

## Innkeeper 191

The Innkeeper

Chapter 191: Fenrir

Tuning into the piano music being played at the Midnight manor, Lex slowly rubbed his fingers together as he listed down the pros and cons of Protector D, the pup. The pro was obvious. Since it was a newborn pup, Lex could train it from birth, which would mean that loyalty was not an issue. After all, dogs were extremely loyal. But the con was also fairly obvious. The whole point of having a protector in the first place was to provide security, but if the protector was even weaker than Lex, then its position would be pointless. While it had limitless potential, and could benefit Lex far in the future, it would not help Lex from any troubles today or tomorrow.

Basically, Lex's issue was boiled down to only two factors. He could choose immediate strength and questionable loyalty, or eventual strength but assured loyalty. It was... surprisingly difficult to choose. Hmm, but tomorrow, or the days that followed, wouldn't matter if he could not live past today. He had to deal with his immediate protection first.

Lex opened up his system and investigated what kind of protection he could purchase directly from the system, as this should help him decide. Fortunately, because of his increase in authority, he had more options available to him. One of the options, though very expensive, immediately caught Lex's eye. While this would not provide an immediate solution, it was still very quick.

He scanned his Inn and found the Sovereign Galactic turtle sleeping in its shell near the greenhouse. A quick scan showed him that the turtle did not have a breakthrough to a higher realm, and had only increased its cultivation level within the Golden Core realm. This was good news, as Lex would not have been able to wake it up otherwise since a breakthrough like that would put it into a very deep slumber.

Teleporting directly to the turtle, Lex directly woke it up by knocking on its shell like a guest, knocking on a door.

After a few tries, the sleepy turtle eventually brought out its head to investigate what was going on.

"Hey turtle, if I raise the effectiveness of the greenhouse and give you a cutting of a Delinquent Viper Vine, how quickly can you raise it to maturity?"

The turtle was confused by the question, mostly because it did not know the name of most of the plants he worked with. Lex showed him a picture and, after considering for a while, gave an answer Lex found acceptable.

With a heavy heart, Lex spent 5 million MP, leaving him with only 4,780,000 MP, and purchased a cutting of a Delinquent Viper Vine. He then spent another 100,000 MP upgrading the Greenhouse to the maximum amount his authority would allow.

With both of those tasks done, Lex handed the cutting to the turtle and said,

"This is your immediate priority for now and everything else can be taken care of later. Plant this in the Greenhouse and grow it as quickly as you can. I'm counting on you."

With that, Lex disappeared back to his room, as he had a decision to make. The turtle let out a tired sigh and slowly stood up, completely unaware that Little Blue was sleeping on its shell. Just like that, the gardener woke up to the unusual sight of the baby whale sleeping on a giant turtle that was walking across the greenhouse.

Then he noticed all the overgrown plants and cried out, "my art!" He quickly took out a pair of shears and began trimming them where he could, to try to reclaim what had been lost of his artwork. The gardener had been trying so hard to create his own art using the plants. If taken care of properly, when they grew up according to his desires, they would become a display worthy of the Inn. But somehow, something always got in the way! The gardener kept cutting with tears running down his face, unaware that wherever he tears would drop, new plants would start to grow and... ruin his artwork.

Back in his room, Lex did not delay any further and selected his protector before he ended up changing his mind. A blindingly bright light flashed in front of his eyes, and when it disappeared, it left him with a pup before his eyes.

A white and black dog, one that Lex assumed was a husky, lay before Lex, sleeping soundly. The reason Lex assumed, and was not sure that it was a husky, was because... the pup was as big as a grown horse! Even as a mortal... he was afraid of what would happen if this dog tried to give him a hug, or tackled him with love. Who the heck would train this massive puppy about where to relieve itself?

He felt a headache coming on, but regardless of what happened, his choice was made. He could not allow a being that was much stronger than him to stay in the Inn permanently. Regardless of how loyal it might be at the start, there was no guarantee that with time, it would not have a change of heart.

With this puppy, though, Lex could train it well, and provide it with the best resources to help it grow. Best of all, the turtle would help him grow the Delinquent Viper Vine. Although it was very expensive, at full maturity it could grow up to one level above the Nascent realm. Furthermore, it normally lived underground and could cover an area of up to 20,000 acres! The best part was, this vine could be controlled directly by Lex via the system! He could even pass the control over to Mary! Over time, according to the system's information, he could nurture the vine's spirit so that when it formed, it was completely loyal to Lex!

Of course, it would not immediately reach that realm, but the turtle promised to speed it up as much as possible. Until then, Lex would have to get by with using the Fruit knife. This was a dangerous move for Lex, but he was betting on the fact that there would be a short lull in terms of guests after the games. This got in the way of some of Lex's plans, but it wasn't a big deal to spend some time at the Inn and just concentrate on improving it in the meantime.

Anyway, now Lex turned his attention to something very, VERY important. He had to name the puppy. Somewhere deep inside, he felt a calling to inherit his place as an MC and name the dog Little White, but could not find it in himself to name the dog so casually.

He scanned the pup once to learn more about it first.

Name: None

Age: 0

Sex: Male

Cultivation Details: Mortal

Species: Dog

Midnight Inn Prestige Level: 1

Bloodline: Fenrir 100% purity

Condition: The dog has been injected with a powerful sleeping and priming agent, making it susceptible to bloodline theft. If left alone, it should recover on its own in a day.

Remarks: You have probably made a powerful enemy somewhere in the universe by stealing this dog. Lol, get rekt.

Of course, Lex made an enemy somewhere in the universe, but he couldn't care less. How would that person ever track Lex down?

Lex rubbed his hand over the massive pup's head and looked at it fondly. He had no idea what a 100% purity Fenrir bloodline meant, but he liked the sound of it. Henceforth, he would be called Fenrir.

\*\*\*\*\*

As is the way with these things, far away somewhere in the universe, a massive wolf stared at an empty cage with red eyes. It took it 1 million years to finally breed a purebred Fenrir, the source for the final ingredient to evolve its own Superior Lykaios bloodline. Yet, as he was preparing for the extraction ceremony, the pup disappeared from right in front of its eyes. How was it possible for the pup to disappear before his very eyes, in his own private domain?

The wolf searched its domain for the intruder using its senses, but it was no use. The most frustrating part was that while giving birth to the pup, its mother, which had long been the subject of its various experiments, finally died. Originally, the wolf did not care, but now he was left without a mature breeder.

The wolf turned its eyes to another cage which held a similarly sleeping dog, the original pup's sister. At least he did not need to start from scratch this time. A 99% purity whelp like this would greatly increase his chance to breed a 100% one again. It needed to raise this new breeder to maturity, which would no doubt take a while, but at least it didn't start from scratch.

More importantly, it needed to figure out how the original pup disappeared, and how to prevent any future pups from disappearing. It would never repeat its mistake again.

## The Innkeeper

### Chapter 192: Fanatics

While Fenrir was currently sleeping in Lex's room, he wanted to create a real home for it. He looked at its thick coat and immediately knew where it should live. Since it was a newborn, Lex would not be leaving it alone for now, but in the future, its home would be near the peak of Midnight Mountain. Lex made a few quick alterations and a small, yet hidden cave appeared near the peak of the mountain. He left the cave empty for now, as he planned on designing it based on Fenrir's personality, but carved the pup's name into the wall. He wanted to ensure that the cave would not easily be located by his guests, so he also moved all the trails coming even close to this location.

But as much as Lex wanted the pup to live in its own home, it was likely that it would be living with Lex for a while so he needed to rearrange his own apartment. Of course, Lex could have some of the AI take care of the pup, but since he was nurturing it to be absolutely loyal to Lex himself, he would have to spend a considerable amount of time with it. There were no shortcuts in this regard. Lex purchased a massive doggie bed and placed it near his own, and then bought a collection of chew toys. Lex added a new room to his apartment which would be keeping all the dogs' things temporarily. Something this big would definitely consume a lot of space.

He also wished he had some kind of guide or manual about this breed of dogs, and even checked the system for something like that, but had no luck finding anything of the sort. He would need to keep an eye out for an expert on beasts so he could ask him some questions, such as, what was he supposed to feed the dog? Was a dog like this still allergic to chocolate? Because, to be honest, Lex had a lot of chocolate in his apartment. His excuse was that he left some on his guest's pillows to improve their experience, but he had been munching on it every chance he got. But for now, he had done everything he could regarding the dog.

With the rewards finally handled and the event finally over, Lex could now turn his attention to a matter he had been putting off, which was meeting Remy Lavern and learning more about this secret society. Personally, he didn't think it was such a big deal, even as far as prompting the system to give him a quest regarding it.

Without delaying the matter any longer, Lex teleported from his room to the lake where the young man seemed to be reading a book by the water. Surprisingly, the book was in Japanese. It must have been given to him by Akihiko. The two seemed to have become decent friends over the course of the games.

"I see you seem to be getting along with Akihiko," Lex said, as he came up and sat beside Remy.

"Yes, Akihiko-san is surprisingly wise for someone so young. I have learnt much from him." Suddenly Lex realized that this man who looked very young might actually be very old, but maintained his appearance due to cultivation. On the other hand, despite his vigor and good health, Akihiko was a human mortal in his fifties, and so naturally looked like an old man. Judging people by their appearance, despite the old adage not to do so, was a habit that Lex would have to overcome.

Lex scanned him, to learn a little more about this man who prompted a quest.

Name: Remy Lavern

Age: 9999

Sex: Male

Cultivation Details: ???

Species: Atila-Morpher

Midnight Inn Prestige Level: 1

Remarks: Very literally the slippers on his feet are worth more than you, so scam him like a call center based out of a basement

Ah, yet another old geezer in disguise. But what in the world was an Atila-Morpher? He looked human, and if he were hiding or altering his appearance, the Host Attire would have detected it.

"Mortality and short age bring a perspective to time many cultivators lack," Lex replied to Remy's comment about Akihiko's wisdom. "I am curious though, what would someone like him have to teach someone like you? Your lives must be extremely different from one another."

"That's also what I thought, at first at least. But the details can vary, pursuits can vary, even desires can vary, but the pattern remains the same. He took the experiences of his short life and superimposed them upon mine. The lessons he learnt in a year, I could not even learn in a thousand."

"He must be a wise man, then."

"It is a tragedy that the line between wisdom and idiocy is so thin. No matter what I say, Akihiko-san refuses to cultivate. Why would anyone willingly forsake a better and longer life?"

"Everyone has a story, he must have his reasons. I am more interested in hearing about you, though. I hope you've been enjoying your stay."

"Heh, I just had the easiest breakthrough of my entire life and saved thousands of years of work, so how could I be anything but great?" Remy asked with a massive grin on his face. "At first, I was only considering this place because of the ease of teleportation, not to mention the phenomenal entertainment, but after that breakthrough, I'm convinced. Our base can be in nowhere other than here. That's not to mention at all, what place could be safer than here? I saw with my own eyes how that young chap Ragnar stayed in line. If even someone like him behaved, what else do I have to worry about?"

"Are you so sure?" Lex asked, amused. "I have no problem with it, so long as all your members follow the rules, but this is a public place and I have many guests. It is not really a good idea to have this as a base for a secret society. That's not to mention at all the very fact that you and I are having this discussion. Shouldn't you be hiding the fact that you want to host your society here instead of blatantly telling me?"

"I doubt I could keep secrets from you," Remy said very casually, "and I'm sure if we had any secret meetings here, you'd eventually find out. The point is not to keep the secret from you, but to get your help keeping the secret from everyone else. Besides, isn't this being a public place the perfect disguise? Even if our members come often, with such a diverse clientele, no one will pay extra attention to us."

Lex raised his eyebrow. What Remy said did make sense, in a way. Lex felt like he was insisting on using video game logic, but since he was fulfilling a quest, who was he to stop him?

"So then, what would you like to do? I doubt simply renting a room for a meeting is all you had in mind."

"If only things were so simple. You see, the first step in hosting the society would be distributing the golden keys to the few members of my organization. The problem is, some of them are in other galaxies and I do not have the time to spare to travel for so long just to distribute keys, as I have a job. So, while I've already had keys sent to the ones within my reach, if possible, the first thing I would like you to do is distribute the keys."

This request by Remy was extremely reasonable, based on the premise that Lex could teleport people across the universe. Unfortunately, he could not actually freely teleport wherever he chose, and totally depended on the location of the planets connected to his system.

"Mary, is there any way I can control what planets the Inn connects to?"

"Well, your authority has increased significantly from when you started. If you get some item from the planet, it might be possible to target it specifically. It would still depend on how far it is, though, from the regions the Inn normally starts searching from.

"How can I find these people?" Lex asked, to which Remy scratched his head.

"Would their names and descriptions work?"

Lex only stared back at Remy as if he were an idiot. Let alone the whole universe, there were billions of people on any given planet, many of whom would share a name. How were those two details good enough in any capacity? Even if Lex were really as powerful as everyone believed, that was still too much, right?

"Some kind of personal item will suffice," Lex said, finally.

"Eh, yeah I guess that's fair. I'll see if I can get my hands on anything like that. I guess sending them the keys will have to wait. Now, onto my second request. The thing is, the purpose of our society is very specific, and we require a certain kind of environment to carry out our activities, so..."

As Remy began outlining what he needed, Lex started to get worried. Was he about to host... a society of BDSM fanatics?

The Innkeeper

Chapter 193: Employees

In a relatively remote corner of the Inn, far away from any of the main attractions, Lex built a cabin. The cabin itself wasn't too large, with 3 individual bedrooms and one living room that also had a kitchen in it. If anything, the unique part of this cabin was the secret basement. The entrance to the basement was completely hidden and could not be detected, as arranged by Lex, by using his powers, so that if Remy ever needed to bring someone else into the cabin, they would never detect the opening.

A vertical ladder from the opening led into the first room of the basement was just one that led to four other rooms. This is where the real magic of the Inn shone, as building the specifications of those rooms would require extensive engineering and labor, along with expensive and rare materials. Yet Lex was easily able to isolate the unique environments in each room.

The first room was completely empty except for a small pool of lava right in the middle. The second room was completely empty, except that it was -100 degrees celsius and perfectly insulated. The third room had dirt instead of concrete as the floor, with perfect artificial lighting and humidity to act as a greenhouse. The fourth room was completely normal and completely empty.

Lex could not even begin to imagine what he needed such unusual rooms for, especially so close together, but he did not ask. At most, he would just spy on them whenever they actually used the room, which Remy was quite upfront about in saying that he did not expect to be able to keep secrets from Lex. He did add, though, that they themselves weren't completely certain about what kind of requirements they needed, but would make the corresponding changes themselves after some experimentation.

The only thing Lex said was that Remy wasn't allowed to hold people against their will, or harm them in any way, in the Inn, to which Remy agreed. Oddly enough the quest wasn't completed yet, but Lex didn't know what more he could do so he just ignored it for now.

Due to the uniqueness of the cabin, Lex charged Remy 400MP per night for it, and Remy booked it directly for 300 days, the maximum amount he was allowed to rent out a place at a time, as Lex learnt. Well, earning 120,000 MP so easily wasn't something Lex would fret over.

Once he was done inspecting the cabin, Remy was extremely satisfied, and finally left the Inn to continue his job - the details of which he very openly shared with Lex. On a side note, Lex did not think Remy was a good person to hire to conduct secretive jobs, as Remy was actually sent by the Jotun empire to compile an independent report on the Inn.

Apparently, according to Ragnar's report, they suspected Lex to be at the Dao Lord realm or above, and it was Remy's job to evaluate the legitimacy of such a claim. Remy even offered to show Lex the report, which he politely declined.

Once this eccentric guest finally left, Lex finally had some free time. There were, of course, many things he needed to do, but none so urgent that they required his immediate attention, which is why he could take his time and choose what he wanted.

Teleporting away from the cabin, he reappeared at the Manor where Velma was currently passing out orders to some of the other AIs.

As soon as she was done, she quickly came to him and asked, "Is there anything you need, Innkeeper?"

"I just came to check up on you. How are you doing? Is there anything that you need?"

"I'm doing well," Velma replied, suddenly getting flustered. She felt incredibly flattered that the Innkeeper was checking up on her. "It is a little difficult to manage all the guests at the Manor as well as at Avalon at the same time. Maybe you should put someone else in charge of the Avalon."

"That makes sense. Take some time to evaluate everyone working there and give me a suggestion about who would be good for that position. Any other suggestions? Is there anything you want?"

"No, I am extremely satisfied with the way things are."

"How's your cultivation going? I see you've already entered the Qi training stage."

"Oh, it's excellent," she said as she suddenly jumped with excitement. "Cultivating was really easy, and I broke through the Qi training stage even before Gerard! I even unlocked a bloodline ability, look."

As she said that, a silver light shone in her eyes, before more silver light appeared in her hand, taking the shape of a washcloth.

"Using this, I can wipe the whole manor in minutes," she said, as she displayed her prowess by having the washcloth fly around at astonishing speeds, wiping down each and every surface.

"That's amazing," Lex said genuinely, not realizing his AIs could even exhibit bloodline powers. He scanned Velma to learn more about her.

Name: Velma

Age: 0

Sex: Female

Cultivation Details: Qi training

Species: Human (artificially created)

Midnight Inn Designation: Midnight Manor supervisor

Bloodline: Regalia Bloom

Remarks: Just so you know, this qualifies as child labor

"Hey Mary," Lex asked, with a hint of hesitation in his voice. "Does Velma have a soul?"

"Yes," she answered immediately. "As a living being, of course, she has a soul."

Suddenly, Lex was filled with guilt. He had literally been treating them like AI, because of his assumption that they were artificial beings but... although different in the way they were born, they were still human.

Lex suppressed his guilt and immediately made a decision. Instead of AI, Velma and the rest would be referred to as his employees or workers - he would not demean them like that now that he was in the know.

"Velma, I plan to start paying all the workers a salary. Since I'm already taking care of your housing and food, how about 100MP a week sound?"

"Oh no!" she said in a panic, her silver washcloth disappearing. "We do not need salaries. You have already given us enough!"

"Nonsense, since you are working, of course you must be paid. At the Inn, everyone is like family. And not only salaries, we need to work out everyone's schedules so we can figure out how we plan on giving holidays and vacations. We can't have everyone working every day."

This conversation ended up taking much longer than Lex anticipated, but eventually Velma reluctantly agreed and told him she would help him plan out the schedules. Lex also wanted to have a casual, non-work related conversation with her... but he felt like he should take it slow. This little girl... or baby? This loyal employee of his was way too excitable.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 194: You have Booty

A week went by since Lex's conversation with Velma. It was oddly peaceful and the least hectic week Lex had in a while, which allowed him to spend the time very productively. He finalized the employees' pay at 100 MP a week. Counting employees that worked at the Avalon and manor, as well as the various miscellaneous jobs across the Inn, he had roughly 150 workers.

He was momentarily mind blown when he realized how many people he had working for them. He deducted 360,000 MP from his total and set the system to pay the employees on a weekly basis.

He took this time to meet more of his employees and learn about them as well. Learning that Gerard, the employee with the appearance and personality of an old man, had developed a craze for driving and racing, Lex was extremely surprised. He was surprised even more when he learnt how much game the old man had. Out of all his employees, Gerard worked the most, because there was always a line of older ladies wanting to be driven around by him. And sometimes, some young ladies as well. Of course, all he ever did was to drive them around and chat with them.

Lex offered to buy him an actual car, but he insisted on keeping his golf cart, and just requested a few upgrades, only some of which Lex was able to facilitate him with. Despite the system's seeming ability to make absolutely anything, it actually had very strict limitations. For the rest of his requested upgrades, Lex would need to find a mechanic. He put that on the Mystery trial list as well.

Lex also finally installed the lazy river close to the lake. He scrapped his original plan to have it extend across the Inn as a way of transport, and kept it to a corner of the Inn. Still, it was widely appreciated by his guests.

He also built a few glasshouses underwater. His primary target for those were beasts or guests that could only exist in water, but a few special functions would allow humans to live there as well. The water could be added or removed from the houses as needed, and the glass could go from clear to opaque, as per the guest requirements. That was also a huge hit among his guests.

He added a few tree houses in the forest as well, and inspired by the Hobbits, built a few houses that seemed to meld into the landscaped hills. Overall, he increased his guest capacity by now having a total of 400 rooms overall, many of which were empty.

He needed empty rooms, otherwise the random golden door would not spawn on the planets.

Speaking of planets, Lex spent 250,000MP, 300,000MP and 500,000MP to extend the reach of the Inn from just Earth, Vegus Minima and Nibiru to their entire star systems respectively. This meant the Inn was connected to not only all the planets in their systems, but moons, satellites and spaceships in that area as well.

Not only did this spread the range for where the golden door would appear to accept new guests, Lex could directly teleport to any planet in those systems that he wanted. The Vegus system only had 2 other habitable planets, as Lex remembered, but apparently Nibiru had 7 other planets and hundreds of moons in its system that were inhabited, which is why it was the most expensive of the 3 systems.

Of course, Lex did not plan on visiting those planets, not yet anyway, but it was good to spread the reach of the Inn.

During this time, the Delinquent Viper Vine (DVV) had already started to grow. Though planted in the greenhouse, it could extend its vine up to 1 acres away from its location right now. Its strength was still very low, at only the Qi training stage equivalent, but the turtle assured him that within a month it could get it to the base of the golden core realm.

When speaking of the Vine, it was natural to also think of the pup that caused Lex to purchase it in the first place. As promised by the system, Fenrir had woken up a day later. Yet it did not have the energy Lex was expecting from a massive newborn pup. It seemed to be extremely depressed.

The good news was that it acknowledged Lex easily, and grew extremely attached to him. The bad news was, Fenrir was a cuddler. Lex had been sleeping with the pup for the past week. Today, Lex finally managed to get the depressed pup and the shy baby whale to spend some time together. After acknowledging each other, the respective babies quickly returned to their 'fathers' after having drained their social batteries.

As for what Lex fed the pup, a lot of thought had gone into it. Lex fed him a lot of spiritual food, along with 1 Tier 1 zombie core, as well as a lot of meat every day. The pup ate till it was full, and already its strength had shown rapid growth. In fact, Lex felt no shame whatsoever, so he rode the pup around his Inn like a horse.

Like Little Blue, Fenrir was an immediate hit with all the Earthlings, but since he was always with Lex, they could only admire him from afar.

Yes, as far as Lex was concerned, this past one week was extremely enjoyable. But today, finally, he welcomed a few guests that could spell potential trouble if not handled correctly, which is why he already had the Fruit knife hidden within his sleeve.

A small group of pirates had returned to the Inn, this time sober. They were led by an almost frail looking man, but one that wore the look of authority on his face. None of them were subtle as they looked around the place, as one group searched for the guards that 'took care' of them the last time they were here, while another admired the scenery they saw for the first time.

"Welcome guests, to the Midnight Inn," Lex said, his usual smile on his face. The pirates had already been informed about the Inn and its rules by their personal holographic assistants, but Lex liked to welcome them nonetheless.

The leader, maintaining his stern expression, looked at Lex dead in the eyes as he said, "I was told you have Booty."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 195: Captain Hooker

"I was told you have Booty," the leader said, his expression deadly serious.

Lex, on the other hand, almost broke character.

"Excuse me?" he said, unsure of how exactly to respond to that statement.

Before the man could repeat himself, though, a golf cart approached them with a relatively short and bulky man hanging out the side.

"Captain, you're finally here," the man yelled with a massive grin.

Looking at the telling man, the leader's expression softened a bit, and he simply waited for him to catch up with them.

"Booty, why the hell did you not return to the ship?" the leader asked when Booty approached.

"Haha captain, smell the fresh air. Who would want to return to that tin can and breathe in recycled air when you can spend time here, relaxing?"

The captain did not respond, and only glared at Booty.

"Alright, alright, it's because I knew there was no other way to get you to visit this place yourself. It's incredible! I've spent some time here, and look, I even had a breakthrough!"

Booty then displayed his Mid Golden core aura to his fellow pirates with pride.

"And, most importantly, we can even unload stuff here! Captain, you have to check out the Guild room, it's so much more convenient than that shop on Beneroof, and we can just teleport here whenever we want. This is a great place!"

Booty was in a great mood, and the rest of the crew was indeed surprised by his sudden breakthrough. The Captain, though, did not seem pleased. He was a firm believer in if things were too good to be true, they usually weren't.

Lex, who had only been observing so far, chimed in, "Well, it seems you have found your companion. Feel free to take a tour of the place on your own, or if you need any help, don't hesitate to ask. The Midnight Inn welcomes everyone... as long as they follow rules."

With that said, Lex disappeared, not giving them any time to respond. But though he had disappeared, his attention was still focused on the pirates.

If they made any trouble, Lex would need to solve it immediately. The good news was, most of these pirates were in the Foundation realm, and could easily be resolved using the Fruit knife if they made trouble. The bad news was... the captain wasn't. Lex scanned the space pirate captain.

Name: Captain Hooker

Age: 86

Sex: Male

Cultivation Details: Nascent initial

Species: Human

Midnight Inn Prestige Level: 1

Bloodline: Orc

Condition: The body is in a state of starvation.

Remarks: Space pirates are either very rich or very poor. They look poor.

Firstly, he was surprised by the realms of these space pirates. He expected pirates to be stronger, though it was a good thing they weren't. What Lex didn't know was, space pirates could get away with being weaker, because as long as they destroyed or disabled an enemy ship, their raid was practically complete. Space fighting was extremely dangerous, as well as difficult. A good enough spaceship was a million times better than having stronger pirates by your side. Of course, this was dependent on what kind of enemies you targeted, but it was true for the majority.

While Booty was convincing the Captain to explore the Inn, and Lex was listening in, Mary appeared to tell him that Marlo was requesting to speak with him.

Lex raised his eyebrow in curiosity, but complied. Lex teleported to the lakeside, the most popular spot in his Inn at the moment, and greeted Marlo who was busy eating endlessly.

"It has been a while, 'King Marlo'," Lex said with schadenfreude in his voice.

Marlo instantly burst into a fit of laughter, which forced him to finally stop eating.

"It is just a title, it doesn't matter much," Marlo said in false humility as the massive grin on his face told Lex. "But I have been good nonetheless. I had an important question I wanted to ask you about something very serious."

"Go ahead."

"Before the Midnight Games started, you said there was a combat arena that had been temporarily shut down. Can I use it now? I'm itching to have a go with that old geezer Brandon."

Of course, fighting is what this maniac wanted to do.

"Sure, I'll open the arena. But I hope you know when to stop on your own."

"Yes, yes, of course. It'll just be a friendly spar."

'I hope so,' Lex said internally, because if it wasn't a friendly spar he would have no way to intervene. But the timing also wasn't bad. If he could have them fight where the pirates could see, it would intimidate them enough to not cause trouble.

Lex thought about where to place the arena, and then decided near the Recovery room was a good idea. A few hundred feet away from the Recovery room, Lex built an open-air arena around 5000 square feet in size. He reinforced the ground a few times so it wouldn't break, and then purchased a small array to cover the arena to stop their attacks from exiting. Even then, such a small array with a defensive purpose cost him 100,000 MP.

On the topic of arrays, one might wonder why Lex never purchased a defence array for the Inn if he was so concerned about security. The truth was, of the security options available to him, arrays were one of the options. But to cover the space of the entire Inn would cost a few billion MP. That, too, was only a defensive array. To stop the assailants from attacking further, or to control them, would cost several times more.

So, for now, this would have to do. He built a few seating stands for anyone who wanted to view the match, as well as a broadcasting upgrade for 10,000MP. This would broadcast any matches in the Inn like what happened during the games, so that if anyone wanted to watch from the comfort of their room, they could.

"It's done," he transmitted to Marlo, and sent him the location.

The Innkeeper

## Chapter 196: Supreme Emperor

News of the newly crowned King of New York, Marlo, challenging the newly declared Supreme Emperor of Mars, Brandon, spread fast. Mostly because Marlo roared his challenge at Brandon as loud as he could without causing something to break.

Supreme Emperor Brandon was once again celebrating his honeymoon with the Supreme Empress Audrey, and so was in no mood to respond immediately. This gave enough time for news to spread across the Inn. Rorick, the acting ruler of Mars - as the title his parents had imparted upon him - was currently not at the Inn or else he may have tried to downplay this fight. But he had been gone for nearly a week, as the heir apparent - that would be the title Brandon gave to Alexander - had briefly returned to Earth since no one was supposed to know his location on Earth, and had returned with grave news.

Alexander's friend, Zeus, had managed to send him some extremely vital news at the risk of his own life. He had transmitted the identity of the traitor in the Morrison family, as well as some aspects of the council's plan to take over Mars as well. Though the news transmitted did not contain too many details, there was enough for them to ascertain that the plan was extremely thorough. Apparently, the council had tampered with all the atmospheric regulation formations on the planet, not to mention any other plans they may have.

Originally, this may have presented a problem for the Morrisons, as they were weak and exposed during transit from Earth to Mars, but with three Nascents in the family, now they could literally just destroy the council. Thus Rorick was currently on Earth, handling the situation as he saw fit, as Brandon had given him permission to do whatever he wanted. The family heads had also used this opportunity to return to Earth and test if their newfound strength could overcome the arrays trapping them.

Usually this was the kind of stuff Lex would worry about, since it might affect stability on Earth, but through spying on his guests Lex already knew that Fernanda, who was under a lot of pressure, had told the council that she would interfere if the situation deteriorated. All in all, the situation was so complex on Earth that Lex simply stopped following it. Should the situation get bad, he would return to rescue his family, otherwise he would just not care.

A result of this unusual situation caused a massive crowd to gather at the newly built arena. The environment was different from the coliseum, but that was a nice change as well. Marlo, of course, had arrived on stage. Behind him was his own group of supporters, including his mother and Larry. Sophia, predictably, had not deigned this important enough to leave her son's side and watched via hologram. Brandon had his own group of supporters, despite his current absence.

Even the pirates happened to find their way to the arena and had in no way been manipulated by Lex having his staff give them the wrong directions.

The crowd especially got excited when the Innkeeper himself showed up and sat beside him. Lex was extremely friendly and charismatic, and in no way let anyone know that the only reason he was here was because the Fruit knife was currently the only deterrent he had. In fact, Lex had even tried to upgrade the Fruit knife into the fabled Chef's knife, but unfortunately he lacked the key ingredient - 50 Millenium Crystal Watermelon. Only by slicing open this apparently legendary and rare fruit could the fruit knife be upgraded.

Eventually, Brandon finally appeared holding hands with his wife. He was wearing shorts and a white undershirt, showing off his various tattoos. Audrey, who now looked even younger than she had before, was wearing a long skirt and a random T-shirt. The two really did look like a couple of youngsters. In fact, if Lex stood beside Brandon, it would be tough to decide who was older.

"Brat, you better be ready to get your behind whopped. Don't you know not to disturb your elders."

"Shut up you old, irresponsible geezer, I've been wanting to beat you up from the moment I heard about how you raised Alexander. That's no way to raise a child."

"He's my grandchild, I can do what I want."

"Oh yeah, well, this is my leg and I can kick whoever I want with it."

The duo's pre-match trash-talk was truly... unique.

"Before you two begin," Lex interrupted, "I would just like to remind you not to push things too far. If I need to get involved... things will not end well."

'Things will not end well for me,' Lex silently completed his sentence.

They acknowledged the Innkeeper before Brandon stepped into the ring. The crowd hushed, and even the pirates stopped their chatter to pay attention.

This was the first time Lex would see a fight between two Nascent level cultivators, so naturally all his attention was on stage. The fight began and reached peak intensity immediately, without any warm up. With eyes wide open and bated breaths, everyone watched two old men fight each other.

During all the hubbub, though, Lex missed the fact that two new guests entered the Inn. One of them was Haris, the overly dramatic teenager who was in love with Ayesha. It just so happened that another guest appeared at the same time - a guest who was slightly older than Haris.

Lex would have recognized this second guest as Babur, the celebrity he read about on Tempest from the ancient Mughal family. The two guests who should not have had anything to do with each other locked eyes the moment they appeared, and then displayed animosity filled grimaces.

"I thought you died," Haris finally spat through gritted teeth. "I heard you got scammed by some girl on Tempest and beaten to death."

"And I heard your family made you dump your girlfriend. Must be nice, out there in the universe, being spoiled and pampered like some rich heir."

Haris immediately drew a sword and stared at Babur with eyes that screamed murder.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 197: Ventura

While the standoff between Brandon and Marlo was one worthy of being contested, between these two kids, there was no point in fighting. Babur was a Qi training cultivator and Haris had only just entered the Body Tempering realm. But the passion of youth did not seek logic, and currently Haris was ready to kill.

That is, until Alexander, who was passing by, saw them. He did not recognize them, but the situation was obvious to read.

"I advise you not to fight here," he said in passing, not paying too much attention to them. "Not only will it be pointless, you'll get banned from coming to the Inn. If you're really desperate for a fight, go to the battle arena."

Despite his anger, Haris controlled himself and sheathed his sword. Babur, on the other hand, was startled when he saw Alexander. Even before Brandon proclaimed his own family royalty out of jealousy for the attention Marlo was getting, Alexander was considered a Prince on Earth. He was strongly admired by his own generation and those near him in age, and Babur was no exception.

Though technically Babur could also be considered a prince due to his ancient heritage, he did not behave arrogantly in front of the real deal. His attitude became even more docile when he thought of the reason he even came to this 'Inn'.

"Excuse me for the crass display, your grace," Babur said promptly, completely ignoring Haris.

"Don't worry about it," Alexander said.

"Your grace, would it be possible to talk for a moment," Babur said, quickly catching up to Alexander who was already leaving. "I have a message for you from... RussianPrincess77." Babur almost blushed as he said the name. Not only had he been beaten up badly by a prank she pulled, but later, through a series of coincidences, he ended up working for her.

Alexander paused and turned to look at Babur. RussianPrincess77 had been a great help to him many times, and he took her very seriously, but at the same time, he still knew next to nothing about her. This might be a good opportunity to resolve that issue.

Alexander eyed Haris, who was standing nearby, and said, "follow me."

After walking a short distance, he asked, "what's the message?"

"RussianPrincess77 said that she has some information that will greatly influence your future. If you want to hear it, then you have to agree to owe her a favor."

Alexander thought about this for a moment, but then eventually nodded and said, "alright, I'll owe her. What's the information?"

"She said it's very important that you enter the new Minor realm that will open on Earth as early as possible, the one gifted by the Inn. She says that if you miss this, you'll lose someone very important in your life without any way of getting them back."

Alexander frowned as he ruminated on her exact words. The phrasing mattered immensely. Still, he had some time to think this over before the realm opened. For now, he looked back at Babur and smiled.

"So you're her friend?" he asked, as he thought of ways to extract information about her.

\*\*\*\*\*

If Lex did not have the power of the Host Attire, he would never be able to keep up with this fight. He was expecting to see some new forms of fighting, but the direction this fight had taken was very surprising.

Marlo, in his new form of cultivation, had lost access to spiritual energy as well as spiritual techniques, but instead gained various bloodline abilities. Brandon, on the other hand, was practically the poster child for conventional cultivation, and so launched techniques like a toddler throwing candy at a duck - which was to say, very frequently.

The end result was Lex watching what looked like an anime battle, but in real life. He understood nothing about the complexities of their fight, but at a glance, Marlo seemed to be winning.

At a certain point in the battle, Brandon opened up his belt and started whipping Marlo with it, who only laughed as he dodged each attack. This was taking... an unusual turn.

"Lex, one of your guests wants to speak with you," Mary told him as she munched on holographic popcorn while watching the battle.

"Just when it was getting kinky," Lex muttered, before disappearing.

At the restaurant in the Midnight manor, a lonely teenage boy was slumped over one of the tables. There was a club sandwich on a plate beside him, but he had not touched it yet as he was lost in his thoughts.

When Lex appeared and saw him, he recognized the boy. He was one of the two teenagers who'd used the Inn for a date. He'd been anticipating the return of the two very dramatic kids, but they had not appeared together since. Last time, Ayesha appeared alone, and now this time it was Haris.

"Dear guest, are you alright?" Lex asked, his voice heavy with concern.

Haris was startled by the sudden intrusion, but quickly recovered when he noticed the Innkeeper. They had never really met, but he asked the bartender about the owner of this place and learnt about the Innkeeper. He really didn't know much about the Inn, despite coming here before, but only hoped the owner of the place was trustworthy.

"I heard you're the owner of this place," Haris said directly. "I have a request for you, and I can pay if I need to."

"What do you need?" Lex asked simply.

Haris took out a green-colored crystal from his pocket and held it out to the Innkeeper.

"I came here last time with a girl named Ayesha. If she comes back looking for me, can you give her this and tell her I'm being enrolled in Ventura Brown, and that I'll find a way to get to Ventura Silver? I have her picture here so you can recognize her."

"No need for a picture, I know Ayesha. I will pass along your message if she visits the Inn, there's no need for any payment."

"Thanks," Haris said, smiling weakly. He stuffed the club sandwich in his mouth, and directly disappeared. It seemed he was in a hurry.

Lex stared at the crystal in his hand, and wondered about what the teenager had just said. He was being enrolled somewhere? An academy for cultivators? Interesting.

## The Innkeeper

### Chapter 198: Tickets

Lex eventually put the crystal away without investigating it further and told Mary to let him know whenever Ayesha came into the Inn again. He scanned the arena, and the fight was still going on. Lex returned and watched the fight, but fortunately, it ended without anyone getting hurt.

Just as Lex had hoped, the pirates were greatly intimidated by the fight and behaved well while they were at the Inn. Without wasting any time, they made their way to the Guild room under Bootys' insistence, where they ran into Chen and Lily.

Unexpectedly, to both the pirates and the siblings, the two parties immediately became interested in each other's goods. The pirates sold many of the rare metals they'd just stolen to the siblings, and put up the rest of the goods they were willing to sell in the Guild room. In exchange, they purchased hundreds of zombie cores.

This was a good opportunity for the siblings, as zombie cores were a business they would soon lose, as the planet was almost free of zombies. With these rare metals, as well as the accumulated wealth, they could start planning for their future. As fruitful as it was to make money like this, their ultimate pursuit was still as warriors.

The pirates had finally been convinced to use the Inn as one of the ways they sold their stolen goods, but a one time deal was not good enough. If their goods continued to sell, they would consider making the Inn their permanent spot, but for now they were still testing waters. Lex had already earned a few thousand MP just from the charges on this single transaction so he hoped they decided to come back.

With their work done, they left, and Lex's peaceful days once again resumed. During this time, Lex focused on his cultivation and improving the Inn. Using his Leo persona, he had put up some requests in the Guild room for various techniques for the Qi training realm, but while some people offered to sell him some techniques, he was never satisfied with their descriptions.

A few days later, news spread that the Minor realm that Earth had been awarded by the Inn had finally appeared in Iceland. Many of the guests at the Inn from Earth left, as everyone was curious about it, with Alexander being one of them.

A couple of days after that, representatives of the council appeared at the Inn, followed by Fernanda, and had a meeting with the family heads and eventually reached an agreement. It appeared that the new realm was much bigger than anyone had imagined, and besides a few of the starting regions, none of the Earthlings could proceed.

They reached some kind of resolution, and eventually all the family heads finally also left the Inn, along with the Morrisons as well.

Other than a few random guests that appeared every so often, the Inn only had a few dozen guests left who had been staying for a while now. One may think that Lex would be upset at the slowed down business, but this suited him perfectly as the Viper Vine was still growing.

One week later, the Vine had reached the peak of the Foundation realm, and could spread as far as 500 acres. Soon, it would reach the Golden Core realm, after which its progress would slow down.

This was because Lex, as well as the greenhouse, lacked the necessary resources to speed up its growth beyond this level. Lex was already dumbstruck when he learnt that the turtle had been having the gardener cry above the vine as his tears seemed to help and put a stop to it. Although he was in a hurry, he wasn't that desperate, right?

Fenrir had also started coming out of its depressed and introverted phase, and could often be seen playing with Little Blue in the forest. Its strength had also grown to the Qi training realm.

At this point, as progress was slowing down, Lex finally started planning for the future of the Inn again.

"Hey Mary, is there any way to kind of... I don't know, to be more specific in the kind of planet I search for to connect to the Inn?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, I'd like to connect to a planet without almost dying for once. If we can connect to one of the planets being ruled by the Jotun empire, or anyone else who has a decent security or civilization in place will work."

Mary laughed at hearing Lex's request explained.

"No, there's nothing that specific, but you can be a little more targeted. Previously, you were using Golden Tickets, which not only have a wide range, but are free from many restrictions. You can buy cheaper tickets for your next expansion that have more restrictions. The drawback will be the time to connect the Inn to the planet will be longer, but at least the list of planets you'll get will be more reasonable for your level."

Lex rubbed his hands in the typical evil villain fashion as he thought about what to do, and checked his options in the system.

\*\*\*\*\*

Alexander leaned against a tree as he took deep, heavy breaths. He was covered in the blood of yet another monster he killed, and his entire armor suffered a great deal of damage. That's right, monster, not beast. This minor realm was filled with strange and unusual things he could never even imagine, and his understanding of 'living things' underwent a huge drastic change. But the monsters made of rocks and metal and even dirt aside, it was the monsters made of materials he didn't recognize that gave him a tough time.

He thought the Midnight games had been tough, but at least there he only fought enemies in his own realm. Here, there was no guarantee of what he might encounter next.

Just as he was about to move forward, a bright light in the distance caught his eye. He turned to look at what appeared to be the ruins of some kind of temple and saw a giant portal. In front of the portal, he saw a familiar figure, trying to resist the pull but failing.

"Helen!" Alexander roared in a panic, as he started sprinting towards her, but she was too far and his voice did not carry. What the hell was she doing here? Unlike him, Helen was not a fighter, and had no training except the most basic self defense, so how could she even reach here?

As these thoughts ran through his mind, and as he sprinted towards her, he watched in horror as she was pulled into the portal before the portal shut down. She had disappeared before his very eyes. Despite receiving a warning before this realm even opened, Alexander could not stop his friend from disappearing, potentially forever.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 199: Spiritual Techniques

Lex was sitting in his lawn chair, sipping a smoothie as he surfed the system. Lately, he had begun avoiding relaxing in public to maintain his mysterious persona. But after Lex decided to be more approachable rather than mysterious, he had returned to lounging in the open. The first day he had done this, his guests avoided him, but by now they had gotten used to it. His horse sized pup was lightly snoring beside him, attracting loving gazes from many of his guests.

Lex was not paying attention to that, however, as he was currently looking up the kinds of tickets he could buy. The Golden Ticket he used previously was the most expensive one available to him, at 100,000,000 MP! The reason why it was so expensive was because not only did it have the greatest range, it resulted in the fastest connection between the system and the world, and was capable of searching for extremely powerful worlds, such as the 5 Star world Lex came across called Dunya.

The cheapest ticket available was only 100,000MP. This was incredibly cheap considering how expensive some of the things Lex purchased were, not to mention that it could still cover vast distances in space.

It had many shortcomings, but somehow ended up being perfect for Lex. First of all, it was restricted to 1 Star planets only. Secondly, Lex would have to pick one of the planets he was already connected to, and the ticket would only search within the same galaxy. Thirdly, being there were any beings too strong on the planet, it would interfere with the detection and so the ticket would be unable to detect the planet, depending on the strength of the person. Fourthly, the shortest amount of time it would take to connect the planet was about a week.

The last point was not one Lex counted in his favor, as a week was still the shortest available time for the connection to be completed. Although he was thinking of getting this ticket, he hadn't bought it yet.

Lex would not go anywhere unprepared, and he was still not ready. For one, he had only finally managed to purchase a few techniques for the Qi gathering realm. They had not come from the Guild room, but rather from John. He visited John in with his Leo persona and described exactly what kind of techniques he was looking for, and had John make them to his needs and specifications.

Lex had asked for two different attacking techniques, one defensive technique, one to improve his speed and one to hide. Until Lex learnt all techniques to a satisfactory level, he would not even think of going to another planet. This was also not considering the fact that he needed a lot of new equipment as well, some of which he had ordered from Chen and some from Will.

Done perusing the system, Lex stretched a bit, nodded to some of his nearby guests and returned to his apartment with Fenrir. He changed into the Bathrobe and entered his Meditation room.

Considering Lex had never learnt any spiritual techniques before, he expected it would be difficult. For most of them, that was true. For the defensive technique, however, a single glance was all it took for Lex to learn it to the maximum proficiency possible! Even Lex himself was dumbstruck by how easy it had been.

But, it made sense. Regal Embrace had only just begun to show its worth, and not only had Lex's defense improved, his understanding of anything related to defense had also improved.

But, practicing the defensive technique made it much easier to practice the others, as it gave him a deep understanding how these techniques actually worked.

Lex was currently at Qi training level 3. There were a total of 9 levels in the Qi training realm, and with each realm Lex would hold an increasing number of Qi in his body.

To use these techniques, he would need to manipulate the Qi in his body along certain pathways, these being the meridians, in certain patterns in very exact amounts to give birth to various phenomena.

Why these phenomena were birthed was a topic of a different study. It was like asking why a magnetic field was created by passing electricity through a wire. The why of it was completely irrelevant to someone who was an electromagnet to perform a task. This person only needed to know how to turn the magnet on and off, not the hows and whys behind it.

This was currently the situation for Lex with these techniques. He did not understand the complexities behind the techniques, but memorized the techniques themselves.

The defensive technique was called Qi Repulsor. It worked by building up charged Qi anywhere on Lex's body, and when the built up Qi encountered a sufficient force, it would release a pulse of Qi that would push back against the force.

For example, if an enemy were punching Lex, and Lex blocked it with his hand that had been charged with Qi Repulsor, the released pulse of Qi would either neutralize a lot of the punches force, or in the case that the pulse was stronger than the attack, push the enemy back.

This type was a very standard defensive technique for Qi cultivators, as they did not yet have enough Qi to launch techniques far from their bodies.

If Lex had to learn this himself, it would take him a long time, as not only did he have to run sufficient Qi strands at very specific speeds in very specific patterns near the area where he wanted to use the technique, he then had to control the built up Qi that was outside his body - something incredibly difficult for Qi training cultivators who were only just learning to control Qi within their bodies.

But by understanding and practicing such a complex technique repeatedly using his over the top proficiency in it, he eventually got the hang of how to properly manipulate Qi within his body. It was an extremely novel experience, and he loved it!

## The Innkeeper

### Chapter 200: Misbehaving Qi

Despite being thoroughly familiar with the technique, Lex continuously practiced it for over an hour. He practiced gathering the Qi for Qi Repulsor on various parts of his body, from his palms to his chest to his legs and even his forehead. Only when he was completely drained of his Qi did he finally stop.

Tired and sweaty, Lex went and took a nice long shower, before he re-equipped the Bathrobe and returned to the Meditation room. Sitting cross-legged, he started cultivating using Regal Embrace.

Each cultivation style was different, and would slightly transform the absorbed Qi into the unique form of Qi each cultivator contained within their body. For people who had affinities, such as Will Bentham who had a water affinity, the Qi or spiritual energy they stored in their body would be more concentrated and special. The Qi in Lex's body, though, was on an entirely different level.

It contained aspects of spiritual energy, soul energy, and vitality. This unique combination of aspects meant that Lex was not limited to only using spirit techniques, though at the moment he only had access to those. It meant he could also use his Qi to use the rare and especially potent soul techniques, as well as the special techniques of body cultivators. While a normal cultivator would have to build up a reserve of each respective type of energy to use the techniques associated, Lex could use all three directly using his Qi.

This also made his Qi more potent than that of his peers, though this potency was displayed in a form of resilience instead of attacking power. The bright side of this was, since he was technically drawing from 3 sources while people only drew from one, he could replenish his Qi faster. The drawback of this was that each of his breakthroughs would be three times as hard as an ordinary cultivator. Lex had personally experienced this difficulty while trying to cultivate these past few days.

But Lex wasn't trying to cultivate right now, he was only replenishing his Qi so that he could practice his techniques. He scanned the Inn once, to ensure nothing required his attention, and then resumed his training.

The next technique he practiced was the one he found easiest after Qi Repulsor, which was the technique to increase his speed. It was called Falcons relief. Instead of focusing on something like the legs, the Qi was focused around the heart and the lungs. The effect was not something as mundane as ensuring he got plenty of oxygen in his blood, no. By focusing on those two areas, the Qi would slowly dissolve from his meridians into his blood, and provide him with an overall boost in speed, not just in his legs, but everywhere. He could run faster, but he could also attack faster, turn faster, eat faster or digest faster. What he wanted to speed up was up to him.

The duration of the technique lasted as long as all the Qi did not dissolve into the blood. Whether Lex used that for an increase in burst speed or long distance running or something else was entirely up to him.

But while this was the next easiest technique after Qi Repulsor, it didn't mean it was actually easy at all. In fact, while Lex had barely started using it after a few days practice, he could say for certain that without the Meditation room and Bathrobe helping him concentrate and learn faster, it would have taken him much longer.

Learning these techniques also gave him a new respect for all the fights he saw previously, because using the techniques while you're standing still was one thing, but using it while also doing any other action was incredibly difficult.

But Lex was not too hard on himself, he had only just begun training and it made sense that he was bad. He especially could not fathom how people used multiple techniques at the same time. But Lex was getting ahead of himself. He had to take things one step at a time and focused on Falcons' relief.

The hours flowed by like grains of sand falling in an hourglass, and by the time night fell, Lex was extremely tired. Not only was he drained of his Qi, he even felt physically and mentally exhausted.

Taking yet another shower - see, he wasn't unhygienic - Lex proceeded to eat some food. At this point, he exclusively only ate spirit food as it helped him replenish his Qi passively, and even slowly helped him increase his cultivation. Once he was done, Lex threw himself onto his bed and instantly passed out.

The next morning, before he could even ask, Mary let him know that Alexander wanted to meet with him. The meeting was short, as Alexander wanted to know if Lex could track Helen. Lex obviously could not do that, and said so in a diplomatic way.

Alexander then asked if there was anywhere in the universe that was blocked from accessing the Inn, as Helen had disappeared through a portal, yet had not returned to the Inn using a golden key. Lex assured him the Inn could be accessed from anywhere, according to what Mary told him.

He did not spend more time with Alexander, as the kid seemed troubled by his own thoughts and Lex had his own tasks to complete. Once again, Lex started the day by practicing Qi Repulsor, then spent the rest of the day practicing Falcons' relief. By the end of the day, Lex was able to use the technique and also run at the same time, a huge achievement as it required an immense level of multitasking.

The following day, Lex practiced Falcons' relief for half the day, before moving onto his two offensive techniques. The two techniques, Qi blade and Auxiliary burst, were very difficult for Lex to master. It was not just the inherent complexity of the techniques that overwhelmed him; he felt like Regal Embrace was giving off an inherent disgust for the techniques. He could feel it in the way his Qi would misbehave whenever he tried to practice.

But instead of being discouraged, the challenge somehow increased his motivation. Instead of trying to develop the techniques as instincts or reflexes, he practiced them mindfully. He paid extra attention to the speed, density and flexibility of each strand of Qi while he practiced the technique, and learned to anticipate when and how his Qi would misbehave, and ended up learning the techniques even faster than Falcon's relief. That only left his final technique for Lex to learn, simply called Mirage.

Mirage could help him hide by camouflaging him and making him difficult to detect using sight, but currently, Lex was unable to master it. This wasn't simply because of the complexity of the technique, it was also the scale of the technique as well as the amount of Qi required to use it. Since he had to cover his whole body while using the technique, the scale was bigger than anything Lex had done previously, and the amount of Qi was nearly everything he had in his body.

At this point, he went back to John for some consultation. As much as Lex would like to do everything on his own, it just wasn't possible. Receiving the guidance of those more experienced than him would make the learning process drastically easier.

In his Leo persona, he demonstrated each of the techniques to John, as well as talked about his experiences while learning the techniques. John was secretly very impressed by Leo's speed, but did not let it show. Was he learning multiple techniques within a single month? No, it had not even been two weeks yet.

When Lex explained how he managed to learn the two offensive techniques, John's eyes shone and he realized something, but did not say anything yet.

John spent a good few hours explaining his mistakes to Lex, and instructing him on how he should proceed with his practice in the future.

Once he was done with that, though, John sat down comfortably in his chair and stared at Lex for a few moments while he considered something. In the end, he let out a sigh and said, "Young Leo, are you familiar with arrays?"

"Yeah, aren't those the formations used to protect places and stuff? I heard we had some guests who stayed at the Inn for a long time because back on their planet, their return location had been surrounded by them."

"My young friend, never say something so illiterate again," John said as he chuckled at Leo's lack of understanding.

"To a layman, indeed formations and arrays are the same thing. This is because both of them have the same origin, and often a person who is a master in one, is usually also a master in the other. But arrays and formations, while occasionally similar in effect, have vastly different purposes.

"Formations make use of various items, some manufactured and some natural, along with the intricate and complex knowledge of the science of cause and effect to give birth to various effects. They can be defensive in nature, or offensive, or auxiliary, or even a mix of the three. Arrays, however, are made completely and only of spiritual energy."

John watched Leo, who was paying complete attention to his words, but for some reason lost the will to say more. He handed Lex a ring and said, "Insert your Qi into this and you'll be able to read the book inside. Let me know what you think."

"Sure," Leo answered, feeling unsure about why John brought all this up. But he went along with it anyway.