

Innkeeper 321

The Innkeeper

Chapter 321: Another kid

Cornelius once again found himself eating an entire feast as he listened to various reports. He had a busy schedule ahead of him, so he had to make up for it and handle all the governing matters that required his attention today. In his absence, he had others to keep things running, and he was slowly distributing these responsibilities to his sons and daughters, but in the end, some things could only be handled by him.

A nervous-looking man entered the chamber and gave him an extremely deep bow, but before he could continue with any more formalities, Cornelius used his spirit sense to stop him.

"Save the flourishing for public settings, it is not important. I was told you have some important matters to report to me. You may begin."

The professor was caught in surprise, but he quickly gathered himself, recalled the information he had rehearsed. The fact that Lex was suspected to be the king's son was something he need not mention, for it was irrelevant to the revelation he was going to present. As a professor, he was used to summarizing important aspects of his lecture as bullet points in his head, before delivering the lecture flexibly.

"I suspect one of my students is secretly cultivating the true path," the professor began, but already the demeanor of not only the king, but of everyone else in the room changed as well. "His name is Lex, and after I began to suspect as such, I did a thorough background check on him as well as kept a close eye on his actions afterwards. My background check only..."

"Wait," Cornelius said, interrupting him. "Assistant A, bring up a picture of the Lex you previously informed me of."

Miscellaneous Assistant A, the king's closest and most loyal assistant, quickly turned on a terminal nearby, and brought up a picture of Lex.

"Is this the student you're referring to?" the king asked.

"Yes, yes that's him!" the professor replied with excitement. Just the thought that he may have once been a teacher to a cultivator of the true path filled him with excitement.

"Miscellaneous, fill me in on what Lex has done since you last gave me a report. Stick to major things only."

Cornellius actually expected a very brief result. He remembered that what he liked most about Lex was his extreme focus and dedication. It was the same mentality that got him to his position today, and it was the same mindset he tried to nurture in his kids.

"Let me see... He broke through to the Foundation realm, as predicted, spent over a month training for the Realm races with your daughter Cwenhild, and successfully helped her become the first person to take control of a Minor realm. It was reported he single-handedly defeated a Kraven in the Golden core realm. During the fight, he is reported to have shown great resilience to spirit attacks, and a sturdy body. Autopsy of the Kraven after the fact revealed minimal to no physical damage other than the killing blow, leading to the suspicion he defeated the Kraven using spirit or soul attacks."

Cornelius' hands paused halfway through cutting his steak. Just as he was about to comment, Miscellaneous continued with his report.

"Once he successfully gained experience in capturing a realm, he entered multiple other realms on his own and was able to take control of 2, or possibly more. This information was hidden from the academy, and the only reason we know about it is because of the spy you placed in your wife Nora's estate."

The professor paled, as he felt like he heard something he shouldn't have. The king though didn't care about his private life being revealed. In fact, it wasn't as if Nora herself did not know about the spies. The fact that she still revealed the information meant she wanted him to know. She was clever like that. She never outright asked people for what she wanted, but manipulated events to make certain things happen.

Well, for better or for worse, she had attracted his attention.

"You have done well," the king said, looking at the professor. "You deserve a reward. Tidy up your affairs at the academy and report back here tomorrow. I'll have an immortal be your teacher for a year."

Before the professor could even begin to process what he heard, and his elation begin to show, the king disappeared.

Upon hearing the familiar ting of the system, Lex checked to see a new notification.

Quest Complete! Midnight Tavern being established!

Host Authority sufficient for manual setup. Would you like to manually set up the Midnight Tavern? Y/N

Please note: manually accepting the Midnight Tavern will cost an extra 5 million MP!

Lex didn't even hesitate to select yes. He already had an image in his mind of how he wanted to do things this time around, and for the Midnight Tavern, he planned on doing things differently than the Midnight Inn.

A complete map of the entire Crystal realm was projected into Lex's mind, alongside hundreds of thousands of undiscovered Minor realms, as well as millions of discovered Minor realms.

As if that wasn't enough, he also received a lot of information about each and every region of the Crystal realm that he would focus on. If he wasn't in a time crunch, he would spend hours, maybe even days, agonizing over every detail. Unfortunately, time was the one thing he did not have.

"Mark all the areas on the map controlled by Kraven as black," Lex said to Mary. A very massive chunk of the map turned black, nearly 8% of the entire realm. When considering that the total amount of land controlled by the 7 races combined didn't even cover 40% of the realm, that 8% seemed massive.

"Now mark all the regions with ongoing wars and conflicts as red. Mark all neutral zones as yellow. Mark all areas where at least basic laws are enforced as brown. Mark all areas where all races are freely allowed to enter as green."

Different colors filled the map as he looked over it. The best case scenario was a place that had all the colors representing aspects he liked, while being far away from black and red. Still, there were too many options.

"Marks areas with low supervision as silver. Mark areas rich in treasures and resources as gold. Mark areas with a high concentration of travelers as blue."

The map was still vast, but suddenly, one area stood out to him as was colorful enough to be a rainbow. It was rich in resources, was in neutral lands, had a high concentration of travelers and, most importantly, it was far away from any major conflict so Lex didn't need to worry about war disrupting his plans any time soon. He would have liked to study the map some more but, his instincts suddenly started screaming so he made his choice. The next moment, he vanished from where he stood.

40 seconds later, the king appeared outside the bank, his expression one of intrigue.

"How did he teleport without emitting any spatial waves?" the king asked, assuming Nora was responsible.

"How am I supposed to know? Shouldn't you be the one keeping an eye on your kids. I already have my hands full taking care of one of yours"

"How can you call that taking care of? From what I understand, you see her maybe once a year." Cornelius had originally come, not for Lex, but for whatever cultivation technique he cultivated. His own personal one was too difficult for most people, but if more and more cultivation techniques for the true path could be discovered, slowly the nation would have more true cultivators. But since Lex was gone, quite mysteriously at that, he turned his mind to other things. Namely, Nora. He had been so irritated by her behavior that he completely forgot that she was actually quite beautiful. Suddenly, he felt like giving her another kid.

On the side, Cwenhild was frozen still. Literally. Nora was using her spiritual sense to freeze Cwenhild because she had no idea what this daughter of hers would say to her father, and she just couldn't handle the embarrassment if something went wrong. After all, she had worked hard to build her reputation.

In the bustling town of Babylon, two streets away from the busy dock, on Bakers street, a three story building stood empty. It was a wooden building, with age and history embedded in every board and plank. But as it often was, when things were described as aged, they were often just run down. Yet beneath its shabby exterior, was a building with a strong foundation, that had stood for as long as the town had existed.

However, on this busy street, full of wealthy traders, skilled workers, soldiers, sailors and vagabonds, no one cared for history, age or nostalgia. This was a center of commerce, and as such, the people longed for something new, something bold, something adventurous, something that would add to the charm of the town.

That something or rather, someone, stepped out of the wooden building and took a deep breath of the salty sea air. With a grin on his face, Lex turned back in. It was time to renovate.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 322: Welcome to the tavern

Stepping into the building he now owned, Lex ran his hand across the wooden bar, feeling the subtle, weathered grooves. He didn't mind the dust that gathered on his fingers, as his focus was only on absorbing the feel of this building.

Before the system gave Lex the ownership of this building, it had belonged to a once wealthy family. Due to a series of unfortunate events, as well as poor management, the family had fallen on tough times. They didn't have the money to repair what was now the tavern building, yet at the same time, they were too greedy to sell it to anyone else at a cheap price. The extra 5 million MP Lex actually spent was converted by the system into local currency to pay off the owners more than a hundred times what the building was actually worth. A condition of the payment was that they would never mention it to anyone, or come back to give Lex any problems.

Regardless, Lex was now legally the owner of this building. Furthermore, this property had integrated itself with the system. But, since the tavern was in the middle of a town, and not in its own realm like the Midnight Inn, Lex had an entirely different idea of how to run it. Most of the time, for the day-to-day clients, it would be nothing more than an ordinary tavern. Yet for some people...

Lex chuckled.

He opened the system interface and allowed himself to get familiar with the layout of the building. The entrance of the building had a small porch with enough space for four or five people to sit in chairs without blocking the door. After the porch was a tiny patch of lawn which, currently, was nothing more than a collection of weeds and overgrown bushes. A small, tiled path cut through the lawn onto Bakers street, though the tiles had long since been covered in dirt, and were no longer visible.

On the inside, the condition of the building was actually worse. While the major structure appeared to be fine, a system scan showed a massive termite infestation. Most of the windows of the building had also been boarded up, but some were left as is, leaving the building to the mercy of the elements. As strange and unpredictable as the weather was in the Crystal realm, he could not even imagine what this building had suffered.

The list of things wrong with the building was actually quite large, but for the most part, it did not matter. Since the Midnight Tavern was in a public place, Lex had no plans to miraculously fix the building overnight and attract the entire town's attention. Yet, at the same time, while he could take his time to fix the external appearance of the building, if he used the system to fix the inside of the building, no one would know.

So what had to be determined now was the layout. Ignoring the existing layout of the building, Lex began to tinker with the system interface. Above the front door would be a small banner that read Midnight Tavern, and the door would open up to the main hall.

There would be no separate reception, and instead, only a long bar attached to the left side of the hall. Right beside the bar was a door to the kitchen, probably one of the most important places in a tavern, right after the bar itself. He set a few stools in front of the bar and ten tables in the main hall.

At the far end of the hall, there was also a small stage for a bard or musician to entertain his guests. In the back, there were also two private rooms guests could rent for their meals, if they wanted to avoid the hubbub of the crowd.

As plain and simple as it was, that was all there was on the ground floor. On the first floor, there were three private rooms for lodging, equipped with a small bathroom, as well as a smaller hall that could be booked for private events. On the second floor, there were five private rooms available for booking. The rooftop was modeled onto a terrace, equipped with a grill, barbeque station and a minibar. It allowed for a spectacular view of the sea, as well as the town, and made for an overall excellent spot for a small get-together.

The area behind the building could be entered through the kitchen, and led to an enclosed space surrounded by a large wooden fence. It had three small, attached rooms for any live-in staff, a laundry room and a small storage room.

He did not make the tavern look posh and refined, and while he fixed as well as strengthened the building's structure, he maintained a weathered and rustic aesthetic throughout. Yes, this was nothing more than the average tavern, nothing special about it whatsoever. The renovation for the entire building cost him 7000 MP. He snapped his finger, and by that it meant he spent some more MP, and the tavern bar became fully stocked, all the furniture appeared, and he was basically ready to open for business. All he needed now was to hire some staff.

Then Lex cracked his neck and began spending the big bucks. Using his increased authority, and a whopping 300 million MP, Lex bought a spatial formation for the building. Its purpose was very simple. It hid a folded space within it, like a manufactured Minor realm, but one that couldn't continue to exist without the formation itself.

There was no fixed entrance to the hidden space, as any door that Lex wished could turn into the entrance, or exit of the hidden space. Lex frowned. He couldn't keep calling it the hidden space, so he decided to call it the backyard. Yes, it was the tavern's backyard.

The backyard wasn't big, only about 4 acres of land, but it was completely bare. Lex had to add everything, from the dirt to the grass, to the air. He fixed the light so that it seemed like it was always early morning, and the air was fresh and crisp, like a breeze blowing from a snow-capped mountain.

This is where the selected guests of the tavern would be allowed to enter and receive all their services. He couldn't wait, he thought of...

With a bang, the front door of the tavern slammed open, and a massive man walked in. He was eight feet (2.4 meters) tall and seemed just as wide. His grizzly face was furnished with an ugly scowl, though Lex found it hard to focus on the man's face when his entire body was covered in blood.

With heavy steps that caused the wooden floor to creak, the man trudged into the hall. He gave Lex the ugliest glare possible before throwing his massive body onto one of the stools. Miraculously, the stool did not break.

"Barkeep, pour me a drink," the man bellowed, before resting his head on the bar. He grabbed his hair with his hands, as if he would pull it out any second, though he resisted.

Lex was stunned, partly because he didn't expect his first guest to walk in merely a few moments after he installed the tavern sign outside, and partly because he had no idea what drinks to pour!

Suffice to say, he had no experience behind a bar, nor was he familiar with the unusual spirits he had filled his shelves with, but you couldn't keep a client waiting. Even a blood-covered, giant monstrous client.

He hopped behind the bar, grabbed a green colored bottle that looked like something out of a pirate movie, and poured from it into a random glass. These were drinks he'd never even heard of back on Earth, so he had no idea what the proportions should be, but he guessed he would find out.

Filling the glass to the brim, he slid it near the giant and said, "you alright there, buddy?"

"How can I be alright? How can I be alright? The Babylon killer has struck again, my captains dead and worst of all, my only good clothes are covered in blood. I was supposed to meet a lady tonight!"

The giant man lifted his head, grabbed the glass without looking and chugged it down.

"The Babylon killer?" Lex asked curiously. At the same time, he was going through the system to hire a worker for the tavern that could run the bar.

"Yeah, there's a serial killer in Babylon, haven't you heard? Say, did you pour..." the before the man could finish his sentence, his eyes rolled to the back of his head, and he fell to the ground. Steam started coming out of the man's open mouth and nose, and he turned red like a tomato.

At that exact moment, a few more guests walked in and froze at the sight of the collapsed giant, and Lex's newest worker stepped out of the kitchen door, and froze as well.

Lex smiled weakly at the new guests, scratched his head and said, "Welcome to the Midnight Tavern."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 323: Theme music

Three men stood at the entrance to the Midnight tavern, their eyes aimed at the blood covered, collapsed man on the floor. The steam rising from his mouth was very visible, and his face was redder than the blood covering him, which had started to turn brown.

Behind the bar stood a casually dressed, very young man who was flashing them an awkward smile, and at the other door stood a tall, mature man wearing a black coat vest, white shirt and black pants.

Silence hung in the air as the man leading the trio slowly pointed at the man on the floor and said, "I'll have whatever he had."

"My god, Big Ben is flat on the floor," said one of the two men behind him.

"Why is he out cold? Doesn't he know the constable will come around to ask him questions?" "Who knows..."

The three men started chatting amongst themselves as they happily walked over the man on the ground continuing their chat. By the sound of it, they seemed to know 'Big Ben' well, and even knew that he had recently witnessed some kind of murder. Compared to how distraught Big Ben had been, they were completely nonchalant.

Lex breathed a sigh of relief, and looked towards the new barkeep, who promptly introduced himself.

"My name is Roan, sir. I can man the bar, and I can also cook."

"Very good," Lex said, allowing Roan to replace him behind the bar. "You make the drinks, and I'll take them over. Also, take care of Big Ben here as well. Take him somewhere he can take a nap comfortably."

"Yes sir," he said, his hands moving with experienced deftness, as he poured the drink from the green bottle in shot glasses. He put them on a tray, allowing Lex to take it over.

Lex could have just hired a bunch more workers from the system, but for the tavern he wanted to fit seamlessly in with the town. That is why, other than a few core employees, he planned on hiring the rest of his workers from amongst the locals. Seeing familiar faces instead of all strangers would allow the tavern to quickly become accepted by the locals, and provide a fresh experience for Lex.

"Here you go gents," Lex said, as he put down the tray on the table. "Drinks today are on the house, seeing how it's the tavern's first day."

"I was wondering when this opened up," said the man who had been in the lead earlier. "It's about time we got a decent tavern..." the man paused, took a slow look around the place, and then continued, "well, a somewhat decent tavern. I was tired of drinking old Husky's homemade spinach brew. Yuck!"

Grabbing the shot glass, the man raised the glass to Lex, and then downed the glass in one go. His two friends did the same, and in only a few moments, they started to blush, though fortunately none of them fainted.

"Before Big Ben, eh, took a nap, he was telling me about some murders that have been happening here. Do you know anything about that?" Lex asked.

"Yes yes, the Babylon killer, the serial psycho, the rat barber, people have given him different names depending on the district. What, you didn't look into it before opening the tavern? Worried it'll affect business? Well, yeah things are bad, but that's also good. As of today, there's been 22 murders in the last two weeks, all of them a bloody sight.

"The local constables can't seem to catch the guy and no one has any idea who it is. Things are getting worse, but that's good, because the local lord is bound to take notice if it starts affecting his profits. When the lord finally gets here, everything will get better. Until then, just keep on going, and pray that if the psycho is gonna strike again, he'll strike you because at least that way you don't need to listen to batty Marge's ramblings."

The man's two friends cheered and laughed, before they all started rambling about this 'batt Marge'.

Lex went back to the bar and waited for Roan to return from putting Big Ben away. His mind had been focused towards developing the tavern's backyard, but it seemed his first priority needed to be protection. After all, the town apparently had a serial killer on the loose.

But, he wasn't totally without protection. After all, a 300 million MP formation wasn't simple. Moreover, for whatever reason, the system seemed to be placing fewer restrictions on the tavern than the Inn, so Lex had a lot more room to maneuver.

His first form of protection was the fact that no one could sneak into the tavern. No matter where or how they tried to enter, they would always be brought to the front hall. This was because the spatial formation freely allowed Lex to set several safety measures as he wanted in the tavern building occupied space. Similarly, while he could not teleport people freely, he could easily manipulate the location any door led to, effectively making the tavern building as complex a maze as he wanted to make.

But, for trouble makers who come barging in the front door, this was no obstacle. Unfortunately, the system still did not provide him with any formations with any offensive capabilities, but he could set up a formation to trap people, and then just keep them as prisoners indefinitely. This wasn't a perfect solution, but it was good enough for now. The best part was, once the second formation trapped someone, Lex could treat that trapped area as a room, and use the spatial formation to move it around. Yes, this would work out nicely. After all, Lex wasn't a fighter, he was a billionaire Innkeeper, he had other ways to handle troublemakers.

The trapping formation, due to its simple requirements, was only 1 million MP for one of its best versions. He doubted anyone could break out of it.

By the time he was done with that, Roan came back after putting Big Ben in a bed in one of the rooms.

"Will he be okay?" Lex asked, with a hint of guilt.

"Yes, the Jade Heart ferment that you gave him is a very potent, but safe spirit. It's a little hard for most people to tolerate normally, since it burns impurities and diseases in one's body. When he wakes up, he'll be the healthiest he's been in a long time."

"That's good, that's good. By the way, for today, the drinks are free. But, starting tomorrow, make sure the guest knows how much each drink is worth when they order it."

The drinks that had been stocked in his bar were not random drinks. The same way the Midnight Inn was connected to all the planets Lex anchored to it, the Midnight Tavern was connected to the Crystal realm. All the drinks here were drinks that existed in the Crystal realm, but all of varying rarity. These were still relatively cheap ones, but from the system interface Lex could stock his bar with extremely precious drinks. In fact, there were a few drinks that cost energy as well as MP. Lex was truly curious what they were like, but now was not the time to be wasteful.

Other than Roan, he needed one more worker who would maintain the place. Somehow, the tavern's banner had managed to attract some customers, but Lex really preferred if the front of the building looked presentable as well. Since he didn't want to use the system interface for that, his next worker would have to be skilled in these things.

Lex started entering his requirements into the system.

Gamer's Den, Midnight Inn

Z was pacing around the busy store, waiting. He didn't need to manage all the guests because, under Lex's instructions, Mary had hired more workers for the Den, allowing Z to become the manager. A result of that change in position was naturally a raise in salary. A raise in salary meant Z could easily get whatever he wanted. But after a while, he ran out of things to buy. So he stopped thinking about it. Moreover, since the invasion of the Raskals, Z had been feeling down, though he never let anyone know.

He had been trying to figure out why he hadn't been able to overcome the difficult ordeal like all the anime main characters he'd seen. After all, Z had all the things they had. From spikey hair, to the power of friendship, to a training montage that he made in his free time, to even a speaker for combat music. So what was missing? How could he fail?

Then, one day, the answer came to him. He'd been using generic music. All the heroes had their own, dedicated theme music, but Z had been using random stuff he found online. What he needed was his own theme music, and he couldn't be limited in that either. He needed his signature music for when he

was stoic, when he was pumped, when he was fighting, and especially when he needed to overcome his limits, and let the power of friendship make him stronger, leaving his enemies saying 'nani?'

So, using favors with friends he managed to make at the Inn, he hired the best composer he could find.

The next moment, the door to the Gamer's Den opened and a figure walked in. At first, Z could only see his silhouette, due to the bright light coming in from outside, but as the man stepped in, Z felt relief flood him.

"Mr. Hans Simmerz, I'm so glad you could make it."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 324: Hot tub

Lex's second worker for the tavern had to be good at repair work, carpentry, have modicum expertise at gardening and should have some knowledge of various fields. He entered all the relevant information and summoned his latest worker.

Soon, a man walked out of the kitchen door and presented himself before Lex. Lex immediately compared him to Roan, who had a mature and suave air about him, with the dress and demeanor somewhat similar to that of a gentleman - as strange as a sight that was in a tavern. The new man, Rick, as he introduced himself, instead was dressed very casually, with a shirt much too large for him, and had somewhat of a belly. His hands and face were covered in dirt, and it looked like he had just come from hard labor.

Despite his languid appearance, as an employee of the tavern, he would fulfill his duties perfectly.

"Clean up the front of the building," Lex said to Rick. "The weeds need to be removed, the tiles need to be uncovered from the dirt and cleaned, and the porch probably needs some repair work as well. You can judge what needs to be done with that on your own."

Rick only grunted in reply before he headed out. Lex glanced at the three guests who were chatting loudly, before he turned his attention back to the backyard. He needed to spruce the place up, add the facilities he was planning, as well as finally create his own living space. After that, he planned on exploring Babylon a bit to spread the word about the tavern. Furthermore, he needed to hire a few

locals as well. A couple of barmaids, a few people to man the kitchen, a few more to maintain the rooms and complete minor chores such as laundry, room service and such, and finally, he needed one or two bouncers.

While Lex had very lax requirements for the other positions, who the bouncer would be would reflect on the authority and security of the tavern. The bouncer would need to develop or have an existing reputation, and he could not be easily replaced. As such, Lex's initial plan was to make whomever he chose as a bouncer a permanent employee of the system, rather than just a temporary one.

For all of that, first he would need to get acquainted with the locals and then hold interviews for any interested applicants. But for now, the backyard.

He checked the new building options that had been unlocked in the system due to the tavern, and one by one, read through their introductions.

First was the Wine cellar. Despite its name, the cellar wasn't dedicated only for wines. Instead, all spirit drinks could be stored there, as the room had a special function. It would age, develop, and even enhance all drinks placed in the room. Some drinks, for example, served medical purposes, but needed time to mature into the appropriate properties, and leaving such a drink here would speed up that process.

Second was the Secret room. Its entrance could be as inconspicuous as Lex wanted, and led to a room equipped with a makeshift bed, a bathroom and, most importantly, isolating properties that would prevent tracking from common forms of tracing. Of course, it wasn't as effective as the Destiny protection the Inn afforded, but that wasn't something Lex could casually buy, either.

The third room was a peculiar one called the Rumor room. Any rumors circulating in the vicinity of the tavern that were repeated with great frequency would automatically be listed there. There was no indication of the veracity of the rumors, or how they originated. Lex felt that one was for him, mostly. After all, in many novels he'd read, people came to the barkeep to hear the latest news.

Lastly, there was the Hot tub room. The hot tub was not massive, as he could have expected, and instead could at most comfortably accommodate 6 people. It did, however, come with various benefits. The hot tub served as a disinfectant, but it was not just germs or disease it was ridding you of, but any unnatural entity latched onto your body. This included but was not limited to minor curses, minor to mediocre poisons, most tracking techniques, artificially inflicted bad luck, etc. It also served to relax the

users mental state in case they were inordinately stressed and helped the body recover in case of unusual exertion.

Without hesitation, Lex added all these rooms to the backyard, except the Security room which he created an entrance for right behind the bar.

Moreover, he also added a meditation room, recovery room, recovery pod, and a training room. Each room was separate, and unlike the wooden exterior of the tavern, were built from the most exquisite marble.

He created one more room, of a similar design to the Hot tub room, but changed the size of the hot tub to only accommodate one person. Then, in a small cage at the bottom of the hot tub, inserted the green pebble that produced the magical water.

He still did not fully understand the pebble, and so currently did not plan on letting this room become open to the public. For the time being, only Lex would use the room. After all, he did not know if the water produced by the pebble was limited.

Next, he turned his attention to the Wine cellar. Much in the way that the Gift shop had its selection of items Lex could buy, the Wine cellar had a selection of drinks on its own. But, unlike the Gift shop, the selection for the Wine cellar was massive. He suspected it had to do with his increased authority.

The drinks started all the way from 1 MP, and went well into tens of millions of MP. He strongly suspected that the most expensive drinks were meant only for immortals. He would study the list in detail at a later date, but for now, he bought a dozen drinks in the 100 - 10,000 MP range. Each drink, other than just its name, gave a small description of their effects. These dozen drinks that Lex bought all helped solidify and speed up the cultivation for those in the Foundation realm.

Heh, he was biased to his needs. Who could fault him?

In the spirit of celebrating his new tavern, and the satisfaction of being able to use his system again, he bought a single bottle of wine for 1 million MP. Although he could afford to splurge, there were other things he had in mind for that.

"Hey Mary, now that I have a tavern, as well as a private space, can I just use a spirit energy formation to gather the energy the system requires?"

"Yes, it's completely possible. But to have any significant effect on your energy accumulation, you would need a formation designed for immortals. To purchase such a formation, you would need to spend 20% energy as well as 5 billion MP."

Lex paused, as looked towards his MP. Currently he had 2.2 billion MP! In fact, considering how long Lady Cosmos had been going on, he should have had a lot more!

But despite his best efforts, he ran out of spiritual food to serve his guests. While his increased authority allowed him to directly buy spiritual food, it was expensive, which meant he was selling it at a loss, since he didn't want to randomly increase the food price.

All he could do was increase the size of his greenhouse by another 3000 acres, and give the turtle all kinds of new seeds to plant. He didn't want to expand too much, since he fully expected demand to go back down after Lady Cosmos ended, and he wanted sustainable growth.

Speaking of Lady Cosmos, it was actually in its final stages. There were only 100 contestants left, last time he checked. One of these days, he would take some time out to actually watch the show.

"Another thing," Mary said, interrupting Lex's thoughts. "Since you now have a tavern as well as an Inn, the system's energy consumption has increased. This means, every 3 months, your accumulated energy will drop by 1%. If it reaches 0%, the system will have to shut down some essential functions of both places to continue operating. I highly recommend you don't let that happen."

"Got it," Lex said, suddenly feeling the urge to jump into that hot tub and let his stress melt away!

But his situation was not as bad as it seemed. He had already turned his attention from seeking random pockets of accumulated energy towards those crystals he absorbed in the bank. Moreover, he had not selected the location of the tavern randomly.

It might not seem like much, since at a glance the technological level of the town was vastly below that of the academy, but what did technology have to do with resources? When he was selecting a place on

the map, his current location was bathed in gold - the color he decided for treasures and resources. He was literally in one of the richest places in the whole realm!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 325: Getting started

Lex's thoughts wandered back to the map of the Crystal realm. He'd seen it for less than a minute, but even so, it had revealed a lot of information to Lex. Of the many things he learned, the most unbelievable was that the Crystal realm was flat!

It consisted of hundreds, possibly thousands of continents, and how deep the ground went was not revealed on the map, but the borders where the realm ended were clearly marked. About 1000 miles (1609 km) from the edge, on all sides, was an absolute dead zone, where no living thing could enter. The edge of the realm did not open into nothingness, leaving the realm as if floating in space, but was tightly blocked. On this, there was too little information, but a preliminary guess Lex made on his own was that there was a solid wall of space blocking off the edge. Of course, Lex's understanding of space was entirely based on fiction novels, so there was likely a better explanation for it.

He had a few other theories, and at another time it would make a good subject for research, but currently he had other priorities, so he left it as something unbelievable.

Something much more pressing, and relevant to him, was the information he gathered on the Kraven. Unlike the rest of the races, which were spread out across the entire realm, the Kraven were inside a bubble. Slowly they were expanding their borders, and reaching the rest of the realm, but nonetheless, it was a fact that they were concentrated in a certain region of the realm. Lex had too little information regarding the matter, but based on what he knew, he could venture a bold guess that they either originated in, or adjacent to, the Poliod territory - the first race to encounter, and then be defeated by the Kravens.

This meant that if he wanted to discover their origin, he would have to venture into that territory. It was a quest he had from the system, but not one he was actively trying to fulfill. His first priority now was to develop the tavern as his base, and start collecting those energy filled crystals.

The first step to that was spreading the tavern's popularity. He opened the event management panel, created a one-day event called 'Opening Celebrations' and printed out a few hundred fliers for the tavern. He didn't need anything else from the panel, and wasn't planning on doing any mystical or magical advertising, so these fliers would suffice.

Lex took a few and walked over to the three guests, who were laughing amongst themselves. Even though they hadn't had a single drink after Jade Heart, they seemed intoxicated already.

"Lads, you seem to be having a good time," Lex said, putting down some fliers. "But what's a good time if you're having it alone? Take a few and spread them out, invite a few friends over. Remember, drinks are free only today."

"Hahaha if you think you'll have any drinks left for tomorrow after offering them free today, then you're dreaming! Don't worry, I'll spread the word. Just after one more drink."

The way the man insisted on 'just one more drink' Lex gave up any hope of the man getting anywhere. Lex returned to Roan and instructed him to make sure no more incidents like 'Big Ben' happened, before stepping out of the tavern, fliers in hand.

Bakers street, where the tavern was located, was an extremely busy street. Buildings lined both sides, filled with various shops and offices, and the wide road was filled with bustling crowds.

The crowds were not just limited to humans either, as just from his doorstep Lex could see some Sentinels, with bodies seemingly made of metallic skeletal frames held together not by joints, but some strange visible gas. Once or twice he saw some kind of plant walking around, and rightfully assumed that they were the bodies some Trelops were using. To this day, Lex still did not know what their actual bodies looked like.

There were a few other, less common races as well, such as fairies, but the most common other than humans were the Varn. The Varn had two forms, their common form in which they walked on all four legs, their scales covered their body with a smooth flow and other than their relatively sharp claws and fangs, they did not look too scary. In their combat form, their bodies would expand, they would stand up on their hind legs, their scales would shift and form spikes all over their bodies, and they became the stuff of nightmares.

Lex took in the sight, and then started walking down the street. He familiarized himself with the shops beside his tavern, as they would be neighbors, and made a mental note to visit them on his way back. His current objective was the docks, where he imagined most of his upcoming clientele would be. At the same time, he wanted to learn more about the town.

After all, it would be strange for him to open up a new business without knowing anything about the town itself.

Babylon was far beyond the borders of the Hum nation, or any of the other nations for that matter. These were neutral lands, considered property of powerful families or organizations. The rules in these lands were a lot more lax, and besides the basics, such as paying tax, and avoiding arson and murder, there was limited enforcement of various laws here. Well, at least, that was the case for normal neutral lands. Considering the supposed wealth surrounding this region, Lex imagined that security was somewhat better.

The town itself was surprisingly beautiful, and well planned out. The streets were wide, the buildings beautiful, and there was greenery everywhere. Most importantly, it was clean. It was a bit backwards, though. All around Lex were beast pulled carriages, people carrying swords and spears, people dressed in either simple cotton tunics or leather armor. It was as if he had stepped into a fantasy themed renaissance fair.

In a corner, he spotted a few children selling newspapers, or rather, news crystals. With a smile, Lex walked towards them, fliers still in hand.

"Hey there, mister," called out one of the children, dressed in blue overalls. "Want to buy the latest news? The Babylon killer, the Green reef pirates, Lord Bori's latest divorce, we have all the news right here, just 6 copper pieces." The kid held out a green quartz crystal.

"Nah kid, I'm here about a job. I opened up a new tavern on Bakers street. If you hand out all these fliers and spread the word that drinks are free, today only, then you and your friends can come to my tavern and eat for free for a week."

"Hey I'm not a kid!" the kid protested fiercely. "I'm 13 years old now, and I'm the man of the house! And as a man, a job with no cash payment sounds like a scam. No deal."

Lex laughed despite his best efforts not to. The kid was attempting to look serious, but his chubby cheeks and tiny brown eyes just made him look like a teddy bear.

"Alright fine, spread the fliers and I'll pay you. You can find me at the Midnight tavern when you're done. "What's your name?"

"Roland," the kid replied, as he pulled the stack of fliers with a grin. He picked one up and looked at it from all angles, extremely fascinated by the material. It seemed these kinds of fliers were not common here.

"Well, remember Roland, drinks are free, but only for today. Spread the word."

Outsourcing his task to Roland, Lex put his hands in his pockets and continued to explore. He was not too concerned about money as with his newfound authority, he could convert MP into local currency, though the exchange rate put him at a loss. For example, if a customer spent 1 gold coin making it equivalent to 1 MP, Lex would have to spend 10 MP to get 1 gold coin back.

Furthermore, for the foreseeable future, he expected the tavern to run at a loss, or at most, give him very little income. This was because, unlike the Midnight Inn, where compared to the common man, the prices were very high, the tavern's prices were very low. Well, they weren't very low, just that he only expected to sell the low priced drinks.

It would be a while before he could start earning a decent income from here. But, as a new MP billionaire, Lex didn't care about these minor expenses. Much.

As Lex continued to explore the town, most things were within his expectations. When he reached the docks, however, Lex had to pause. It wasn't the massive wooden ships, warehouses, shipyards, fishmongers or anything else that caused this. No, it was because the moment he stepped here, he felt his instincts act up. This place... was dangerous.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 326: Why would he run?

After a few moments, Lex realized that it wasn't that he was in danger, but that the people in this area were mostly at a higher cultivation level. At the academy he learned that for humans, on average, reaching the Foundation realm in your early life was considered normal, and reaching the Golden core realm before you die fell in the realm of moderately talented. This was keeping in mind that, for a Foundation cultivator with a life span of 150 years, even up to the age of 50 was considered early in his or her life.

But these people would only be very average cultivators and carry no or limited danger to someone like Lex. That was why he walked comfortably through the town without feeling much danger. Yes, there were other races as well, but not all races carried the overwhelming advantages that the Crystal race or Kraven boasted.

The docks, however, were filled with cultivators who were vastly superior to Lex in cultivation, most likely near the peak of the Golden core, or even in the Nascent realm. Moreover, they were not 'average' cultivators.

Lex relaxed a bit, and continued to explore the docks. It made sense that there was more security in such an important location, not to mention news of that serial killer was everywhere. He even had a witness to a murder sleeping at his tavern right at this moment.

Putting such thoughts away, Lex continued his tour. He couldn't approach the ships, for that area had been sealed off, but he could see from afar that the activity was unceasing. That was good - it meant that there was a lot of trading going on.

He dropped off another batch of fliers with some kids here as well, before asking directions and going towards the biggest market in Babylon. The market, found on Edmonton square, once again exceeded Lex's expectations. In a town he expected that there would only be a limited number of citizens of the upper class, and that most would be lower or lower-middle class. Yet this seemed to be untrue.

The contrast was massive, as people went from simple tunic and garbs, to multilayered dresses, extravagant gowns and exquisite suits. There was more than one tailoring shop in Edmonton square, several apothecaries, weaponsmiths, jewelers, furniture shops, fabulous cafes and restaurants.

After taking in the scenery, Lex decided to return. These were not the kind of people he expected would visit the tavern. The Inn would more likely be to their liking. Instead, he would introduce himself to his neighbors, and invite them to visit once they closed their shops.

Cornellius was sitting in his throne room continuously tapping his finger on the armrest. Opposite to him sat Nora, her expression one of extreme boredom. She couldn't decide if she appreciated Lex for his

guts, or hated him for getting her into this mess. After all, it was difficult to escape suspicion when she had met him only minutes prior to his disappearance.

"I don't understand. Why would he run?" he finally said, giving up.

"Well, if you listen to the rumors, the boy is not too fond of you," Nora replied casually.

"You can't trust rumors. I had someone do a background check on him. There's no record of him prior to entering the academy. As for the rumor that he's the son of a fallen lover of mine, I've had it investigated as well. All of my lovers, past and present, are accounted for, and none of them gave birth to a mystery kid. So we can't judge based on that."

"Maybe he just didn't want to share his technique, that's all."

"But why? All true path techniques are extremely stringent, so the chances anyone else would be able to cultivate them anyway is miniscule. All it would have done is provide us with a better repository to design new techniques on our own. And he would have been rewarded. He spent enough time at the academy to know he would be rewarded."

"He has his own goals. My - our daughter told me that when he found out about the core academy, he was not tempted at all."

Cornelius let out an exasperated sigh. Kids could be so frustrating. And he was just beginning to like Lex, too.

"Well, no matter. On to the next topic. I heard you're getting the crystal race to design Cwenhild a new cultivation technique."

"Yeah. She made it really easy. I don't know if you've heard, but she found a sleeping bunker in her realm. That helped with negotiations." Cornelius squinted his eyes and stared at Nora, trying to decipher her thoughts.

"If a true path technique were that cheap, or if the Crystal race were so amenable, I'd be swimming in cultivation techniques. You must have paid them something else as well."

"Oh hush now, let's not get into these trivialities. Let Cwenhild believe she earned it, it's good for her self-confidence."

"If you insist, then I'll let it go. But if the technique works, you must give me a copy."

"Oh? And how exactly do you expect to pay me for it? I assure you, whatever you would have given Lex is of no interest to me."

Cornelius was silent as he stared at Nora, his thoughts unknown. She hid it very well, but deep down, she was actually nervous. An immortal though she may be, she knew her place. Even in her dreams, she could not compete with her husband in strength, and he was not truly as mild-mannered as he appeared to be.

Eventually, though, Cornelius let out a sigh. He held out his empty hand to Nora, and a black, metallic card suddenly appeared in it. Engraved in the middle was a single word - Ventura. Nora smiled, but otherwise hid her relief well. She grabbed the card and left.

After she left, Cornelius disappeared from the throne room and reappeared in what looked like a lounge. There were a few people in the room who had been drinking, but at the appearance of the king, they all froze in horror.

"Out," was all he said, but everyone in the room scrambled to exit as fast as possible. Only one person remained in the room beside Cornelius: a man who was sleeping upside down on a table, a mug of ale held firmly in his hand.

Unable to hold back his frustration, Cornelius kicked his son on his ass, waking him up.

"What? Who? Al-Algard I to-told you, I could out drink you!" said the drunk, but suddenly he noticed the room was empty, except for his very angry father.

"You brat, one of my daughters is about to embark on the true path, and I've found a student cultivating it as well. You better clean up your act, or your title as the crown prince will be stripped!"

The Innkeeper

Chapter 327: Bakery

Lex spent a surprising number of hours visiting the shops on Bakers street. He thought he'd just pop in, introduce himself and the tavern, and invite the shopkeepers for a drink afterwards. But most shopkeepers started to chat with him, often exclaiming he was so young to be able to open up a tavern. They were friendly enough, and the offer for free drinks made them even friendlier.

By the time he visited the fourth store, upon noticing the excitement for free drinks, he wondered if he should add a home drop off service for his customers once they were done. It was definitely something he would look into.

Finally, he approached the last store, which happened to also be his immediate neighbor - a bakery. Walking into the store filled with the smell of fresh bread, Lex could not be happier at his tavern's location. Most of the shelves seemed to be empty, with only a few rolls of bread and some pastries left. Either this was a very popular or unpopular shop.

"Hey hey, welcome friend," exclaimed a particularly jolly man from behind the counter. "Welcome to Bakers street bakery." The man chuckled as he said the name. Something told Lex he did that often.

"Clever name," replied Lex with a smirk.

"Ah yeah, the wife dared me just when I opened up the shop. I was going to call it Dino's bakery, after myself but, well, a dare is a dare."

"Should have just gone for Bakers bakery directly."

"Hah! That would have been a blast. But, well, it's done now."

"Well met, Dino," said Lex as he reached over to shake the man's hand. "My name is Lex, I just opened up a tavern right next door. You should come on over after you're done. Drinks are free the first day, in celebration of the opening."

"Free? Well now brother, free is the magic word. I'll be sure to drop by. Better yet, I'll bring the wife too. Ain't no reason she can't enjoy a free drink as well."

"I'll be glad to have you. Spread the word if you can, otherwise people won't even know that there's a tavern here."

"Will do brother."

With the exchange complete, Lex exited the shop, breathing a sigh of relief. Fortunately, while Dino was friendly, he was not chatty. That had been his quickest visit yet.

He returned to the tavern to find Big Ben finally awake and sitting at the bar, looking much weaker. His cheeks had gone in noticeably and his once tight shirt hung loose. That, however, did not seem to be his concern - if he had noticed at all - as he was moaning about how his date tonight would be ruined.

"Has the constable already come and questioned you?" Lex asked, surprised that he was still here.

"No, of course not. When the murder happened, I just ran as fast as I could. When I couldn't run anymore, and stopped for breath, I looked up and saw your tavern. I've been here since. The constable probably has no idea I'm even here."

Lex was dumbstruck for a moment. If all the witnesses in the case were like this, it was no wonder the murderer hadn't been caught yet.

"I have an idea," Lex said. "Why don't you tell the girl you were going to see that you witnessed a murder, and you're distraught? That way, she can come here to console you. At the same time, I'll call the constable. When she hears the story of how you survived, I'm sure she'll be impressed."

"Yeah? Do you think so?" he asked, looking at Lex like a messiah.

"Either way, you need to tell someone what you saw. Otherwise, what if the murderer ruins another date for you?"

Big Ben was convinced, though Lex was seriously beginning to wonder how the big lug had made it through life. Lex told Rick to go find a constable, and bring them to the bar.

In the meanwhile, Lex had Roan pour Big Ben something to revitalize him. He also looked at the relatively empty tavern and couldn't wait for people to start coming in. He checked the time and discovered it was only 3 pm. The perpetual daylight was very disorienting, and Lex still wasn't used to it, as it was almost impossible to tell what time of day it was by the sol-light.

But just because the tavern was empty didn't mean there wasn't anything to do. Lex had Roan start cooking up some finger food for when the rush started. Since there was no kitchen staff, all the food they would serve would need to be prepared in advance, and would require Lex and Rick to serve. A day of serving food at a tavern. Just thinking about it made Lex impatient to hire his staff.

Noman Butt dragged his exhausted body out of the recovery room. Never in his life had he felt so good and terrible at the same time. He felt good, because he had been fully healed. He felt terrible, because unbeknownst to him, during his pursuit, he had been poisoned. It took him weeks in the recovery pod for his body to completely become immune to the poison, and the entire time he was in pain.

If there was one thing to celebrate, it was that his funds never ran out. When he finally woke up after he first passed out, he was informed by Nurse Jubilation about how much treatment was costing him, and how his family was being charged directly for his expenses.

Heh, for other people this might be a large sum, but for his family it was akin to peanuts. Even if they were deducting it from his personal pocket money, he would have enough to survive for years here.

Now what he needed to do was relax, and recover. The Clark Kent glasses ensured that his identity remained hidden while he was here. With his new anonymity, he'd be free of the people finding trouble for him.

"Oh Juliet, I love you with all my heart. I could die for you!" someone exclaimed within Noman's earshot.

He turned to look at the couple, and before the girl could reply, Noman said, "He's lying."

The duo was startled, but before they could ask any questions, he moved on. Yes, he was finally free from all troubles, and a lifetime's worth of experience hiding his unique power ensured that no one would bother him again.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 328: First night

It took 20 minutes for Rick to find a constable and come back, though he didn't really bother explaining the situation to them. Using a series of grunts and sighs, the perpetually tired worker somehow got the constable to follow him.

The moment he realized he was being brought to a tavern, the constable groaned as well, for he was almost entirely certain that he had to deal with the result of a brawl. What awaited him, instead, was the massive Ben, covered in dry blood, being fawned over by his girlfriend. She had instantly noticed the man's weakened state, and directly attributed it to the trauma he suffered, and began coddling the eight foot man like a baby. The girlfriend, Betty, stood at 7 feet and eight inches herself, so her presence was no joke. The dichotomy of a massive woman, her arms rippling with muscles, babying an even larger man was, however, quite funny.

Despite Ben's best efforts to be interrogated right in the tavern, the constable who happened to know the couple eventually convinced them to follow him back to the constable's office.

The tavern was pretty quiet after that, until at exactly 5:30 pm, when Roland entered the Midnight Tavern, followed closely by a group of other kids. Considering their job, they were relatively well dressed, with no obvious tears or holes in their clothes, and even they themselves were clean enough to tell they had showered sometime within the last few days.

Perhaps it was just a stereotype that kids doing jobs in small towns such as this were all homeless orphans. Maybe they were just doing extra work to help around the house.

"We successfully passed out all the fliers you gave us, specifically, 712 of them, each to a separate individual. At 10 fliers per copper coin, that's 71 coppers."

Lex smiled at the kids and asked, "are you sure you wouldn't rather just eat here for a week?"

"Money is money man, don't renege on our deal. You can't bully us just because we're young entrepreneurs."

All the kids behind Roland firmly nodded their heads, looking at Lex fiercely.

Lex chuckled and pulled out a silver coin, worth 100 copper coins, and handed it to Roland. "Well, good job. Here, you can keep the change. I'll keep an eye out, and if I get a lot of customers who got your fliers, I'll contact you again."

Roland's eyes shone as he grabbed the coin, but he managed to keep his voice steady.

"It was a pleasure doing business with you."

"Why don't you and your friends grab a table? Since stuff's free the first day, let me treat you to something."

"Eh... we're kids - no I mean, young entrepreneurs," he said, hesitantly.

"Don't worry, I'll only serve you tea. It'll be good for you."

The kids exchanged a few looks and in the end decided that it would be in poor business spirit to turn down the irresistible offer of 'free'!

Lex had a few plates of french fries, along with sweet iced tea sent over in mugs for the kids. Unlike the sugar water that was iced tea back on Earth, this one was made using the leaves of a spirit plant. Not only would it be refreshing, it would nourish their bodies and heal any injuries they have. It was a tea with very mild effects, perfect for non-cultivators.

The entry of Roland seemed to be some kind of trigger, as after the kids sat down, small groups started pouring in. Many of them were holding the fliers that had been passed out, but even more of them came asking about the free drinks.

This is when Lex turned on his charm. With a grin on his face that made it seem like he was having the most fun in the world, and a tray in his hand that was never empty of drinks, Lex began welcoming all his guests. First it was only a few, but quickly the tavern started to fill up with sailors and workers who'd gotten free from work.

As soon as a crowd started to develop, Lex took the sitting kids to one of the private rooms, and allowed them to finish up their snacks at their own pace.

But with that, he returned to the main hall, and began serving everyone who dared enter the crowded room. By 7 pm, there was no longer any room in the tavern hall, and Lex began to carry drinks outside so that guests could at least get something to drink even if they didn't stay.

He knew that most of the people who came today wouldn't end up becoming regular customers, but at least this way his tavern would become the talk of the town overnight.

He also made sure to pay special attention in case anyone became rowdy. Brawls and tavern fights were a common occurrence, or so he assumed, but Lex had no intentions of tolerating fights in his establishment.

Lex saw hundreds of different faces, and people came and went faster than he could keep track. It was only due to the system that he was able to monitor the situation.

By 8 pm he had served so many people that even his guests were amazed, and someone by the name of Dirty Rye started a bet for what time the tavern would run out of drinks. One of the sailors brought out a harmonica and took to the stage while another two started dancing.

One man, a hauler at the docks, tried to sing along to the tune, but he was so bad that he was quickly pulled down from stage, accompanied by uproarious laughter.

Dino the baker dropped by along with his wife, a plump woman who worked as a school teacher. She knew half the crowd in the tavern by name, and the other half by their kids' names. After cracking a few jokes, the couple gave Lex a welcome basket full of fresh muffins as a welcome to the street before leaving.

By 9 pm, the tavern was booming with jovial energy and laughter. At 9:01 pm there was pin drop silence, as a carriage arrived in front of the tavern, its presence announced by a trumpet that cut through the noise and froze everyone in their seats.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 329: Getting married

The opal white carriage, pulled by a single Brown feathered Fantasy Lion, stopped directly in front of the tavern. The driver disembarked from the carriage in proper form and stepped in front of the door and opened it. During this entire process he neither looked at the venue nor deigned to study the surrounding crowd. His gaze was strictly focused only on the ground.

From the carriage stepped forth a handsome young man, his fair skin dazzling under the night time sol-light. He had a soft smile on his face, as if he was enjoying life, and eyes full of curiosity.

"My ship just arrived at the dock and I heard say that someone was giving out free drinks," the man said softly, as if to explain his arrival. Yet no one said or did anything, and all eyes were still stuck on him. The man let out a defeated sigh, and shook his head, as if he was all too familiar with such a scene.

"I told you to let me walk here and blend in. Now look, you've caused a scene."

"It is their honor to be in your presence," responded someone from the carriage, his visage strangely hidden from view. "If you are dissatisfied with the reaction, then get back in the carriage and let's leave. These people will not be comfortable with a lord among them."

The young man passed his gaze over the crowd one more time, as if confirming the other man's statement, and indeed everyone had frozen expressions, filled with panic and confusion.

What he did not know was that the person accompanying him was secretly exposing everyone in the tavern to his aura. He was not suppressing anyone, as the signs of that would be easily identified, but

just his aura of an immortal was enough to have the whole tavern in fear for days to come. The man's plan worked - almost.

While everyone else was frozen, Lex took out a tray and put a mug and a glass on it. In the mug he poured the cheapest drink in his tavern: Dimmelon juice, and in the glass he poured the most expensive drink he had: Sunset Wine. Of course, it was only the most expensive drink not including the ones in his wine cellar.

Then, Lex picked up the tray and casually walked towards the carriage. In truth, it only seemed it was casual, and in actuality he was under a lot of pressure. But it was only because the immortal was not actually targeting him with the aura that Lex could even think, let alone move. After all, he'd already experienced how the coercion from the Kraven stopped even his thoughts, let alone actions.

"Indeed, there are free drinks, though only for tonight," he said, and brought the tray before the man. "In celebration of the opening of my tavern."

The man was first startled at Lex's demeanor, and then he grinned widely. Without saying a single word he grabbed the mug and chugged it down. He expected that he would have to force himself to drink, for he did not know what to expect from such a... mediocre level establishment. Yet whatever he drank was genuinely amazing, strengthening his resolve.

In a brute life fashion he allowed the drink to spill from the mug down his face, and once he was finished he wiped it clean with a sleeve.

"Well if it's a celebration, then we must also celebrate," the young man declared. "You can go on without me, because I for one cannot turn down my host's hospitality."

The man in the carriage only let out a deep sigh, after which the driver closed the carriage door, got back in his seat and drove it away.

Now free from the aura, the crowd in the tavern had begun to murmur, and they all watched the young man with fear. A good number of them silently slipped away, but most of them remained.

"The name is Pvarti," the young man said with excitement as he looked around the tavern. It was his first time in such a place.

"What was that drink you poured? It was excellent! I dare say even my brother would like it."

"Dimmelon juice. Technically speaking, it's just the juice of the Dimmelon fruit. It just so happens that the fruit is alcoholic in nature, so it needs no fermentation to be served."

In the entire bar only Pvarti and Lex were talking and the rest were watching, at most whispering amongst themselves.

The situation was not ideal, and Lex had only just begun to think of ways to dissolve the awkwardness when a familiar voice yelled across the street.

"BARKEEP POUR THE DRINKS, I'M GETTING MARRIED!"

Before anyone could even wonder who had yelled, a shirtless giant burst in, holding a similarly giant woman in a dress.

Big Ben and his fiancée were grinning ear to ear, and paid no heed to the unusual silence in the tavern.

Before Lex could reply, Pvarti grabbed the tray from his hand and brought it to Big Ben.

"Congratulations brother," he said as he gave Big Ben a slap on his back. "Here, have this."

Without thinking Big Ben grabbed the drink, and before Lex could utter a warning, gulled it down in one go.

"Ah that... was for Nascent realm cultivators and above," Lex said, awkwardly.

"What?" Big Ben asked, unsure of what Lex meant. The next moment his eyes rolled up, and he fell back on the floor, unconscious.

The tavern burst into laughter, Ben's fiance included. Before the situation could change again, Lex quickly started passing out drinks again while Rick carried Ben to a room once again. He had poured Sunset Wine intending to pass it to the person in the carriage, but the person never gave Lex the opportunity.

Lex turned to look at Roan and asked him if Ben would be okay. After scratching his head a moment, all he could say was "probably."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 330: Triplets

The night was long and bright, and the brightness did not help the hundreds of sleeping guests in and around his tavern. Lex scratched his head as he looked around him and began to wonder if he took the free drink thing too far.

He himself was not a big drinker and had little experience with the habits of sailors. On top of that, he did not account for the fact that a higher cultivation allowed his guests to drink even more. Logically speaking, he definitely should have run out of drinks considering how much was drunk last night.

Yet with the unlimited supply of the system it never happened, and so it was in the later part of the night when Lex abruptly noticed that the noise in the tavern had been dropping. By the time he picked up on what was happening and told Roan to stop giving out drinks, it was too late.

Fortunately, the chances of an accident happening were low to none. This was because the drinks served at his tavern induced intoxication not through alcohol, but through the drinks' spiritual properties. The person drinking would fall asleep if they drank too much so that their body could better absorb all the nutrients and nurturing energies within the drink.

Big Ben, for example, would likely have a breakthrough in his cultivation. Whenever he woke up, that is.

This was more or less the version of his statement that Lex prepared for when the constables eventually came to investigate why there were so many people asleep around his tavern.

Lex, Rick and Roan made sure everyone was alright, turned them on their sides and put down blankets, but... that was more or less all they could do. Even Pvarti was well and truly hammered, though he had the good sense to rent a room instead of passing out on the ground.

Eventually, though, the constables never came. At 6 am, as if clockwork, everyone started waking up. Those that didn't wake would be roused by the people beside them and, after cracking a few jokes about having a 'breakfast' drink, they started making their way back. Though, it needed to be emphasized that it was only a 'joke' because Lex firmly confirmed that the free drinks were over now.

Just like that, his first day as a tavern day owner ended without any major accidents, and just a few tiny accidents.

He ended up spending around 250,000MP yesterday, despite the fact that most drinks were actually very cheap. But it was worth it, because that was the fastest way to spread word about his tavern. Now came the hard part, of slowly developing a reputation amongst actual guests, as well as hiring the appropriate staff.

He told many people yesterday he was looking to hire, so word should definitely spread. But that was a matter that could not be rushed.

Now though, he finally had time to rest. Unfortunately for him, he did not intend on getting any sleep. He entered the tavern's backyard and began cultivating in the Meditation room. He did not forget how his professor told him that cultivating the true path was actually slower, let alone Regal Embrace which should be even harder. He could not afford to slack off.

He only cultivated for a few hours though before stopping. This was both because he needed to pace himself, and because there were a few guests at the tavern who seemed to be waiting for him.

Although being a tavern owner did not necessitate him to be as presentable as the standard he kept for the Inn, he still took time to freshen up before exiting.

Two people were sitting and waiting for him at the bar, one massive and anxious lady and another young looking man in extremely formal attire.

"Big Ben is still sleeping," the giant lady, Betty, said. "He always wakes up on time for work. Is he going to be okay?"

"Yes yes, I assure you," Lex said in a soothing voice. "He will be fine, but he will probably sleep for a few more days. He drank a glass of Sunset Wine, which is not something he can easily absorb at his cultivation level. Once he is done absorbing all the spirit energy, he will naturally wake up, and he'll be feeling better than ever."

Betty let out a sigh of relief, although she was still a little worried about how this would affect his work. People at their level couldn't just take unannounced holidays.

"You have Sunset Wine in this place?" asked the young man with a hint of surprise. Lex immediately recognized the voice - it belonged to the person who accompanied Pvarti to the tavern but didn't get off. This person was an immortal.

"Yes, I keep a bottle onhand incase I get a guest with a more... demanding pallet," replied Lex. At the same time, he used a function of the system he dearly missed. He scanned the person sitting in front of him.

Name: Bertram Noel

Age: 876

Sex: Male

Cultivation Details: Earth Immortal

Species: Human

Remarks: He reeks of prestige. Will be offended if he is not upcharged for services rendered.

"Would you like some?" Lex asked. "I originally poured the glass yesterday for you."

"You were able to recognize me?" Bertream asked, intrigued even further. "Sure, pour me a glass. I want to see if you have the authentic article."

"I recognized your voice," Lex said, as he signaled Roan to pour. "As a tavern owner, I need to be good at recognizing people."

Betty wasn't the least bit interested in their conversation, and went back to Ben. Since the fellow had collapsed during the free drinks period, Lex decided not to charge him for a room until he eventually woke up. After all, it would help him build relations in this town, and Lex wasn't really desperately in need of the rent.

Roan poured a glass of Sunset wine for Bertram, and left the bottle on the table. A single glass of this wine cost 20,000 MP since it was targeted towards Nascent realm cultivators.

The young man showed a pleasant expression as he lifted the glass and smelled. His attitude was much better than Lex expected based on his behavior the previous day. Still, he only thought that and didn't say it. He was not in the mood to test his formations against an immortal on the second day of having a tavern.

"It's the real deal," he said, then looked at Lex as if reanalyzing the man. "It's not easy to get a bottle like this. I'm impressed."

"Thank you. I hoped I'd be able to satisfy an important guest when I got it, I suppose I was able to fulfill that criteria. Let me take this opportune moment to introduce myself. My name is Lex, and this is my humble tavern."

"Well Lex, your 'humble tavern' has impressed me."

"Are you waiting for Pvarti? It seemed like you weren't too happy about him coming here last night," Lex said, as he sipped some tea from a mug Roan passed to him.

Lex had selected an entire menu of drinks that would aid him in his cultivation, and had explained their uses to Roan. As someone with plenty of experience managing a bar, he knew best when to give Lex what for the greatest effects.

Bertram chuckled as he poured himself another glass and said, "Do you think this is the first time he's done something like this? Or did it seem like this was a novel experience for him? The truth is, it's definitely not. He's just using any excuse possible to delay our trip home for he knows how much trouble he's in."

Les smiled weakly and did not continue to ask. It was good to be friendly towards people in positions of power, but it definitely wasn't a good thing to pry into their lives. Before he could change the subject though, the man in question finally arrived, his appearance befitting someone who just came from a brawl.

"I've done no such thing, and I'm avoiding no one. In fact, let's go home directly. I'm not afraid," he declared, his voice still as full of energy as last night.

"Lex, this is a fine tavern. I'll be sure to tell my father about it, and get him to waive your taxes or something. Keep your stock of Dimmelon juice from falling, I'll definitely be back for some more."

Then, like a protagonist from a show, Pvarti marched out of the tavern, making a grand exit. Bertram rolled his eyes as he paid for the bottle of Sunset Wine and took it with him.

Silence once again returned to the tavern, and Lex was about to return to his cultivation, but his neighbor Dino made a sudden appearance, followed by a few girls.

"Lex I remember you saying you were looking to hire for your tavern, so I brought you some applicants."

Behind him, three identical looking girls stepped in, looking around curiously. They were triplets, so Lex had a feeling he would have to hire all of them or none of them.