

The Innkeeper

Chapter 21 Survival

Lex's speed instantly picked up once he exited the park onto the cobblestone road. The style and architecture of the buildings was dramatically different from what Lex was used to on Earth, but he couldn't be bothered with that now. All he cared about was getting to some place safe.

The road, a wide single path cutting through the city, was littered with large rectangular objects Lex could only assume were vehicles, though he saw no tires. There were no windows in the "cars" either so he couldn't look through them and didn't know how to open them, so they were automatically disqualified as a hiding place.

The buildings, which were only a couple stories high, seemed as if they were cut out of large rocks as they had no joints or seams, and most importantly, no doors or windows! How was he supposed to get in?

Lex continued limping in the darkness, further and further away from the park. Fortunately there didn't seem to be any living zombies roaming the roads. He said "living" zombies because the roads seemed to be littered with dead, rotten bodies he could only assume were zombies. That made him feel at ease as that probably meant there were living humans clearing the...

A loud crash attracted his attention, which was followed by more banging. It seemed someone was fighting. After thinking for a moment, he slowly started moving towards the sound, doing his best to stay out of sight. If he found a few people he could possibly consider joining them..

In the few minutes that he had been walking his pain had reduced, however slight. That at least proved Botlam Dew seemed to be effective, for now. Leaning against the cars for support and cover, he peeked around a corner to see if he could get a view of the fight.

What he saw was not humans fighting zombies, instead he saw an eight feet giant monster that looked like it might have once been a lion viciously devouring a small horde of zombies. The zombies, moving with their usual slow pace, gathered around the lion and tried attacking it. They scraped and

bit the lion but seemed to be doing no damage, while the lion casually bit the head of a zombie and seemed to be sucking something out of its body. The already decayed zombie shriveled up before the lion flung it away, crashing it into a nearby car, and bit the next one.

Lex was horrified. Then he slowly started moving backwards. Although his steps were already light, he did his best to not make even the slightest bit of noise as he retreated. Every time his backpack would rustle he would be horrified! This world was too scary! The situation, however, did not seem to be improving. When he turned around, he saw several zombies walking towards the lion from the distance, and he was directly in their path! The loud noise of the fight was too prominent in the silent night. He had to get out of the line of sight immediately!

Quickly he changed his direction and walked down a different street gripping his knife tightly, as if it was the only thing giving him courage. Lightning flashed through the sky again, and the thunder that followed seemed to signal the start of a devastating storm. The rain started spontaneously and fell with such speed and ferocity that it would put a charging army to shame.

It was around this time that he finally saw a building with a small portion of the wall collapsed. Thanking his miserable luck finally turning, he stumbled towards the building and entered it. It was completely dark now, and except for the few flashes of lightning occasionally Lex had no other source of light. He was a little fearful; he didn't want to enter the building without being able to see. What if he walked right into a zombie? It was then, like a revelation from the heavens, that he remembered that he had packed a flashlight. Stumbling through his backpack, he searched for the light and turned it on. Not wanting to attract too much attention in the darkness he immediately entered the building into what he assumed was once a living room. Broken furniture and shattered glass covered the floor like rubble and the room showed clear signs of a fight. A few skeletons lay on the ground, broken and dismembered. The one thing the room did not have, however, was a door that led deeper into the house. The people of this world must have had some other way to enter and exit, Lex would have to figure that out somehow. For now though, he needed rest.

Lex stumbled to a corner in the room and dragged the remains of a couch to cover him as he sat to rest out of sight. He closed the torch so as to not attract attention, but remained vigilant in case he discovered zombies coming towards him. The knife was still gripped tightly in his hand.

A woman stood nervously in a large drawing room, dressed in a very formal looking suit, gripping her son's hand tightly. Her son, a small boy who stood beside her, looked around the large room in wonder and awe. Once the child had been in rooms much more lavish than this, but he was young and memories even a few months old were too ancient for him let alone those from further back. His left hand was a little uncomfortable – his mother was squeezing too tightly, but he did not say anything as he knew his mother would only do that when she was not feeling well. His mother was often not feeling well these days, she thought he didn't know but he could tell. He didn't know how to make her feel better though, he was only a child. Sometimes he would share his cereal with her, or save some candy he got from school to give to her.

In his right hand the child was holding a golden key. It was a toy he'd gotten from somewhere, he couldn't remember where, and he really liked it. Holding the key made him feel stronger, and sometimes when he was cold it would keep him warm. He tried to give his mother the key so she would feel better, but she was usually busy with other things. He kept the key with him always, so that when his mother was less busy he could give it to her.

While the child was lost in his own thoughts, an old man entered the room with a male nurse helping him walk and a female nurse pulling an IV pole with a drip that was attached to the man's hand. The old man looked weak, but his eyes were filled with energy as he looked at the woman before him.

"Hera my child, it's good to see you, it's good to see you. What an age it's been since we last met. Come closer, let me get a better look at you." The man spoke jovially, and waved at the woman to come closer.

"I remember your wedding, such a happy day. Much happier times, those," the old man said while reminiscing.

"Yes," Hera said softly, trying her best not to let herself think back to then. Her husband had died, along with the rest of her family, and thinking back to happier days brought her more pain than relief. The old man in front of her was not really that old. He was in his late 50's, and at her wedding he had been strong and healthy. A rare disease in recent years had sapped most of his strength, leaving him in his current predicament. He was also an old family friend, the only one so far who had agreed to meet her. It was funny, so many of the people who she used to think were close to her had suddenly become

distant after her family died and she was left destitute. Even when this old man, Will, agreed to meet she was scared he had some ulterior motives. Still, she had no choice but to give it a shot.

“This must be young Jimmy. Such a handsome young boy,” the old man said, looking at the child. But Jimmy suddenly moved behind his mother, as if hiding from him.

Hera smiled weakly at the old man, as if to apologize about the child’s behavior, but Will didn’t seem to mind and only looked at them fondly.

“I was very surprised to hear from you. I hadn’t heard about your family...I’m...sorry to hear about them,” the man uttered with a forlorn voice. “I would have reached out to you myself if I had known. My health keeps me occupied, I barely meet anybody these days.”

“It’s...alright,” Hera said with some difficulty. “You have troubles of your own. Just agreeing to meet with me is a great favor...”

“Nonsense!” the old man interrupted. “You’re like family, child, like family. How could I let you stay out there all alone when I heard about what you’re going through? You will stay with me, and I will help you get back on your feet. It’s settled.”

“No that’s not...” the woman tried to speak, it was not her intention to accept handouts, but the old man would not have it.

“None of this ‘no that’s not’ business child, none of it. There’s not much that this old man can do anymore, but that doesn’t mean I will let family suffer out in the world alone. Your father was like my brother, your mother was like my elder sister. How would I face them if they were to find out I let you suffer so much? No child, you mustn’t treat me like an outsider. You must stay, and keep this old man company. It’s been so gloomy in this house these past few years, your presence will liven the place up.”

Hera almost teared up, though she controlled herself quickly. The old man was insistent and stubborn, but she felt from him a caring warmth she hadn’t in a long time.

The child, who had been listening to everything so far, kept looking between the old man and his mother. It seemed like they would be living with him now, and somehow that made his mother happy. The child thought for a bit, then

slowly crept out from behind his mother and approached the scary looking old man. He was skinny and wrinkly and had veins showing all over his body, but he was a good guy if he could make his mother happy. Finally, he held up the golden key to the old man and mumbled, “for you.”

The old man was taken aback by the shy child’s gesture, but smiled and reached out to take the golden key. When he touched the key though, he was rocked to his very core as he stared at it in horror and excitement!

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

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

Chapter 22 Risk

Hera noticed the old man’s body tremble, his pale face regain color and his weakness change into strength. Immediately she knew something had happened. She signaled Jimmy to hand over the key and quickly pulled him back to her side, but the old man didn’t seem to notice. All of his attention was focused on the key that was now in his hand, and the subtle warmth it spread into his body.

“How many years?” the man mumbled to himself. “How many years has it been?” In fact, the man did not need to wonder as he could probably recall down to the exact minute how long it had been since he last felt the comforting warmth of spiritual energy course through his body.

He broke from his reverie and looked at Hera and Jimmy with immeasurable excitement and glee before asking, “Where did you get this? Do you know what it is?”

Hera looked at the key and tried to recall. She had no memory of it, except that she had seen her son holding it whilst he slept at the apartment. Where could he have gotten it from except from there?

“Isn’t it just a key? It was in the apartment when I moved in, it probably belonged to my father – he was the only one who ever lived there before.”

“In your apartment? The last bit of your inheritance, I assume?” Will asked, his smile growing as though he suddenly understood something.

“Hera child, have a seat. We have some business to discuss.” The old man sat comfortably, gripping the key tightly in his right hand, while he asked his nurse to make a call to his lawyer. While they waited the old man’s home staff served refreshments and they all made small talk, though no one was too interested at the moment. The old man was clearly distracted by the key, while Hera was very curious as to what Will was thinking. She had no money and resources, if the key was something valuable the old man could take it and there was no way for her to fight back. He could even say the key was repayment for him taking care of her, but the old man insisted that business was business and family was family, the two should not mix.

Twenty minutes later his lawyer finally came, along with an entire team of important looking people all with their laptops in hand, ready to work at a moment’s notice.

“Hera dear, you must be confused so let me explain the situation first. This key,” the old man said, holding up the golden key in his hand, “is more than it appears. In the hands of someone who does not understand its value, it is simply a trinket. However, in my hands it instantly becomes something of inestimable value. To be exact, currently even I cannot accurately determine what it’s value should be. Determining that will take time and research. Despite that, I want to purchase it from you. I have two propositions for you, you can pick the one you think is more suitable for you.

“First, I can pay you a total sum of \$100,000,000 to purchase it from you. After that I will become the owner, and whether the key ends up being more or less valuable has nothing to do with you. Second, I can pay you an initial sum of \$1,000,000 and then take my time to determine its exact value, before paying you that amount. This way it could end up being more than \$100,000,000 or it could be less. The risk is yours to take.” *innread.com*

The lawyer and his team had immediately opened their laptops and started working whilst the old man talked, and even now. The environment was suddenly so drastically different Hera was not able to acclimate. She shook her head and looked at the old man in slight confusion.

“Uncle Will, if you didn’t tell me about it I would never even know there’s anything special about the key. You could have just taken it and I would not have said anything. Why did you tell me?”

The old man chuckled when he heard Hera's question, and looked at the girl with a look of endearment.

"I'm an old man, on the verge of death. What value does money have for me? One million or a hundred million, neither will keep me from dying, nor will they affect how I live my life. You, on the other hand, still have a long life ahead of you and a son to take care of. This money will seriously affect you everyday for the rest of your life, this decision will follow every other decision you will make for the rest of your life. How can I lack this little bit of virtue and steal from you, who is like my own daughter? You should make the decision you think is best for you and your child."

Hera heard the old man's words and felt moved. Her life had been so miserable recently, and she did not see any brightness in her future coming soon. But now, everything felt so different. She looked at her son, tears forming in her eyes again, and the child looked back at her.

"It's very nice," the child mumbled, telling his mother about the key. "It keeps me warm." Hera nodded, as if understanding what the child was trying to tell her. She hugged the child as she was filled with determination. Since this opportunity was brought to her by her son, she would listen to him and take a risk with \$1,000,000.

The sound of thunder woke Lex up, who had not realized at all he had fallen asleep. Fortunately, nothing bad happened while he was dozing off. Instead, his chest felt much better and all his pain was gone. He also felt more clear headed now that he had time to gather his wits and wasn't constantly trying to survive.

He was most surprised to discover that instead of feeling fear or panic, he was feeling excitement! The heart pumping, adrenaline filled adventure that he had felt more enjoyable than anything he had ever done. Obviously at the time he was taken by surprise and didn't have the time to think of anything else, but now it was different. It was only now that he felt like he was in the cultivation world, and that he felt most alive when he was fighting for his life! He had to survive long enough to connect this world to the Inn, and he could do so by hiding and surviving off of the stuff he had in his backpack, but he no longer felt like hiding in the dark till he could escape.

He pulled up his quest menu and took a look.

Quests:

New Quest: As the most renowned Inn in the universe, the Midnight Inn does not only host the rich and the powerful! Setup and develop the Pro Bono wing of the Inn and accept your first Pro Bono guest!

Remark: Keep working hard! If you raise your cultivation high enough, one day you'll be able to cast illusions to make yourself look better!

Quest: With a great personality and abundant energy, Marlo is a great candidate to serve as a valet for the Inn! Hire Marlo as your first valet!

Quest Time limit: 1 month (6/30 days)

Quest Reward: 1 small staff dormitory, 1000MP, +1 Midnight Inn Level

Quest failure punishment: -1000MP (if host is unable to pay, it will result in immediate death!)

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

Quest status: 2/20 zombies killed

Quest rewards: 1000MP

Quest failure punishment: none

He had killed two zombies while escaping the park since he had received the quest, and had 18 more to go. Lex grinned with excitement. He could envision himself, sneaking in the dark like a ninja, stealthily killing zombies. But he was not a man who did things in a rush, he had to be prepared first.

He opened his backpack and took out a few granola bars to fill himself up. Fighting, running and then healing must have exhausted his body, even if he could not feel it yet. He collected rain water in an empty water bottle he had and drank some to rehydrate himself. Finally, he took off his shirt and armor to get a better look at his chest and assess his condition. He had no bites or scratches anywhere so there was no chance of infection, but his chest was mostly pink and purple, even after all that healing. The bruises ached, but he could tell that his bones at least weren't hurt anymore.

He assessed his equipment, and other than his knife he only had a swiss army knife which barely gave him an advantage in combat. The firestarter

would be useless in the rain so the only thing he could use to help him was his fancy monocle and flashlight.

That suddenly reminded him of his fancy monocle, and how he had manually set it to only show him data he thought was relevant because otherwise it showed too much data – but the monocle could not always determine what was relevant. He had the monocle analyze the entire building and give him all the details.

The building was made of igneous rock, the furniture of some kind of wood, and there were pieces of identifiable metals all around. The rain water was normal and everything seemed to be ordinary. The monocle discovered no secret entrance hidden in the walls or some mechanism to make a door appear. Lex felt it was a pity, but it was probably because it had not yet had access to any kind of database from this world yet.

Regardless, there was nothing more he could do at the moment to prepare. Now was the time to actually go out and take some risks. Lex grinned. It was time to kill some zombies.

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

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

Chapter 23 Exciting life of a Rookie Assassin

To a degree Lex had become used to the darkness and could make out vague shapes in the distance. The constant rain made it difficult for him to hear any walking zombies, but similarly it stopped them from hearing him as well. Lex's eyes gleamed with excitement as he confirmed everything was set and stepped out of the building to begin his hunt.

First and foremost, he would not hunt anywhere near the building he was in. He was treating that as his home base and didn't want to risk attracting a horde near it. Secondly, he moved in the opposite direction from where he saw the giant lion – that was an enemy he wasn't yet ready to face. He

carefully memorized his path as he moved further and further away, crouching behind the cars as he surveyed the city.

Similar to what he encountered previously, all the zombies along his way were dead bodies on the ground. It took him a decent amount of time before he finally encountered a few – three of them were standing in a daze staring towards a certain building. They were dripping wet from the rain, though that did not seem to bother them.

Lex watched them for a while, but they didn't move. Either they knew there was prey in that building or they were just standing there, waiting till they heard an indication of life from anywhere. When he was certain they wouldn't move, he thought about how he should attack them, and repeated the movements in his head a few times. When he was certain, he moved towards the zombie closest to him without hesitation..

In one swift movement he grabbed it by the neck and stabbed it through the base of the skull. The zombie died just like that, without any struggle or noise. Carefully, Lex laid the body down on the ground and moved swiftly towards the other two zombies. They were standing side by side so it would be difficult to kill one without alerting the other, so this time Lex didn't bother trying.

He repeated the maneuver from last time, grabbing the zombie's neck and stabbing it in the skull, but instead of laying the body on the ground Lex threw the body at the other zombie! The last zombie was knocked over, and before it could do anything Lex stomped hard on its head, killing it instantly. The whole affair was complete in less than ten seconds, but Lex's heart was beating like a drum, adrenaline coursing through his veins. The entire process was flawless, he couldn't think of a way he could have performed better.

These zombies were normal slow ones, and Lex called them regulars. Regulars seemed easy to kill so long as they weren't in a large group. It was the one he faced in the park at the end, mini-boss as Lex had temporarily named it, that was tough. Appearance wise the mini-boss didn't look too different from regulars, but it's actions were distinct and driven with purpose. Lex wanted to avoid those if possible, he was not yet good enough at combat to be confident enough to defeat it every time they fought. As for the lion beast, the big-boss, that Lex wanted to avoid at all costs. He had no idea how strong it was, but Lex didn't doubt that he would certainly die if he fought it.

He inspected the three zombies to see if he could find anything on their bodies that could tell him more about this world, but alas there was nothing – there were barely any clothes so how could he expect to find anything else.

Ignoring his disappointment, he continued on his journey to hunt. After searching for a short while he found another group, this time however there were many of them bunched together moving randomly through the street. There were too many of them and he thought he should avoid them, yet fate had other plans. He heard barking, and suddenly from the horde two zombified dogs came bolting towards him.

For a moment Lex was filled with panic, an instinctual reaction, but he quickly overcame it and stared at the two dogs. He absolutely had to kill them, he couldn't risk letting them bite at him at all! His heartbeat accelerated as he watched the two dogs run towards him and his body trembled with nervous energy.

The dogs lurched at him, and in a split second he knew they were too close to one another. If he tried attacking one, he would in turn be attacked by the other. He jumped and rolled to his side dodging them, but reached a building with no more room to go that way. Before the dogs could turn and attack him again he launched himself at them, not wasting any time. Attacking their skull with the knife put him too close to their mouth, he didn't want to risk it, so he kicked the first dog as hard as he could on its body, trying to disable it.

The first dog was thrown away but the second one used this time to turn and attack Lex. Once again he jumped and rolled away, feeling slightly like a character from a certain, extremely difficult video game he'd played (any guesses?) to dodge the dog's attack. From the corner of his eye he noticed that the horde of zombies had started moving towards him! He didn't have time to waste, he kicked the second dog and turned to look at the first one. It was still coming at him, but was limping now so it had slowed down considerably.

Lex grinned, it seemed he wasn't so bad at this. He attacked the first dog again and this time he kicked it on its head. The dog tried to bite at his leg but Lex was too fast. With that last attack the dog's neck cracked and it became completely disabled, though it was still alive and staring viciously at Lex. With decent practice, he did the same to the second dog, which died instantly when he kicked its head. There was no time to celebrate though, the horde was almost upon him.

This time, Lex decided to retreat. Though the regulars were very weak, they had a great advantage in numbers which Lex could not overcome. Not to mention, if a mini-boss was hiding in the horde Lex would be a goner. Better to run and fight another day. In the dark, with Lex's great running speed, and the roaring of the rain covering the sound of his footsteps he quickly lost the horde.

He took some time to rest this time, not wanting to jump straight into another fight. He wasn't tired, but he didn't have a complete grasp of his body's new stamina and didn't want to risk fatigue in his next fight. After 15 minutes of sitting in the shade, away from the rain, he continued his search. Fortunately his body had become very resistant to the cold, otherwise he would have gotten sick from being in the rain so long.

This time, he found zombies fairly quickly. They were in a large horde, much larger than he had ever seen, and they were moving together all in the same direction at their usual pace. He didn't even need a moment to deliberate, Lex retreated and went in the opposite direction. But it was only a few minutes later he found another group of zombies, this time only four, but they seemed to be heading in the same direction as the larger group. Something was clearly happening, and Lex didn't want to risk his life to find out. Immediately he decided to give up going back to his "home base" and started moving in the opposite direction to where all the zombies were going. A couple of times he saw some lone zombies limping down a street and used the opportunity to kill them, bringing his quest total to 8/20.

Everything was going smoothly, until it wasn't. He heard a loud roar from the direction the zombies were going towards, shaking the city itself with its might, which was followed by a series of loud crashing noises. Someone, or something, was fighting a tough fight and it was making a lot of noise. For a moment Lex was grateful he decided to move away, but then the buildings around him started emitting a soft blue light in the shape of an archway. From within the buildings came out zombies who initially seemed to be attracted to the noise, but quickly caught sight of Lex.

"Bloody hell!" Lex cursed as he started sprinting as fast as he could. "Mary, how much longer till I can leave this world?" Lex roared in his mind as he kept running. The zombies behind him were already a safe distance away, but new zombies kept exiting buildings around him. He needed to get to a clearing as fast as possible!

“You’ve only been in this world for 6 hours,” Mary said sympathetically. “You have at least 18 more hours to go, with the possibility of more.”

“Bloody hell!” Lex swore once again, and promised himself he would never again wish for more excitement in his life. THIS WAS TOO MUCH EXCITEMENT!

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

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

Chapter 24 Awakening

Lex picked up his speed and tried to run past the zombies before they noticed him. For the ones who came out as he was running past he was successful, but there were many times where zombies had already exited buildings as he ran past. They would always be attracted to him and start moving in his direction. Initially he was still able to dodge them, but as time went by he had to preemptively start attacking them.

Killing zombies wasn’t his goal with these attacks. With one look he determined his optimal escape path, then stabbed or tripped any zombies in or near his path, turning them into a hindrance to the zombies behind them. Quick and efficient. Those two words could describe his actions at that moment.

At first it was just a couple that would come his way, but the hordes slowly grew. The once empty streets were filling up with the walking dead. Under normal circumstances Lex would be panicking once again, but unbeknownst to him, he had entered an extremely focused state. When two zombies would approach him from the front he would slash the first one’s neck and push it towards the other with his body, acting too fast for the zombie to scratch or bite him. When more zombies came his way he would quickly duck and slash the zombies thighs, making it trip, creating an obstacle for the zombies behind to slow them down.

Lex didn't know, but slowly and steadily, even though he didn't mean to, his zombie kill counter was increasing. This was because often when slashed the neck he started cutting the head clean off and other zombies would then stampede over the head, killing it. In barely a few minutes he completed the 20 kills, and the quest was updated, but Lex remained completely unaware..

This was because by now he was almost completely surrounded. Giving up trying to run, he climbed up onto one of the cars. On an instinct he instructed the Fancy Monocle to collect data on how the "blue light doors" that the zombies were coming from worked and updated him when it discovered something.

The "car" was rectangular and around 8 feet high and almost 15 feet long, which gave Lex a decent amount of space to maneuver. But he didn't have time to think further – zombies were climbing up behind him.

He kicked a zombie hard on its chest, flinging it away into the zombie behind it, knocking them all down, but there was no respite. Behind him he felt a zombie cling onto his shoulders and attempt to bite him, but before it could he elbowed it to push it away. He turned, stabbed it through the eye and moved onto the next zombie as if it were nothing.

By this point he could no longer continue to dodge scratches. On his chest, his arms, his legs, everywhere zombies had tried to scratch him but fortunately so far it seemed they were unable to break through his skin – but repeated attempts might still be able to pierce through. That's not to say he was unhurt, his body was covered in bruises both old and new, but he felt neither. Even his synthetic armor started to show signs of wear, but in the dark, rainy night who was paying attention to that?

Slowly, his efficiency improved even further. He used the momentum from one attack to flow into another, turning from his rigid, repetitive motions to smooth, flowing ones. When he saw an attack coming he could not avoid, he would try to catch it on his chest so his under armor could protect him.

He got another notification from the System, but it was ignored just the same. The monocle gave him a notification, but as if it were an unnecessary distraction Lex ignored it. Lex was now a killing machine. With his right hand he would stab, and with his left hand he would use his index and middle finger to stab zombies through the eyes. It was not something he consciously thought of, it was something that he naturally started doing. A pile of bodies

had fallen on the ground around the car which had built a path for zombies to climb up, which only increased the pressure on him.

While this was happening, Lex was mowing through anything that approached him, his clothes ripped to shreds and his backpack lost somewhere along the way. He was covered in sweat and the spilled blood of his enemies.

A zombie approached him slowly from the back, waiting to catch him off guard. It studied him, studied his attack patterns, and slowly crawled towards him. It was mixed in with the “dead undead” bodies on the floor so as to not attract attention to itself. Lex turned his back towards the zombie to attack in the other direction, and the zombie immediately launched itself at him. In one quick jolt it had gone from the ground to almost on top of Lex, and just when it thought it was about to reach him, Lex moved. Spinning on his heel Lex avoided the zombies lurch and swiped at its neck with his knife, using its own momentum to cut its neck. From start to finish, Lex had not even seen the zombie. To him it was just a single moment between so many other intense moments, but he would be surprised to know that this was the third “mini-boss” zombie he had dispatched so effortlessly whereas he had struggled so much with it before.

Somewhere along the way Lex lost his knife too. It broke or got stuck or was pulled from his hand, he could not remember, but he had lost it. That had not slowed him down though. His punches delivered a devastating blow to the zombies skulls, his fingers piercing though as if daggers and his kicks launched zombies far away as if they were shot through a cannon. He had awakened a primal side of him he had never known, his brain was working faster than he had ever thought possible, and his actions followed almost as quickly as he thought of something. In this life or death moment, Lex had completely let his instincts take over, and if the “mad” Marlo were to look at him now, it would be up for debate which one of them was the mad one. The downside of such feral fighting was that he had become completely numb and so did not notice that along with battered bruises, his body was slowly starting to be covered in cuts and scratches.

“LEX QUICKLY HIDE!” he suddenly heard a roaring sound in his head, and he recognized it as Mary. Before he could ask her what happened, he noticed a red warning flashing on his monocle, pointing towards his left. When he turned to look his pupils shrunk and he was filled with horror. The giant mutated lion was rushing in his direction, being chased by what looked like a giant ten feet tall zombie. Lex didn’t need anymore motivation, he jumped as far off from the car as he could and launched into a sprint.

“Approach the center of a building and put your hand flat against the wall!” Mary instructed urgently, and Lex obeyed, not wasting time on questions. To his great delight, as soon as he did so a blue light formed on the wall and he ran through. As soon as he crossed he turned his attention to listen to the sounds outside – the lion and giant zombie seemed to pass right beside the building and crossed it. Lex waited a few more moments to ensure they had passed. When he was assured he asked the monocle how to lock the door and followed the instructions, after which he took a look around the room to see if there were any zombies. The room appeared to have been a lounge once. Sofas were arranged neatly around a table and various decorations filled the room. A few plants that had seemed to have overgrown let out a soft, green light, illuminating the room creating a pleasant environment. Lex, however, had no time to appreciate any of that.

When he finally found there were no zombies he collapsed onto the nearest couch. He was thoroughly exhausted. He had lost all his supplies and his clothes had been ripped to the point that he was practically nude.

Without thinking too much he pulled out the second bottle of Botlam Dew from the system and moved his aching hand to deliver it to his mouth, a simple action that had suddenly become immensely painful as soon as he let himself relax. Once he drank the bottle he closed his eyes and fell asleep. He was completely mentally and physically exhausted. He did not know it, but he had spent nearly three hours continuously fighting zombies. His body was completely black and blue, and his originally pristine and flawless skin could not be differentiated from an old piece of beaten leather.

If he had known how bad his condition really was he would have panicked, but the last time he had checked his body the zombies had been unable to pierce his skin so he thought he was still safe. If he had known how many scratches his body had sustained he would have assumed that he was infected. Which he was, for a short time, but a closer examination of his wounds would show tiny droplets of Botlam Dew killing off even tinier black, wriggling spores. Unwittingly, he had saved himself. Even Mary did not notice, as she was not able to view the status of his body. She just appeared in the air and watched him sleep, worry painted across her tiny face.

“You can’t die, not yet...” she whispered, her thoughts completely unknown.

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

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

Chapter 25 Epiphany

When Lex finally woke the first thing he became aware of was pain. His entire body, from his toes to his head was filled with pain. He was also incredibly sore, and that was a feeling he had barely felt since he started cultivating Regal Embrace. With difficulty he got up, and all his bones cracked as he did. When he got up he was hit with a sudden bout of nausea and leaned to the side of the sofa to let out pitch black vomit. Lex was horrified looking at it, but he suddenly felt much better once he was done.

Other than the constant pain, the soreness and the weakness that filled his entire being, Lex felt pretty great! Shaking his head, he got up and moved to a different corner of the room to get away from the smell. He looked at his completely bruised, almost bare body and was honestly impressed. Not a single cut was visible, Regal Embrace really lived up to its claim of having the best defense in the universe, even at this level.

Previously when he had Botlam Dew it had almost completely healed and reinvigorated him, compared to this time when he was clearly still pretty badly hurt. It was a testament to how miserable his condition must have been. He opened up the system to buy another bottle of Botlam Dew but froze when he saw the list of notifications.

Quest Completed: 20/20 zombies killed!

Quest Reward: 1000MP delivered!

Quest Updated: Kill 50 zombies before returning to Inn!

Quest Reward: 1500MP

Quest Completed: 50/50 zombies killed!

Quest Reward: 1500MP delivered!

Quest Updated: Kill 100 zombies before returning to Inn!

Quest Reward: 2000MP.

Quest Completed: 100/100 zombies killed!

Quest Reward: 2000MP delivered!

Quest Updated: Kill 5 Rank 2 zombies before returning to Inn!

Quest Reward: 5000MP

Quest Status: ? Rank 2 zombies killed

He read the notifications multiple times before he could accept what was written. He had unwittingly earned 4500MP, and that was amazing. BUT HE HAD KILLED OVER 100 ZOMBIES!? Honestly he didn't even recall what happened.

When he thought back, he could only remember flashes. He remembered feeling sweaty, he remembered feeling pain from being hit, he remembered feeling that his body was extremely hot! At some point, he was on top of a car. He had lost track of his backpack, his knife, and most of his clothes. He vaguely remembered telling the monacle if it could figure out how the blue-light doors worked when it saw zombies coming out of buildings, and at some point it must have done that. He remembered...the giant lion...running? He remembered Mary's warning.

"Mary, are you there?" he croaked. His throat was very dry and his voice was barely audible.

"I'm here," she said, appearing in front of him. She was floating in the air before him, looking down at his beaten body with sympathy. "You did really well. Who could have guessed your first trip to another world would be so dangerous?"

Lex chuckled. He had anticipated many things when he thought of what he could encounter on another planet: hostile civilizations, primitive lifeforms, aliens, but he never considered zombies.

"How much time is left before I can leave?" he asked her, this time using his thoughts.

“It’s been 21 hours since you’ve been on his planet. 3 more hours before the minimum time required, and it could be any amount of time after that. I suggest you get as much rest as you can, in case it takes much longer. You’ve lost your food so if it takes much longer than 24 hours for you to be able to go back, you might have to think of something.”

“If I can continue hiding, I’ll just buy Saturn Cake from the Midnight Store. It’s expensive, but I’m in no condition to continue fighting. Anyway, I’ve earned quite a few MP. Did I really kill that many zombies?”

For a moment Mary just looked at Lex with a complicated expression on her face. “You killed quite a few zombies, but you’ve over exerted yourself. You lost yourself in combat, which was very dangerous. You could have easily escaped much earlier, but you were so focused on fighting that you completely forgot about everything else. In the future, try to maintain your self awareness at all times.”

Lex was startled. He was under the impression that he had done really well, but Mary’s lecture reminded him that his primary purpose wasn’t to kill zombies. He should have only fought as long as needed. Instead, he got caught up in a cycle of acting without thinking because the situation was too intense. As a result, he was not thoroughly exhausted.

“I’ll keep that in mind,” he said as he moved to buy another Botlam Dew finally, but right before he made the purchase he had an idea. He had an idea for how to solve another problem he had been having.

“Mary, how do I recruit Marlo as a valet?” he asked.

“You can purchase an employment key from the Midnight Store. It’s a platinum key you can give to someone, who can then use it to enter Midnight Inn. There they can view an employee contract that details their responsibilities, based on their job, and if they accept they will become your employee. You must also give them a test to complete before they can officially join, as becoming an employee of the Midnight Inn should not be a leisurely task.

“Once you have an employee you will also have to provide them with an employee residence. The employee can choose to live in the residence permanently or travel back and forth between their world and the Inn, but either way they must have one. The employee can also never harm you, in any world, but you can also not harm an employee or ask them to perform a

task that will kill them. You can only give them orders related to the position they are filling, and anything else you tell them to do will be a request that they can turn down if they so wish.

“You also have to pay the employee in MP, and their salary will be based on their cultivation level as well as position and result during the test. If you are unable to pay your employee at the end of every month the system will instantly kill you. There is no such thing as credit when it comes to the system.

“Right now you only have basic positions open to fill, such as valet, but later on you can recruit better and more skilled employees such as Pill refiners, Blacksmiths, Spirit Array refiners and more to provide the best services to your guests.”

Lex understood the basics, and it was more or less as he expected it to be. Slowly a plan formed in his mind, but enacting the plan would depend on when he would be able to return to the Inn.

He closed his eyes and rested while he waited for the last 3 hours to pass. Normally his body was very quick to recover since he cultivated Regal Embrace, this was the first time his feeling of weakness persisted.

He checked his status mentally and was shocked at the state his body was in, especially since this was after he had drunk Botlam Dew:

Name: Lex Williams

Age: 23

Sex: Male

Cultivation Level: Regal Embrace Body Tempering Stage 1

Health: Suboptimal (developing brain tumor), severe muscle damage (recovering), severe exhaustion (recovering), multiple hairline fractures (recovering)

Midnight Points: 5331

Midnight Inn Level: 2

Inventory: Bathroom Slippers, Self Defense Butter Knife, 1 Golden Tickets, Host Attire

Quests:

New Quest: As the most renowned Inn in the universe, the Midnight Inn does not only host the rich and the powerful! Setup and develop the Pro Bono wing of the Inn and accept your first Pro Bono guest!

Remark: Keep working hard! If you raise your cultivation high enough, one day you'll be able to cast illusions to make yourself look better!

Sudden Quest: With a great personality and abundant energy, Marlo is a great candidate to serve as a valet for the Inn! Hire Marlo as your first valet!

Quest Time limit: 1 month

Quest Reward: 1 small staff dormitory, 1000MP, +1 Midnight Inn Level

Quest failure punishment: -1000MP (if host is unable to pay, it will result in immediate death!)

Lex rested with his eyes closed, though he was not able to fall asleep due to the pain. He waited patiently for his 24 hours to be complete, and prayed for the Inn to connect the worlds as soon as possible. Fortunately, his luck was good and he got the notification. *innread.com*

Midnight Inn Update: World Vegus Minima connected! Access available!

Quests completed before connection: 3

Rating: C-

Host Reward: Serene Whistle, Trials

Lex didn't have the patience to go through his reward right now, he was in too much pain for goodness sakes! He could tolerate it if he had to, but he had no intentions of prolonging it.

He quickly left Vegus Minima and returned to Earth. He threw on some random clothes and hailed a cab to Marlo's apartment. He did his best to make himself look as miserable as possible, which wasn't very hard to be honest as he was still covered in dried black blood from the zombies and smelled like death.

He rang the bell for Marlo's apartment and when the butler answered the door he gave one look at Lex and delivered an annoyed look rather than a surprised one.

"I will summon the master," the butler said, escorting Lex to the least luxurious part of the apartment: a bathroom.

Marlo appeared quick enough and his face was plastered with the largest grin Lex had ever seen, and his eyes were practically screaming with excitement.

"I had an epiphany about self defense," Lex said weakly as he chuckled.
"Giving up an opportunity that's too dangerous for you is also a form of self defense."

Before he could explain further the behemoth of a man before him burst into a roaring laughter.

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

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