

Alchemy 711

Chapter 711: Inner Demon

"Who are you?" Alex asked. By now, the only explanations he could think of were that someone was either using spiritual sense to talk with him or that their spiritual sense was way too strong for him to notice it.

Or... he was back. He was back and he was taking it back just like he said he was.

"You know who I am," the voice said. "You know what you took from me."

"NO!" Alex said. "It wasn't yours to begin with."

"I cultivated so hard, day and night, not you. I took all the pain, the suffering, not you. It was I who lost my arm, not you," the voices said. "It was I who had to watch my master die, not you."

"If you think you can just take over the life I created and live it out like you were the one who worked hard, then you are a bigger idiot than I would have thought you to be," the voice said.

"No!" Alex said. "You're wrong. It wasn't yours. It's mine."

"Yours? Like Pearl is yours?" the voice asked. "You already know you are ruining his cultivation by keeping him, and yet you still haven't taken him back?"

"There is a chance he will die if he goes back," Alex said.

"There is a chance he will die if he stays with you," the voice said.

"You know he will soon be very weak for you. At that time, I know you will just abandon him. I know that because I am you," the voice said.

"No, I would never abandon Pearl," Alex said.

"Never? Like you never abandoned MY master? Like you never abandoned MY senior sister? Like you never abandoned all the relationships that I created back in the Crimson empire?"

"The moment you saw a way out, you took it. Because that is what you do. You abandon people," the voice said.

Alex tried to ignore the voice, but it was getting to his head.

"A dead father, a dead master. I bet Hannah is already dead on the other continent too. Same for Aunt Liz in the Northern continent."

"Soon, there will be a dead and abandoned Pearl too."

"How many more family members do you need to lose before you realize just how weak you are," the voice said. " You are going to lose mother--"

"NOOOOO!" Alex suddenly got out of his cultivation trance in a fit of rage.

The Qi circulation he had been maintaining suddenly went haywire and Alex started feeling pain all over his body.

It wasn't a very intense pain, but it was worrying as he felt it all over his meridians and even his naval area.

Alex quickly sat back down to circulate his Qi and only after a few minutes did he get it back on track. By that time, however, the damage was done.

Alex put on a sour face as he realized that his peak True Lord 9th realm cultivation had dropped to the point where it felt like he had just broken through a month or so ago.

He had lost nearly 2 months' worth of cultivation because of a single mistake.

'I went through Qi Deviation?' Alex thought with nothing but shock on his face.

'Why? How?' he thought.

The fear and anger he had felt just minutes ago when he had been cultivating were no more.

'Was that... not real?' he thought to himself. 'It felt so real though.'

Alex felt like he had been in a dream moments ago. When in the dream, he didn't realize that it was a dream, but now that he was awake, he could tell it wasn't real.

'What happened again?' he thought to himself, but slowly he started forgetting what the events that led to him going through Qi Deviation were.

It was the same as dreams. Once awake, he forgot what the dream was about. Not even Alex's eidetic memory helped with that.

Right now, Alex only remembered the feeling he had felt. Slowly, he was starting to forget the feeling too. Soon, he would only remember that he remembered feeling fear and anger.

"So many days of cultivation wasted just like that," he thought as he checked himself.

In the end, since there was nothing else he could do, he sat down and started cultivating to start fixing what he had just broken.

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A week later, Alex was standing on top of a Teleportation formation in the DawnSpring city, ready to go visit the capital to see the Formation competition.

After his failure during cultivation, he told what happened to his mother and sect master Qin, both of whom seemed to have no idea what he was talking about.

So, Alex had gone to check the library to see if there was any information there. Unfortunately, the library wasn't as useful as he would have hoped it would be.

The only other way he could think of was to either go to the Han family or Heaven's Peak school and find Han Hongqi or Shangguan Quan there to ask them what had happened to him.

However, if he did so, there was a chance they would put him in their debt and force him to join them. He didn't like the idea of that one bit.

So, he decided to go to the capital and see if there is information there. Unfortunately, due to the competition, the teleportation formations were packed and he couldn't use them at all.

Except, the Formation guild could, and he had been invited to go with them not long ago.

So, Alex took the chance to go together with them and watch the competition while at the same time trying to figure out what could have possibly happened to him during the breakthrough that made him fear and angry to the point that he went through Qi Deviation.

His mother was happy to see him go see the world after staying with her for 2 years. Now that Alex thought about it, 2 years was the longest he had ever stayed anywhere in this world.

It took the Formation guild 2 trips to reach the Capital, with them having to go through Lightborn city.

Once they reached the capital, all the guild membered were taken through the afternoon heat towards a busy street that ended on a massive hotel that would be housing them for the next week.

Alex got settled onto a room all by himself, one of the perks of being a True Heaven ranked formation master. Once he was settled, he decided to leave and go to the capital library.

Since the competition was tomorrow, he could spend the rest of the day today looking through information.

Alex quickly found the library not far away from where he was staying and started searching through books that had anything to do with problems on breakthroughs or Qi Deviation.

The books gave many reasoning such as a mismatch between one's cultivation path and cultivation technique, a deep injury to the body or the soul, lack of potential, and poisons, and yet none of the explanations matched Alex.

Alex continued searching for the information, but even until the next morning, he found nothing in the nearly five-story tall building.

Of course, had Alex known what he was searching for exactly, he would have realized how useless his search was.

Things that were only related to Saint realm experts were something that he would never find out in the open. Especially not in a public library.

Alex had yet to even know of a single Saint realm beside Saint Condensation that Qin Shan was in as there was no information out there.

There was no way he would ever find out information about Inner Demons on his own.

Finally, after realizing that his search was fruitless, Alex returned to the hotel, from where he was soon taken to the competition ground.

Over the next 7 days, for 4 different days with a break between each, Alex watched the Formation competition take place in a massive location that the guild had prepared.

From what Alex could see, the location was the exact same as the one for the Talisman competition.

It was perhaps the same location that was used for all 7 or maybe even 8 of the competitions.

The competition went smoothly throughout the entire week. There were a few twists and turns, but in the end, the winner of it was the person everyone had expected to win in the first place.

A young woman by the name of Fu Fanrou. The woman was 32 years old and had a cultivation base of about True Lord 8th realm and hailed from the Fu family, whose ancestor was a Saint rank formation master.

Her final, winning formation had been a formation with an Efficiency of 77%.

Judging by the rest of the group in the competition, Alex guessed that had he taken part, he would have most definitely come in the top 5 amongst them.

He was feeling glad he didn't take part in it. Seeing the people surrounding the woman before she could even leave the competition ground, Alex was sure the swarm he would get would not be less than this.

Once everyone started leaving after the cultivation was over, Alex too stood up and left. Tomorrow, after the rewards were distributed, they would all be taken back home.

However, along the way to the hotel, Alex saw something that gave him a feeling that he should perhaps not return.

'I've done so much already,' he thought to himself. 'I can't stop now.'

So, instead of returning with the group back to the DawnSpring city, Alex decided to stay.

He decided to stay and go join the LightSworns.

It was time to once and for all figure out if the princess could get him his arms back.

Chapter 712: Third Time is the Charm

2 days later, Alex arrived at the southern side of the capital where the evaluation for the Lightsworns was taking place.

It was a large, open ground with a lot of tents. From there, Alex could even see the purple building in the distance that was the royal palace.

Standing in line for the registration, Alex looked at the many people in colorful robes walking around them, all doing their own things.

'If things go well, I will finally be wearing that," he thought.

The first time he had thought of joining the Lightsworns, he had been sidetracked into training for over 2 years.

The second time he had thought of joining them, he had found his mother and suddenly another 2 years had passed.

Now was the third time.

"This time's the charm right?" he thought as he waited for his turn.

"There are too many of you trying to get into the Lightsworns. Do not waste our time, or we will throw you out immediately," someone shouted from the front.

Instantly, everyone got alert and looked forward. From time to time, the man repeated the same thing, putting the newcomers on edge too.

Finally, after nearly 40 minutes of waiting, it was Alex's turn.

He walked into a tent and saw a man with a talisman waiting for him in front of a stone wall.

There was a formation carved onto the wall and Alex had to place his hand on it for it to show any and all information about him that it could find.

Alex had studied about this before coming here, so he knew what he must do. So, he placed his hand without even a prompt from the person, and immediately a variety of information appeared on the screen.

The man looked at the screen, gave a split-second look of surprise, and proceeded to record the information.

23 years old - True Lord 9th Realm - Superior Metal root.

"Name?" the man asked.

"Yu Ming," Alex replied.

"Any sect or family?" he asked.

"No," Alex said as he shook his head.

That made the man give him a curious look before looking at the information on the stone. He was probably wondering how someone so young could have such talent and cultivation base yet not belong to any sect or family.

Alex was a little surprised by the information himself.

'So despite me staying 3 years in the demon realm, it only counts the time I experienced, huh?' he thought to himself.

The cultivation base wasn't anything new at all, but he was surprised that it showed his spiritual roots. Except, it was completely wrong.

'Is my Metal root so much better than the rest that their formations can't even separate the other roots?' Alex thought. 'Also, what happened to my Yang root? It's obviously just as good as the metal too.'

The only reason Alex could come up with was that the formation on the wall wasn't advanced enough to learn it all, even though it was a Saint rank formation.

Alex quickly left the place and went to another location where he was made to sit down to the side as a group of people watched someone else fight a puppet on a stage.

The person fighting was a woman with True Lord 3rd realm cultivation base, and the puppet she was fighting against had the same cultivation base as well.

A man stood to the side, recording everything that he saw on the stage. The woman fought for a while before it was clear that she was struggling against the puppet.

"Stop," the man said and the girl stopped. She knew she had failed.

After she left, another man's name was called out and he began fighting against the puppet.

Just as they started, Alex was surprised to see the puppet's cultivation base suddenly increase to True Lord 6th realm to accommodate the man's own True Lord 6th realm cultivation base.

The fight lasted for a few minutes, in which it was clear that the man was strong enough to win against the puppet.

The evaluator stopped the match and passed the man.

"You have passed both of the tests. You can now go become a Lightsworn," the evaluator said as he brought out something from his bag.

When Alex saw what it was, he was a little confused.

'A sand watch?' he thought when he saw the evaluator place it on the table and the sand started flowing.

"Here in the Lightsworns, we do not accept tardiness. So, you have until this time to go and register yourself in the other tent right," the man pointed.

"Yes," the man said and ran away.

The evaluator then turned around and called another person to fight. This lasted for a while until it was Alex's turn to go down and fight.

He walked up to the puppet and its cultivation base changed to True Lord 9th realm.

That was way too weak. Still, Alex had to fight for almost a full minute, so he started.

The puppets attacking style was a simple hand-to-hand combat, so Alex decided to go with that too.

He dashed close to the puppet and delivered a weak, but still strong enough punch directly onto its chest.

The puppet tried to move away, but it wasn't fast enough. Alex's punch landed squarely on the chest and the puppet flew away.

It quickly stood back up, but Alex was already on top of it. He kicked it to the side and dashed in the direction it flew to attack it once again.

"Stop," the Evaluator said and Alex stopped.

'So fast?' he thought, but it was obvious he was better than the puppet.

"Good, you've passed. Same as everyone, you have a minute to reach that tent over there and register yourself," the Evaluator said and flipped the now pull sand watch.

Alex nodded and immediately left the room.

The tent was far, but not very. It would take him half a minute at best to reach it if he ran the whole way.

So, he ran.

Just as he was about to reach the opening of the tent, he heard a rather loud voice coming from the side.

"Mother, come on. I will carry you back," a small body of barely 8 years old said to his mother, who looked sickly.

"I am alright, my son. You don't have to—"

Before she finished, she immediately started coughing and vomited out a bunch of blood.

Alex's eyes immediately went wide and he rushed to her without thinking.

"Are you alright miss?" he asked, but the woman simply kept on vomiting blood.

"Miss, quickly eat this," he said as he brought out a poison antidote pill and a healing pill.

He brought the pill close to her face, but she showed no reaction.

"You passed," A voice came from behind him.

"What?" Alex said as he turned around and saw a man looking at him with a talisman in his hand.

"You passed the test," he said. "Whatever you are seeing is an illusion that was created to test your empathy and compassion. You can go to that tent and register for real now."

"Oh," Alex said as he turned around to look at the woman who was still vomiting blood. "So this is fake?" he thought and tried to touch her.

While his mind told him that he was touching someone, he could feel a surreal feeling that only came with knowingly being in an illusory formation.

"I see," he said. "Thank you."

Alex turned and went to the tent to prepare for the finalization of him entering the Lightsworns.

There were a bunch of people already in the tent he went to, but not everyone that had passed the puppet test was there.

'They failed at the empathy test?' he thought.

He sat by on an empty seat and waited for the tent to fill up. 20 minutes later, it was finally full.

"We have recorded your information and have registered you into the Lightsworn. However, one more task remains for you to fully become a Lightsworn and enter our legion," the man said.

Suddenly, words appeared in the air on a floating screen that started with 'I make an oath to the heavens...'

"Once you've said this oath, you will become a Lightsworn," the man said.

Everyone clamored to start saying the Oath. Alex prepared to say it as well.

Chapter 713: Oath

I swear to the heavens to protect this empire from any threat it may face. I swear to the heavens to serve the people of this empire and keep them safe from any harm the others may cause. I swear to the heavens to be lawful and enforce the law of the empire. I swear to the heavens to above always follow and obey the Emperor.

Alex read the words that hung in the air in front of them all. The information outside only said what the oath was about, not what it exactly was.

Only now did Alex get the exact oath he was meant to say to become a Lightsworn.

I swear to the heavens to protect this empire from any threat it may face.

That part of the oath felt fine for him. After all, as Lightsworn they were meant to protect the empire.

I swear to the heavens to serve the people of this empire and keep them safe from any harm the others may cause.

This was like the job of a normal police officer back in the central continent: serve and protect. It made sense why one would make such a vow.

I swear to the heavens to be lawful and enforce the law of the empire.

That oath was fine for the most part, except if there was ever a law change. What would Alex do if they changed the law to something worse?

'It's highly unlikely that would happen,' Alex thought and finally focused on the final part.

I swear to the heavens to above all always follow and obey the Emperor.

That, to him, felt like the most suspicious part of the oath. Follow and obey the Emperor? What if the emperor told him to go kill innocent folks? What if the emperor changed and it was now some douche?

And he had to obey the Emperor above all? The previous Oaths would mean nothing if the order came from the emperor directly. That let him use the Lightsworns as his personal group of slaves.

It was probably true that the Emperor wasn't the sort of person who would do such a thing. However, it still didn't help the fact that there were possibilities.

Alex fell into a dilemma on whether to say the oaths or not. Perhaps the dilemma would have been less hard on him if there was a way to get out of the oath through a sort of time limit or someone letting him free from the oath.

However, there was no such thing.

The only way Alex saw getting out of the oath was by leaving the Empire entirely or going to the forests to live like a hermit.

"I swear to the heavens..." One of the men close to him started saying his oath and soon the others followed suit.

The people around the room that were not the newcomers kept a close watch on who said the oath and who didn't.

Soon, aside from a few including Alex, everyone said the oaths.

"If you do not want to say the oaths, we understand. You are free to leave," the man in the front of them all spoke to the remaining few.

Half of them immediately bowed and left with no hesitation. The other half, including Alex, still couldn't decide.

In the end, all of them, except Alex, made a choice. Now, only Alex remained.

He looked at the oaths once more and thought of the things he would have to do. Then, he thought of the things he would likely obtain.

His arm.

"Are you saying it or not?" the man asked Alex.

Alex took a deep breath. 'Screw it. If anything bad happens, I will just leave this Empire,' he thought and opened his mouth.

"I—"

"I wouldn't say that if I were you," a voice spoke from next to him as a hand appeared around his shoulders.

The voice felt... familiar.

Alex quickly turned around to look at the new arriver. It was a young man that wore a stark white robe and had a head full of long golden hair that ended on black tips.

He had circular earrings with wavy spikes poking out from every side, and a smile hung on his face as if it were an accessory of its own.

"Brother Shen!" Alex called out in both shock and joy. "What are you doing here?"

"You should have let me know if you were alive. Why didn't you come to find me?" he asked.

"I—"

"Hey! Who are you?" the people in the room were now staring at them.

Shen Jing slowly turned his head towards the man in front of them all and brought his hand up to his face before putting a single finger on his lips.

"Sssh," he sounded.

Suddenly, the whole room went silent. It wasn't just silent but rather suppressed. Every single person in the room could feel a pressure on them that they had never felt before.

"I'm talking here, so it would do you good if you kept quiet for a bit," Shen Jing said and turned back around to Alex.

"So? Why didn't you come to find me?" he asked.

"Come where?" Alex asked. "Brother Shen, I don't know where you live. Hell, I don't even know who you really are."

"Ah, right," Shen Jing said as he scratched his chin. "That's a problem, isn't it? Unfortunately, it is going to have to stay that way. So? Are you okay? How's Pearl?"

"We're doing fine," Alex said. "How did you find me?"

"I found you earlier this week," Shen Jing said. "I wanted to go talk to you, but you instead teleported away to who knows where."

"I had to go around the Empire searching for you and I only found you here this morning," Shen Jing said.

"Eh? Why didn't you just ask the people where I was teleported to?" Alex asked.

"I could do that? Ahem, Let's not talk about that," Shen Jing said and looked to the screen with the oath.

"They are making you say an oath?" Shen Jing asked.

"Yes," Alex said. "I will finally be a member of the Lightsworns after I finish saying the oath."

"I heard these people say the oath," Shen Jing said. "It wasn't a bad oath, but there were too many loopholes one could exploit. You are better off not saying it."

Alex gave a dejected look at that.

"What's wrong?" Shen Jing caught his sad face.

"Well, if I don't say that, I won't be a Lightsworn," Alex said.

"Why do you want to be an Empire's lapdog in the first place?" Shen Jing asked.

"I told you before, brother Shen. After becoming a Lightsworn, I will have a chance to meet with the princess and use her healing crystal to see if I can get my arm back," he said.

"Ah, right. You did say that before," Shen Jing said. "So why bother with this oath? Let's just go meet with the princess and be done with."

"Meet the princess?" Alex was shocked at the boldness.

"Yes, where is she?" Shen Jing asked.

Alex shook his head. "I don't know," he said.

"What does she look like?" Shen Jing asked.

Alex shook his head again. He really did not know anything about the princess.

Shen Jing turned his head at the man whose eyes were wide with shock and fear still. A single call for silence had left him reeling in fear.

"You! Where's the princess?" he asked.

"I...I do not know, senior," the man barely spoke up.

"Anyone here knows anything about the princess?" Shen Jing asked. However, not a single soul answered.

Shen Jing shook his head and sighed. "Well, this isn't working," he said.

"What do we do then?" Alex asked.

"Well, one person should be able to help us for sure," Shen Jing said.

"WhoooOOO..." Alex couldn't finish his words before he was picked up and taken away somewhere.

When his blurry vision became normal again, he was in the middle of a large hall with a very tall ceiling.

The entrance was behind him with large doors made of the most exquisite wood out there. The pillars and walls were also made with probably the best item one could find.

The purple accent looked quite good all around the hall with even the chairs looking majestic.

Alex was standing behind Shen Jing and couldn't see the front, but on both sides of them were people sitting on great chairs that looked at him, or rather Shen Jing with a threatening look.

"Calm down, I'm not here to hurt anyone," Shen Jing said as he looked at the people that looked like they were about to attack him.

Alex slowly walked out from behind him and saw what was in the front.

At the center of the room on the opposite side was a young man with long black hair and a clean-shaven face that wore purple and gold clothes.

Alex had a suspicion that he knew who this was, and the suspicion got answered when he saw the golden crown full of intricate gemstones on the man's head.

This was the Emperor of the Luminance empire.

"Who are you?" The Emperor asked calmly. "What are you doing in my Palace?"

"Are you the Emperor?" Shen Jing asked.

"Insolence!" a man stood up, but the Emperor put up his hand to stop him from speaking any further.

"Yes, I am the Emperor," he said. "Who are you?"

Shen Jing shook his head. "It doesn't matter to you. We're not here for you in the first place. We're here to see your daughter for a small thing. Call her here, the one with the healing crystal."

Chapter 714: The Princess

"You want me to call my daughter and yet you won't even say who you are?" the Emperor asked.

"Despite who you are, I am still an Emperor. You will respect me as such."

From what Alex could tell, the Emperor was already showing signs of fear around Shen Jing, but he was still keeping his cool.

"Ohh," Shen Jing gave a smile. "Very well, I will tell you who I am."

Shen Jing then turned to the rest of them and said, "Leave!"

The different court officials and guards looked confused for a second. After all, following the orders of someone else in front of the Emperor they swore to follow and serve was unacceptable.

Shen Jing sighed when he saw that. He simply flicked his fingers and suddenly every single one of the people in the room, including the shadow guards hiding in the ceiling and walls was thrown out of the room.

Alex was astounded when he saw them all get thrown out, but he was sure they would be alright. After all, they were all cultivators, to begin with.

"You should leave for a while too," Shen Jing said to Alex.

Alex nodded and left the room. After he was gone, Shen Jing turned around to the young emperor.

"Who exactly are you, senior?" the Emperor asked with a timid face. He could already tell that Shen Jing was stronger than him. So, all he could hope for was that he wasn't an enemy.

As he waited, Shen Jing spoke up and said something to him. The Emperor's eyes widened in horror when he heard the words.

"No way..." he said.

Then, the young Emperor's face lost all color when he saw something else. Only then did he vividly remember the thing his father had told him about.

The truth that every Emperor should know about before they take the throne. That truth was here in front of him today.

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Alex waited for a bit outside while the many court officials and guards tried to open the door. However, the door was covered with a golden barrier that they couldn't break through it.

Many of them also looked at Alex as if they were going to hurt him, but the threat of who was inside kept them from doing so.

As Alex waited, he suddenly heard a different set of commotion coming from the other side of the crowd.

He turned around to see the servants, guards, and court officials part to give way to a young woman who walked through.

The young woman wore light-purple robes and a hair braided full of gems and ribbons. A purple veil covered her face, but even then one could see that she was beautiful.

There was a certain elegance in her steps that only came from rigorous training. Besides her, there was two purple-robed male, both very strong.

From what Alex could tell, they were both in the saint realm. As for the young woman herself, she was in the upper realms of True King.

'Is she the princess?' he wondered.

"What are you all doing out here?" the woman asked the group.

One of the court officials walked forward and explained everything that had happened.

The woman's eyes went wide. "And you let my father be with such an individual?" she asked, worry filling her voice.

She quickly walked off and stood in front of the golden wall before striking it with a blue-colored attack.

'Water Qi?' Alex thought when he saw that.

The attack landed on the barrier and suddenly the barrier disappeared.

"Woah!" people started shouting in surprise.

"When did the princess get so strong?" they asked.

However, the door opened and Shen Jing's voice came from inside.

"Little Yu, come in. Bring the young lady too," he said.

Alex walked forward and stood next to the princess. "Princess, please," he said as he led the way.

The princess didn't understand what was happening, but she had been called here by her father, so she walked in without even Alex prompting her to.

The two guards of hers tried to walk in as well, but a force stopped them from entering.

Once both Alex and the princess were inside, the door closed on its own.

"Father, what's going on?" the princess asked as she ran up to her father, barely giving a glance to Shen Jing.

The Emperor had gotten back his composure, but he seemed a little afraid of Shen Jing still, and Alex could see that.

'What did he do?' he wondered.

"Xumei, did you bring the crystal, as I asked?" the Emperor asked.

"Yes, father," the Princess said and brought out a staff. The blue staff had intricate details along the side of the shaft, and at the top of it was a half-sphere transparent crystal that shined a very light shade of blue.

"Is that the healing crystal?" Shen Jing asked.

"Yes, Senior," the Emperor said before the princess could say anything. The princess looked at her father with a weird look on her face. She had never heard him call someone so young senior before.

"Come here, little girl," Shen Jing called.

The princess looked at her father who nodded to her. Only then did the princess walk over to Shen Jing.

Shen Jing stepped to the side and said, "heal his arm for me."

The princess nodded and looked at Alex, who quickly pulled up his long sleeve and proceeded to remove his fake arm.

"Wait, he isn't wounded," the princess said. "That's an amputated limb. I can only heal, not regrow."

As soon as Alex heard those words, disappointment filled every corner of his very being.

"Are you sure?" Shen Jing asked.

"Yes, senior," she said. "I have tried before, but I can only heal wounds and poisons, but I can do nothing for something that isn't already there."

"Hmm... still, try it for me," he said.

The princess nodded and grabbed her staff by the sphere, rather than the shaft, and placed another palm on Alex's now bare stump.

She took a deep breath and started doing something and slowly Alex could feel the energy enter his body.

The ends of his stump felt stimulated, but other than that, nothing else happened.

The princess gave up. "See, it doesn't work," she said.

"Why did you hold your staff so weird?" Shen Jing asked.

"Oh, that's because it's the crystal that's the source of the power and I have to touch it in order to heal others," she said. "The rest of the staff is just there for decoration or a bit of convenience because of the shape of the crystal making it hard to hold."

"Oh, what shape could that be?" Shen Jing asked as his spiritual sense went into the staff and checked it thoroughly. Suddenly, his eyes narrowed when he noticed something.

"It's in the shape of a—" before she could finish Shen Jing grabbed the staff and took it away from her.

"Senior?" The Emperor spoke but Shen Jing gave him no heed. Even Alex was weirded out by what was happening.

"Brother Shen?" he called out, but Shen Jing was focused on the crystal.

He grabbed the edge of the metal that cupped the crystal and tore it away like it was made up of paper. After tearing it away from each side, he brought out the crystal.

Alex finally saw the crystal in full.

The transparent crystal with the blue hue was mostly spherical, except for one side where it looked like someone pinched it and pulled it until it was pointed.

Without any warning, Shen Jing pulled back his arm and punched the crystal as hard as he could.

"No!" the princess cried out in horror, but it was too late.

BANG!

Alex suddenly felt a shockwave in the air as it pushed him back towards the door where he struck it and fell to the ground.

He felt his brain rattle and his interior organs shuffle around for a bit. He felt like vomiting out everything in his body, but he stopped himself.

The Emperor put up a barrier to protect himself and his daughter, but even then they were scared.

"Senior?" the Emperor asked.

Shen Jing's smile was no more and instead, he had an irritated, but the concerned face on him.

"Where'd you find this?" Shen Jing asked, bringing Alex's attention back to the crystal that was perfectly fine.

"The crystal?" the Emperor asked. "That is something that had been passed down in my family for generations."

"Every single princess that can take the crystal and use it to heal our family and our warriors," the Emperor said. "That's how it has been for a thousand years."

"I didn't ask you that," Shen Jing said.

"According to the records, this crystal came down in the meteor shower over a thousand years ago, senior," The Emperor finally answered his question.

Shen Jing's face changed. "The meteor shower?" he asked. "God damn it!"

"Is something wrong, senior?" the Emperor asked.

"Yes, there is," Shen Jing said. "But you won't understand."

"Damn it!" Shen Jing said before rubbing his chin as he thought of something.

"This artifact is far too dangerous to be kept with you," he said. "I will be taking it away today."

"Senior?!"

"No, you can't!"

Both father and daughter spoke up at once as they put on aghast expressions on their face.

"I'm not trying to steal from you, little girl. I'm trying to protect you," Shen Jing said.

"You have no idea the amount of trouble you will get from keeping the Ocean God's Teardrop with you."

Chapter 715: Legacy Artifact

"Ocean God's Teardrop? Senior, you know what this is?" the Emperor asked with a face full of surprise. Ever since his grandfather found the crystal, they had been wondering as to what exactly it was.

It was by accident that they realized it could heal wounds, but aside from that, they knew nothing.

Just like every other item that dropped during the meteor shower, this one was an enigma too.

They had all wondered at times as to what the meteor shower was exactly. However, after getting no answer for millennia, they had given up.

Now that the Emperor found an answer, albeit being the name of a single thing, he wanted to know more about it.

"It would be a lie to say I know it exactly," Shen Jing said. "I have heard and have seen images of it."

"How did something like this come here?" Shen Jing softly spoke to himself.

"Who's the Ocean God?" Alex asked from behind.

"A dead guy," Shen Jing said without thinking. "He doesn't matter right now. What matters is that his Legacy Artifact is here and the people that are under him will soon come looking for it."

"And trust me when I say this, you don't want to mess with these people," Shen Jing said.

Shen Jing then turned around and tossed the crystal to Alex. "Try and heal yourself. See if you can do it," he said.

Alex nodded and poured Qi into the crystal. It was a struggle as the artifact belonged to someone else, but he succeeded.

Suddenly, cool energy released from the crystal that once again tried to heal him. However, this time the energy was weaker than when the princess did it so nothing happened.

"It's not happening, brother Shen," Alex said.

"Well, I didn't think you could," Shen Jing said.

Alex got dejected. "So, this won't help me?" he asked.

Shen Jing shook his head. "It could if we had time, or the little princess here had refined it better, but as it stands, I don't see how you will."

"This artifact demands a superior Water spirit root. The better the root, the better the results will be," Shen Jing said. "However, aside from that, they also have to refine it."

"From what I can tell, these princesses have been refining the same small part of the artifact since the very beginning and haven't made any advancement in it since then."

"This thing can heal the worst of wounds. You could lose your whole body, and if your soul survives, it can heal you."

"It could heal you from the worst of poisons out there too."

"It could even heal wounds to the spirit itself. However, since the princesses stopped refining it, they have only touched on the first part," Shen Jing said.

The rest of the 3 people stood stunned when they heard that information. The Princess knew the most about the crystal out of all the three, and yet even she was surprised.

"So... if we were to refine this, we can use it?" Alex asked. He had refined things before. The ring he was wearing once belonged to someone else. Since he had managed to refine that too, he should be able to refine the teardrop as well.

Shen Jing shook his head. "You can't," he said.

"But, I've refined such things before too," Alex said softly to him. "Remember the ring?"

"This is different," Shen Jing said. "A Legacy Artifact is not so simple to refine. That is the artifact someone spends their whole life with. It's the artifact they used every day for a long time."

"It is the artifact that they are remembered by. Do you think you can compare such an artifact to something so common as a storage ring?" Shen Jing asked and shook his head.

"The princesses must have taken decades to even reach the level they have and the reason they stopped was that refining any more became excruciatingly hard."

"If they wanted to advance, they needed a better cultivation base," Shen Jing said. "If you can wait until the princess or you have a better cultivation base, you will have already gotten your arm back by simply being in the saint realm."

"I see," Alex said as disappointment filled him again. 'I guess I really am meant to wait until I reach Saint realm then,' he thought.

"Anyway, I'm taking this now, goodbye," Shen Jing said and turned to leave.

"Senior wait," The Emperor spoke even before the Princess could voice out anything.

"What is it now?" Shen Jing gave an annoyed look that stopped the words that were going to come out of the Emperor's mouth.

"Senior, we are too reliant on that crystal. Our people expect me to heal them whenever they are wounded. If you take that away, we will..." The Princess didn't know what to say next.

Shen Jing thought for a second and sighed. "You're right," he said. "I shouldn't just take things away from others."

"You only use it for healing, right?" he asked.

The princess nodded.

"Alright, then take him in exchange," Shen Jing said as he pushed Alex forward.

"Huh? Eh? What?" Alex was surprised and panicked.

"I'm trading you for this crystal," Shen Jing said as the crystal disappeared somewhere.

"Who... is this young man?" the Emperor asked awkwardly, trying not to push any boundaries with his questions.

"He's a little guy I found in your empire. Since you need to heal your people, he will be doing what the crystal has been doing until now," Shen Jing said.

"This young man can heal people?" the princess asked suspiciously.

"Well, he's an alchemist so I hope so," Shen Jing said. "You can make healing pills right?"

Alex nodded.

"See? He will be a fine replacement," Shen Jing said.

"That's..." the princess didn't know what to say. Even the Emperor was speechless.

"Tell them how good you are. They will trust you then," Shen Jing said.

'Am I being sold off? Is this human trafficking?' Alex thought for a second. Still, in the end, he sighed and brought out his badge to show the Emperor.

"I'm a True Heaven rank Alchemist, your majesty. I can promise you that I can make the pills as required," he said.

"Oh," the Emperor gave a surprised look. He hadn't expected someone so young looking to have such a high rank as an Alchemist.

"What's your name, young man?" the Emperor asked.

"I am Yu Ming, your majesty," Alex said.

"Very well. Since Senior has given you to us, we will gracefully take you. Xumei, he will be under you from now on. Treat him like he's my guest," the Emperor said.

"Yes, father," the Princess nodded.

"Are you really selling me off, brother Shen?" Alex whispered next to him.

"Selling you? Why would I sell you?" Shen Jing asked.

"But... but you just gave me away to the Emperor," he said.

"Oh, right," Shen Jing said and turned to the emperor. "I hope you know this is just a limited-time thing. You can give him ingredients and he will make you a pill."

"However, that will go on for just 2 years. After 2 years, he will leave. Meaning, you have 2 years to switch from being reliant on this artifact to being reliant on pills and such to heal you," Shen Jing said.

"Yes, senior," the Emperor said. He wouldn't have kept Alex longer even if he wasn't told. After all, Alex really wasn't a replacement for the crystal, but rather something to aid in their transition to stop being reliant on the crystal.

"Alright, now that things are done, we're leaving," Shen Jing said. "Let's go, little Yu."

"I'm not staying here?" Alex asked.

"You'll come here tomorrow. For today, I have many questions to ask you," Shen Jing said and took Alex away.

The doors closed behind them and only the Emperor and the princess remained.

"Are we really going to let him take the crystal just like that?" the princess asked.

"Yes," the Emperor nodded.

"Why? That's ours. How can he just take it away like that?" the princess asked.

"Xumei, there are times when you have to know to back off. This is one of those times," the Emperor said.

"Is he stronger than you?" she asked.

"Many times," The Emperor said.

"Who is he?" the Princess asked.

"I can't say," the Emperor said. "You shouldn't go around trying to find his information either. That is a royal decree."

"That's... I've never seen you so serious before, father," she said.

"I know," he said. "I just... I didn't expect to meet him today."

"Who is he?" The Princess' curiosity was truly piqued.

"I told you, I can't say," the Emperor said.

"You can't say? Or you won't say?" the princess asked.

"I can't say," the Emperor repeated himself.

"Oh... wait, did you?" the princess' eyes went wide. "Did you make an oath?"

The Emperor nodded. Finally, the princess understood the severity of the situation.

'Just who the hell can force an emperor to make an Oath?' she wondered.

* * * * *

"Are sure it was a good idea to talk to the Emperor so directly? You might be strong, but he's still the Emperor, you know?" Alex asked.

They had already left the palace and were out in the streets now.

"Of course," Shen Jing said. "Why would it matter to me? He's not my Emperor."

"Eh? Are you not from the Luminance Empire?" Alex asked.

"Is Luminance Empire the only location on this continent?" Shen Jing asked with a smile.

'Right,' Alex thought. There was the Crimson Empire and the beast realm. Aside from those two, there were also multiple islands to the west and south that were their own hegemony.

"Are you from one of the Hegemonies in the ocean?" Alex asked.

Shen Jing simply smiled, not saying anything. They soon reached a restaurant where they sat down to order some food.

"Here, I got you something," Shen Jing said as he chewed on the biggest piece of meat on the table. He reached into... somewhere and brought out something before placing it next to Alex.

Alex looked at the new item, a fruit, and gave a weird look. He had never seen it before. Even so, very quickly a name floated up to his head.

As soon as it did, his eyes went wide and his jaw dropped to the point that one could see the food inside his mouth.

Alex quickly swallowed and picked up the fruit to watch it with reverence.

"This..." he still couldn't believe what he was seeing. One of the rarest things in the world was sitting on the table in front of him.

"This is a Divine Devil's fruit."

Chapter 716: Three Demonic Plants

"Yes!" Shen Jing said as he ate another piece of the meant. "I brought it for you. Eat it later tonight."

Alex looked at the bright red and yellow pear-shaped fruit with swirls all around the outside of it.

"Um, I don't need it though," Alex said. "I've already gone through Mortal Cleansing."

"Oh, you've eaten this already?" Shen Jing asked with a bit of surprise.

"No, I've never even seen this before," Alex said. "I just went through Mortal cleansing... on my own."

Alex wasn't sure if he wanted to reveal the existence of Pearl's help in Mortal Cleansing. While he was sure that one would need to ingest the White Tiger's blood essence to do what he did, there was still the chance that Shen Jing would think Pearl would help him and take him for his own.

While the chance was very, very small, Alex didn't want to take it.

"You went through mortal cleansing without a Divine Devil's fruit? Now that's interesting," Shen Jing said. "Wait, how did you know about this fruit if you've never eaten it or seen it in the first place? There's no way there are pictures of it out there, right?"

"No, I just know the names of all alchemy ingredients out there. So while I haven't seen it before, I recognize it," Alex said.

"Huh?" Shen Jing gave a weird look, maybe even a confused one.

"What's wrong?" Alex asked.

"This isn't an Alchemy ingredient," Shen Jing said. "Why would you think a Divine Devil's fruit is an Alchemy ingredient?"

"Huh? But it is. I know the information of all Alchemy ingredients," Alex said as he grabbed the Divine Devil's fruit.

He was about to say something when he noticed something weird about the fruit. The fruit was indeed the Divine Devil's fruit and it was about 122 years old, however, it had no energy in it at all.

Or rather, it did but the information about it that he was supposed to get wasn't there at all.

'What's going on?' he thought.

"Yeah, right. Like anyone can create pills out of Divine Devil's fruit. If they can do it, I will call myself their little brother," Shen Jing said.

Alex was still confused. "But... I know the name," he thought to himself.

"I have never even heard of anyone talking about making anything out of plants that descend from the three Demonic plants," Shen Jing said offhandedly.

"The three Demonic Plants?" Alex asked as his eyes narrowed. He had heard of that before... but where?

As he thought for a moment, an answer came to him.

"Ah! The plants blessed by one of the gods," Alex said as he remembered Godslayer's words.

'There are only two true gods in the world. One that blessed the Four Heavenly Beasts, and the other one that blessed the Three Demonic Plants.'

"Wait, are you saying the Divine Devil's fruit is one of the three Demonic Plants??" Alex asked with a shocked face.

"What? No. It's descended from one. Pretty close too," Shen Jing said.

"If you don't mind me asking, what are the Three Demonic Plants?" Alex asked.

"Well," Shen Jing mulled for a bit as he saw Alex's face. "Fine, I'll tell you."

"The Demonic plants are just normal plants that were blessed by the gods to be the best of all the plants in the world."

"There are 3 of them, each that affect one of the 3 things for a cultivator."

"Body, Qi, and Mind."

"The Divine Devil's fruit is a plant that descended from the plant that affects one's body. While the Demonic body Plant affects the body with every single part of the plant, its descendant, the Divine Devil plant, only affects the body with its fruit," Shen Jing said.

"Oh," Alex said. "Does it have a name? The Demonic body plant I mean."

Shen Jing smiled. "It's too early for you to know about them. Just learning they exist is already more than you should know."

"I see," Alex said, not asking any more questions. "I wonder why I know the name if it's not an alchemy ingredient. Maybe I just know the plant names."

Alex looked at the fruit once again and started considering what he could do with it.

"Stop acting like this is your first time seeing something like this," Shen Jing said as he continued eating his food.

"Huh? But it is my first time seeing this fruit," Alex said.

"Not the fruit, a descendant of one of the Three Demonic plants. It's not like you're looking at one of the Demonic plants itself," Shen Jing said.

Alex's face suddenly got serious. "I've seen another one? Where? When?" he asked.

"Did you forget what I said?" Shen Jing said. "The Demonic plants affect Body, Qi, and Mind."

Shen Jing pointed to his head. "Have you never seen anything that affects that?" he asked.

"I have?" Alex thought for a second and immediately his eyes went wide. "I HAVE!"

"Spirit Cleansing Lily!" he shouted.

"Yes," Shen Jing said. "It's a descendant of the Demonic Mind Plant where only the flower of it actually works."

"Is that why it is not part of any pill?" Alex said. "I didn't know I was so close to the descendant of one of the Demonic plants."

He then looked at the fruit in his hand and said, "Two, now."

"Are there any more?" Alex asked.

"There are," Shen Jing said, "But most of them don't do anything. It's like when you have too good of a physical constitution, so you have a hard time having kids since Heaven doesn't want you to pass on your advantage to your offspring."

"Huh?" Alex was confused.

"Are you an only child?" Shen Jing asked.

Alex nodded.

"Point proven," Shen Jing said as he chewed his meat.

"Wait, what are you saying, brother Shen? Are you saying that my parents couldn't have more than me?" Alex asked.

"They might have wanted only one child," Shen Jing said, "but it is more than likely they wanted more, but they just couldn't."

"The heaven is really considerate about letting a person with great constitution have children. Just the fact you were born means your parents had to fight the odds for that," Shen Jing said.

"Is... is everyone like that?" Alex asked. "What if the parents are normal? Can their child not be special?"

"Oh, they can. Absolutely," Shen Jing said. "But do you think your parents are normal?"

Alex thought for a moment and shook his head.

"Yeah, the plants are similar too. Heaven just can't let a Demonic Plant's offspring be good too, so most of their offspring end up mutating. Mostly into something useless, but sometimes into these," Shen Jing said.

"Even then, it is hard to acquire them," Shen Jing said. "Not only are they rare, to begin with, but they are also hard to pick."

"For the Spirit Cleansing lily, you have to choose it from one of the many flowers that grow. It's nearly impossible unless you have a particularly strong spirit."

"As for the Divine Devil's fruit, you have to pick them up after they have become 120 years old and before they become 123 years old."

"If you eat anything that was picked outside of those 3 years, you end up causing problems for yourself," Shen Jing said.

Alex nodded. He had already seen the effect of eating a raw Divine Devil's fruit on Fu Wen's mother back in the Scarlet city where she had fallen into a coma after reading halfway through Mortal Cleansing.

"Thank you, brother Shen, for explaining it all to me," Alex said.

"Yeah well, turns out you didn't need it in the end," Shen Jing said.

"About that, I have a favor to ask," Alex said. "Can I take this fruit anyway?"

"Hmm? Why?" Shen Jing asked. "You want to feed it to Pearl?"

"No, I want to feed it to my mother," Alex said. "Wait, it works on beasts too?"

"Of course," Shen Jing said.

'Right, if the Spirit Cleansing lily worked, then, of course, the Divine Devil's fruit would work as well,' Alex thought.

Now, he didn't know what to do. He had been thinking of giving this fruit to his mother for a while, but if Pearl could eat it, then he deserved it too.

Especially since his cultivation had been slowing down for a while.

'What should I do?'

Chapter 717: Insecurities

"Why do you look so down?" Shen Jing asked.

"Well, here's the thing," Alex said. "I want Pearl to eat this fruit, but I also want to give it to my mother. So, I'm not sure what I should do."

"Your mother? Did she come to this continent too?" Shen Jing asked.

Alex nodded.

"Oh, then don't worry about here," Shen Jing said as he reached somewhere and brought out another Divine Devil fruit. "I have two."

Alex was surprised. "Where did you find two? Aren't they very rare?" he asked.

"They grow in my backyard," Shen Jing said.

"In your backyard? It must be quite amazing to grow these then," Alex said.

"Where's your mother now?" Shen Jing asked.

"In the DawnSpring city. She's a disciple in the Flowing Brush sect," Alex answered.

"Alright, I will give this to her later then," he said.

"I can give it to her," Alex said.

"Well, we both will," Shen Jing said with a smile. After they finished eating, Shen Jing took Alex and flew in the direction of DawnSpring city.

A distance of around three thousand kilometers ended up taking Alex only 6 minutes at best.

Due to his increased cultivation, it seemed Shen Jing was going faster than before now.

'Geez, just how fast can he go?' he wondered.

When they stopped, Alex pointed toward the sect and they entered. Shen Jing was practically trespassing, but not a single alarm went off for some reason.

As far as the sect running formation was concerned, he wasn't even there.

Alex quickly introduced his mother to Shen Jing and gave her a Divine Devil's fruit. Then, the two of them went to his house to talk for a bit.

"That you for telling me about the Demonic plants again," Alex said. "Those sort of information are impossible to come by."

"Yeah, well you shouldn't be searching for such information in public places. Sects and families are very conscious of what they have and what they can protect.

Alex nodded to agree with the statement when he thought of something. 'Something that can't be found in public places.'

Suddenly, a question that was plaguing his mind for 2 weeks ago came flooding back.

"Brother Shen, I... am facing a problem with my cultivation right now. I was hoping you could help me," he said.

"Oh, you're facing problems with cultivation? That's weird," Shen Jing said.

Alex nodded. "About 2 weeks ago, I sat down to cultivate, but I kept coming out of it. I think someone was talking to me, and I also remember feeling very angry and scared."

"Honestly I have no idea what happened, but I ended up going through Qi deviation and lost a bit of my cultivation due to that," Alex said.

Shen Jing's face suddenly got serious and he sensed Alex's cultivation base again.

"True Lord 9th realm," he said softly. "If what you say is accurate, then you must have been tormented by an Inner Demon."

"An Inner Demon? What's that?" Alex asked. "Does it have anything to do with the demons from the demon realm?"

"No, these are completely different. Inner Demons were named way before," Shen Jing said. "What an Inner Demon is, is the world forcing you to face your trauma and insecurities."

"The world?" Alex asked.

"Yes, the world. Or you may call it Heaven too. The same thing," Shen Jing said. "Remember what I said before? Heaven hates letting someone with an advantage grow. So, they try to stop them by putting obstacles in their way."

"Wait, wait, wait," Alex stopped him. "The Heaven is trying to stop me from advancing because I was born with my body and talent?"

"No," Shen Jing said. "That is something your parents faced, not you. Since they fought through it, you have nothing to worry about in that regard."

"Then what advantage do I have?" Alex asked.

"Dao," Shen Jing said. "You know the Dao of Explosion, right?"

"Yes," Alex said. "And Heat too."

"Another one?" Shen Jing raised an eyebrow.

"Yes," Alex said.

"When?" Shen Jing asked.

"2 years ago," Alex said.

"Wow, nice," he said. "Anyway. Since you now have 2 different Dao, you have power, or rather Authority over the world itself in that regard."

"You can force the world to do what you want. The world allows it, but they also put obstacles in your way to try and stop you."

"There are 2 types of obstacles that they put on you. Physical and mental," Shen Jing said.

"Physical obstacles usually come when you are about to break through between Major realms, like from True to Saint, or Saint to Immortal."

"Since you know 2 Daos, it is likely you will have to face it when you break through to the Saint realm," Shen Jing said.

"I will? What will I have to face? Will different beasts come to attack me?" Alex asked.

"No, you will have to fight something that comes from up above," Shen Jing said.

"From above?" Alex asked as he started thinking about what came from above. Then, he remembered the scene when Lady Ren's strength went past the Saint realm and crossed the border of the Immortal realms.

"Heavenly Judgment?" Alex asked with a face that was drained of any blood.

"Yes," Shen Jing said. "Except, this time we call it Tribulation lightning."

He saw the scared look on Alex's face and said, "Don't worry, it won't be as strong as a Heavenly Judgment's lightning. Just a realm or two above what you are trying to break through to."

"Although, in your case, it might come down stronger given how high your strength is."

Alex's face which was about to be relaxed tightened up again with fear.

"Don't worry, you'll be fine," Shen Jing said. "Besides, we are talking about Inner Demons. That's the mental obstacle the world will put in your path to stop you from breaking through a minor realm."

"From True Lord to True King, from True King to True Emperor, from True Emperor to Saint Condensation, that sort of thing," Shen Jing said.

"We will go through it even when we break through major realms?" Alex asked.

"Of course, it's not going to stop now," Shen Jing said. "Anyway, Inner Demon is simply your trauma and your insecurities taking the form of a voice to play with your mind."

"As long as you have a solid heart, you will pass through," Shen Jing said.

"So... I need to know what my Inner Demon says so I can prepare against it?" Alex asked.

"No, you do not prepare for Inner Demon," Shen Jing said. "There is no preparing for it. No matter what, there will always be something in you that your Inner Demon will focus on to torture you."

"The worst part is you don't realize it's an Inner Demon while it's tormenting you, and you don't remember what it tormented you with afterward."

"So, the best way to prepare for an Inner Demon is to face your insecurities before you try to breakthrough. That way, you give the demon not many things to use against you."

Shen Jing slapped his thigh. "Right, bring out an empty talisman," he said.

Alex nodded and brought out one.

"Okay, now write everything that is troubling you in there. One of the ways to face your insecurities is to write it down and think through it one by one," Shen Jing said.

Alex thought for a moment, nodded, and started writing. He thought about what could be troubling him so much and noted down whatever came to mind.

"Are you done?" Shen Jing asked after seeing Alex put down the Talisman.

"I don't really know much, but I think I'm done," Alex said. "Do you want to read?"

"I can't read," Shen Jing reminded him. "Say your first point out loud."

"I worry I will never get my arm back," Alex said.

"Haha, that's a stupid one," Shen Jing said. "I told you, once you reach Saint realm, it will grow back even if you don't want it. You should throw it out of your mind now. Alright, next?"

Alex nodded.

"I worry I am ruining Pearl's potential," he said.

"Ruin his potential? How?" Shen Jing gave a weird face.

"I... Pearl was supposed to go through a ritual to evolve or something, but I stopped that from happening. I am starting to believe that is not the right thing," Alex said.

"Hmm, can you bring out Pearl?" Shen Jing asked.

Alex nodded and in bright white light, Pearl came out.

"Hmm... Old man?" Pearl asked when he saw Shen Jing.

"How are you doing, little fellow? Did you miss me?" Shen Jing asked.

"No," Pearl said.

"What?" Shen Jing made a sad face. "Here I thought you would be happy to see me again."

"I am," Pearl said, "but I didn't miss you. I have a brother and mother with me. I don't miss anyone else."

"Mother?" Shen Jing gave a weird look.

"My mother," Alex said.

"Oh," Shen Jing said. "Come here, Pearl."

Pearl jumped into his embrace and Shen Jing pet him a bit. At the same time, he checked Pearl as well.

"Yeah, he's fine. There's nothing to worry about him," Shen Jing said.

"Really? But his cultivation speed has been slowing down recently," Alex said.

"That's just how beasts are. Their cultivation speed is usually slower than humans. Plants have it worse," Shen Jing said.

"So, he's fine?" Alex asked.

"He's fine," Shen Jing said. "Of course, if he can evolve, that would probably increase his speed. But strictly speaking, he doesn't need it right now."

"As long as you get him to evolve before he reaches the Immortal realm, he will be okay."

Chapter 718: Belong

"What's next?" Shen Jing asked Alex to go through the rest of the insecurities he had.

Alex read the next one.

"I worry about my father," Alex said.

"Your father? Where is he?" Shen Jing asked.

Alex shook his head. "I don't know. That's why I worry. He was teleported to a random location along with my mom. While I think he's in the Southern continent because he said he ended up in a place with Desert, I can't be sure," Alex said.

"Well, Southern Continent is the only place that's mostly desert," Shen Jing said. "Is that the only information you have?"

"Well," Alex thought for a second. "He couldn't cultivate either."

"Yeah, that's definitely Southern Continent," Shen Jing said.

Alex couldn't believe that. "The northern section of the Western Continent is also a desert," he said.

"I know," Shen Jing said. "I went there in the last few years. Trust me, that is not where your father went to."

"How do you know?" Alex asked.

"Because Senior used the teleportation formation that was already in place," Shen Jing said. "He made sure to send people to places where they could survive."

"You ever wonder why you didn't appear inside a lake, or in the middle of a pack of beasts? That's because he made sure to put some safeguard when teleporting you all."

"Besides, it is unlikely all 3 of you ended up in the Western Continent. After all, the teleportation formation here is considerably much worse than the other continents, so fewer people got sent here anyway," Shen Jing said.

"Eh? That's the reason why Western Continent didn't get many players?" Alex asked.

"Yes. Either way, your father should be in the southern continent," Shen Jing said.

"That doesn't make me feel very good though," Alex said. "He's still in a new place and probably didn't know what to do. I worry."

"It's just the southern continent, you know," Shen Jing said. "It's not like he was sent to the ocean. Also, hasn't it been 7 or 8 years since he went there? He's probably living a good life right now. You needn't worry at all."

Alex nodded, but he couldn't get rid of the worry.

"Next up," Shen Jing said.

Alex looked at the next one. "I worry that someone will find out about my talent and try to take advantage of me while I'm still weak, maybe even kill me," he said.

"Why do I feel like this is directed at me?" Shen Jing asked.

"What? No, I'm talking about in general," Alex hurriedly explained.

"I'm joking, chill," Shen Jing said with a chuckle. "You don't need to worry about that. After all, who dares do anything to you while I'm around. Besides, I even got the Emperor to be in your favor. Do you still think you have something to worry about?"

"I guess not," Alex said.

"Any more?" Shen Jing asked.

"Well, there is a big one," Alex said as he deliberated a bit.

"What is it?" Shen Jing asked.

"You see, as soon as I became a cultivator, my masters took me in and trained me in the sect. While I was there, I thought of the sects as my home. However, after my master who taught me alchemy passed away, I realized there really isn't anything keeping me tethered to the sect."

"After I came here, I was going to roam around too. I found my mother, but while I like living with her here, I still don't see this place as my home."

Shen Jing listened. "What place do you see as your home then?" he asked.

"The Central continent. Back where my actual home is," Alex said.

"So, what's the problem? What's troubling you?" Shen Jing asked.

"I... I think of it as my home, but none of my parents are there, and everyone I cared about is scattered throughout the world. Even if I manage to go back there... do I still count it as my home?" Alex asked.

"Not only that. Ever since I became a cultivator, I feel like I was destined to cultivate and become someone big."

"If that is the case then, can I still go back to my home? Do I even belong there anymore?" Alex asked. He had been wanting to go back to the Central continent for a long time, back to his home.

However, now that no one lived there, was it still his home?

Shen Jing sighed. "That's one thing I can't help you with. You will have to figure that out yourself," he said.

Alex nodded.

"However, there is something I can tell you. It is fine not feeling like you belong somewhere but still finding happiness there," Shen Jing said.

"Besides, it's not the place you really belong to, it's the people. You don't feel like you belong to your home now because deep inside you can tell that it's no longer your home."

"Your home was a place where your father and mother lived. As soon as they moved to a different location, that location became your new home," Shen Jing said.

Alex fell into thought. Shen Jing was right. He didn't feel like he belonged there because he really didn't belong there anymore.

But that didn't matter. He didn't have to care for something just because he belonged to it, or it belonged to him. There was nothing wrong with wanting to go back to see the Central continent.

After all, it had once been his home. It wasn't anymore, but who cared? He would go because he wanted to, not because he felt like he belonged there.

Alex felt his heart grow significantly lighter after the talk.

"Thank you, brother Shen," Alex said.

"It's okay," Shen Jing said. "Are you done?"

Alex looked at the list and saw that he could figure out the rest on his own. "I'm done," he said.

"Alright, my time to ask questions then," Shen Jing said. "Tell me everything that happened back in the Demon Realm."

Alex nodded and told everything.

"Wait, you were the one that killed the girl?" Shen Jing raised an eyebrow.

"Yes," Alex said. "Why?"

Shen Jing smirked and sent his spiritual sense to thoroughly check Alex. When he reached a certain point, he couldn't help but show a shocked expression.

"What? What's wrong?" Alex asked. He hadn't sensed Shen Jing's sensing, so he didn't know what he was reacting to.

"Well, aren't you full of surprises?" Shen Jing said with a bit of chuckle in his voice.

"What? What surprise?" Alex asked.

"You will find out later on your own," Shen Jing said.

"What? No! Come on, you have to tell me," Alex said.

"Well, you did something that you weren't supposed to until you reached the immortal realm. I don't think I've ever heard of any case where someone did it even in Saint realm, and yet you've done it in True realm," Shen Jing said.

"I wonder though how this could possibly be related to how you killed that girl," Shen Jing thought to himself. "I don't see any connection, but maybe I'm just stupid."

Alex wasn't understanding anything that came out of Shen Jing's mouth. "What are you talking about?" he asked.

"Do you like a mystery?" Shen Jing asked.

"Yes?" Alex said.

"Great. There's a mystery for you to solve once you reach a higher realm," Shen Jing said as he giggled. "I can't wait for you to find out on your own."

"What are you even talking about?" Alex asked. "What did I do?"

"Never mind it now, let's change topics. You learned Sword Qi?" he asked.

Alex nodded.

"Good, so you need to improve your sword intent more if you want to get better. If you do so, you should be able to create your own Sword Aura in a few dozen years," Shen Jing said.

"Sword Aura? That's the next stage?" Alex asked.

"Yes," Shen Jing said. "You're still way far away though. You still need to perfect your Sword Qi. For that, you need to perfect your intent."

"My Intent? Not my Sword Qi?" Alex asked. "I thought I would have to improve my Sword Qi to reach the next level."

"You do, but you also need to improve your Intent. Only when both your Sword Intent and Sword Qi are at the peak level will you form your Sword Aura."

"Then, for the next one, you elevate all three of them, and so on and so on," Shen Jing explained.

"I see. Thank you for explaining that," Alex said.

The two of them talked for the entire night and Alex learned a lot of things. When the sun came up, Alex went to speak to Qin Shan.

"Sect master Qin, thank you for everything you've done to me for the last 2 years," Alex said.

"Sigh, so you're really leaving, huh?" he asked.

"Mother told you?" Alex asked.

"Yes," Qin Shan said. "Well, where are you going?"

"I'm going to be an alchemist for the royal Wei Family. I'm going to be working under the princess," Alex said.

"Wait, wait, wait, what?" Qin Shan couldn't believe what he heard. "How did this happen? I thought you were going to become a Lightsworn."

"Well, things happened and I ended up becoming the person Alchemist for the princess," Alex said. He too couldn't believe how it had happened.

"Here," Alex said as he handed back his Guest Elder badge.

"No, keep it," Qin Shan said. "Use that to remind yourself while you are with the princess that this sect will forever open for you."

"Thank you, Sect Master Qin," Alex said. "And goodbye."

Chapter 719: Pearl's Cleansing

Shen Jing took Alex to the capital that very morning. He left after that but promised to come to visit frequently and even help train him.

If Alex were to fight against Shen Jing, he would need no one else to train against.

The princess stood at the front of the gate with her two male guards that were in the Saint realm.

"Your highness," Alex bowed in greeting when he saw her.

"You are called Yu Ming, right?" She asked.

"Yes, your highness," Alex replied.

"Don't call me your highness, call me Princess Xumei or you can call me Sister Xumei if you want," she said.

"I think I will stick with princess Xumei for now," Alex said.

Xumei wanted to get close to Alex just so she didn't accidentally offend him and bring the wrath of Shen Jing on her family.

"Alright, follow me," she said and walked in.

Alex walked in with her and watched the empty meadow on either side of the walkway as they went towards the Royal Palace.

The servants and workers bowed toward the princess as she walked in. Alex hadn't read up much on the royal family, but he had read enough to know that she was the most important princess in the family.

Behind only the crown prince whose name he didn't know.

As they went in, the princess carefully explained every single aspect of the palace to Alex. Where he could go, where he couldn't go, which side the royal family lived on, where the servant's quarters were etc.

Once she was done explaining, she took him to the back of the palace. The backyard of the palace lay beyond the city walls and was actually at the foot of a tall mountain facing the west.

The backyard itself was beautiful. Even as the princess explained everything, Alex was just in awe over the garden that lay there.

Different types of rare plants of all types of grades grew in there. There was also an empty area at the center with a massive pond where fishes of all types swam.

"This garden is beautiful," Alex said.

"Isn't it?" the princess said enthusiastically. "Our gardener takes good care of it."

Alex wasn't lying. The garden was indeed very beautiful, perhaps the most beautiful he had ever seen.

He didn't see much value in the plants as ingredients as no matter how rare they were, the pill they made weren't important, but aesthetically, they were marvelous.

"I would love to meet this gardener of yours and learn a few lessons of raising plants," Alex said as he remembered that he really needed to learn about botany.

As an alchemist, cultivating plants and beasts for ingredients was supposed to be one of his talents, yet he knew nothing about it.

He didn't even know where the seeds for most of the plants came from. Especially for ones that didn't bear fruit.

"Alright, let me go show you your room," the princess said and took him along. Alex saw his room and nodded to himself.

He couldn't have thought of a better-looking room out there. This was even better than the guest room back at the royal palace of the Crimson Empire.

"If you want to go anywhere else, just let me know," the princess said.

Alex nodded. "Where's the room I'll be working in?" he asked.

"Um... we don't have an alchemy room," the princess said.

"Huh? Where will I be working then, princess?" Alex asked.

"In the guild," the princess said.

"You don't have Royal alchemists or the likes?" Alex asked.

The princess shook her head. "We haven't needed an exclusive alchemist... ever," the princess said. "If we ever need a pill, we simply tell the guild. They have an exclusive agreement with us where we are prioritized if we do request for any pill."

"I see," Alex said. "So I will be working in the guild huh?"

"Well, I'm sure we can prepare a room if you truly require it," the princess said.

"I don't really require it, but it would be better if you do prepare it. After all, I suppose you will be taking in alchemists for the family after I am done here," Alex said.

"I suppose so," the princess said. "Alright, I will talk with old Huo later and tell him. For now, take this."

Alex reached out and grabbed the talisman she handed it to her. Just from looking at the runes, he could tell it was a communication talisman that worked within a few kilometers."

"I will get you a servant. Work along with him to gather ingredients and make pills. If there is anything important, you can message me directly," the princess said.

"Thank you, princess Xumei," Alex said.

"I have some work to do, so I will leave you now," she said and left.

Alex locked the door and entered the room. With a simple scan of his spiritual sense, he realized that there was a formation carved into the room that blocked off senses from outside.

"Good," he thought and spread his spiritual sense to the fullest inside the room.

The guest room he was given had 2 more rooms. One was a bathroom with a big bathtub inside. The other room was a cultivation room with a small Qi gathering formation carved in the center.

"The bathroom first," Alex thought and called out to Pearl.

"Woah, where are we, brother?" Pearl asked as he looked around the room with its massive size and beautiful white walls.

"We're in our guestroom. Make sure to behave here and never speak when you are outside this room, okay?" Alex said.

"Okay," Pearl said. "I miss mother."

"Me too, buddy, but we will go visit her from time to time," Alex said.

"I hope so," Pearl said.

"Right, I don't know when I will have to start my work here, so we should finish our little task before that," Alex said.

"What are we doing?" Pearl asked.

"YOU are doing something," Alex said as he brought out the Divine Devil's fruit.

Shen Jing had already given one to his mother, and now Pearl was getting one too.

Alex prepared a bath, and despite Pearl's insistence on not needing it, he made Pearl get in the bath and cultivate.

After Pearl was comfortable for a while, he finally made him eat the fruit. Not knowing what else he was supposed to do, he made Pearl cultivate even more.

There were numerous cuts on his body as Pearl cultivated, but Alex kept a steady eye on the little furball.

Soon, the white fur on his body was starting to stain black a little.

As he waited, the white fur got even more black in some spots.

Time passed and Pearl kept cultivating. After finally 4 hours of cultivation did the black stuff stop coming out.

Alex had to already close his nose because of the smell, but when he saw that Pearl was done going through Mortal Cleansing, he told him to stop and thoroughly cleaned him.

'That was faster than mine. It probably has to do with age,' Alex thought.

"How do you feel, buddy?" he asked.

"Amazing," Pearl said. "I feel like I can jump really high."

"Is that so?" Alex chuckled. "Alright, let's quickly test how good you are. I need to go work soon."

Chapter 720: Shurin

"Hello, I am Fang Shurin," a young girl barely 15 years old introduced herself to Alex as he walked out of the room.

Alex looked around. "Hello. Have you been waiting for me?" he asked.

"Yes, dear guest. Her Highness, the princess has given me the order to assist you in anything you need," the girl said.

"My name is Yu Ming, you can call me Brother Yu," Alex said. "How old are you, Shurin?"

"I am 18 years old," Shurin said.

"Woah, really?" Alex was surprised. "But you look so young."

"I have lived in the palace for a long time, so I started cultivating from a young age. As such, I ended up looking younger than I really am," she said.

"Hmm," Alex nodded as he heard her. He quickly sensed her cultivation base and was surprised to see that she was on the very of breaking through to the True realms.

"Is there anything you would like me to do?" the girl asked.

Alex thought for a second and quickly pulled out a talisman to write down something.

"These are a list of ingredients. Can you get me as many as you can? You can find me in the guild after you've collected them," Alex said.

"Right away, brother Yu," the girl said and left.

Alex left the palace too. He made his way towards the center of the city where the guilds were.

'Still as packed as ever,' he thought as he looked at the guild. Since it hadn't even been a week since the Formation competition, the city was still packed full of people waiting for the Teleportation platforms to be open before they could leave back.

So, at that time, they were busy roaming the streets and visiting different locations, including the guild.

Fortunately, the guild was massive, so it could easily house the many people that were there.

Alex looked around for a bit, taking in the guild's image as he would be working here for the next 2 years or so.

After checking the guild, Alex made his way to the mission board and looked around for something to make.

As he did, a new mission popped up for an interesting pill. "A pill to increase someone's libido?" he chuckled a little, but he was interested in the recipe himself. He was interested in every new recipe he came across.

Alex took the mission despite it only requiring a 30% Harmony pill and looked for other missions to take. As he searched, he found another mission regarding an antidote and decided to take it.

However, he couldn't. "Huh? I can't take two missions at once?" he was a little surprised. That hadn't been the case back in DawnSpring city.

'Is it because this is a capital? I will have to ask the staff later,' Alex thought and pulled out his badge from the mission board. As he was about to leave, a hand landed on his shoulder.

"Wait!" a voice spoke to him. Alex turned around and saw a man in his 30s with a thick beard as well as a True Earth badge.

"How may I help you, brother?" he asked.

"Did you just take a mission regarding a libido pill?" the man asked.

"Yes," Alex said, a little surprised the man noticed. 'Can other people check what mission I took?' he wondered.

"That was meant for me. Why did you take it?" the man said in an angry voice.

"It didn't have your name on it," Alex said. Usually, if someone wanted a specific alchemist to make them something, they would make sure to name the alchemist in the mission so that only he could take it.

"Well, that's... goddammit! He was supposed to put my name on it," the man said. "Can you return the mission?"

"Uhh... no, I will have to pay a fine," Alex said.

"It's just a little fine. What does it matter?" the man asked.

"Are you going to pay the fine in my stead then?" Alex asked.

"Sure, yeah, whatever," the man said.

Alex shrugged and went on to return to the mission. However, when he did, the mission board gave him a rather weird prompt.

-Forfeiting this Mission will cost you a fine of 460 True Spirit stones-

"What the hell?" Alex said as he looked at the pill. It only asked for a single pill, then why was it asking for 460 spirit stones? It wasn't like he already got the ingredients and wasted it either.

"It's asking for 460 True Spirit stones. Give it to me before I cancel it," Alex said.

"What?" the man said in an exaggerated tone. "How could it— shit! It must be... arghh!"

"So? What do you want me to do?" Alex asked.

The man deliberated for a moment but couldn't say anything. 460 was a lot of Spirit stones that he couldn't force someone to pay and couldn't bring it out himself.

"Alchemist Tang!" A relatively angry voice spoke from behind them.

Alex turned around to see a man in a purple robe look at the middle-aged man.

'That robe... is that the same one as the little girl from earlier?' Alex wondered when he saw the man.

"Why are you still out here? You should be making my pill," the man said.

"Um, brother Lu, there's been a little problem," the man said.

"What problem?" the purple-robed man asked and the man named Tang explained.

"So? Just pay the fee and make my pill," the man said. "You, forfeit the pill right now. I'm in a hurry."

"Alright, give me the spirit stones then. Besides, What are you in a hurry for with such a pill in the middle of the day?" Alex asked.

"You! Do you know who I am?" the man shouted.

"Brother, you shouldn't talk back with him," the man whispered to Alex.

Alex sighed and shook his head. "I'll just go make your pill then. It will be faster that way," he said.

"No, I don't like you. You will not be making my pill," the Lu man said.

"Dammit! Pay me the spirit stones then," Alex said angrily. He was starting to get frustrated too.

"You! You dare talk back to me, I will—"

"Brother Yu," A voice came from far away as Shurin came running towards them.

"Oh hey, what's up?" Alex asked her as she gave a weird eye towards the Lu man before running up to her.

"Here's the ingredients you requested for," Shurin Gave it to him.

"Oh? So quickly?" Alex asked as he looked through the ingredients. There were indeed a lot of the ingredients he asked for.

"It was a request by you, brother Yu. I will have to do it fast no matter how," she said.

"You don't need to be so serious about it. Think of me as a friend," Alex said and looked at their robes.

"Are you guys from the same sect or something? I thought you worked in the royal family," he asked.

"We are disciples of the Royal family," Shurin said. "That makes me wonder, Uncle Lu, what are you doing here?"

"I... I'm just..." he couldn't answer since the answer was so embarrassing.

"Oh, did the princess give you an order too?" Shurin asked with bright eyes.

"The princess... what?" the man named Lu asked.

"The princess. She didn't tell you to meet with brother Yu?" Shurin gave a confused look.

"Um... which princess are we talking about? Your mother?" the man asked.

"Princess Xuemi," Shurin said. "Did she not send you for Brother Yu? He's her guest. Or rather, he's the Emperor's guest and is working under her."

"What?" the man was shocked like he heard the name of god. "Is this... true?"

"Of course," Shurin gave a weird expression. "Did you not know? Why else would you be bothering brother Yu at this time then?"

"I... I'm sorry, brother Yu," the man suddenly fell to the ground in a bow.

"What's happening?" Shurin asked Alex. Alex explained the best he could without saying anything... unnecessary.

"What? A high fee for forfeit?" the girl's face suddenly got angry. "Uncle Lu, are you abusing the royal family's privilege in the guild?" she asked.

"I... I..." the man couldn't say anything.

"I will tell my mother about this today," Shurin said.

"Wait, no, please," the man started pleading but Alex only shook his head.

"Alright, I'm off to make pills. You guys do whatever you think is right," he said and left.