

Chapter 16 Introductions

“Excellent! EXCELLENT!” the madman roared as patted Lex on the shoulders with gusto, shaking him to his very core. Marlo’s cultivation was definitely very high. “I love it when a masochist joins the class! They have so much energy, so much vigor!”

“I’m not a masochist!” Lex quickly defended himself, but Marlo didn’t seem to be paying attention.

“You can stop for today, I have other appointments to keep so I have to close down for now. The next class is on Saturday, I hope I’ll see you there. That’s when the fun really begins. Oh, and all faction and organization members are welcome to join my class except Ultimate Fighting Fortress.” His expression suddenly darkened, and for a moment he seemed lost in thought, but quickly recovered. “So if you are planning on joining someone you should not be worried that coming to me might be a conflict of interest. My class has quite the reputation. In fact, if you pass my class before joining the army you can get recruited directly at the rank of Captain. It’s quite beneficial.”

“I don’t plan on joining anyone at the moment,” Lex said, rubbing his aching shoulders. “And I do plan on continuing your classes. I am very attached to my life, you know, I’d like to keep it if I can.”

Marlo burst into a roaring laughter at Lex’s comment, and gave Lex another pat on the back that sent him flying off the stage.

“That’s the spirit! See you Saturday then. The full self-defense course costs \$1.7 million, you can pay upfront or sign a working clause since you won’t be having an organization sponsor you.” Marlo walked away, still laughing, the floor trembling at his footsteps, with a line of minions following him.

Lex left, ignoring the fact that he had once again ripped his sneakers and tracksuit, thinking of ways he could recruit Marlo as a valet without revealing his identity. He seemed like a very straight forward man, but Lex would have to spend more time with him to figure out his personality completely. It was

currently Thursday morning, so the next class was two days away. It was enough time for him to plan how to try and get closer to the excitable giant.

He returned home and went directly into the shower. It occurred to him that he wasn't hurt at all, and he was only sore where Marlo had patted him, whereas everyone else who had left the session looked considerably harmed. He smiled. Regal Embrace was already impressive, and it would only get better as he raised his cultivation.

The next two days went by quickly. Bastet and Falak still had not made an appearance and no one had used his golden key, so there was no progress there. He had however spent a lot of time planning on what he would take with him when he traveled to the other world for the first time. He didn't want to be too conspicuous so he had prepared a backpack with a first aid kit, a swiss army knife, a flashlight, some rations and a firestarter. He would add more things as he thought of them, and currently he was too poor or unqualified for Spirit Tech that might be useful. He had also spent more time trying to get used to his strength. He exercised for strength control and played video games for delicate control, trying to avoid breaking his controller (that's totally the only reason he pulled an all nighter playing games).

Finally Saturday morning he went back to Marlo's follow up class and surprisingly only two other people from the previous 15 showed up, a young woman Lex hadn't really talked with and surprisingly Larry. Larry was one of those who had been beaten till he passed out, and judging from his behavior before class Lex hadn't expected him to be so dedicated as to come back for another class. But here he was, bruised but smiling and trying to flirt with the woman.

"Lex my good man, good to see you again! I knew you were a tough one when I saw you, unlike all the others who ran away. Come come, let me introduce you. This is Matilda, she cleared her training last time pretty quickly."

"Hello," Matilda said, her tone very formal, as she looked at Lex. It was clear that although Larry had been trying to get closer to her, she didn't want to become too familiar. Matilda was a fair bit shorter than the two of them, and healthier too, but she had a handsome face.

"Is it just us or will more people come?" Lex asked after greeting Matilda, but Larry shook his head.

"I expect more won't join. Honestly, Marlo has a bit of a reputation. His training gets only tougher as it progresses and if you don't have a strong mentality you can't really get through. Most people just want to pass his class because you get better perks from your organization if you do, but passing it is not easy."

"Is that why you're here?" Lex asked. He was slightly curious about Larry now, and it wasn't a bad idea to try and develop a few connections of his own. A potential future army captain wasn't a bad person to know.

"Me? I guess you could just say I'm trying to make the most of my time..." Larry's usually chipper was laced with a tinge of defeat and exhaustion as he said so, but he quickly recovered as if nothing happened. "What about you, my talented fellow? When I left you were still taking quite the beating, I didn't think I'd see you again."

"I just want to learn how to defend myself. I don't know much about the cultivation world, but everything I've heard and seen makes me think it's a very dangerous place."

"INDEED!" came a roaring voice from behind them, followed by the hulking Marlo with his trademark grin. "Life is hard and living is harder. A man must know how to defend himself. A woman more so!"

Compared to last time, when Marlo was dressed casually, this time he came wearing a suit. His hair was properly kempt and he had a clean shave. Though his eyes were still filled with madness, he looked much more civilized.
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"Once again I would like to welcome you to Marlo's Self Defense for new cultivators. Just by being here today, you have proven yourself worthy of the title of cultivators. Just by being here today, you have earned the right to tell me your names. Just by being here today you have earned the right to hear my self-introduction."

Marlo paused and took a look at his three future students, carefully studying each one of their faces as if he was etching them into his memory forever.

"You may have done your own research about me before joining this class, but nonetheless I will tell you a little bit about myself so you know whose hands you will be in in the future." He paused for a moment, looking at his small audience, before continuing with a hint of solemnity in his voice.

“My name is Hanson Marlo Bravi III. The III comes not from my family having predecessors with the same name, but is something I added myself for each time I faced death and emerged victorious. For each time I emerged a new, stronger man.

“The first time was when I was eight years old, and my village was attacked by a pack of jackals that had gone through spiritual awakening. For hours I escaped through the wilderness, sometimes running, sometimes tumbling, carrying a newborn child with me until I eventually ran into an army unit conducting training in the wild. I led them back to my village, only to discover nothing left. Only the child and I survived.” He paused once again, his grin completely gone from his face this time as he looked at his three students in their eyes. He studied their expressions in silence, then he continued.

“The second time was when I was 28 years old, during the Australian Beast tide of 1981. A new Beast Alpha was expanding its territory and many other Alphas were using that opportunity to expand their own territories. I was a member of the Nosso private military at the time, and we were stationed near where the Beast Tide originated. Four days,” Marlo paused again, to give emphasis to his words. “When the Beast Tide emerged our base was overwhelmed and for four days I was stuck in what was a red zone, surrounded by enraged beasts with no knowledge of what was going on as we had lost communication. Out of the entire army base, I was the only survivor. When the UN response team found me, I was hiding in the carcass of an Inner Core level beast that I had killed. At the time I had only just entered the Foundation Realm.”

Larry visibly trembled when he heard Marlo and Matilda’s complexion visibly paled. Lex was also quite shocked; an Inner Core level beast was equivalent to a Golden Core cultivator.

“The third time was during the war of 99 between Navo Corp. and the Pelican Sect in Western Europe. Navo Corp had provoked quite a few people here in the US as well, and I was acting as an escort for a diplomatic mission to France to see if we could potentially ally to put pressure on them, but were ambushed en route. 36 Golden Core experts against a team of 9. That incident later came to be known as The Day of the Red Dawn. Every time a Golden Core expert dies the sky is covered in a red hue by the spirit energy released from the body, and that day the sun rose to a red sky.

“Every time I’ve been closest to death, it was during something unforeseen. It was during something no one could have predicted, but that didn’t change the

fact that any of those incidents could have killed me. That is why a man must know how to defend himself, and how to survive. The world is a tough place and dying in it is the easiest thing to do, it's surviving and living on that's hard."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Please report the problems you have identified regarding the novel and its chapters.

Chapter 17 What is self defense?

Lex found it hard to believe that the giant in front of him could be so profound, but it was exactly that giant's life and his words that gave him goosebumps. Dying was easy, living was hard. At first it was a strange thought, but it reminded Lex of all the struggles he'd ever had in life. He recalled the worst and toughest parts of his life. Although his life up till now was very ordinary, no one could claim there weren't parts of it where he felt very miserable. Living truly was difficult sometimes, but it was worth it. He was ready to go through harder difficulties for an even better life.

"Now one by one, introduce yourselves. Give as much or as little detail as you want, it doesn't matter."

"Ladies first," Larry quickly said as he looked towards Matilda with an honest smile.

Her lips twitched but she controlled her annoyance and focused on Marlo.

"My name is Matilda Ross. I am 22 years old and inherited my cultivation method in my brother's will. I want to continue on this path and not only survive, but also flourish. But first I need to focus on survival, so I am here to learn how to do that."

Marlo gave the woman an accepting nod, his expression still serious. Lex almost found it unusual to see the man without some manic expression.

"I guess I'm next huh?" said Larry with a hint of reluctance. "I have a bit of ambition you could say. I want to do big things, and for that I need a solid start. Going through this class will really help with that so I'm here." He smiled weakly at his fellow students, as if trying to portray a weak determination. "My name is Larry Dershaw," he finished, his volume lowering almost to a whisper, yet its effect was drastic. Marlo's expression changed to that of surprise, as if he had heard something truly unexpected.

After a moment though, Marlo's expression returned to its former serious state, and he made a short comment, "A man can be defeated but he cannot give up. Your journey may be long but every breath you take is a victory against your enemies."

After that all three of them turned to look at Lex, who was slightly distracted. It seemed Larry had a story behind him, and Matilda too for that matter. But thinking about that was for later, right now he had to focus.

"My name is Lex Williams, I am 23 years old and I was only just introduced to the world of cultivation. I don't have any grand ambitions or anything like that. I just feel like the world is very dangerous, and that if I am not prepared for it I won't even know how I died. The difference between what the world is really like and I used to think it was is too big. I want to be better prepared." Lex's words were very simple, and he tried to downplay his life as well as himself so that no one would think anything interesting is going on in it. He thought he had done a good job. The look on Marlo's face, however, said otherwise; he had a knowing smirk on his face as he eyed Lex up and down. It was quite a contrast to how he responded to the previous two, but he made no comments.

Eventually, he addressed all three together. "Matilda, Larry, Lex, the three of you have an admirable will to show up here after last class. You have also demonstrated a knowledge of your current weaknesses, as well as a desire to improve. To me that is admirable, but actions are the best way to communicate. Take these and sign them to officially start your classes. The training period will be a total of three months, during which you are not allowed to miss any classes. If you cannot attend a class or need to miss an activity you will have to inform me prior with a good reason, otherwise it will be deemed as a violation of your contract. I've said this before and I'll say it again, I have a reputation to uphold. Anyone who has attended my class has a 87% better survival rate compared to other cultivators in up to level Blue danger situations. I won't have that number drop because a student is too lazy to complete my training."

Marlo handed the three contracts and gave them time to review them. The contract only had a few main points, first about the payment and the forms acceptable. The preferred method was actually 1 bloodline stone, after which were 5 spirit stones, after which was cash and finally an employment contract if you were unable to pay. It also accepted sponsorships from any organization that might be backing the student. The second clause was that if a student were to miss a single class without sufficient reason he would be immediately expelled and could not claim any relation to Marlo or his self-defense class under penalty of law. The third clause was an unusual one; it stated that so long as a student attended even a single paid class with Marlo, even if they did not continue with the full course, the student was not allowed to join an organization called Ultimate Fight Fortress, and if this clause were to be violated Marlo reserved the right to challenge the student to Legal Trial by Combat (LTC). Lex didn't know what that meant, but a quick search on the Bluebird portal told him it was basically a government sanctioned death fight. Whoever participated could kill the opponent in combat if they wished, suffering no convictions or punishments. The rest of the contract was pretty basic, and covered stuff like Marlo would not be responsible for injuries caused during training etc.

After going through it Lex signed it, only to realize everyone else had already done so and were waiting for him. Finally, once the formalities (signing, setting up payment plans or methods etc.) were completed Marlo brought them back to the arena where 3 minions were waiting for them.

"As of now, for the next three months, we have officially established a relationship as students and as a teacher. Before we begin training practically, I would like to impart some of my experience onto you. The most important thing to teach you is what self defense actually is, and what it looks like for you now, and what it will look like for you in the future.

"Some of you may have an image in your head that we will be learning martial arts, or some form of hand to hand combat, but that is a misconception. While combat skills are absolutely essential, you must realize that combat between cultivators and mortals is very different. Right now you are basically just a slightly stronger mortal, if you will. This is because in the Body Tempering stage there aren't really any cultivation skills you can use. Later on, however, you will learn them and be able to use them. That doesn't, however, mean that right now you won't encounter an enemy that can't use cultivation skills.

"How do you deal with a situation where you encounter an enemy who can use cultivation skills? How do you deal with an enemy who is in the same

realm, but higher level than you? What do you do if you encounter a beast? How do you deal with a hostile mortal carrying a gun? How to survive if you are being targeted by a spirit formation? If you are being poisoned? How to defend yourself when suffering from legal persecution? I will cover the basics on everything I have mentioned so far, and teach you with varying depths how to react in those situations. Everything that is a part of your syllabus is a result of my direct personal experiences and I will do what I can to teach you how to react in those situations. Of course, this is only a beginners course so I will only cover stuff to a certain degree. If you wish to learn to a greater level, you can take up my intermediate and advanced courses later as well."

Lex had to admit, he was fairly impressed by Marlo. The man was extremely professional, and had not let his hysterical tendencies loose during the class so far. It was no wonder he was so reputable.

"Let me ask you all a question. In any given situation, what do you think self-defense looks like?" *innread.com*

The three students looked at one another, before Larry hesitantly answered, "Ensuring your own survival..."

Before Larry could finish his answer Marlo let out a deafening roar "WRONG! Self defense means to kill your opponent as quickly and efficiently as possible! If the source of your danger is dead, then by default you are safe!" Marlo burst into a loud and hysterical laughter after he finished saying.

It was extremely brief, almost as if Lex had imagined it completely, but it seemed as if the minions looked at the three students with eyes full of pity. Lex felt like beating himself up for believing Marlo was professional. The man was a giant child hopped up on a dozen energy drinks. Lex was once again worried for his future.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Please report the problems you have identified regarding the novel and its chapters.

Chapter 18 Preparing for the new World

Once the giant man was done laughing he looked at the somewhat defeated faces of his three new students and grinned.

“Of course, this definition doesn’t yet apply to you, yet. Right now you are weak. The ideal scenario for you right now is to hole up somewhere and steadily increase your cultivation to Qi training at the very least. Even if you go ahead and join an organization they would not put you through any dangerous situation so as to avoid needless casualties, but life is unpredictable. Situations can change quickly. So the question is, if you find yourself in a dangerous situation, what should you do?”

Marlo’s words were phrased as a question but he did not wait for an answer, instead he signaled his three minions who quickly quickly picked up an assorted pile of wooden panels and began putting together what seemed like a maze.

“Your first, and MOST important lesson will begin now. It won’t cover something as mundane as combat. The most important aspect of self defense for you all is to learn to analyze and identify dangerous situations, and quickly map out your best course of actions.” The madman grinned, as was his norm, like a psychopath. “This is always my favorite lesson.”

The three students trembled and the look of pity on the minions faces was blatant now.

It was 7 pm when Lex got home and though it was not so late in the day, Lex could not remember when he had been so exhausted last. He didn’t have the energy to shower properly so he just lay in the bath and began filling it with warm water. He closed his eyes and let his thoughts wander, occasionally appreciating how the water seemed to massage his sore muscles. Yes, his ‘sore muscles’. Marlo had noticed how the minions on the same cultivation level as him didn’t seem to push him much, so he had undergone his training with minions at the 7th stage of Body Tempering. Most of his bruises had already healed on the way home, but when he left Marlo’s arena even his own mother would not have recognized him. Larry wasn’t much better than him. Matilda, to Lex’s great surprise, performed exceedingly well and Marlo had

decided to give her lessons separate from the two boys so that she wouldn't be held back by their level.

Lex was a little annoyed, not at Marlo or his training or anything of that sort. His annoyance was focused on the cultivation novels he'd read. In just a few lines the novels declared the MC would train for months or years on end, always pushing himself to the limit beyond any of his peers. It seemed so easy on paper. Yet the novels never missed the gritty details of how difficult training was. It never mentioned the feeling of constantly being out of breath, of feeling extreme heat, of hearing your own heart beat so loud it was hard to focus on anything else. The novels never mentioned how sticky it felt to be in sweaty clothes all day, or how draining it was not just physically but also mentally. Lex kept complaining to himself until he slowly drowsed away in the tub.

He was woken up with a start when he heard his phone ring! He hadn't even realized when he'd fallen asleep and now his bathtub was overflowing, flooding his bathroom. Quickly he turned off the water and unplugged the bathtub drain to let some of the water flow out. After rubbing his eyes and trying to rouse himself a bit, he reached for his phone. It was a call from his youngest sister.

"Hey Moon," he answered in a teasing voice, "is it snowing in the Sahara? How did you remember to call me?" His youngest sister, who was probably 16, or 15 (he wasn't sure, he didn't remember exactly) wasn't actually called Moon, it was just a nickname she had since she was young. *innread.com*

"Ha ha very funny!" Moon answered in an annoyed voice. "I wouldn't be calling if you weren't causing trouble everywhere. When are you coming to visit? You know mom and dad are very angry at big sister Liz but she won't listen to them about anything so they just spend all their time complaining to me. You know she only listens to you. When are you coming home? I can't take much more of this, I'm telling you! If you don't come home soon I'm going to tell mom we should all visit you in New York!"

"No, don't!" Lex didn't know whether to laugh or cry. He had a bit of an unusual family, his parents were archeologists, but not the kind that worked in one place. They worked with various groups and had to travel all over the world for their projects, as such his childhood was filled with traveling all over the world and he was mostly homeschooled. When he was younger he enjoyed it quite a bit, but eventually he got tired of constantly traveling so when he left for college he had become completely independent. His two

younger sisters however stuck with his parents, even though he had offered to let them live with him and attend school or college here. His older sister Belle also chose to stay with their parents. Anyway, it had been a few years since he stopped traveling with his family and now whenever they visited they would nitpick everything he did or didn't do. It was best to meet them outside of New York.

"I'm a little busy with work, it's not easy to get a leave. I'll visit you guys as soon as I get the chance," Lex tried to appease his little sister and spent some time catching up with her. Moon was mostly just calling to let him know that the family was missing him, but everyone was a little too proud to admit it. He promised he'd call everyone and take some time to catch up.

Eventually he hung up and looked at the time. It was 10:30 pm, he'd slept for around 3 hours in the tub but already felt much better. He wasn't at 100% but he wasn't completely drained like he was when he got home. He ordered himself some pizza and sat on a table and thought about the new world he would be visiting soon. He would be able to use the Golden Ticket again on Tuesday and he planned on using it the same day. His preparations were almost complete but his training today made him realize that he should at least carry some kind of weapon with him in case of an emergency. Buying Spirit Tech was out of the question, but he should be able to get some kind of weapon from Marlo during his next class on Monday. Marlo had mentioned that his students could buy gear from him at a discount if they wished as he was also a certified trader. A surprising thing Lex learned about Marlo was that the eager giant was very industrious. He ran multiple businesses and side hustles. Today his formal attire was not because of class but because he had arrived directly from some kind of meeting. He could also use that opportunity to "accidentally" drop a hint that Lex was expecting some kind of fortuitous encounter and use that to build some kind of trust with the giant. He would use that as a foundation to somehow slip the giant a key to enter the Inn. He hadn't worked out the details yet but he had a vague plan.

"Mary, can you tell me what the process of connecting to another world is like? How will I choose another world and what will the connecting process be like?"

"Sure," said Mary cheerily as she appeared in the air in front of him. "When you tear the Golden Ticket you will get a list of a few habitable planets within the Inn's current range, with some basic details about the planet such as the spiritual energy density, what kind of environment to expect etc. As for the details of what kind of beings inhabit the planet, you will have to find out for

yourself when you visit. You can however make guesses, such as if the planet has temperatures and spiritual energy similar to Earth you might find humans, whereas if the conditions are drastically different then it's almost impossible to find humans."

"There are humans on other planets?" Lex asked in surprise. Honestly he was expecting some kind of aliens. Humans were a species that evolved on Earth (as far as he knew) so unless Earth colonized these planets he was honestly not expecting to see more humans. Bastet and Falak also supported his theory that he would be able to find intelligent aliens on other planets.

"Checking authority...surprisingly, you have enough authority to receive this information as it pertains to guests you can receive. In this universe, as long as any species exists for even a moment, the foundations of its existence become a core of the universe. That means, anytime an environment that can support the existence of that species occurs the laws of the universe naturally propagate its natural birth and creation. That means humans, for example, exist on multiple planets across the universe. However, just because the planet can support the life and existence of humans does not mean all humans have the same traits.

"Humans born on a planet with higher gravity will eventually evolve to adapt to it. Humans born on a planet that has 99% of its surface covered in water will evolve to be able to breath under water. There are numerous examples of this, which means there are various subspecies of humans across the universe. In fact, to you it seems like you are the normal version of humans, but that may not be necessary.

"Of course, this applies to other races as well. So across the universe you will encounter different versions of some intelligent species, and it is difficult to guess which will be the most common species to be your guests. This may also sometimes lead to conflicts between guests of different species, this is something you need to be aware of and prepare for."

"Got it," said Lex. For now his options were limited so there wasn't really anything to prepare.

"The range of planets available for you depends primarily on your cultivation, the higher the cultivation the greater the range. Once you select a planet you will be transported to that planet, and will act as an anchor for the Inn to develop a connection to that planet. The connection building process may take anywhere from 1 day to 1 month to even a year, depending on how far it

is. In the beginning, however, the connection process shouldn't be longer than a week at most as your range is currently very small."

Lex nodded, relieved that the process wouldn't take too long. Just to be safe though, he should also think of an excuse to give to Marlo in case he missed a class.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Please report the problems you have identified regarding the novel and its chapters.

Chapter 19 New Planet: Vegus Minima

Monday morning Lex arrived at Marlo's apartment bright and early. He lived in a penthouse downtown Manhattan so it was easy to find. They were all supposed to gather here and then travel together to the location for their next training session. It had to do with surviving in the wild, or something of vaguely that nature as Marlo had not been specific with the details. Lex however arrived an hour earlier than the designated time as he wanted to talk with Marlo alone before the other arrived.

Lex was let in by someone he could only assume to be a butler, and escorted to where Marlo was resting. He found Marlo sitting comfortably in a pair of shorts and a T-shirt, with his eyes closed, his feet in a bucket of what Lex could only assume was some kind of elixir and having his temples rubbed by a rather beautiful woman. She was an older lady, clearly, but her flawless skin and indifferent temperament made it difficult for Lex to guess her age. Could this be Marlo's wife?

"You're early. I'm assuming that's on purpose?" Marlo asked, though he still kept his eyes closed. His tone and voice were rather normal, which was something Lex was completely not used to, but he did not let this fool him into thinking the giant would not switch to his excitable personality at a moment's notice. He still had to be careful in what he said.

“Yes, there were a couple of things I needed to talk to you about.” He glanced at the lady massaging him, wondering if it was okay to talk in front of a stranger, but she did not seem like she was going anywhere.

“Don’t be shy,” Marlo said when he noticed Lex pausing. “This is my foster mother, she’s treating an old wound of mine. You can say what you want in front of her, trust me she doesn’t care.”

The woman continued with her massage, completely indifferent to being talked about, as if to prove Marlo’s point. Lex was shocked. Marlo was already in his 60’s, something Lex knew from when Marlo introduced himself, yet his mother didn’t look old at all. In fact, Marlo, despite looking very fit and energetic, looked like the older one of the two.

Lex suppressed his surprise and focused back on the matter at hand. “I need some kind of a weapon, something I can use in case I encounter some trouble, and I need it today.”

“Oh?” Marlo exclaimed in an amused tone. “Expecting some kind of trouble are we? That was quicker than I expected, if I’m being honest. When I saw how committed you were to taking a beating in our first class I had a feeling you’d be interesting. It’s rare to see someone so committed without adequate motivation spurring them.”

Marlo paused for a moment, as if in thought, but then continued, “Getting a weapon shouldn’t be a problem, it all depends on your budget. That’s the great thing about America, eh? It’s as if people will almost be offended if you don’t buy a weapon every now and then. What are you thinking? A gun? A dagger? A rocket launcher?” Marlo’s casualness while discussing such matters brought a new kind of pressure on Lex. This guy was way too cool right? Selling a rocket launcher as soon as someone asked for a weapon?

“A blade, or something quiet and that won’t attract too much attention. While you’re at it, some discrete kind of body armor would also be nice if it’s available.”

“Anything else? Tactical equipment of some kind? Night Vision goggles?”

“No no that’s enough. Furthermore, I might not be able to make it to the next class. Although it’s unlikely, I thought I should give you a heads up anyway in case I’m not able to make it back in time.”

Marlo chuckled, as if Lex had told him a great joke.

“I’ll keep that in mind. I’ll be looking forward to your return. It’s always disappointing when a student disappears, especially an entertaining one.”

Lex could almost hear the excitement in Marlo’s voice being suppressed. It was clear the giant wanted to burst into his trademark laughter but was keeping himself from doing so. It seemed no matter the age, everyone had to behave in front of their mothers.

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Tuesday Lex found himself resting in a lawn chair at the Inn with Velma serving him breakfast early in the morning. The food at the Inn really was better than getting home delivery, Lex had discovered, and he enjoyed it every opportunity he got. Occasionally he would still crave the junk food from Earth, and though that could also be made by Velma, there was just something special about home delivery.

That was not the focus though for now. Right now Lex was waiting for the Systems notification that he could reuse the Golden Ticket. He was dressed in a tracksuit with a synthetic spirit armor under his shirt, and next to him was his backpack. Strapped to his left leg was a military knife with a spirit formation engraved into it that would allow it to heat up when used, making it easier for it to pierce and slice through things. The knife cost him a heavy \$30,000 but that was nothing compared to the \$400,000 that the armor cost. The armor could block basic attacks from an early Qi training cultivator, and was great at blocking sharp attacks below that level. He also kept enough rations to survive for a week. Just to be safe, he also bought himself two bottles of Botlam Dew, in case he got injured. Those he left in the System inventory as they could be stored there. He had already put on the Bathroom Slippers, the item that would protect him from environmental damage when traveling to a new planet in case he forgot to equip it when he left. His Fancy Monocle had its database further updated using the Bluebird Portal, and he had already equipped that as well. This would be the first time he would be traveling to another world, he would take all the precautions necessary.

Finally, after a few hours, he received a System Notification:

Host can now use the Golden Ticket!

Instantly a Golden Ticket appeared in his hand and, after appreciating its beauty for a moment, he tore it. Similar to last time the pieces started to shine and disappear, but different from last time a panel appeared in front of him with two names on it.

Planets Available:

Planet: Vagus Minima

Planet Rating: 1 Star

Planet Distance: 3 Sectors

Planet Environment: Similar to Earth

Planet: Helios

Planet Rating: 3 Stars

Planet Distance: 2 Sectors

Planet Environment: Extremely hot!

Planets Connected:

Planet: Earth

Planet Rating: 0.8 Stars

Planet Distance: 0 Sectors

Planet Environment: Being from Earth, if you still need to read this then you should give up the System and eat tofu at home

Lex's lips twitched. The System could never let a serious matter stay serious. But he ignored the comment and asked Mary, "What is this Star rating?"

"The Star rating is the cultivation environment on the planet. Earth's environment has been greatly damaged for some reason and now can only allow cultivators upto a certain level to grow. A 1 Star rating is the average star rating for a planet, while a 3 Star rating means that the planet accommodates certain biomes that contain extremely precious materials that can be considered rare treasures. It also has a higher average spirit level and

can allow cultivators to grow to a higher level. For reference, the Star level of the Inn is at 1 Star currently.”

Lex nodded, currently he could not sense spirit energy so he could not compare but he did always feel the environment at the Inn was better than on Earth. He returned his attention to the list and looked at his options. The decision seemed pretty easy for now. Choosing Helios seemed dangerous, not only because of the environment but also because he was more likely to encounter higher leveled cultivators ergo he would encounter more danger.

Without any further hesitation he put on his backpack and decisively selected Vagus Minima. He was enveloped in a bright, warm light and then disappeared. When he reappeared he found himself on a small hill with dark clouds covering the sky so he couldn't really see much. The weather, although a little windy, seemed normal and the air fresh. It seemed he wouldn't need the Bathroom Slippers.

While he was looking at his environment and taking everything, his Fancy Monocle instantly flashed “Warning!” in big bright letters.

“Threat identified! Exact species: Unknown! Closest identifiable match: Zombies!”

“WHAT?!” blurted Lex, but before he had time to process what the Fancy Monocle told him, a swarm of zombies appeared before him! They were heading straight for him, and their numbers were not low!

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Please report the problems you have identified regarding the novel and its chapters.

Chapter 20 Zombie Slayer

Lex panicked and jumped backwards as fast as he could, quickly transitioning into a run. The hill was covered in tall grass and randomly growing bushes which made it hard for him to run, not to mention the dark making it difficult for him to see. After running for a few moments when he looked back he noticed

that the zombies were moving pretty slowly, and he had opened up a gap between himself and the swarm.

Now, at a distance, he calmed down a little from his initial panic and his brain started working again. Instantly his thoughts went back to the training he had received from Marlo during their first official training. He had to assess the situation and quickly determine the best course of action for himself. He was in an unknown environment, with hostiles incoming, and he did not know their strength or numbers. The terrain on the hill made it difficult for him to see and move, which admittedly also hindered the zombies, hopefully, but it also prevented him from seeing them coming towards him. He also didn't know if all zombies were all slow as the ones chasing him, or if there were any faster ones. He had to...

A hand suddenly gripped his ankle and Lex let out an involuntary scream in fright! He looked down to see a zombie with only an upper torso lying in the grass. With its arm that had gripped him, it was pulling itself closer to bite onto his leg! Lex let out another scream and kicked the zombie on its head, but the zombie's head was harder than he expected and he tripped instead! He started panicking again as he fell, and when he turned to look at his leg he was horrified to find the zombie barring its ugly teeth and chomping down towards his leg! He was frozen in horror! There was too little time, there was nothing he could do!

Then...then nothing. The zombie tried to bite his leg but couldn't break through his skin! In that moment Lex was flooded with relief, which was instantly followed by wrath! Without any hesitation he drew the knife strapped to his leg and stabbed the zombie in the skull, instantly killing it. Lex pulled his leg free to observe to see if there was a wound, but all he saw was a hole torn in his tracksuit pants and his leg covered in dirty saliva. That was close, he didn't intend to risk another bite to see if his skin's defense kept up. He had to find his way to a clearing, this tall grass was an excellent place for zombies to hide!

The system that had been quiet so far gave out a notification:

Sudden Quest: Kill 20 zombies before returning to Midnight Inn!

Quest status: 0/20 zombies killed

Quest rewards: 1000MP

Quest failure punishment: none

Lex scoffed and without wasting any time got up and started running again, vigilant this time for any surprise visits from zombies. He liked getting MP but right now he wasn't willing to take any risks. He kept looking in the distance to see if he could find any signs of habitation, so many zombies definitely meant there was or at least used to be a human settlement nearby. And indeed, after he actively started looking for signs he noticed houses in the distance.

Lightning flashed in the sky, followed by a clap of thunder. It seemed like it was going to rain soon, and the sound from the rain should cover the sound of him running, but his visibility would be reduced even further. He should...

His foot fell into a pothole he missed in the darkness and he tripped again. Suddenly Lex felt like forgiving every clumsy character in a horror movie he had ever seen, he was not much better!

"Focus!" he told himself and picked himself back up, ready to run again, only to freeze. Three zombies slowly walked out in front of him from some bushes, if he hadn't tripped he would have run right into them without realizing. He turned to look behind him to see if he could find a way to run around the zombies, but although he could not see any figures he could hear zombies moving in the dark.

He felt conflicted, should he go try and fight the zombies or look for a different route and risk running into even more of them, when he remembered one of Marlo's lessons flashed in his mind, "Hesitation means death!". He turned to look at the zombies with a look of determination. He didn't really need to kill them, just bypass them. In a swift motion he took off his backpack and threw it at the zombie closest to him. The zombie was momentarily blinded by the incoming backpack, and then stumbled backwards into the zombie behind when it was hit. Lex took advantage and bolted, grabbing the backpack with his free hand and swung it hard at the final zombie, knocking it over. He took the opportunity to stab the zombie that had fallen down in its head, and quickly ran past the other two that were starting to reorient themselves.

The entire interaction from when Lex saw the zombies to when he escaped took maybe ten seconds, but Lex's heart was beating as if he had just ran a marathon. He was feeling a mix of fear, excitement and success. But he had only a moment to enjoy the feeling as he noticed more bushes in his path shaking, as if something was trying to go through them. There was no time to waste.

He started running towards the buildings at full speed, this time keeping an eye on his footing as well as the obstructions in his path. At this rate he would be able to reach the buildings in a few minutes. As he got closer he noticed a large, broken fence behind which seemed to be roads. It appeared he was in a park. He grinned, he was almost out. Then he came to a screeching halt. Of course his luck couldn't be so perfect. From behind a tree in his path a zombie stepped out and looked at him, as if observing him. This zombie was larger than the ones he had seen before, and its actions seemed to be deliberate instead of instinctual like the previous ones. It was hiding behind a tree, waiting for him, instead of stumbling towards him like the rest, and even now it was holding back its instincts by just standing there and observing him.

Lex instantly decided to treat this zombie as if it were stronger than the others, and smarter too. This was definitely an upgrade in danger, but Lex couldn't afford to wait. He had to deal with this zombie in its path right now, lest the ones behind him catch up and surround him.

Like last time, Lex took off his backpack in one swift motion and threw it towards the zombie to distract it. But the tactic didn't work, the zombie dodged the backpack and let out a viscous growl as it lurched at Lex. The fight began instantly. Lex did his best to dodge all of the zombie's attacks as he couldn't afford to get scratched, while the zombie blocked all of Lex's attacks with its limbs. With Lex's strength he should have been able to cut through a normal zombie, but the blade would get stuck every time he hit bone.

They had only a few exchanges, but every moment Lex felt the pressure building up. If more zombies caught up he would be dead! There's no way he could fight an entire swarm, and this particular zombie was fast enough that if Lex tried to run he would instantly be caught.

A dilemma! How should he solve it? What should he do? Lex tried to think of solutions but all his focus was on dodging the zombie, how was he supposed to do anything else?

After a couple more attempts at stabbing the zombie failed, Lex made up his mind. He didn't think about it, he didn't plan it, but instinctively he knew that he couldn't afford to wait any longer and had to take a risk if he wanted to escape.

He grabbed the dagger with all his strength as he eyed the zombie, waiting for its next attack. When the attack came, instead of dodging, Lex lunged at the zombie so that its claw would fall on his chest where his synthetic armor could

help block the blow, and used all his strength to stab the zombie through the eye. The dagger stabbed the zombie but at the same time Lex felt its claw smash his chest, blowing the air right out of his lungs and throwing him in the distance. *innread.com*

Pain! Sharp pain shot through his chest and he instantly knew that he had broken at least a few ribs. He summoned a bottle of Botlam Dew and drank it, hoping to quickly heal. Much to his chagrin he didn't instantly feel a warm feeling in his chest or his ribs healing, like he read in the novels, but right now he didn't have the time to think about it. He looked at the zombie to find it lying motionless in the ground, his knife sticking out of his skull. With great difficulty he picked himself up, pulled out the knife, picked up his bag and limped towards the city.

He had to hide as quickly as possible, he was not cut out for this zombie slaying business.

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