

Innkeeper 201

The Innkeeper

Chapter 201: Expo date

Once Lex returned to his apartment, he investigated the ring given to him by John, but when he saw the size of the massive book that appeared in his mind, he quietly and respectfully put it away. That was not to say that he had given up on the book, but that currently he had his hands full with learning his techniques and didn't have the mental energy to read what looked like a physical representation of Wikipedia.

He spent the day practicing, as usual, but at night he did not immediately fall asleep despite his exhaustion. His mind wandered to the situation with Helen. Alexander had spent all his time at the Inn since he last talked to Lex, hoping for Helen's return, but to no avail. He had finally left today, and at a glance he did not seem too bothered, but with the power of the Host Attire, Lex could tell just how stressed he was. Lex even overheard a conversation he had with his family about her.

Since Alexander was so busy with his own things, he had not realized how neglected Helen was, though no one could be blamed for this. His family were caught up in their own tasks, and though they shared a courtyard with her, they would usually only see her once every few days. Alexander felt guilty for neglecting her, but there was nothing for it.

Lex, however, had his mind on another matter. He was considering whether there was a flaw with the keys, but he didn't have enough information. The only thing he could conclude was that if Helen didn't use the key, it meant that she didn't want to, she had lost it or, as much as he didn't want to consider it, that she was dead.

Lex sighed and pushed the thoughts away and allowed himself to fall asleep. The next few days Lex followed the same routine, and slowly built up his familiarity with using his spiritual techniques. He also used his Leo persona more often, for two main reasons. First, he wanted to build up more relationships as Leo, not to mention he couldn't leave Z to run the Gamer's Den all the time. Secondly, he used the Leo persona to learn as much as he could about the universe.

One of Leo's most frequent guests at the Gamer's Den was called Crawford-981. He was a very friendly guy, but had been suspended from duty for the next month over something he only called 'the incident'. Leo didn't care much about the details of the incident, but spent a lot of time chatting and gaming with 981. The man was like a walking encyclopedia for the universe, and Leo learned a lot about the kind of worlds one can expect to encounter when traveling the universe.

Despite the massive size of the empire, and the prospering cultivation not to mention technology, it seemed that the Empire actually did not interact with about 90% of the inhabited planets in its territory, for various reasons. The quickest summary of it was, they simply didn't have the manpower for it and often enough, it wasn't worth it. They would let the worlds continue to exist on their own, unless they encountered a demon invasion, birthed a sufficiently strong enough cultivator, or possessed rare resources.

These planets that had been left ignored were almost always Ground of Sky level civilizations. Ground level meant that they had not yet even left their home planet, and Sky level meant they had colonized multiple planets in their star system.

Over the period of a few days, Leo learnt a lot of common practices and trends among these kinds of worlds, as well as some of what one can expect. Of course, this was Lex building up his knowledge base for when he starts connecting new worlds again. He learnt common forms of currency, frequently repeated etiquettes across the universe, and many more details that might be useful to him should he end up at such a planet.

One more thing Lex learnt from him, the most important thing, was the name of the Star system that hosted the Jotun Empire's main planets in the galaxy that hosted the Vegus system.

It was known as the Pental system, and hosted 11 planets that had all been inhabited, and hosted the various bodies of the Jotun Empire's governance system. Leo didn't care much for the details of that, but memorized the name in case it ever came up.

As leisurely as the days were passing, Lex was now only waiting for the Vine to enter the Golden Core stage. Once that was done, Lex would leave the security of the Inn in Mary's hands and start traveling once again. This was not only to increase the Inn's connectivity, as during this extended lull it was experiencing, Lex had only earned a total of 21,000 MP since the Midnight Games ended, but also for an event he knew would be coming.

One day, Miranda reappeared at the Inn. She looked just as exhausted as ever, with the number of dark circles under her eyes ever increasing. This was a rare sight amongst cultivators, but she made it evident that it was still possible.

She did not waste any time, however, on any services, and directly asked to meet with the Innkeeper. Lex, who was in the middle of practicing his techniques, had her wait a while as he finished up and showered.

"Miranda, it's good to see you again. I hope you've been well," the Innkeeper said, as he appeared in the private room she had rented while waiting for him.

"Not as well as I would have liked," she replied with a mocking smile on her face, though it appeared she was mocking herself. For some reason, in front of the Innkeeper, she did not maintain her usual facade. It was as if she expected that the Innkeeper would be able to see through her attempts at keeping things together, and so did not even try. Obviously, the council's rule over the Earth was not progressing as they had hoped. They had broken away from the chains of the family heads seeking freedom, only to be brought down by an even stronger, more mysterious force.

Waking up from her daydreams, Miranda composed herself and focused on the business at hand.

"Innkeeper, I would like to talk to you again about the Expo I brought up previously. Earth's political situation has stabilized, and we are ready to begin planning colonization of the rest of the Solar system, but before we begin that we want to know what kind of support we can garner via business relations out in the universe.

"We've also obtained some rare and unusual resources from the new Minor realm that has opened up, the uses of which we cannot yet identify. Perhaps they will have a high demand, or perhaps they can shed a light on their uses to us. Regardless, we have much to gain and offer from this, but at the same time, we are not yet ready to host it.

"We want to have the Expo at the Inn in six months' time, and by then we will be completely ready with a very thorough list of all that we can offer, as well as what we are looking for. This should also be sufficient time for any interested parties to get ready, as well as word for such an event to spread."

"Well, if you are sure, I will book the date for you. For an event like this, the deposit will be 1,000,000 MP and the rest will depend on how exactly you want the Expo to proceed and what kind of services you require. You can come to me one month prior to the event, and then we can discuss in greater detail the options available to you."

They spent some more time hashing out the details before Miranda quickly left, as there was no shortage of work for her to do.

Lex, on the other hand, returned to his room and looked at his calendar. 6 months of time before the Expo was more time than he was expecting, but that was a good thing for him. This event was also one of the reasons Lex was in a hurry to extend his reach to more planets. If he only advertised this upcoming event to the same three planets, the image the Inn had built up of reaching the whole universe would be greatly affected.

It was currently October, so the event would happen in the middle of March. It was up to him now to expand the Inns' reach as much as he could without overwhelming himself.

He was not worried, though, as the equipment he had ordered had already arrived, and his practice was going along well. Whatever the next world could throw at him, Lex was ready for.

Three days later, the Vine finally entered the Golden Core realm, and its speedy growth slowed down considerably. The only way to speed it up once again would either be to increase the level of the Greenhouse, or provide it with very high leveled resources as fertilizer, neither of which Lex could do at the moment.

It seemed as if everything was telling him, it was time to move forward.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 202: X-142

Secretly, Lex spent a good amount of time testing the Delinquent Viper Vines ability. Naturally, he spread the vines around the entire Inn, underground of course. What Lex was testing was how quickly the vines could come out of the ground and restrain someone.

He tested it out in areas devoid of guests, of course, and on practice dummies. The speed naturally could not match that of his previous guards as well as bodyguards, but a portion of that fault lay with Lex himself. His mind could not work at the same speeds as them, and so his response would take longer. The remainder of the issue was, of course, that the Vine itself had only just entered the Golden Core realm. Mary was no better at controlling it than Lex, but she was no worse either, which was nice. Still, the Vine was fast enough and would have to do for now.

Lex spent the remainder of the day going over the miscellaneous details of the Inn with each and every worker, in case there was something he needed to fix, or a system he needed to refine. A prominent problem he was facing was that, while he had various vegetables to serve in the form of spirit food, there was a distinct lack of meat. At the moment, Lex had no solution for this, as there was no ranch option in the system.

Other than that, however, fortunately the Inn was running smoothly. In fact, there was a surprise for him at the greenhouse, in the form of a Lotus. The turtle brought it to Lex's attention, and for good reason. If it remained in the Inn much longer, the Lotus was going to die. The turtle told Lex various things about the Lotus, but claimed to only know as much as its instincts would tell it. To be sure, the turtle was correct, Lex scanned the Lotus.

Name: World Seed Lotus

Age: 0

Species: Primordial Origin Lotus series

Condition: Decaying

Report: The World Seed Lotus is deprived of Primordial Spirit Energy in the Inn. Expose it to the universe outside the Inn, or raise the Inn Star level to 8 to let the Lotus survive.

Remarks: It's dying anyway, make Lotus cake

The system scan didn't give Lex the information he wanted, but the name was very telling. Still, he found it difficult to comprehend.

"Are you sure this thing can create a world?" Lex asked, eyeing the simple black colored Lotus.

"Look at it. How can you not tell that it will give birth to a new world? But it's suffocating, you need to take it out."

"How do I do that?"

"The Lotus is, naturally, sentient. Reach your hand out to it, and it will accompany you."

Sentient? Lex eyes the Lotus, but could not tell anything. Still, he reached his hand towards the Lotus, only for it to promptly jump up from the ground and land in Lex's hand. Yet when it fell in Lex's hand, it fell into his skin like a tattoo, and crawled all the way to Lex's back, where it found a comfortable position to sit.

Then, as if it were a real tattoo, it stopped moving.

"Thanks," Lex heard a squeaky voice say in his mind, startling him.

He tried to talk back to the Lotus, but it had stopped replying. The idea of a... sentient Lotus living on Lex's back may have freaked him out, if he couldn't feel a continuous stream of warm energy entering his body from his back. He had no idea what the Lotus was doing, but instinctively he knew it was good for him.

"The Lotus can give birth to a planet," the turtle repeated. "That doesn't mean a massive rock will suddenly appear in space. It will be a new planet, with an established and awake world spirit. Since the Lotus can create something so wonderful, naturally it will also provide some help to you for aiding in its growth."

"How long will it take for it to birth a planet?" Lex asked curiously. A world spirit was a great thing, if he had enough time before the planet was born, he could...

"Not long, I think. Anywhere between 500,000 to 800,000 years."

Lex immediately put the Lotus and the world it would create behind him.

'I'll think about it again in 499,999 years,' Lex thought to himself and chuckled.

With everything in the Inn taken care of, Lex returned to his apartment to gear up. This time around, he had refined his kit even more after his last trip visiting a world. It was sufficient to say that everything he wore, from his boots to his pants and shirt to even his undergarments, were actually armor in disguise.

Unlike last time, when his clothes looked like tactical gear worn by an Earthen soldier, his clothes this time looked like normal clothes. Other than that, he had a knife strapped to his leg, a sword along with the Heavy Harley at his waist, a deployable talisman shield, tactical tracking drones, a generic Jotun communication wristwatch and a couple of other gadgets. These were just the things he wore on his body, and did not include the items in his armored backpack.

Since he had to be selective with the items in his backpack, he had 10 spirit coins, 10 gold coins, an emergency first aid kit, some dry rations, various tiny grenades, stimulants, sedatives, and a cultivators version of a Swiss army knife, gifted to him by Will.

A lot of thought had gone into his gear, and though he was still missing out on many things, he had to be selective. Each item served a specific purpose, and could mean the difference between life or death. That was not exaggerated at all. For example, spirit coins, which were a commonly seen currency in the universe, even used on Earth. Lex could have brought more, or even spirit stones if he wanted to, but too much wealth might attract the wrong kind of attention. Though only 10 coins would not last him a long time, it would be enough to get him started if he were in a situation that required commerce. The gold coins served the same purpose.

A familiar feeling of excitement and nervousness filled Lex as he spent 100,000 MP on purchasing the Wooden Ticket. As embarrassing as the name was, Lex did not dwell on it as he crushed it, and a familiar screen opened in front of his eyes.

Planets Available:

Planet: Alf

Planet Rating: 1 Star

Planet Distance: 2 Sectors

Planet Environment: Extremely diverse biomes, resource rich

Planet: X-142

Planet Rating: 1 Star

Planet Distance: 3 Sectors

Planet Environment: Strictly regulated, conducive to normal life

Planet: Y-44

Planet Rating: 1 Star

Planet Distance: 1 Sector

Planet Environment: Planet has been converted into an ore farm

Lex was pleasantly surprised to see a few options presented to him, which was more than he was expecting. He wished it was a tough choice after reading his options, but Alf immediately seemed dangerous with its 'extremely diverse biomes'. Nothing about that actually indicated that the biomes had to be dangerous, but it did not assure him either. Y-44 was an ore farm, whatever that meant, but Lex could only associate that term with mining. Not only did that make it seem like the planet was hospitable, it probably did not have the kind of habitation Lex was targeting either.

X-142 was also risky, as 'strictly regulated' indicated the planet was under someone's control, but it could also be a good thing. Such a planet might have a civilized society with established security systems to protect societies and such.

Of course, no matter which planet he picked, it would involve a great deal of risk. So Lex simply stopped hesitating, put on his Bathroom slippers and monocle, and selected X-142. One drawback to it was that

it was 3 sectors away, so it would take longer for the system to build a connection to the planet, but nothing was perfect.

Lex was enveloped by a bright, warm light, and then disappeared. When Lex reappeared, both his hands were near his weapons, ready to draw at a moment's notice. Both times he had visited a planet, something had happened to him quickly after he arrived on the planet, so he wasn't expecting anything different.

Yet what he did not expect was to be immediately assaulted by the smells of street food and the sounds of downtown New York. Lex was standing in the middle of a busy bazaar, with beings walking past him in both directions.

No one seemed bothered by him suddenly appearing from a ball of light, and in fact, he received a few annoyed looks from the nearby stall vendors.

His monacle was going crazy as it identified everything in his vision, but he didn't need its help right now. Other than the ordinary humans passing him, how could he not identify the flying fairies, the floating balls of slime and, most importantly, the cat-men and women shopping around him.

Had he teleported into an anime?

That's when he heard the familiar ting of a new quest in his mind.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 203: Infinity Emporium

Lex, after moving to a corner so that he wasn't literally standing in the middle of all that foot traffic, checked the system for the quest.

New Special Quest: Sell a rare item to Infinity Emporium

Quest Reward: Subject change based on value of item sold

Remarks: Gotta get that cash money, baby

Lex was... intrigued, to say the least, not only by the quest but by the remark the system gave. Had the system been watching late night tv?

Still, this was the first special quest he had received, and he was interested in learning about it. But first, he had to investigate the situation on this planet, and learn if there was anything he should avoid.

He turned on his 'generic Jotun communication wristwatch' to see if it worked. A hologram appeared before him as the watch tried to connect to any available networks and, after a few minutes, successfully connected to the local planetary network.

As much as he wished he could Google things, the watch provided him with similar functions and Lex looked up anything he could about X-142. Soon, the watch opened up a historical and cultural website that detailed the occupation of this planet.

About 3000 years ago, this star system had come under the control of the Dimitri family, a legally recognized noble family in the Jotun Empire. They were a business oriented family, and used this entire star system as the foundation of their agricultural business. Not only had they colonized all the planets in this system, the X-14 system, and regulated each planet to be suitable to grow certain kinds of crops, they provided safe and accommodating planets for the citizens of the empire to settle and work in.

The rest of the page was filled with endless praise for the Dimitri family, which Lex directly dismissed as propaganda. He breathed a sigh of relief, as he had landed on a planet under the control of the Empire. He knew from the conversation with Crawford-981 that the galaxy that Vegus Minima was from wasn't fully under the Empire's control, so it was really up to his luck whether he would land on such a planet.

Fortunately, he had, and even had a plan of action he had devised in such a situation. The first and most important thing to remember was that while it was alright for Lex to create an account on the Henali portal, something akin to a universal internet, he must absolutely not get himself registered in any Jotun empire facility.

This was because the Jotun database was apparently shared, if not galaxy wide, then at least over several star systems. Furthermore, every few decades, the databases would be compiled together. Lex doubted that amongst the probably hundreds of trillions of citizens in their database, they would notice

him even if he did regularly get registered or scanned at various planets, but Lex did not want to leave a record.

As for why it was relatively safer to log into the Henali portal? It was because no one he ever talked to had ever heard of any kind of disciplinary force, or in fact any force altogether, associated with Henali. Whatever it was, it was clearly targeted towards much higher leveled cultivators, and people with less power or authority than a certain level weren't even qualified to know about it.

As a result, the Henali was very openly used to conduct shady business, and even the Empire couldn't do anything about it, as they could not even get the real identities of the users.

Still, all of that was for later. Right now, Lex had to do a few things. He had to find cheap accommodation, find Infinity Emporium, and think of a way to earn enough money to help him survive however long he would be here.

'How convenient would it be if I had a branch of the Inn here,' Lex thought with a chuckle, then froze. That wasn't a bad idea. He quickly put down having branches of the Inn on various planets as an idea to look into.

Lex looked towards the nearest vendor, a man... er, beast? The nearest vendor was humanoid, but with thick, purple skin and a face that looked like that of a tiger, but with two protruding horns on his forehead, with long, flowing white hair.

Lex had no idea what race he was, but walked up to the man and asked, "Hey, any idea where I can find the Infinity Emporium?"

Unaware of the particular customs on this planet, Lex was concerned about somehow offending the man, but apparently he did not need to be.

"Maybe you buy something, it'll jog my memory," the vendor said with a smile. It was completely not the vendor's fault that his toothy smile exposed some vicious-looking teeth and looked more intimidating than friendly.

Lex looked at the vendor's wares, and his monocle scanned the items. He wanted to find the cheapest looking thing but... he had no idea what anything on the stall was. There were blades, that much was certain. But these blades were unusually shaped, with odd curves and blunt ends that clearly indicated they had a very specific purpose.

"My friend, I need to sell something to the shop, as I don't currently have any money at all."

"Teh, cheap," the vendor muttered under his breath, but then explained the directions to Lex anyway. It seemed that despite his grumpiness, the vendor was a good man- eh, beast-person-thing.

As Lex started following the directions - and only then realizing he was still wearing his bathroom slippers - Lex thought about what to do once he reached the Emporium. The easiest thing would be to sell an item from the Inn, but he didn't want to do that. He could sell one of the items or pieces of gear he brought with him, but that would depend on what kind of shop the Emporium was.

When he reached, he saw a modest sized building, but one with a spectacular finish. That was not to say the other buildings weren't well designed, but something about the Emporium was just eye-catching. Lex considered inquiring about its architect for a moment.

One other thing that stood out about the Emporium was the large number of people going in and out. The shop was clearly a popular one. Since there was no particular line, Lex simply stepped in the shop, following one of its customers, but was taken aback once he stepped in.

The shop, though simple, was absolutely gorgeous! A red carpet ran from the front door to the counter, spread over a milky white marble floor. The walls were carved with various designs, with a few pillars half protruding from the walls. The ceiling was painted as well, not to mention lined with elaborate woodwork.

But despite its spectacular splendor, what surprised Lex was that he was the only other customer in the shop. All the people Lex had seen entering had disappeared, and only a single man stood behind the counter, grinning at Lex. It seemed as if he was able to tell what had surprised Lex, and was thoroughly enjoying the reaction.

"Welcome to the Infinity Emporium. Please, do not be alarmed. This is just a bit of clever use of formations to give each customer their privacy while shopping. We value our clients' privacy highly."

"Not bad," Lex commented as he stepped into the shop. He took a look around, and though the shop looked amazing, he could not actually see any wares. Should shops display what they're selling?

"What kind of business do you do here?" Lex asked curiously.

"We can provide anything you wish for. Anything legal, that is. Of course, we have a membership program, and if your membership level is high enough, even some things that aren't legal can become an option."

"Uh, are you sure you should be saying something like that so... openly?"

"Why, of course," the shopkeeper replied while laughing. "The Dimitri family, and everyone else relevant, know about our business. They are not very concerned, and even they themselves sometimes shop with us."

Lex raised an eyebrow as he wondered about the man's words.

"And do you buy things from customers?" Lex asked.

"So long as an item has any kind of monetary value, we can take it off your hands."

Lex wondered about the man's answer and considered his actions. The rarer the item he sold, the better his reward from the system would be. Since there was no time limit, it wasn't as if he had to sell something right away. He decided to wait a while before selling something, hoping he could find something on the planet. And, if he wasn't able to find anything, he'd just sell a golden key.

"Since you sell everything... I'm pretty broke right now, and need information on a cheap but safe place to stay, and a possible way I can earn some money."

"Excellent. Since you are on a budget, I'll compile the cheapest folder I can. That'll be 1 spirit coin, sir."

Lex handed over the coin, which, by the way, wasn't exactly a cheap price for some basic information. But since Lex didn't want to waste time figuring out things on his own, this would have to do.

After accepting the coin, the shopkeeper handed over a simple folder, summoning it out of thin air and grinned at Lex, as if he had just spent millions in the store instead of a single coin.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 204: New Races

Lex opened the folder that had only a few pages inside. On the first page was a list of cheap places he could stay, listed in terms of geographical distance from Lex's current location, which was the Emporium. The rest of the pages had lists of jobs he could do that didn't require a long vetting process, as well as the basic requirements of each job. It need not be said that each job was targeted towards Qi training realm cultivators. It was not a surprise that the shopkeeper was able to determine his cultivation realm as there was no way for Lex to hide it unless he used some kind of treasure, but what did surprise Lex was how quickly the man was able to provide such a detailed and well-organized list. Lex had only asked, and the man immediately provided it.

"Hey, I uhh, come from a human only planet. Would you happen to have a list of all the different races on this planet and a little bit of information about them?"

"Such a list is not a problem at all," the shopkeeper said, summoning another file. "Since this information is all common knowledge, it is much cheaper than your first request - only 2 gold coins. I can also provide a more detailed list, should you need it, but that will raise the price."

"No, this will do for now," Lex said as he paid the man and put both folders in his bag and turned to leave, but the shopkeeper stopped him.

"Excuse me sir, before you leave there are a couple of things which are my responsibility to tell you if you have a few minutes to spare."

Lex was in general very impressed by the shop, and so decided to hear him out.

"Firstly sir, the Emporium places a great deal of emphasis on maintaining the client's privacy, and so I would like to assure you that details of a client's purchase history will never be leaked under any

circumstances, this is an Infinity Emporium guarantee. Secondly, upon a total expenditure at the value of 10 common grade spirit stones, you become eligible for a basic membership card. The membership has various levels and at each level, more and more items become available to you to purchase. And thirdly, the Emporium currently has an ongoing sale on skin, wing and horn care products that will end in 7 hours."

"Got it, thanks," Lex said, and chuckled as he left. The only skincare he ever indulged in was moving away from body wash, shampoo and shaving foam all in one bottle and getting three separate products instead. That was quite enough for him.

As soon as Lex left the Emporium, the shopkeeper couldn't help but raise an eyebrow as he muttered, "A Fancy Monocle, eh? Haven't seen one of those in a while. How retro."

The first thing Lex did once leaving the fancy shop was head in the direction of the nearest tavern where he could stay, sightseeing along the way. This city he was in was an unusual mix of extremely advanced and extremely basic technology. A good example of that was the hundreds of vehicles flying about in the skies, while an alien equivalent of a donkey cart pulled someone along the street. Or the simple wooden stalls, but with virtual or holographic vendors. He also saw many different races of beings walking around, though humans still maintained the majority.

When Lex finally arrived at the Tavern, he read the name Bent Benches spelled out in a neon sign, hung across a balcony in the wooden building. It was a curious name, but Lex didn't put much thought into it.

When he walked in, though, the building was completely empty. Lex would have expected such a cheap place to be packed with guests, yet not a soul could be seen - not even a worker.

On his left was a long, wooden bar and on his right a long, rectangular room full of empty tables. There was a corridor leading deeper into the building right in front of him, but Lex felt strange about randomly strolling into the building. Maybe there was something he didn't know about how taverns worked in this world.

Yet just as he was pondering, he picked up the sound of slow, deliberate breathing. He leaned over the bar and saw a man rocking back and forth in the fetal position, taking deep breaths with his eyes closed.

"Uhh, are you alright?" Lex asked awkwardly.

The man was surprised when he heard Lex's voice, and turned to look at him. When he noticed a guest, he flashed him a bright smile and said, "Could you wait just a few minutes? I'm right in the middle of dealing with an anxiety attack."

"Uhh, sure, I guess," Lex replied, as the man flashed him another smile before once again closing his eyes and returning to what he was doing.

Lex took a step back to give the man his privacy, as he awkwardly waited for the man.

About 15 minutes later, the man stood up as he dusted himself off and approached Lex, with a smile.

"Sorry about that, was just dealing with some stuff. You know how it is." The bartender looked fairly young, with ruffled hair and a wrinkled uniform, but at the same time, looked quite presentable.

"Uh, yeah, sure, totally, no problem. Are you sure you're okay? Do you need more time?"

"No, no, I'm good. I've gotten pretty good at dealing with those. How can I help you today?"

"I'd like to rent a room for a week."

"Not a problem at all, that'll be 4 gold coins."

Lex handed the man the coins, but the barkeep didn't immediately accept it. He eyed the coins curiously, and then scanned them with a device.

"Well, it's real gold, but I don't recognize where it's from. Let me guess, you're fresh on the planet? You came at a good time, my friend. It's almost time to harvest the Gugu fruit, but you need to be at least in the initial Foundation realm to be a harvester. Tough luck my friend, that's the kind of stuff those scammers leave out when they just want you to fill in the seats in their transport ships. Each year we get a lot of people who come looking for jobs, only to find out later that their level is too low."

Lex flashed the man a weak smile, but said nothing.

The bartender jumped over the counter and led Lex down the corridor towards his room.

"There's no room service, so try to keep the place as clean as you can or you'll end up living in a mess. The kitchen's currently out of order as well, so if you want to eat you'll have to go out. I can give you a list of nice places nearby where I usually eat from, if you're interested." The man continued to list everything that was wrong with the place, making Lex wonder if it was even worth the few gold pieces he paid, but when he saw the room that thought went away.

Unlike the old and disheveled state of the building, the room was immaculate. There was a massive window with a balcony, a neat king sized bed, a study table with what Lex assumed was a computer, and a private bathroom. Everything was clean and tidy, and looked relatively new as well.

"Here's the key, and have a good stay," the bartender said before leaving. The man had a smile on his face the entire time he was with Lex, and had a cheery attitude, so it was hard for Lex to imagine what caused him so many anxiety attacks.

Lex put the thought behind him and entered the room, scanning everything with his Monocle. After ensuring there weren't any cameras or mics or such in the room, Lex finally relaxed, and took out the folders he received from the Emporium. He scanned both the documents again with his monocle, then began reading the list of potential jobs. Considering the cheap price of accommodation, Lex was no longer in a rush to find a job, but it wasn't a bad idea to be in the know.

As could be expected, none of the jobs looked too alluring to Lex, but there were a couple of alternative options listed that Lex wouldn't mind trying. As one can guess, one of those options was betting. Apparently there was some kind of tournament being held nearby by one of the agricultural academies ahead of harvest season.

Lex made a mental note of it, not because he was interested in gambling but because he wanted to learn more about the culture of this world. Once he was done with that, it was time for the other list - the one with all the races on this planet.

Of course, this did not literally list all species and races, as that would include various wild animals and cattle, but only the species recognized by the Empire as legal citizens. The one that Lex immediately noticed was Dragons!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 205: The return of the crazy cultivation novel

Lex could scarcely believe what he was seeing! Dragons. Actual, living dragons! For a few moments, Lex's imagination went wild as he thought of every fantasy movie he had ever seen, and envisioned the massive, powerful behemoths they depicted. When he finally woke from his fantasies, Lex quickly read the description.

Dragons:

Massive, reptilian beings with immense power. No actual Dragons have been reported in the X-14 star system, but various species of Drakes - dragons with impure lineage - were original inhabitants of the system, leading to the belief that Dragons may have once lived here. Drakes still reside on multiple planets in the X-14 star system, and are renown jewelers.

Alongside the description was an image of a lizard like being the size of a Rhino. It was covered in brown scales and had large claws. Lex had no idea how a being with claws made jewelry, but he didn't want to sound racist so he just accepted the description.

While going over the list, he discovered that the beings Lex assumed were cat-men and women were just a subspecies of humans called Neko, and were just one of the many human subspecies that existed.

The list was surprisingly long, and also included Atila-Morpher, the race that Remy belonged to.

Atila-Morpher:

New species formed from a mutation of the human subspecies: Atila's. They are able to shapeshift to assume the appearance of any humanoid species, and are born with the ability to traverse space. Atila-Morphers are known to be highly aggressive in nature, and own many businesses in the X-14 star system.

That was a curious description and caused Lex to wonder why they were listed as a separate race from humans, while so many others were listed as subspecies. Lex noticed a common trend of new species being born from preexisting ones from the list. He would probably need an in-depth study or report to learn the difference between a subspecies and new species, and how they were identified. For now, he just manually went over the list so that he had some notion of the various races, and made sure that the Fancy Monocle recorded them all.

After that Lex tried to use the computer so that he could comfortably look up more information, but when he could not figure it out after 20 minutes decided to simply learn the old-fashioned way - walking around and investigating himself.

With no specific idea of where to go, he asked the bartender for directions to the tournament, and then started to stroll in its direction. He took his time and often stopped to listen in on the conversations people were having around him. He didn't want to seem shady, but it was the best way to learn whatever was most relevant at the moment.

Most conversations seemed to be focused on the upcoming harvest season. Apparently, the Gugu fruit was one of the major cash crops of this planet, with an incredibly high demand for it. Not only was it an incredible spirit fruit, it had many applications in medicine, pill making, alchemy, and many more fields which Lex had no idea about. Most importantly, it was a favorite snack of a type of mount that was very popular among high level cultivators.

As he listened in on conversations, he could not help but imagine what life must be like for a family that used entire planets as farms. Of course, devils were the same, but the Dimitri family consisted of humans, so Lex could relate to them somewhat. It also let him know that his Inn wasn't unique or interesting enough for these kinds of guests. Maybe they would come due to the prestige he had built as the Innkeeper, but the Inn itself was lacking.

Eventually, Lex climbed aboard what looked like a tram because reaching his destination was taking too long. Originally, he thought he might get lost, but it seemed a majority of people were heading to the same place.

The venue was a massive, square building with endless crowds streaming in. It really bewildered Lex from the popularity this harvesting tournament had, but since most people's livelihoods on the planet were connected to it in some way, it made sense.

The entry ticket was a steep, 8 spirit coins. Lex almost immediately decided to skip it, but just as he was turning around, he noticed something. He stood perfectly still as he blatantly listened to a conversation some people were having.

'No,' Lex thought to himself. 'This can't be. It's impossible.'

To make sure, Lex walked around outside the venue for a good thirty minutes, and slowly his expression turned from disbelief, to shock, to excitement, then back to disbelief. This was... it was impossible. Things like this didn't happen in real life. It... it just couldn't be. But it was.

Lex hesitated for a moment, then decided to take a risk. Anyway, he had already paid for his stay for a week, so if he fell short on money, he would have time to make it back.

As Lex paid for the cheapest possible entry ticket, his mind wandered back to when he last read a very popular cultivation novel, "Ultimate King Emperor: All the Gods call me Daddy".

It was the novel Lex read where the MC's adopted sister was a Saintess who was kidnapped by celestial beings and who then killed the MC by destroying his entire planet, but the MC actually reincarnated.

the MC to finally leave the planet he reincarnated on with a harem of 9 women who were all strong, independent women who were originally stronger than the MC, but somehow lost their will, goals, and personalities once they fell in love and spent their days planting flowers in a garden, waiting for him endlessly, because that's how harems work. Of course, most of those women felt bitter and slight resentment towards the MC, not because he had too many women, but because of his noble and pure heart, which caused him to reject many women. They were upset because he rejected them.

Naturally, that minor conflict resulted in a fight that destroyed not only the antagonists' entire family, but several other organizations. He recalled vaguely the original fight being that the MC wore the same color clothes as the antagonist, or something mundane like that.

Lex was getting sidetracked in his thoughts again. The main point was, while the MC participated in that tournament, he was the underdog and the tournament, for reasons unknown, started gambling with 10,000 times the return if the MC won. Such a stake in itself was stupid, but the point was the MC finally won and earned a lot of money by betting on himself.

The reason Lex was bewildered currently was... word for word, Lex could hear the surrounding people insulting someone called Tetsuya Seigan with the same insults. Furthermore, Lex learnt that Tetsuya had only entered the Foundation realm, the minimum requirement to participate, mere minutes before the deadline to enter the tournament. As if that wasn't enough, the rumor was that Tetsuya had a rivalry against the son of the owner of the academy he studied at, who stole Tetsuya's girlfriend. To top it all off, the gambling stakes for Tetsuya were a ten times return, something Lex actually thought was crazy high.

As a sane person, cognizant of the fact that this was reality and not a cultivation novel, Lex did not believe for a second that the cliché scenario from cultivation novels was going to play out in front of him.

But that could not stop him from betting his last spirit coin on Tetsuya, and finding his way to his seat in a daze. The surrounding people made fun of him too for betting on Tetsuya - how they knew who he bet on was another mystery. But it was too surreal. Everything was happening like in the novel.

What Lex didn't realize was that since everything was following such an established cliché trend, in a private room a second generation brat who was staring at Tetsuya's picture with eyes filled with hate and ridicule was just informed that someone had just placed a bet on Tetsuya.

He frowned. How dare someone not follow his exact wishes and actually take advantage of the great odds he himself had personally put up against the brat?

"Remember him," the spoiled brat said. "I'll personally take care of him after the tournament."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 206: Consequence of arrogance

When Lex arrived at his seat, there were already some preliminary matches going on. But Lex had no idea what was happening on stage, so he could not help but ask the people sitting next to him.

Sitting beside him was a Roslo, the same species as the purple skinned, doubled horned vendor Lex met the first time. According to the description Lex had of their species, they were extremely easy to aggravate, but also very easy to befriend. They were known for their extreme physical prowess, along with the ability to display that prowess with skill and precision.

Still, Lex had no trouble having a friendly chat with the Roslo, and asked about how the tournament worked and what he was supposed to be looking for. This particular Roslo was apparently a very skilled harvester and loved talking about it, so it ended up helping Lex.

The explanation started with the origin of the tournament. Harvesting Gugu fruit, as some may have noticed, was a major trend on the planet. But the harvesting process was not as simple as picking an apple from a tree. The first and most basic requirement was to be in the Foundation realm. This was because, when the fruit was removed from its tree, regardless of whether it was a successful harvest or a failed one, a great deal of spirit energy would be released.

Some people may think that being exposed to a great deal of spirit energy was a good thing, but such was not actually the case. Qi training cultivators could not handle a great deal of spirit energy in their body, which is why they cultivated only a few strands of Qi. In fact, at each level in the Qi training realm, a cultivator would only absorb 11 strands of Qi, so that by the 9th level the cultivator would have 99 strands of Qi. Absorbing that 100th strand was a part of breaking into the Foundation realm.

Therefore, if a large surge of nonneutral spirit energy entered their body, they would immediately suffer from spirit energy poisoning, the effects of which ranged from being bedridden to straight up death.

The next requirement of harvesting Gugu fruit was technique, precision, and skill. The fruit that looked like a Red Mango, but with a harsh exterior like that of Pineapple, had to be removed in a certain way to preserve its potency from dropping, and allowing it to be transported for use at a later date. This was a very brief description of the process, like saying a person used fire to heat ingredients as a description for cooking - it wasn't inaccurate but there was a lot more to it.

Such techniques were obviously not practiced on the actual fruit itself, as they had a long maturing period and were extremely valuable, so certain fruits were artificially designed to have the same extraction requirements as the Gugu fruit, but had no other value. Naturally, when an environment that had high stakes as well as many highly skilled people was created, it nurtured competition. That is how these tournaments originated.

Having a greater understanding of events, Lex paid great attention to the stage. He wanted to get a good understanding of what to expect when Tetsuya finally came on stage. Lex wasn't anticipating his arrival because he was comparing it to the MC from that ridiculous novel that he could not stop binge reading.

As free spirited as he was, he would not waste 80% of his money on a hunch. He had actually received a quest from the system when he first heard people discussing him.

New Quest: The Inn caters to all the universe, but not all guests are the same. The Inn is not only a place where guests stay; it is a place to where they may seek refuge on their tumultuous journey in the cultivation world. Help Tetsuya Seigan avoid calamity by having him retreat to the Inn.

Quest time limit: 10 hours

Quest Reward: Support token!

Remarks: The system is literally finding good guests for you. Go do something on your own once in a while.

Since the Inn gave such a high review of Tetsuya, Lex didn't mind betting his money on him. Besides, it wasn't like he was taking any personal risk by doing so. At worst, he would just lose some money, not a big deal. Thinking that, Lex stretched his body as he got comfortable in his seat.

He could feel the crowd's anticipation slowly building, and soon the preliminary matches ended and the main event finally started! Lex noticed quite the hype as the contestants came up on stage one by one. One person, in particular, attracted a lot of attention.

"That's Brent," the Roslo sitting beside told Lex. "He's the son of the head of the academy hosting this tournament. Last year, he was in the top 10 for most Gugu fruits harvested during the harvest period. There are rumors that this year he's been recruited by the Dimitri family to harvest in their premium fields."

"Wow, that must pay well," Lex said casually as he stared at Brent. So this was the guy Tetsuya had a rivalry with?

Just as Lex was playing out an elaborate backstory in his mind for how their rivalry would play out, another contestant stepped out on stage. It wasn't as far as the crowd starting to boo him, but the negative opinion of the crowd was evident. On the stage a tall, thin man had stepped out with bright red hair and a proud smirk.

Lex did not need to be told that this was Tetsuya, but his next actions immediately confused Lex. He went up and greeted Brent, and the two seemed to be having a pleasant conversation.

"Isn't that Tetsuya? I thought he had a rivalry with Brent."

"No, not with Brent," the Roslo said with excitement. It seemed like he thoroughly enjoyed gossiping. "Brent is the bast*rd son of the owner, and grew up on the streets with Tetsuya. The two of them are like brothers, and it's even said that the whole reason why Brent raised his cultivation so high was because Tetsuya gave him some kind of treasure he found.

"But the academy owner's rightful son and heir, Darius, who was raised in the lap of luxury, apparently hates Brent, and hates Tetsuya, too. There are even rumors that there have been assassination attempts on Tetsuya," at this point the Roslo was whispering.

"If people know that he's the victim... why does everyone seem to hate him so much?" Lex asked in confusion. In the novel, everyone hated the MC because the villain hated him, but that did not seem to be the case here.

"The kid is very skilled in combat, and his harvesting technique is not bad," the Roslo said with the air of an expert, "but he's too arrogant. He's had a tough life, sure, but who hasn't? He uses overcoming difficulty as an excuse to look down on everyone else. He's always picking fights and insulting everyone, so why would anyone like him? Even when he's in the right, he's too proud to explain, as if everyone should be omniscient and just know not to blame him. Instead of considering that there could be a misunderstanding, he directly picks a fight. And of course, since he's so talented, he wins the fights more often than he loses, which makes people hate him even more. People don't hate him because of anything someone else did, he can manage to attract all that hate on his own."

Lex frowned, as he continued to watch the stage. The matches had already begun, and massive trees were raised from holes on the stage, each with various sized fruits hanging from them. The contestants were already harvesting them, with many large screens focused on each of the contestants.

Tetsuya's description was quite different from what he expected, but there were all kinds of people, so he couldn't really comment on how Tetsuya should be. Not to mention, this seemed to just be an outsider's opinion on the matter. Maybe things were actually quite different. Regardless, Lex wasn't

really interested in making friends, anyway. He just had to slip Tetsuya a key, and let him use it to avoid whatever catastrophe he was about to face.

Once that was done, his quest would be complete and Lex could continue exploring this planet and learning about their culture, so he could plan on how to host them better.

As much as the crowd was riled up, Lex quickly got bored. That was not to say the tournament was easy, as Lex learnt. Harvesting each fruit was a long and arduous process. But in the end, Lex was just not interested in... watching fruit be harvested. Nearly five hours later, the tournament finally ended, with Brent coming in first and Tetsuya coming in second. There were moments in the tournament where it seemed Tetsuya was either extremely unlucky or that he was being targeted, as three of the fruits he tried to harvest exploded just as he was about to complete the harvest, revealing pests hidden inside the fruit. Despite such a setback, he had somehow managed to come in second, and win some prizes, as well as the right to participate during the actual harvest.

Lex quickly went to gather his winnings, 10 spirit coins, and then began to think about how he was going to meet Tetsuya. As he was not experienced in these matters, and since he was not expecting it, Lex was completely unaware that he was being followed from the moment he collected his winnings. Some people in the crowd noticed when the number of followers slowly increased, but they said nothing. It was best to stay uninvolved in other peoples trouble, not to mention they could soon be getting a free show.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 207: Volcanic rage

Once the tournament was over and he collected all his winnings, Tetsuya did not forget to go collect his winnings from the bet. Although he did not get first which, even without his 'bad luck' he probably would not have gotten, the bets were on his being in the top three. Unlike Brent, who had multiple sources of income to support him, Tetsuya did not so every spirit coin mattered. Naturally, since he was stepping into the public, he was wearing a facemask to hide his identity. He wasn't oblivious to the fact that he wasn't well liked, but couldn't find it in himself to care. The only reason he even wore a mask was because his time was valuable and better spent elsewhere than arguing with an idiotic mob.

When he went up to the counter to collect his winnings, he did not bother with any small tack and just handed the man his slip. The man, on the other hand, could not prevent himself from chatting a little.

"Must be to catch a break like this huh? You know, you're the second person to collect winnings from betting on that Tetsuya kid. Though, your winnings are a lot more than his, I can tell you that."

"Someone else bet on Tetsuya?" he couldn't help but ask, surprised. "Isn't he afraid of Darius?"

"Aren't you?" the man asked, finally handing over Tetsuya's winnings. "He looked like a foreigner, and didn't bet much. It doesn't look like he knew what he was doing, maybe he just saw the stakes and couldn't help himself. Stuff like this happens."

Tetsuya nodded to the man, and left with his winnings. He could not help but find himself musing. On the off chance that this wasn't a foreigner being ignorant, he better go check things out. It was not like he wanted to go and help Darius out, but in the event that this was a trap and something happened to him, Tetsuya would shoulder the blame. As for the possibility that Darius wouldn't pursue this matter? It was impossible, that brat was too small minded and egotistical to leave things like this alone.

On the bright side, because of that, tracking Darius would be extremely easy. He just hoped he made it in time.

Lex was casually looking for a restaurant to eat nearby. He wanted to treat himself a little before he went looking for Tetsuya. At first he was concerned that he wouldn't have a way to reach him, but it turned out that he was extremely notorious and many people knew the location of his apartment, as the place always attracted a lot of trouble. In a situation like this, finding him wouldn't be the issue. It was convincing him to use the key when he was in trouble that was difficult.

During this time, he was woefully ignorant of the few people following him from a distance. They were waiting for the moment Darius would catch up with them. If not for that, they would have taken care of the target already. They followed him to a restaurant, and then decided to clear the street outside while they waited. Soon, the crowds disbursed, and the unusually quiet street stood out drastically in such a busy city. They didn't care though, as that had nothing to do with them.

When Darius finally arrived, it was obvious that he was in a bad mood. Not only had that insufferable Tetsuya come in second, more importantly, Brent had come first. The more they displayed their talents, the worse off Darius would look. After all, while they were busy harvesting the fruit, Darius had not even broken into the Foundation realm yet. He was at the peak of Qi training, but because he had relied heavily on medication to reach this realm, he couldn't breakthrough so easily. It would require sufficient preparation.

"Where is he?" Darius roared as soon as he entered the street.

"He's in the restaurant, boss," one of his faithful goons answered. "Should we go drag him out?"

"No, I have a better idea," he said with an ugly, evil grin.

A short while later, Lex exited the restaurant feeling extremely satisfied. He had no idea what he had eaten, and as far as he could tell the dish consisted mostly of some kind of vegetables he'd never seen. But not only was it spirit food, the flavor was beyond anything he had ever tried. Lex had already decided to gather as many seeds from this planet as he could.

While he was lost in his thoughts, something distracted him the moment he stepped out of the shop. Why was the street empty? But, before he could think more on the matter, something smacked him straight on the forehead!

Lex's body was hurled off to the side and smashed into a nearby pole. The attack was so sudden and so heavy, even after he had fallen to the ground, he did not completely understand what was happening. His head was spinning and his ears were ringing. He tried to gather his thoughts, but it seemed he was concussed. He saw dirt and blood. He tried moving his arms, but suddenly felt like he couldn't find them.

After a couple of moments, he started to recover, and could hear the sound of laughter. He picked up his head to look around, as he brought his hand to his head, and felt the blood dripping down his face.

"Boss, I think he's still alive," one of the goons said, noticing Lex move.

"Well I'll be damned, he survived a hit of my full strength. I guess he needs a little bit more of my love," Darius said with a malevolent grin as he walked towards Lex, holding something similar to a baseball bat in his hand. The end of the bat was covered in sharp spikes, one of which was covered in blood.

The next moment, Lex finally recovered, his thoughts started to flow once again. At first he was confused. He was being attacked? Why? Then came the anger. In his entire life, Lex had never been assaulted by another human.

The training with Marlo hardly counted, as that was training. Neither the zombies nor the wolves that once nearly killed him either affected him in the same way as he was being affected now. In Lex's mind, they were beings of a different species, and so it made sense that they would fight. But while he had been in difficult situations with humans, he had never been successfully attacked like this. Not to mention, since he was homeschooled, Lex had no experience with bullies either.

So now that he was attacked by humans, for seemingly no reason, he was filled with a rage the likes of which he had never known! The Qi in his body flowed like burning lava and he used Auxiliary Burst flawlessly, one of the two offensive spirit techniques he knew, and fired the Heavy Harley directly at his attacker's face!

Auxiliary burst increased the damage of any attack it supplemented, which, combined with the close range and power of the gun, all smashed into his attack like a cannon! Lex was attacking to kill, and currently he had no thoughts of morality or right and wrong in his mind, he only wanted them to die!

His rage affected him in a way Lex had never experienced before, and he had already entered the state of 'flow' he was so familiar with, but this time it was stronger than ever before. Lex's accuracy was on target to the millimeter, and even as the man with the bat fell backwards, each bullet continued to hit him directly in the center of his forehead - though they couldn't seem to pierce his skin.

The goons who had been laughing and enjoying themselves so far were shocked by the sudden change, and by the time any of them reacted, Lex had already fired ten shots! Shouts of anger and panic filled the street as some sprinter towards Lex while others towards Darius.

But even outnumbered, they held no advantage over the enraged Lex, who had by now gotten on his feet. After ten shots, he was fairly certain that the man with the bat was wearing some kind of treasure that Lex could not break, so he turned his target to the others. Drawing his short sword and holding it in his left hand and the gun in his right, Lex released a vicious battle cry as he met his foes in battle.

Lex did not even realize that he was using Falcon relief, Qi repulsor and Qi blade and Auxiliary Burst all at once, as his focus was on his foes.

Balancing on the heel of his foot, he twisted as he dodged an attack and swung his blade towards the nearest goon, and shot his gun at one farther away without looking. It was not a fight but a slaughter, as even once none of the goons were able to exchange a single attack with Lex.

In the distance, Tetsuya munched on a snack as he watched the fight. The kid was young, but he wasn't bad. Yet despite his amazing display, his inexperience was evident in Tetsuya's eyes. Still, for now, he only watched.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 208: Exhausted

After a couple of minutes, four bodies lay on the ground near Lex, either groaning in pain or passed out. While there was blood on the floor, it wasn't nearly as much when considering the kinds of wounds inflicted by Lex. These goons must have had some kind of protective or healing treasures on them, yet that mattered little right now to Lex.

While four goons were down, four more stood by Darius, who had gotten up from the ground, holding a hand over his forehead where Lex had shot him. His face was entirely red, though you could not tell if it was from pain or anger.

"I'll kill you!" he roared as he gave Lex his ugliest and most despicable glare. Yet Lex did not give him the reaction he wanted. Lex did not cower in fear or beg for forgiveness, but just gave him a sneer. Though blinded by rage himself, Lex was cognizant of the fact that this person had not come here to simply rough him up.

Let alone that he was smacked directly on his head by a metal bat using the full physical strength of what Lex assumed was a peak Qi training realm cultivator, but the end of the bat was covered in sharp pikes. He could distinctly see blood only on one of the spikes, and was aware of the fact that he had just gotten extremely lucky that the spike hadn't been able to puncture his skull. Otherwise, Lex would be dead.

When that thought went through his mind, Lex was enraged even more. He holstered his gun and reached his hand into his bag. Since Lex was able to sense spirit energy now, he was better able to gauge the realms of those near him. Just based on the sheer magnitude of the pressure that two of them gave off, Lex knew they were Foundation realm experts. But so what? Since he had started traveling across planets again, he had taken precautions for even if he faced Golden core experts, let alone two Foundation realm ones.

Of course, neither Darius nor the others intended to give him the time to retrieve whatever he wanted from the bag and attacked him.

While Lex was still able to keep up with the speed of the other goons and dodge them, there was nothing he could do to keep up with the Foundation realm ones, so he immediately deployed the Talisman shield. The shield was one and a half foot wide and four feet long, and hovered around Lex freely. Once activated, it would block attacks on its own, and would last as long as the energy in the Talisman didn't fade or until Lex dismissed it. Activating and dismissing it were easy, but they both required Lex to consciously choose to do so.

Fortunately, this Talisman shield Lex bought from Chen was actually a Jotun product, and was quite strong. This was because the two foundation experts' attacks landed as soon as he deployed the shield, hurling Lex back.

But even as Lex fell back, he was not distracted, and pulled out a few tiny cylindrical items from the bag and flung one of them at the goons.

The strongest two goons immediately realized the threat and retreated, but the rest were not so fast and were struck by a spiritual blast. The two Qi training realm goons were directly knocked out as their bodies flung into the air. Darius was protected by some kind of treasure once again, but even that could not stop him from falling backwards.

Just as Lex was about to rush forward to continue attacking them, he ran out of Qi! All the techniques he was using immediately stopped, and exhaustion hit Lex like a sledgehammer. This was the first time he had been completely drained of Qi since he entered the realm, and he nearly blacked out from the shock of running out of Qi and his techniques being forcefully stopped.

But while he managed to keep himself awake, his state of rage fueled flow was broken. But while Lex was suddenly out of breath, and it took a great deal of effort to use his brain, and he was almost entirely physically drained, he could still continue to fight. As if making a decision, his face hardened as he reached into his backpack one more time to search for something.

But before the goons could attack him again, and before Lex could continue to fight, another person appeared in Lex's sight. He wasted no time and smashed a brick against the goons' heads, knocking them out, before kicking Darius in the face to reach the same result.

Lex recognized this new person immediately, it was Tetsuya. Up close, he looked even more ordinary than he had on the screen, and Lex couldn't help noticing that his cheeks had a slight dip, as if he was starved and malnourished.

"Not a bad performance," Tetsuya said casually, and he reached down and started patting Darius and his goons. Lex was momentarily confused before realizing... he was robbing them!

"You were a little heavy-handed on the Qi usage, which was a mistake. Always try to leave at least 30% of your Qi reserves to run away. If you dip that low and the fight hasn't ended, it's time for you to run away."

"I could still fight them," Lex said hoarsely.

"Yeah, I noticed," he said, as he eyed Lex's backpack warily. "But I suspect anything you did now would kill these guys. Don't misunderstand me, I have no love for these guys. But, as much as I want to, I can't let this guy die." Tetsuya said as he stripped Darius of all his valuables.

"Why?" Lex asked, ignoring the increasingly frustrating headache he was developing. The ringing in his ears had only gotten worse after he ran out of Qi, and while he was slowly catching his breath again, it was very irritating.

"You see, this little brat has a great enmity against me. It's no secret that he's moved against me both openly and under the table. The problem with such a situation is that, should anything happen to this runt, I will be the first person blamed. That will make it impossible for me to ever leave this planet. So, as long as I am on this planet, I have to take care of this idiot."

"Why don't you just leave?" Lex asked, confused. But Tetsuya didn't reply, and only smiled at Lex.

"I take it you're a foreigner here, since you were stupid enough to bet on me. In that case, I'll help you a little. While this kid and his family can be considered local big shots, it's only in this city. If you stay here, they'll come back for revenge unless you find a backer. But if you leave the city discreetly, then they'll be hard pressed to find you. Also, while I don't really care about the rest, my suggestion is that you don't kill them. That way, the local police will be forced to start an investigation."

Lex looked at the various goons laying on the floor. Now that his anger had disappeared, his inclination to kill them had also gone as well. In fact, he was feeling a little conflicted about how easy it was for him to decide to kill them. Tetsuya saw the hesitation in Lex's eyes, but did not comment on it.

"Since I only came at the end, I won't take much. This is your share of the loot," he said, as he neatly put an assortment of seemingly random items in a bag and handed them to Lex. He did, however, easily recognize the few dozen spirit stones and a pouch full of spirit coins that also went in the bag.

With that, Tetsuya grabbed Darius by the leg, and began pulling him away with a casual smile. It was as if he didn't take the situation seriously at all.

"Wait, take this," Lex called out, as he threw a golden key at the man. "Take it as a thank you gift for helping me out. Crush it, if you're ever in trouble you can't handle."

Tetsuya caught the golden key, and observed it carefully. He had noticed Lex using various weapons, so he assumed this was just one more and put it in his pocket. Lex had used some powerful weapons, weapons that weren't so easy to get on X-142, so he took his words seriously.

"If I were you, I would get on the first ride out of this city. There's a train station nearby, so if you have nothing holding you back, that's the destination I would suggest for you."

With that, Tetsuya left. He had already spoken more to Lex than he did to most people, and his social battery was running dry.

Lex, who stood there for a couple more moments, let out an exhausted sigh as he turned and started jogging away with two bags on his back. He regretted paying rent at his hotel already, but this wasn't so bad either. Why should he spend his time on this planet cooped up in a tavern? No, Lex would take on the role of a tourist, and explore.

Once he had left, some people finally stuck their heads out of the shops nearby, and quickly started sharing the videos they took of the fight. It wasn't everyday you got entertainment like this on X-142.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 209: Get that cash money, baby

After jogging for a couple of minutes and finally entering a busy street, Lex entered a random shop and asked to use the restroom, dropping a spirit coin in the shopkeeper's hands. The obvious bribe, along with his blood-covered face and clothes prompted the shopkeeper to quickly guide him to the restroom.

Cleaning the clothes was fairly easy, as the blood washed right off whatever synthetic material they were made from. He cleaned his sword as well and quickly checked to see if any of his other pieces of equipment had blood on them. Once that was done, Lex pulled out a first aid kit from his bag and looked at himself in the mirror. He'd never done anything like this before, and though Lex was not squeamish, he still needed to mentally prepare himself before he began.

Something like the needle failing to pierce his skin due to his increased defence did not happen because Lex had ensured to get equipment suitable for his body. While it did not pierce his skin easily, it got the job done. Having zero prior experience and only a YouTube tutorial seen long ago as a guide, Lex's stitches were not neat, but he managed to close the wound on his left temple. He put a bandaid over it to hide his shoddy work and downed a bottle of Botlam Dew.

It was convenient having a quick fix potion, and Lex planned on enjoying it while he could as once he entered the Foundation realm it would no longer be effective on him. As it was, due to his body, soul and spirit being combined, his healing capability was already slowed down. Yet Lex did not mind that at all, as had he been even slightly weaker. That thought kept shaking him every time he thought about it, and his guilt at wanting to kill those guys had long disappeared.

Maybe if he actually ended up killing someone, Lex might have reacted differently, but as it was, Lex actually found it difficult to make himself feel anything other than anger. A lifetime of watching TV and reading novels told Lex that maybe he should have been feeling some kind of negative reaction to the thought, but he honestly wasn't and he couldn't be bothered to care more about it.

Once he was done, Lex quickly put his clothes back on and left, asking the shopkeeper if there was something akin to a taxi. There was, and soon Lex found himself sitting in a flying pod that was dashing through the air towards his destination. The Air pod, as it was called, was just big enough to fit a sofa on which Lex sat, and accommodate a holographic screen in front of him.

The experience was amazing, but unfortunately, Lex had only just begun to explore intergalactic tv when the pod stopped, and opened up to reveal the Infinity Emporium. Since Lex was planning on leaving, there was no way he would leave the quest unfinished. Lex had spent some time thinking of what exactly to sell to the Emporium.

Naturally, all the items supplied by the Inn were considered by him, including even the Lotus he carried on his back, but a random idea struck him. Since the Emporium sold everything, they also likely bought everything - including information. As far as information was concerned, there were a lot of things that could be sold, including the information about the devil Loretta's father being an insanely powerful cultivator.

But, Lex did not want to get involved in selling any of his guests personal information as that might lead to problems down the road. He did, however, recall something that he once longed for. He wrote down the exact information he got from the system regarding this specific matter, and wanted to see if the Emporium would buy it.

He entered the shop, once again marveling at how effortlessly the shop separated him from the other guests, and walked towards the familiar shopkeeper.

"Hey man, I have a few things I wanted to buy, as well as a few things I wanted to sell. I was hoping you could help me out."

"I would be most happy to help with that," the shopkeeper said with an air of familiarity.

"I never caught your name last time, I'm Lex, by the way."

"How rude of me. My name is Powell Grant. It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Lex."

"Likewise, Powell, likewise. Now, Powell, I'm facing a bit of a conundrum and I was hoping you could help me out. Most of the things I intend to sell should be pretty easy for you to appraise," he said, as he slung the bag Tetsuya had given him off his shoulder. "But I do have something that I'm concerned you might not be able to identify the proper worth of."

"Oh? Please, do elaborate, and I'll help you however I can. I assure you, so long as the business is authentic, we never turn it away."

"See, that's just the thing. I have a piece of information I'm looking to sell, some very valuable information at that. Now, I know the information I'm selling is accurate, but how do I convince you that it is true? Because if I hand it over, and you don't believe it, that'll be quite a loss for me."

"I see your point," Powell said, nodding his head. "Normally information comes from reputable sources, but what does someone who does not yet have a reputation do? Of course, we have a few ways of authenticating information. Please, follow me."

Powell opened up a latch on the side and lifted the counter, providing Lex a way to follow him to the back of the store. Lex followed the shopkeeper into a room, but paused the moment he stepped in.

This room was like something out of a movie. Everything in the room was white, from the walls to the furniture and even the paintings that were made from different shades of white. In the center of the room were two sofas facing each other, with a table between them. On the table was a white orb.

"Please, have a seat," Powell said, his voice coming out in a whisper. That's when Lex noticed that the man's clothes had also changed color and become white. He looked down, and even his own clothes, while still being exactly the same, had changed their colors to white.

"Strange room," Lex said, and was shocked to find that even his voice became a whisper without him meaning to do so.

Intrigued, he sat opposite Powell, who had summoned a white paper cuff.

"There are two ways we use to authenticate information, both of which are employed in this room. You can wear this cuff, and put your hand over the orb and provide me with the information you wish to sell. The cuff will detect if you are lying, and will change color if you are. But that is not normally enough, as informants can sometimes be misinformed. The second judge is the orb, as it detects your karma regarding the information you provide. If anyone has tampered with you, or the information, the orb will detect it. If you pass both of these tests, we consider the information you provide to be true and accurate."

Lex put on the cuff, but before he placed his hand on the orb, asked, "and what will you do if the information is extremely valuable? Are you sure you can pay me appropriately?"

"It's an Infinity Emporium guarantee. So long as the business is authentic, we can handle it."

Lex raised an eyebrow and decided to test it. It wasn't like he was losing anything by trying this out, as he was just giving away some information that was useless to him. On the off chance that the Emporium wasn't able to buy the information he was selling, he wondered what would happen to the quest. After all, the information directly referenced Dao Lords.

"Some time ago, I managed to secretly obtain information about a unique item called the Bangle of Narn. The bangle is actually a single galaxy condensed into a bangle form, that can be worn without any harmful consequences. Everything that exists within that galaxy can be used and controlled by the wearer. The aura of the Bangle cannot be suppressed and can be easily identified by all Daolord realm cultivators within 99 million lightyears."

Lex eyed the cuff as well as the orb, but neither of them had any reaction. When he looked at Powell though, his reaction was very satisfying. His jaw hung open in shock as he stared at the orb for any signs of a lie or interference, but there were none.

But, as shocked as he was, he quickly recovered, and gave Lex a smile with the warmth and passion of a lover.

"Lex, no no, Mr. Lex, do you happen to know anything about the bangles' location? Or the owner?"

"Unfortunately not," Lex replied with a chuckle. He himself almost became the owner of it once, but as tempting as it was to own an entire galaxy's wealth, he did not regret giving it up. He tried not to dwell on the fact that even the Jotun Empire was not able to flawlessly wield the wealth of an entire galaxy, despite owning many.

"How unfortunate," Powell replied with actual regret on his face. But he composed himself quickly and returned to the matter at hand.

"Mr. Lex, the information you have provided is truly valuable, despite not having any information on its location. First, I would like to thank you for trusting the Emporium with this boon. Second, I would like to ask, how would you like to get paid?"

The Innkeeper

Chapter 210: When the arrogant fall

"I would like to ask, how would you like to get paid?" Powell asked, smiling as if he was the one getting paid instead.

"Well why don't you tell me what options I have and then I'll consider it."

"Yes, of course. I'll start by explaining how the Emporium membership works. The most basic customers we cater to are non-members, but depending on how much money they spend, they can get membership for our establishment. But, the membership is not so simple, as it has levels.

"To grow from one level to the next, the first requirement is to spend a certain amount of money. However, clients of a certain stature automatically membership based on their cultivation. Body Tempering is equivalent to level 1, though they don't get automatic membership, Qi Training is level 2, Foundation is level 3, and so forth.

"To make it easier to understand, each level member has access to a greater number of our items. The information you sold to us touches upon the boundary of level 9 membership, but doesn't quite cross it, and so it is categorized at level 8. Suffice to say, for selling such information to us, you automatically get level 8 membership and have access to all our treasures or information up to that level.

"You can accept payment in the form of spirit stones, treasures, information, or store credit as you desire. I must let you know that this is only a small store, so we don't have all the items you might see on the list, but as long as it is within a branch on this planet we can have them teleported over from our other branches immediately, so it should not be a concern."

"That's great, show me the list. But at the same time, there are a few things I need, so how about I ask you about them, and you can guide me."

"Certainly," said Powell, as he handed Lex a tablet with a long list displayed on it.

"Well, first of all, if I'm going to trade for a lot of items, it'll be a hassle to carry all of them around, as I will be traveling for a short while."

"We do have a few items with spatial properties that are categorized as level 7, but unfortunately, none of them are on this planet. An alternative I can offer you is a locker. You can place any items you get in

the locker where the Emporium will take responsibility for their safety. The locker also comes with a key, which you can use to teleport the contents of the locker inside to yourself. The key will be linked to you, so that in case you lose it, someone else cannot use it to retrieve your items."

"I guess that'll do," Lex said, disappointed he couldn't get the spatial items. He really wanted to be able to summon and put away his belongings the way he did with Inn related items from his inventory. Unfortunately, as uncooperative as the system was, Lex could only place items he got from the system in his inventory, not other things.

"Alright, the first thing I need, and I think this is the perfect planet for that, is some fertilizer for a plant I have at the Golden Core realm. I want to help it grow as fast as I can."

"Indeed, we have an excellent selection for that," Powell said, and pulled up some items on the tablet to show Lex. Lex did not hesitate to buy double the recommended amount of fertilizer for the Delinquent Vine back at the Inn. It was unfortunate that this planet only grew plants up to a certain level, as the options of fertilizers would have been even better options. Lex also bought various seeds and saplings for fruit trees and vegetables. He would need to grow the area for the greenhouse once he got back, but he didn't mind. This was a good problem to have.

Next, he bought an excellent binding technique for pets. It wasn't that he doubted Fenrir would not be loyal, but a binding technique would not only make it easier for Lex to communicate, and help grow Fenrir, it would aid in the growth of both Fenrir and Lex. As long as one of them was stronger than the other, the technique would have a nurturing effect on the weaker one, as a result of the technique. Of course, regardless of who was stronger, Lex would remain the controller of the technique.

He also bought some ointments that would help him increase the speed of his cultivation. It had become abundantly obvious to him that because he was cultivating the trinity, his body, soul and spirit, his speed was devastatingly slow. It was literally impossible to cultivate without external help.

He bought himself a self-activating defense treasure, in case he suffered a surprise attack like last time. He also did not forget to buy more detailed information about the X-14 system as well as the Dimitri family.

That took care of the things he already had in mind. After that, he began perusing the list for what they had. The list was... expansive, to say the least. He ended up buying a lot of things, as well as information, that he thought would serve him well in the future - including a seemingly indestructible locket. There was nothing else special about it, as far as anyone could tell, but Lex had a workaround for that, and

anything indestructible had to be precious.. Unfortunately, Lex was severely limited in what he could buy as there was almost nothing above level 4 on this planet, in keeping with the buying power of this planet.

With quite a bit of credit left, and no idea of what else to buy, Lex spent it all on spirit stones, seeds, ores and a few pieces of technology. He had no interest in maintaining any credit at the Emporium, as he had no idea when he would encounter it again.

Then, stuffing everything he bought into one of the Emporium's lockers, Lex finally left. He'd ended up spending over an hour here, much longer than he was expecting, and now he just wanted to leave as quickly as possible to avoid any possible trouble. Putting on a mask he bought before leaving the shop, Lex stepped out confidently and hailed an Air pod to the train station.

He was expecting that the 'trains' here would actually be vastly different from what he was used to on Earth, but that wasn't actually the case. The trains looked remarkably similar to bullet trains back on Earth, but Lex wasn't in the mood to speculate on the reason at the moment.

Since he had obtained information on this entire star system, he naturally also knew a lot about this planet. He already had a destination in mind, and after buying a ticket for a private room, boarded the train. To Lex's great relief, no problems occurred while he waited, and eventually, the train departed safely.

Tetsuya did not avoid the public crowd as he dragged Darius' body back to his house, and left him lying in front of the gate once he arrived. If something still happened to him after Tetsuya brought him back home, then no one could blame him.

He wasn't really afraid of any retaliation, as the only ones on this planet he feared was the Dimitri family. This was because on this planet, anyone who surpassed the Foundation realm and entered the Golden core was asked to leave the planet. The only Golden core experts on this planet were direct Dimitri family members or employees. The reasoning for this was complex and served many purposes, but the result was that Tetsuya felt extremely safe.

He had even fought off Foundation enemies while he was still in the Qi training realm, let alone now that he was in the Foundation himself.

It was this well earned arrogance that resulted in what happened next. Darius had hired sufficiently skilled people long before today to take care of Tetsuya, it was just that they happened to act shortly after Lx thoroughly humiliated Darius in a public way as they were making preparations.

The moment Tetsuya entered his home, it exploded. This was not a small explosion that could be covered up by local forces, this would directly attract the attention of the Dimitri family. But the assassination was far from over.

Wounded, Tetsuya was trying to understand what happened from behind the protective cover of a defensive treasure, when something rammed through the cover of the treasure and directly blew his right arm off! It was only after he suffered the injury that the sound of a sniper shot rang through the street.

Tetsuya, despite still being in shock, tried to move away but the trap this time was too well devised. Before he could move, however, another shot blasted a hole directly through his chest. Tetsuya could not even fall as he was already on the ground, his eyes wide open in shock, his brains slowly shutting down, when a piece of debris fell on top of him, supposedly crushing him.

But before he was crushed, it happened to break the golden key, teleporting the critically wounded man away. But no one saw him disappear. All the cameras which had been recording the whole incident caught a massive piece of debris crushing his body, before it too was covered in the fire that the explosion had started.

Far away, the sniper sent the video to Darius before packing up and starting to run away. He had to get off this planet, or he would be the next one to suffer.