

Chapter 26 Platinum Key

Lex found himself lying on his back on an observation table in nothing but his undergarments. Marlo, after his usual outburst, had Lex brought to a first aid room that he had in his apartment. As if everything was very routine, two female nurses entered the room and began Lex's examination using various Spirit Tech. In a few minutes Marlo had a full report and was reading through it very seriously, though every time he saw something interesting he gave Lex a wide grin.

"Took quite the beating, didn't you?" Marlo asked, his voice normal level for once. "According to your cell activity, your body has already been healing for quite a while, and at an accelerated pace."

"Yeah, I took something quite expensive for that," Lex said, his voice still hoarse.

"Which basically means you were beaten up in even worse shape than you're in right now? And yet you made it back alive." Marlo gave Lex a wide grin and looked at him as if he were a parent looking down with pride at his child.

"What about the other guy? Did he make it? I must warn you, if your enemy is alive you should prepare for retaliation."

"The other... 'guys' are all dead. No one will be coming after me," Lex closed his eyes as he felt relief. There was no chance he would be going back to Vegus Minima anytime soon. Not until he was much, much more powerful.

"Not bad, not bad," Marlo commented, as if it were the most natural thing to kill off one's enemies. "So if you don't need my help hiding from your enemies, what brought you to my doorstep I wonder?" Marlo's voice was unusually stable throughout all of this, which told Lex how seriously he was taking this.

Now was the moment of truth. Lex had to be convincing, and for the most part he didn't have to lie. However, whether he could complete his quest to recruit Marlo would depend a lot on how the next few minutes went. He stayed quiet, lying there for a while. His expression changed quite a few times, from anxiety to anger to relief to reluctance. It appeared as though he was struggling quite

a bit with what he was thinking. Ultimately, his expression calmed down and he let out a sigh.

“I did some research on you. You have a pretty good reputation, and all your students praise you quite a bit. Everyone who has worked with you has said positive things. If it weren’t so, I wouldn’t have had the guts to come to you with this. Otherwise who knows, I might have come to you for your help but ended up losing my life instead.”

Marlo looked at the young man with an amused smile, but said nothing. There was another short silence before Lex continued.

“I had no background for cultivation, and no knowledge of it either. That is, until I encountered something quite magical.” He raised his empty hand and showed Marlo, yet when he spun it once a beautiful, platinum key appeared in his hand.

The key was not shining or glowing or anything of the sort to show it was special, yet just lying there in Lex’s hand it had gripped all of Marlo’s attention. He could instinctively feel that the key was not at all normal, and his instincts were telling him that he must have it. An old wound in his body, a testament to a time long passed, started aching again, as if hinting that the key was important to it.

Marlo’s smile completely disappeared and he looked at the key with extreme seriousness, yet he made no move. He was waiting for Lex to continue speaking.

“The key can take you someplace magical. Over there I encountered someone who gave me tests. If I pass the tests I could be rewarded, but if I failed chances were high that I would straight up die. At first, I thought I could still complete them...” Lex looked at the key with reluctance and longing. “But I know now that I can’t. So long as I have the key I’ll be tempted, and next time I might not be lucky enough to survive.”

He held the key out to Marlo, as if indicating him to take it. “I can sell it to you, if you’re interested.”

Marlo did not reply immediately, but instead kept staring at the key. Now it was his turn to have various expressions show on his face, though in his case it was only a change from serious to mad grin and back.

“How do you know you can trust me? What if I kill you and take the key directly? Did you ever think about that? No one can give me a bad review if everyone who thinks negatively is dead.”

Lex chuckled, as if he had predicted the question. “Of course I have, and I have already taken precautions. If I wasn’t sure about getting out alive, would I come here especially in such a beaten state?” In fact, Lex had made no preparations. From the moment the Inn had judged Marlo to be a good fit as a valet, Lex had dropped his guard against the man. Not to mention, Lex had looked him up on the Bluebird portal, and he did in fact have a stellar reputation.

Marlo nodded his head, and his grin grew wider as if he was proud to hear that answer. “What do you want for it, and what does it do exactly?”

“When you crush the key you will be taken to a different place where someone will give you a test. If you pass the test you get a reward, if you fail but survive you get sent back. I’ve already been there twice, the first time I got my cultivation technique and this time...well let’s say it will soon be worth the trip. But this is my limit, I know it. The only reason I survived this time was because of luck, nothing else. It’s very hard for me to admit it, but I know I can’t pass the next test. And it won’t matter if I wait and raise my cultivation to go back, the test changes according to your cultivation. Having a higher or lower level makes no difference. So long as I keep the key, I know I won’t be able to resist using it, and will most likely die. Better to realize the truth right now and take whatever benefit I can, rather than blindly chasing an unreachable dream.”

Marlo nodded, as if appreciating Lex’s thoughts. Knowing your limits was important.

“You can have the key for \$50 million, as well as a weapon suitable for me. I know the price sounds high, but it’s worth it.” Lex had purposefully asked for a steep price. He had to give the impression that he really valued the key, and that he was very reluctant to give it up. Little did he know that his price seemed paltry to Marlo. Who could blame him? Lex had very little experience in the cultivation world and did not fully understand what little value money had. Furthermore, he could not feel the attraction the key had towards other cultivators. To him it was just a key, to others it was an unbearable enticement.

Still, Marlo did not respond immediately. He sat beside Lex and alternated between staring at the key and Lex, though he wore the most remarkable poker face Lex had ever seen – Lex could not tell what he was thinking at all.

Finally, after about fifteen minutes of deliberation, Marlo spoke, “You are both very wise, and very naïve.”

This remark caught Lex by surprise.

“Your wisdom is in recognizing your strengths and weaknesses, your naivety is in assuming you understand the world and its complexities. You will of course only find positive reviews of me online, because most people who thought differently are already dead!” Marlo chuckled, and patted Lex on the back, the strength of it shaking him to the core.

“Like how the cultivation world was hidden from the mortal world, the real face of the cultivation world is hidden from most cultivators as well. Unless your strength rises to a certain level, or you have a very powerful background it’s impossible for you to see the truth. Without seeing and knowing the truth, it’s impossible for you to judge the real danger in a situation. You think you can trust me and trade with me, and have backups prepared in case things go wrong. You think you are in control of the situation, but the truth is your entire existence is dependent on a whim of mine. Even if I try to attack you, and you escape, a simple bounty from me and I can have your entire family in my hands. It wouldn’t even take more than a few hours.”

Lex’s expression changed, and he stared at the giant warily. It was true, he made a very simple yet obvious mistake – he did not take into account that his family could be threatened. He still didn’t doubt Marlo, since the System thought he would be a good valet then Lex didn’t doubt Marlo’s character. Yet this was a good reminder that in the future anything he does, he would need to take his family’s safety into account as well.

“Take this as another lesson in self defense,” the giant said, getting back up and then staring down at Lex. “I will give you an option. I can accept your offer, and pay you the money as well as the weapon, or I can forgo both of those but bring you into contact with the true face of the cultivation world. I cannot say if knowing this will necessarily bring you any benefits, that depends on many things, but at least you won’t be caught unaware.”

Lex thought for a second, but he already knew what he was going to answer.

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

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Chapter 27 Schemes

Lex groaned as the taxi hit a bump on the road. Marlo had given some painkillers which made him mostly numb, but any sudden movement would bring back his pain. He was already on his way back home now, having given the giant hulking man his answer. What could he have chosen?

The fifty million dollars of course! Lex grinned to himself, despite the pain. What truth of the cultivation world, what hidden secrets? He had Earth's most powerful beings as guests at his Inn, a much better source of information than Marlo. Furthermore, since Earth was his home, he had decided that he was going to stay as lowkey as possible. He didn't want to attract any kind of attention at all, and having Marlo introduce him to the 'greater secrets of the cultivation world' would probably attract some kind of attention down the road.

Lex suddenly frowned. A thought occurred to him: Marlo giving him this option might have actually been a trap to test him. On the one hand he was saying that he was giving up a great opportunity so that he could ensure his security, but if he jumped at the chance to learn more secrets then that might not be inline with the mentality of someone trying to stay safe. It would only tempt someone who had hidden motives and was looking for benefits. Luckily, he hadn't hesitated much and chosen to take the money and weapon.

Marlo would wire him the money in a few days – even if it was a small amount for cultivators they had to be smart about their money and expenses to avoid paying endless taxes and fees – and as for the weapon, Lex told him to wait for a bit. Lex needed to decide what kind of weapon suited him. This was no cultivation novel, this was real life. The romance between a man and his sword might sound appealing on paper, but it might not be the best at serving his needs. He had to be smart about it.

Either way, all of that was for later. For now he just wanted to get home and sleep.

After seeing Lex off, Marlo returned to his apartment and sat in his lounge in a somber mood. He stared at the key in his hand gravely, and felt the warmth it gave off. In the short time he had the key in his possession he could feel it somehow heal him. Marlo wasn't a simple man, and he had faced far more dangers than the few stories he had told his students. His body carried numerous injuries, many of which would take years to heal, and one specific one that was impossible to heal. Yet now, with the platinum key in hand, he could feel that recovery wasn't actually impossible.

The amount that the key healed him, however, was miniscule. As a smart man he deduced instantly that the purpose wasn't to actually heal him, but to let him know that the key presented him with the opportunity to heal. Taking that opportunity was up to him.

Marlo let out a low, withdrawn sigh. Initially this was just an assignment for him, and he didn't carry any more interest in it than any other assignment he had. Now, however, he was completely invested.

Making up his mind, he dialed a number on his phone, and when the call was answered a projector in his room turned on and a realistic hologram of his foster mother appeared before him.

"There's been progress on the assignment. The subject has delivered the source of his fortuitous encounter to me, and given me a brief description of what it entails."

The woman raised an eyebrow and for a moment a surprised expression appeared on her face, but her indifference soon returned.

"That was faster than anticipated. We have only just begun the subconscious suggestion program, and even the mental resistance dampener talismans have not been installed around his apartment. Why would he just give you the source? I do not believe you could have created such a strong relationship with him so quickly."

"No, I haven't given him any special preference in classes and our relationship is not too extraordinary. I believe he was influenced by the data you manipulated on the Bluebird portal, not that any of it was a lie, but he seems to have adopted a good impression of me. He gave me the source as he believed it was too dangerous for him, and that he could no longer profit from

it, and instead he would be harmed by it. He sold it to me for fifty million, along with a weapon for himself. Based on his actions of signing up for a self defense class, I believe his self preservation tendencies are real and his action of giving up the source for more immediate profit is in line with his personality, and is not some sort of scheme or diversion.

“He is decisive and knows his limits. If he is an ally, he should be strongly supported. If he is an enemy, he should be influenced now whilst he is weak so that his stance changes.”

The woman nodded, accepting her foster son's report.

“Stay online, I have already reported the mission complete status. You will be required to give a more detailed report soon.”

“I'm a little confused,” Marlo spoke, relaxing a bit, “what's so special about him that you reached out to me the moment he registered for my class. Or is his fortuitous encounter so special that it would require such a large operation.”

The woman was silent for a moment as she looked at her son. Their relationship was more of a business venture than familial. Their family had adopted Marlo when he showed potential as a young child, and had given him numerous resources to nurture him. He had, in return, helped them a lot in dealing with various difficult situations. Lately however, they rarely asked him for assistance or to do missions as he had grown a lot in strength and influence in his own right. It would not suit his status if he was still treated as someone to run errands, which is exactly why this assignment seemed peculiar. His task was to build a positive relationship with Lex and try to learn about how he entered onto the path of cultivation in as much detail as possible. That was it. The only condition was that he should not use force, or try to make his attempts obvious. As fate would have it, Lex gave him the source directly and fulfilled his mission. Little did he know that Lex's actions were influenced by the Systems quest and not any manipulation on his family's part.

Finally she said, “Even I don't know. This was a mission someone assigned directly to the family head. We had no right to refuse.”

Suddenly Marlo sat upright, his expression a lot more serious. He knew it, this could not have been simple. How could this key, that could allow him to heal his wounds, be simple?

Before he could ask more questions though, another projection appeared in front of him; a young, delicate looking girl. If Lex saw her, he would be extremely surprised as it was his younger sister, Liz. She was the same little girl who had been told to investigate the situation by the monstrously strong man practicing the sword.

“That was quite fast,” she noted. “I expected a few months at least before any progress was made. I hope you were subtle in your investigations.” The last sentence carried a hint of a threat in it, though she was not looking at anyone in particular. Both Marlo and his foster mother felt the weight behind her words however, triggered by their honed instincts for danger.

Marlo immediately stood up and reported everything he had just told his mother. He was not familiar with the girl, but clearly she was someone of status. Once she heard everything he had to say, she asked to see the ‘source’.

Marlo presented the platinum key before him for the girl to observe. Unexpectedly, however, the projection moved forward and picked it up. Projections interacting with physical objects? This was beyond any technology Marlo knew of. She was staring at it from every angle before asking, “You said this can teleport a person to an inheritance land? Have you tried it?”

“Not yet,” Marlo reported, fidgeting. He was surprised that a hologram could interact with the real world, but he took it in his stride as he had seen many strange things in his life. The only thing was that he was hoping the young girl would not notice the keys peculiarity as he was very interested in it. Luckily, after observing it for a while, the girl returned the key.

“You can keep it. Maintain contact with the target and if you learn anything of interest report it back. Don’t, however, give him any preference beyond what your current relationship would entail,” she said succinctly before her hologram disappeared. His mother, after a short chat disappeared as well. Marlo was left alone in his lounge with the key, and suddenly all his prior strict demeanor vanished. His face was painted with a massive grin, and he eventually erupted out in a roaring, manic laughter as he gripped the key tightly in his hand.

Liz walked towards her mothers office with a clipboard in her hand, mumbling as she scribbled on the document in front of her. When she entered, she saw

her mother slowly practicing a fist technique. Beside her stood her assistant, making a report of various things and noting down comments.

“The investigation has results,” Liz interrupted, knowing full well that it would probably be hours before anyone noticed her unless she interrupted them. “Big bro encountered a grade C inheritance item with spatial properties, but he’s already given it up. Even if he didn’t give it up, and got the key inheritance, with the conditions on Earth it would be impossible for him to make much progress. There is no evidence of outside interference in his life so far.”

“Very well, in that case we will maintain our prior arrangements,” replied Serene, her mother.

Liz hesitated, confusion apparent on her face. “Since he’s already started cultivating, shouldn’t we just let him know?”

“No, as long as there is no outside interference your father wants to keep things the same.”

Liz hesitated once again, something clearly on her mind but unsure if she should say it. Eventually, she said, “But you know your brother’s temperament. If you just tell him, he will support elder sister Belle and...”

“It doesn’t matter. Your father wants to go according to the original plan. We will tell him when he turns 50. For a cultivator a few years here or there won’t make a difference. You girls are young which is why you’re impatient. Let things progress naturally, and instead focus on your studies. Prima Ventura has shown an interest in recruiting you early, but it still depends on your upcoming results.”

Liz groaned and the sudden reminder, and all thoughts of her brother were blown out of her mind. Whether it was on Earth or out in the universe, the most insidious evil was always homework.

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

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Chapter 28 Realization of truth

Lex got home and the first thing he did was chug another bottle of Botlam Dew and throw himself in bed. He slept for nearly 12 hours and woke up disoriented and in pain, and EXTREMELY hungry. Wiping the drool from his face, Lex grabbed his phone to check for notifications...and maybe order a lot of home delivery. He knew how to cook, but you couldn't expect an injured man to cook, right? That was totally the reason.

Unfortunately, he did not get the notification for the money from Marlo yet – which was expected. He did however have countless missed calls and messages from Harry and Elaine, his former coworkers and friends. He had completely forgotten to contact them and it had been a while since he quit as well.

He sent both of them a message saying he'd gotten an exciting new job which is why he had been extremely busy, and would reach out to them soon to catch up. He felt a tinge of guilt lying to them, they had accompanied him through many things, but for now safety was all that mattered. Once he stabilized things and was at a higher cultivation level, who knows maybe he would introduce them to the world of cultivation as well.

Groaning, he got out of bed and limped to the bathroom. He removed his clothes and stood in front of the mirror and grimaced at his condition. He wasn't black and blue all over like when he had just returned, but his entire body was still covered in bruises. He pulled up his status to get a better understanding.

Name: Lex Williams

Age: 23

Sex: Male

Cultivation Level: Regal Embrace Body Tempering Stage 1

Health: Suboptimal (developing brain tumor), serious muscle damage (recovering), serious exhaustion (recovering), multiple hairline fractures (recovering), vitality overdrawn (recovering), spirit drained (recovering), soul slightly damaged (recovering).

Midnight Points: 5151

Midnight Inn Level: 2

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

Midnight Events available: Trials

Quests:

New Quest: As the most renown 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 initiated: 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 was slightly alarmed when he saw the new ailments in his status affecting his vitality, spirit and soul and completely missed the rest of his status.

“Mary, what is going on? How did my soul and spirit get damaged? And what does it mean when it says vitality overdrawn?”

“Maybe you can check your status history to figure out when your spirit and vitality were hurt. As for vitality, I can tell you that it was probably also hurt during your fight with the zombies. When a normal person gets hurt, their body recovers for them, and the same is true for cultivators. When a person gets hurt to an extent that they cannot heal even with the use of medicine on the same tier, their vitality gets hurt. At that point, for a person to recover, a medicine above their cultivation tier must be used to first treat their vitality to allow their body to heal.

“Your body was probably hurt beyond its capacity during your fight with the zombies, but you used Botlam Dew which can heal those below the Foundation realm, which is what probably helped you recover.”

Lex got chills when he heard the news, and quickly went over his status history to determine what affected his spirit and soul! Quickly he found the answer, and it sent further chills down his spine!

The status read:

Received cut by tier 1 zombie, infected by mutagen. Body resisting mutagen x 7

Received cut by tier 2 zombie, infected by mutagen. Body unable to resist, mutagen multiplying x 2

Mutagen affecting spirit x 8

Mutagen altering soul x 4

Botlam Dew absorbed in blood. Botlam Dew purifying mutagen, spirit and soul returning to normal x 3

Thank the holy system for Botlam Dew! Lex chanted in his heart, and finally realized how close to his demise he really came. But, he also learnt something incredible: Botlam Dew could purify the zombie mutagens, which meant that at least the zombies he encountered weren't like the ones he'd seen in movies that didn't give the victim any chance to resist. Another thing was that the transformation wasn't instant, so a victim would have time to treat himself.

Well, no point in stressing himself out further over the fact. The situation had already been remedied so better to focus on the future for now.

Lex took a long, warm shower, washing off a lot of dried blood and dirt from his body, and returned to his living room just in time to collect the ridiculous amounts of barbecue that he'd ordered.

Several drinks and an entire cow's worth of meat later, Lex decided to relax for a bit before tending to the Inn. Too much work wasn't good for a boy's soul. In commemoration of his recent accolades, he decided to play a zombie game. He turned on his pc, chose a game and started playing.

At first when he started playing he felt a little uncomfortable: the game was too rigid, it didn't match his experience. Furthermore, the more he played the more he felt like he would rather be training so that he'd be able to handle the situation a bit better the next time he faced them.

Just as he was about to quit the game, his character in the game did a certain action, and like a bulb turning on Lex felt like he'd gotten an amazing idea! He made his character repeat the action, and the more he did it, the more he felt that his idea was amazing. He had an epiphany and suddenly he felt clearheaded.

He realized that he had been confused, but didn't even know it himself. He had been deluded and had somehow gone down the wrong path when it came to combat, but fortunately he had come to realize the truth!

He played for a few more hours to confirm his idea, and the more he played the more he felt that he was an unprecedented genius. Somehow, without realizing it, he had been influenced by some preconceived notions he had about combat, but he had finally broken free of those chains. That got him thinking, if he had been affected by false notions in terms of combat, what else had he overlooked? Since video games had liberated his mindset, he turned to the arts to free himself further.

To get some ideas for what he should do with the Inn he pulled out his phone and searched for the most popular cultivation novel these days. He found one and started reading, and what a book it was!

The main character, who had been abandoned at birth and raised by his "distant family" was severely ousted at every opportunity and treated horribly. Every single person he ever met hated him beyond comprehension and went out of their way, so far as to even inconvenience themselves, to harm the main character.

However, as the main character, the young boy of fifteen had stellar morals and never needlessly harmed others and never hated anyone and always helped anyone he saw – because somehow surrounded by all that negativity the inner morals of the MC could never be corrupted.

The only person who was decent to him was his adopted sister who he had found as a child and raised himself even though he himself was a child. She was devastatingly beautiful to the point where anyone born before or after would never again be as beautiful, but somehow no one other than the main

character ever noticed because her clothes and her face were covered by a little dirt because they used to do manual labor.

She was also in love with him because apparently it's mandatory in cultivation novels for adopted siblings to either betray one another, or fall in love with one another. One day this group of people tore through the fabric of space and time and appeared in front of the main character and beat him up for no good reason. Then they spent several paragraphs insulting him. Then they beat him up some more.

When they stopped the main character's sister somehow found them and lurched at them to stop them, but she was caught. It turned out those cultivators had descended to the mortal plane because the saintess of their family had somehow gotten lost and they were finding her, and the main character's adopted sister turned out to be the saintess.

Happy that they found her, they decided to kill the main character because how dare he take care of her and raise her causing her to have feelings for him? The saintess sister threatened suicide if they harmed him, but agreed to go with them if they spared him. The group agreed and spared him, but little did everyone know as they left, instead of killing the main character they decided to blow up the whole world he was in.

That way they wouldn't technically be directly killing him, thus not breaking their promise to the saintess sister, who at this point had been recognized to be so beautiful the universe itself was crying in admiration, because the little bit of dirt on her face had at some point fallen off.

When the world was destroyed and as the MC was about to die, his heart was filled with hate and sorrow, for he didn't hate those guys for killing him but rather all those "innocent" people in the world who had also died – the same people who had been insulting him his whole life.

This was because he had a heart of pure gold. In the moment before his death a treasure that his mysterious parents had left him started to glow, and saved him, granting him a second chance at life and cultivation.

All of this happened in the first chapter of the novel Lex decided to read. Honestly, he was impressed by the word-count to cliché ratio the novel had achieved. Nonetheless, it did give him an idea. In most novels he'd read previously, the MC goes out of his way to collect rare opportunities and treasures that could help him grow.

But as the owner of the Inn, he had access to several worlds, not just one. He could collect treasures from all over the universe and make them available at the Inn, thus making the Inn even more luxurious. Such an amazing idea!

Where else could he find inspiration? He opened up his computer and started listening to the latest songs, trying to see if the lyrics inspired him some more.

In the background Mary was floating in the air and watching Lex with a stupefied and irritated look. Whatever, she would ignore him for now. His spirit was damaged which affected how he thought. Once his spirit recovered, so would his sanity. She hoped.

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

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Chapter 29 New Guests

Somewhere upstate New York in a mansion an old man sat in a meditation stance, holding a golden key in his hand trying to absorb spirit energy. The key would allow spirit energy to enter his body, and even pass through the meridians, but none of it was absorbed. It was like a teasing sensation, one that dangled his greatest desires in front of him, but kept them out of reach.

Will let out a defeated sigh as he finally gave up. It was obvious to him, the key was whispering to him that it held the possibility that he yearned for, but to grasp it the old man would have to use the key instead of trying to derive benefits from it directly. But did he have the courage to use it?

He could barely walk on his own, much less face any difficulties so it was impossible for him to use the key and search for opportunities. But who could he trust to use the key for him and search for opportunities on his behalf? His “niece” who he got the key from was not a cultivator, otherwise he would trust her enough to do this for him. The old man had children of his own, but honestly he did not trust their competence. They’d grown up privileged and sheltered, akin to a plant in a greenhouse. Even if it was their intention to help

him, he could not rely on their competence. He could hire someone, but how trustworthy was a hired hand when it came to treasure?

Truly a conundrum, and one he had to solve if he ever wanted to recover his former cultivation. The old man sighed again, and called for a nurse to help him. There was one trick he could use to resolve the situation, but he did not want to use it unless he had no choice, for it would truly put him on death's door.

Somewhere on Vegus Minima, two soldiers were running desperately through a forest. For someone at their cultivation level of peak Qi Training it was unusual for them to be so out of sorts, but it was apparent from their appearance that they had just been through a fight. Something peculiar about them though was the fact that they were covered in flashlights and bells. As they ran they made endless noise and attracted all the zombies in the area. They were on a suicide mission. As far as weapons were concerned, they both only carried a single sword and an explosive each. The sword was for fighting and the explosive was for when they could no longer fight.

Their mission was to attract as many zombies as possible so that the caravan they were with could safely pass through. They used to all belong to a small, safe town protected by a resonance shield, but of all things an earthquake occurred and caused the building with the resonance shield to collapse. The town was no longer safe and they had to migrate immediately, and today was already their third day since they started their migration. These two soldiers were not the first suicide party that had set out, and it was the bravery of these suicide parties that allowed the caravan to travel relatively undetected by zombie hordes.

“Brother Chen, we have to set off the first explosive soon,” said one of the soldiers between ragged breaths. “If we get too far from the zombies we run the risk of losing their attention. We can use the noise from the explosion to attract their attention again.”

“You're right, we should,” replied Brother Chen, finally coming to a stop. A close inspection of the man would show that he was bleeding from his shoulder and chest, where he was covered in scratches. They both knew what that meant, but neither mentioned it. It was not like they carried the illusion of escape in the first place.

“I’ll do it,” said Chen in a matter-of-fact way. “Help me tie these torches onto this tree, and then get as far as you can. I’ll set it off when the horde approaches.”

The other soldier only nodded, accepting what Brother Chen told and got to work. What the two of them didn’t know was that a short distance from them stood a tall, pole like zombie. It had undergone some mutations and grown to nine feet tall and was incredibly sleek, with claws that extended a foot long and teeth that barely fit in its mouth. It also had two horns protruding from its head. It observed the two soldiers work in silence. It analyzed their strength and condition, and then smiled when it realized that they were incredibly weak compared to it. Making no attempt to hide, it strode forward.

The sound of the zombie crossing through the thicket attracted the soldiers attention, horrifying them when they noticed the zombie.

“A peak tier 3 zombie!” Brother Chen shrieked.

The zombie made a grunting sound, as if enjoying their apparent panic, and slowed down its approach instead to savor their reaction. The zombie as well as the soldiers knew that the soldiers would not be able to escape.

“Brother Chen, if this zombie finds the caravan no one will survive,” said the soldier as he took out the explosive he was carrying. There was no need to deliberate, they knew what they had to do.

Brother Chen took out his explosive as well, his hands trembling a little from the adrenaline. Even though he knew they were going to die, at the moment of his death he still felt fear in his heart. The fear did not slow his actions, but he felt it none-the-less.

“Throw it when it reaches 10 feet,” Brother Chen whispered, “if we wait any longer, we might not get an opportunity to use it at all.”

The soldier nodded, getting ready, but before either of them could do anything a floating golden door appeared beside them, shining brilliantly. The soldiers froze in confusion, and so did the zombie.

The zombie felt a fatal attraction from the door, and lost all interest in the two soldiers. Moving as fast as it could, it attacked the two soldiers, instantly knocking them to the ground. Whether they were dead or alive was unknown.

Then, with eyes filled with anticipation, the zombie moved towards the door. It dragged the two soldiers behind it, not forgetting to bring along its snack.

It was 4 am and Lex was asleep on his sofa, in front of him his television played some random tv shows. Truth be told, although Lex had not noticed it, the sudden stress and anxiety from such a sudden near death experience, as well as the battered state of his body really did affect him strongly. Fortunately after a day of venting his emotions by playing games, watching tv and reading novels, as well as the recovery effects of Botlam Dew, he had stabilized his drained mental state.

“WAKE UP!” roared Mary suddenly, appearing before him in the air. “The Inn has new guests coming in, as well as a potential enemy!”

Mary’s roar scared Lex into jumping out of bed and grabbing a pillow, holding it close to himself as a self defense item as his brain worked overtime to understand what was happening. He was drowsy and confused, still unsure of what was going on.

“A zombie from Vegus Minima has entered the Inn through a golden door! You need to handle it quickly!” informed Mary, making Lex aware of the situation.

Immediately, Lex gathered himself and began the process to return to the Inn, using the few minutes wait to fully wake up. Not being able to return to the Inn instantly was a real hindrance. It seemed Lex had to focus on completing his quests quickly so that he could raise his authority level.

The moment he reappeared at the Inn he adorned the Host Attire and equipped the butterknife, appearing before the zombie that had appeared at the gate. It stood there in silence, observing its new surroundings, with two limp bodies in its hands.

Lex was tempted to directly attack the zombie and kill it, but as it had not yet shown any aggression the system categorized it as a guest and did not allow Lex to attack. Above the zombie it’s information was clearly visible to Lex.

Name: None

Power Level: Peak Tier-3 (equivalent to peak Foundation realm)

Species: Zombie (Bottom level demon)

Midnight Inn Prestige Level: Not yet available

Internally Lex breathed a sigh of relief as even a Peak Foundation realm was still in the foundation realm, the Self Defence Butter Knife would still be able to handle it.

“This guest, it’s a bit rude to show up somewhere with two bloody bodies at someone’s door, don’t you think?” said Lex as he approached the zombie. He had no idea if the zombie could understand him, but it didn’t matter as his only goal was to agitate the zombie into action. Fortunately Bastet and Falak were still in their rooms, which were isolated from the rest of the Inn once the doors closed, so they did not have to witness the zombie. He didn’t want to discriminate against his guests, but he thought having zombies as guests would lower the prestige of the Inn, and he absolutely had to maintain the prestige of the Inn! He was depending on it to build a relationship with Bastet, and that was a very important part of his future plan.

Fortunately, his plan worked. Though even if he had not said anything the zombie would have acted soon. The moment Lex appeared in front of the zombie its instincts were screaming at it that if it managed to eat Lex it would benefit greatly! Completely dropping the two bodies on the ground it let out a roar and launched itself towards Lex. A pity for the zombie, while with his normal cultivation Lex would never be able to keep up with it, he was currently wearing the Host Attire which filled him with immense power. With a wave of his hand he launched the Butter Knife at the zombie, and literally as if it were a hot knife cutting through butter the knife pierced the zombies forehead and came out the other side.

The zombie dropped dead immediately, bringing the minor ordeal to a very anticlimactic end.

“Clean this up, Gerard,” Lex spoke out into the air, and the old looking butler appeared instantly to take care of the matter.

Just as Lex was about to leave, Gerard said, “Host, what about these two guests? They are still alive, though they might not be for much longer.”

With that, Lex brought his attention to the two “bodies” the zombie had brought with it and came to the realization that the system categorized them

as guests as well. Two, almost dead, probably soon to become zombie guests.

Authors Note: This is the extra chapter you guys unlocked last week! Keep voting to unlock even more extra chapters!

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

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Chapter 30 Pro Bono wing and Recovery Room

Looking at the two bodies he could clearly identify them as soldiers or guards based on their uniform. Above them their information was available:

Name: Chen Lee

Power Level: Peak Qi Training

Species: Human

Midnight Inn Prestige Level: Not yet available

Name: Blane Park

Power Level: Peak Qi Training

Species: Human.

Midnight Inn Prestige Level: Not yet available

Initially he thought they were dead, but since they were alive it would be wrong if he just watched them die. It pinched his heart a bit when he thought of the expenditure, but ultimately he decided to buy two Botlam Dews as well as the recovery room so that they could heal. He purchased Botlam Dew and asked Gerard to feed it to them, but before he made the purchase of the Recovery Room Mary appeared before him and stopped him.

“Using the recovery room costs money as well. If you’re planning on using it on them, then you should get the Pro bono wing first and accept them as Pro bono guests, which will make their use of the recovery room free!”

Lex’s eyes lit up when he thought of that, and purchased the Pro bono wing as well as the recovery room for a total of 3000MP, bringing his total MP down to 1991! Spending so much MP hurt him a little, especially since he needed MP to upgrade his cultivation. But he couldn’t spare time to wallow in his worries, it was not good to leave two wounded guests out in the open.

Entering the design interface he put the Pro bono wing 500 meters to the left of the main Inn, and gave it the shape similar to a small cottage from the English countryside. It’s interior consisted of a small sitting and dining area right at the entrance, as well as two rooms in the back.

The Recovery room he put in the furthest right of the Inn, as a small hut attached to the boundary wall. The Recovery room should be far away from the main area of the Inn so that any patients would not be disturbed by any guests.

Under normal circumstances he would put more effort into designing the two new additions but for now it could all wait. He exited the Design Interface and directly accepted the two as guests in his Pro bono wing, then transferred them to the Recover wing. Summoning Velma, he asked her to take care of them to whatever capacity their status as PB(Pro bono) Guests allowed.

Quest Update: Quest Complete! PB wing established and guest accepted

Calculating Rating...

Rating: D+

Host Reward: 500 MP + A Babies Candy

New Quest: Having a guest come once can be an accident, only repeat guests can reflect an institution’s prestige! Have 5 individual repeat guests!

Minimum Reward: Midnight Inn Prestige

Remark: You can’t live off your face only, stop being lazy and put in some work!

Lex's lips twitched. This was the lowest reward he'd gotten for a quest, probably because he took too long in completing it. But even if it was a small reward, he was still interested in seeing what a Baby's Candy was. That reminded him, he hadn't checked out his reward for connecting Vegas Minima either.

He opened his inventory and checked it out.

A Baby's Candy

Making a baby like you is as easy as giving it candy. Similarly, getting weaklings to like you is as easy as giving them some benefits. Instantly allows peak Body Tempering cultivator to break through Qi Training without any negative influence.

Serene Whistle

A whistle that placates beasts at Foundation realm and below during a taming attempt. Repeated use in a short time builds resistance.

Midnight Events: Trials

With access to multiple worlds and a growing Inn, the number of tasks for will increase but you can't do everything yourself. Create Trials for guests to undertake in various worlds with different objectives and rewards to secretly complete tasks you can't do yourself!

Both the rewards were nice, but of no use to him at the moment. The Trials, on the other hand, was probably one of the most useful things he'd encountered so far. It's potential was amazing, but again, he didn't need it at the moment.

He put both the reward items in the Gift Shop, the Candy for 500MP and the Whistle for 1500MP. His pricing was a little arbitrary, but he eyeballed it based on their use and what cultivation level they corresponded to. A true test of their pricing would be determined when he established more footfall.

While he was thinking about pricing, Velma appeared to give him a report.

"The two guests have been put in healing pods, but they have suffered very serious injuries. The Botlam Dew has neutralized the mutagen, but their

internal organs have been seriously compromised. Their meridians have also suffered damage, not to mention both their spirits and their souls.”

Lex frowned, thinking it was inevitable that they would still die. The condition they had reached in the Inn was just too bad and...

“Keeping all of that in mind, they should wake up within a few hours, and be able to leave by tomorrow morning.”

That greatly surprised Lex! Damn the recovery room was pretty good.

Lex dismissed Velma and summoned Mary. “Introduce the features of the Recovery room to me.”

“The Recovery room (RR) is a special environment that promotes the body’s ability to heal naturally. Currently it can host 6 guests at a time. It’s limitation is that it can only speed up the healing process, so if the body is incapable of healing on its own, being in the room won’t help.

“The recovery of a guest can be further aided by putting them in a Recovery Pod (RP). The room has 3 of those which not only accelerates the body’s self healing further, but also heals some wounds that the body itself is unable to heal as well. The pod also acts as a life support system. This is a great way for someone to heal without damaging their vitality. This is also great for developing immunity for poisons, as the pod keeps healing the body from the effects of poison until it develops a natural immunity.

“Finally, the Recovery room has a single Organic Reconstruction room (ORR), which instead of actual recovery, builds new body parts for the guest and replaces them for the guest. The new body part will be identical to the original in optimal condition. The ORR is special, in that while the other facilities of the Recovery room can be upgraded, the ORR can only work on guests at the same cultivation or lower than the Host, meaning you. The ORR is also not available on PB basis and needs to be paid for.”

Lex raised an eyebrow, clearly impressed. Even if the ORR was limited in its capability right now, it was very impressive.

“Let me know as soon as those two guests wake up,” Lex told Mary, and quickly exited the Inn. Lex had been lazing around for the last day, but the sudden entrance by a zombie scared. He needed to upgrade his authority as quickly as possible so that he could at least stop zombies from entering. While

he did not have a direct way of increasing his authority at the moment, increasing his strength was also a way of doing so in the long run.

Picking up his phone he texted Marlo his requirements for the weapon he had asked for. Although yesterday he was a little out of sorts with his random “enlightenments”, some of them truly did make sense. Having finally sent the message he put on a track suit and went out to jog. His body had recovered a lot by now but he was still sore, a little movement would do him good. Furthermore, he needed to think of ways to distribute more golden keys as the last one still had not been used.

Lex let out a sigh when he thought of all that he had to do. It truly wasn't easy being an entrepreneur.

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