

## **Innkeeper 331**

The Innkeeper

Chapter 331: Princess syndrome

The three girls standing in front of Lex seemed to be in their early 20s, and a quick scan showed Lex that they were all still in the early phases of Qi training. This wasn't abnormal, since with the average life expectancy in this realm, people were a lot more used to taking their time with things.

They lacked a certain sense of urgency that was hidden deep within the psyche of Earthlings. Yet, considering the resource available in this realm, the uniformity of their cultivation realm, and the realm itself told Lex that they had not focused much on cultivating. This meant that they were either lazy, or lacked the time to cultivate. The faded colors on their clothes indicated that it was probably their financial situation that took up most of their time in the form of various jobs.

"Introduce yourselves," Lex said simply, after a brief moment of introspection.

"My name is Naki, and I'm the oldest sister," said the one wearing green.

"My name is Nami, and I'm the middle sister," said the one wearing yellow.

"My name is Nani, and I'm the youngest sister," said the one wearing orange.

"We have jobs already, but we all work separately. If we could all work in the same place, it would be a lot easier on us," said Naki.

"Yes, yes, it would be better for us, and better for you. We're hard workers, and everyone loves us," said Nami.

"Naki works as a floor worker in a grocery store, Nami works at a laundry service for rich people and I work in a kitchen in a restaurant, helping the chefs" said Nani.

The three girls radiated a vibrant and positive energy, and Lex had no issues hiring them, but he would first have to test their capabilities and decide what position they'd be good for.

"Your jobs sound good, are you sure you want to change them? The crowd at a tavern can be rough, and the work can be rougher. Of course, you won't need to worry about your safety, as I will make sure to take care of all my workers, but it still won't be easy."

"Yes, we're not shy," the three sisters answered at the same time. "We have 9 brothers so we grew up around boys, we know how to take care of ourselves."

9 brothers? Lex prayed for their mothers good health and didn't let his thoughts dwell on the subject.

"There's a few positions open. First, I need a few cooks and I also need barmaids. Rick handles the cleaning for now so I'm not worried about anything else, but whoever takes up the position will have long hours. Moreover, I need someone for housekeeping as well. Which of those jobs are you interested in? I have to let you know that I'll have to see how you perform in that position before I hire you."

All three sisters wanted to be housekeepers, but Lex didn't need that many. So they opted for a few different positions, but the premise was that they have the same work hours. Otherwise, there was no point in them changing their jobs.

Lex told them he'd make a decision after he saw them work, and instructed Rick to show them around and tell them where they'd be working.

Dino, who had been standing silently on the side till now, finally stepped up and said, "I heard your tavern was visited by the Noel brothers last night. If you managed to make a good impression then I'd say you're in luck, and your tavern will soon be visited by all the rich folk in town."

"They were brothers?" Lex asked as he compared their two extremely different personalities. "I take it that they're famous around here."

While they spoke Lex invited Dino to sit, and poured him a reinvigorating juice. It was way too early in the day for anything else.

"Of course they are," Dino said with a laugh. "They're the sons of lord Noel, the ruler of these lands. Babylon is just one of the hundreds of small towns under their family's rule, so it's very rare for any of them to visit. Every dozen or so years, someone from the lord's family makes an appearance to make sure everything is going okay.

"As for the Noel brothers, they're even more beloved than the lord himself. Though they're upper class folk, they both are very friendly. There are even countless stories of them even helping the common folk if they spot someone in trouble. Lord Pvarti even saved my grandfather's farm once," Dino told with pride in his voice.

His story, though, made Lex realize that Pvarti was probably a few hundred years old himself, despite him acting like a teenager in search of excitement.

The fact that baffled Lex, though, was that the lord of these lands was actually a human. Not that he was looking down on the human race or anything, but when he compared the wealth that the map showed in this area, he was expecting it to be ruled by the Crystal race.

That wasn't to say that this was the richest plot of land in the realm, but it was definitely up there on the list, so he expected a more powerful race to control it.

If not the Crystal race, then even the Trellops would make more sense. The unusual way in which they integrated with nature, making entire forests and other landscapes their bodies made them ridiculously powerful. Lex even expected that, if Trellops existed back in the Origin realm, if they became strong enough they could probably even treat entire planets as their bodies.

He made a note to learn more about this neutral territory, without arousing suspicion of course.

"There's a rumor," Dino continued his story, not noticing Lex lost in his thoughts, "that lord Pvarti actually broke off an engagement that his father arranged for him. They say the lord is furious, and is planning on seriously punishing the young lord."

"That makes sense. Bertram said that he was delaying going home," Lex informed Dino, adding to the juicy piece of gossip. Nothing helped integrate people into communities more than sharing gossip.

"Hahahaha indeed! Oh my wife will be so sad we missed them when she hears about this," Dino said, barely containing his laughter. "I should get back to my bakery or else we'll just spend the day chatting like this. Good luck with the sisters, though you don't have to be lenient on my account. They're good girls so I expect they'll work hard, but if you don't think so, then don't hesitate to tell them no."

"Thanks, I'll let you know how things go," Lex said. How well they performed really depended on if he got any guests. An empty tavern would make it very hard for him to judge how well they worked.

"Oh and uh," Dino suddenly said, his bright disposition suddenly changing to one full of hesitation and concern. "I meant what I said. If the Noel brothers compliment your tavern, expect a lot of rich folk to drop by. But well, just... just be careful if their sister comes as well. Just as much as the brothers are beloved, the sister... uhh, well she... just take care if she comes."

With that, before Lex could ask any questions, Dino rushed off, afraid Lex would ask him what he meant. Lex raised an eyebrow in curiosity. If there really was some trouble heading his way, it would be best to get some information on it.

He used the spatial formation to walk through the kitchen door and enter the backyard instead, and headed towards the Rumor room. Since whatever information Dino was sharing was likely rumors and gossip anyway, he believed this room would be just as reliable.

The room was akin to a small study station, with an oakwood desk placed against the wall, with a book placed on the desk. Lex took a seat and opened the book that seemed to have endless pages.

This book would list all the currently ongoing rumors in the tavern's vicinity. He didn't know how large the range was, but he assumed it would at most cover Babylon. He could read the rumors randomly, or he could specifically pick a certain topic.

Directing choosing 'Noel family - sister' mentally, Lex began to read from the most commonly circulated rumor, and slowly his expression started to worsen. The fact that all the rumors seemed so typical and predictable made Lex certain that they were likely true. In summary,

Pamela Noel, older sister to Pvarti and Bertram Noel, was an extremely spoiled girl. All signs indicated she suffered from princess syndrome, and was extremely dominating in her ways. To make it worse, her

cultivation was not weak either, at the Nascent realm, but worst of all was that she was greatly indulged by not only her father, but by her brothers as well.

Lex prayed in his heart that she wouldn't visit the tavern, he was in no mood to babysit.

Just as Lex was reading through these rumors, at the other side of Babylon, another person had entered the Noel brothers carriage. Pvarti was sharing various stories of his adventures with this person, and when his tale finally reached a certain tavern, even Bertram couldn't help but mention that it had a surprisingly pleasant wine collection.

"Oh?" the woman exclaimed. "Even little Bert likes it. I'll remember to check it out next time I'm around."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 332: He's lying

Larry Dershaw was sunbathing near the lake in the Midnight Inn, the one near the Recovery room. Nearby, his girlfriend, a Neko, meaning a cat-human, was napping comfortably. From time to time, Larry would softly run his fingers through her hair and lightly scratch her head, causing her to purr in her sleep.

His life right now could be said to be perfect, if one ignored the fact that he was still a fugitive on his home planet, being hunted by some unknown powerful person, while at the same time his family that had been exiled to the moon had mysteriously vanished, with no indication of whether they were alive or not.

On the bright side, he was able to absorb many strange new ores while at the Midnight Inn, pushing his cultivation to the Golden Core realm. Furthermore, he had just gotten another new shipment of 'spaceship scrap' which, after he absorbed, would boost his cultivation once again.

Affording such scrap was pretty easy for him once he gained a mastery of his powers, since he was able to use them to start a new business. People would sell him their metal scraps, and the only corresponding price he had to pay was to retrieve a purified form of certain metals within that scrap. For example, someone could sell him a tonne of electrical waste and only ask for the gold retrieved from it.

After a recent kidnapping attempt back on Earth that he was only able to escape since the kidnappers weren't aware of his cultivation, Larry had more or less moved to the Inn. With the business running through the Guild room, not only was he progressing in cultivation, he was making a decent amount of money. Yes, if he could just let go of the fetters he had on Earth, Larry would have a great life.

Just as Larry was musing as such, he felt a shadow covering his body and blocking the sunlight. For a few moments he ignored it, but after a few seconds when the shadow did not move, Larry opened an eye to look at what was going on. Two asian men were standing in front of him, staring directly at Larry.

"Can I help you?" he asked without really getting up. Although he was running a business, everything was handled through the Guild room, so no one knew his identity. As such, there was really no reason for anyone to be looking for him, especially people he did not know.

"Mr. Dershaw, would it be possible to have a moment of your time? We have a proposition we believe you would be greatly interested in."

Larry's good mood swiftly vanished, and he took in the two men standing in front of him once again. He was trying to recall if he knew them, or had met them ever before, but was drawing a blank. His girlfriend, Irene, sensed the change in Larry's mood and instantly woke up as well. She looked at the two men standing above them with obvious hostility.

"What is it regarding?" he asked, standing up. His height had increased recently, and at six feet two inches (1.87 meters) he suddenly found himself looking down at the two men. The change in perspective seemed not to affect them as the one who spoke previously continued, "My associate and I were working for our client, searching for a mysterious Minor realm. On Earth, we finally found a lead, but the person in question who has the relevant information refused to cooperate with us. Through some private investigation, we were able to determine that the person in question had close ties with the Dershaw family. We are hoping that we would be able to work out a deal with you to help us out. Regardless of whether the person knows anything or not, you will be compensated for your time."

Larry pursed his lips as he thought about what they had said, and the chances it was real.

"Oh, I should mention, the Minon realm we're searching for is suspected to have an opening on the moon, as well as on Earth."

Larry, who had only just begun to question whether these people were telling the truth, was suddenly shook. He had long assumed that after his family was banished to the moon, they were secretly imprisoned or killed, but the presence of a secret Minor realm revealed another possibility.

Just as he was about to ask more questions, a random man passing behind Larry mumbled "They're lying."

This time, both Larry and the asian man who was speaking were startled. They turned to look and saw a random teenager passing them by, not even looking at them as if he had said nothing.

"What do you mean?" Larry asked the kid, having suddenly regained his vigilance.

"Huh?" he asked, looking back at them. "What are you talking about?"

"You said they're lying," Larry clarified.

"Indeed, I would like to know your motives in interfering in our business," the asian man asked, his voice polite yet cold.

"I said nothing of the sort. I don't know you. How could I possibly tell that almost everything that man said is a lie?" the teenager asked, though the question sounded incredibly faked, as if it was a scene played out by a very bad actor. In the asian man's eyes, though, it just seemed as if he was being mocked.

"Kid, I advise you to mind your own business and not interfere in other people's matters. A careless remark or prank such as this could land you in big trouble."

"See, you can tell the truth," the kid replied with great enthusiasm. "I mean, yes, yes, you are right. I won't interfere in other people's matters." With that the kid promptly turned around and quickly walked away.

An awkward silence was left between Larry and the two men, who were just exchanging looks.

"Please consider the matter," the asian man said, as he passed a business card to Larry. "You can conduct your own investigation about this matter if you require, before reaching out. I go by the name Suzuki. I'll visit the Inn again in a few days, and we can discuss the matter further then."

"Sure," was all Larry said, as he took the card.

The two men withdrew, leaving Larry and his girlfriend alone.

By the time they regained their privacy, Larry had lost the mood to sunbathe. He looked in the direction the teenager had gone off and, after a moment's hesitation, followed the same path.

Elsewhere in the Inn, Ragnar appeared, with three others appearing behind him. They were also generals, and each had a command carrier of their own. In terms of strength and seniority, they were Ragnar's equal. In terms of experience, they far surpassed him.

For the past few weeks, the generals had been discussing how to investigate the presence of a Jorlam within their galaxy. Despite Ragnar informing them about the Midnight Inn, and especially the mysterious Innkeeper, relying on the Inn was not the method they decided to go with.

This was because this was an extremely serious matter that required the highest level of discretion and secrecy. Relying on an Innkeeper with a mysterious background was just too dangerous.

In the end, however, the Inn still ended up being their last contingency plan. If all else failed, they would have to take certain risks. After all, if a Jorlam matured, let alone their galaxy, all the neighboring galaxies, and even the entire Jotun Empire was at risk.

But they would not just directly give out the details of the mission, however. They had to know the qualifications of whoever would be helping them, and so, they had to come up with a list of difficult tasks as tests.

"Would it be possible to meet the Innkeeper?" Ragnar asked his personal holographic assistant.

"Unfortunately, the Innkeeper is not available at the moment. The assistant Innkeeper, however, is available if you wish to meet her."

"Then please, request the assistant Innkeepers presence. I have a series of tasks I would like to put up in the Guild room, but they have special requirements, and are not fit to be displayed for everyone. The reward for the first task would be in the price range of about 100 trillion MP."

Before the hologram could even reply, a projection of Mary appeared in front of Ragnar and the rest.

"Please, guests, let us go somewhere more fit to discuss business," she said gently. At the same time, she sent every single kind of notification she could think of to attract Lex's attention. Their energy problem might just have been solved.

"Little lady, if you don't mind me asking, will the Innkeeper be free any time soon?" asked one of the generals following Ragnar.

"Dear guest, I cannot speculate on the Innkeepers schedule. After all, he has left the Origin realm to run an errand. He could be back tomorrow, or he could take a while longer," she replied very calmly.

Her answer, however, caused the generals to exchange a certain look amongst one another. Only Ragnar wasn't too surprised. After all, for someone who could recruit a Celestial, this should not be a big issue.

It was then that he noticed a familiar type of aura. He looked towards the Midnight mountain and saw a massive dragon wrapped around the peak, sleeping. He froze.

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### Chapter 333: Destiny

In the vast universe, an inestimable number of events were taking place at any given moment. Separated by vast amounts of space, and sometimes even realms, any number of seemingly ordinary and completely unrelated events sometimes brought about strange and seemingly impossible results.

A number of people, some oracles, some mystics, some sorcerers, some cultivators, some who could pry the secrets of the foundations of the universe, and some who just happened to have unusual dreams, occasionally could see glimpses of the results before they happened, without understanding the process or cause. These people often claimed these visions as prophecies, or, often, an undeniable destiny.

The truth of destiny was a secret hidden within the machinations of the universe, if there even was a truth to be found. The only thing that could be determined, however, is that in the entire universe, there were very few places cut off from the influence of destiny.

This did not mean that the existence of these places would change the destiny of the universe, for even if key people were hiding in these places, the destiny of the universe would remain unchanged. To the universe, there were no real 'key' people to influence events. If one person or being was unavailable, another could take its place to perform a separate action to bring about the same result.

A very simple example of this was a hungry man at home. If he went into the kitchen but found he had no groceries, instead of cooking himself, he could order food to be delivered to his home. Whether he cooked the food himself or someone else brought it to him, the end result of the man eating food remained unchanged.

But there was an important question that needed to be pondered. In these few places that were cut off from the destiny of the universe, would a new and unrelated destiny arise? If so, it needed to be wondered if destiny was something that was influenced by a person or entity, or was it just a natural state of the universe?

Perhaps destiny did not even exist in the first place, and was simply an abstract concept created by the minds of sentient beings to explain a series of unusual events or unusual results. This was a debate discussed by many philosophers, existentialists, scientists, cultivators, beings of unimaginable power, and simple mortals under the influence of hallucinogens.

The origin of the debate, throughout time, often stemmed from a single thought. A single coincidence could be attributed to entropy, for in the endless chaos of events taking place, two events happening at the same time and influencing each other to bring about unexpected results could still be acceptable.

An example of this was the fact that despite being at the Midnight Inn for a long time, Noman Butt, the man with the unusual power to determine truth, happened to recover from his wounded state just in time to encounter a plot targeting Larry Dershaw. The timing was phenomenal, but it could be attributed to coincidence.

But then, if a series of unrelated coincidences, brought about in unpredictable ways, happened at the same time, subtly influencing one another, most minds would be able to accept that there was no underlying entity secretly influencing things.

Back in the Crystal realm, Lex had entered the meditation room and had muted all system notifications so that he could focus on his study of arrays. He had made excellent progress lately, and now with the combined effect of his thinking cap and the meditation room, Lex felt he could finally solve his long-standing problem of not being able to use arrays quickly in battle.

As a result of this, he happened to miss Mary's attempt to attract his attention so that he could give his input on the deal Ragnar was requesting, leveraging a series of tasks with the minimum payment being 100 trillion MP.

The timing of Lex's retreat was completely unrelated to anything happening at the Inn, for there was nothing foreseeable that required his attention at the Inn. Moreover, it was still early in the day at the Crystal realm, so he had plenty of time to focus on his research before he expected any guests.

At the same time, Cwenhild, his supposed half-sister, who just obtained the qualifications to enter the core of the academy, disappeared. The five people she sponsored entered the core academy, discovering that no one knew where she was.

Near the border of the Hum nation, the crown prince stood in the center of a battlefield that had turned silent. Around him lay the corpses of Kraven, but he treated them like nothing. He was sober for the first time in years, and the look in his eyes was extremely complex.

In his hand, he was holding a plastic fork. It was from a cutlery set Amelia had gifted Lex, after she ate at his apartment once and realized he had no utensils at home.

Back in Babylon, rumors of Pvarti spending the night in the small town spread like wildfire. It caused all the townspeople to scurry and make preparations, for any rumor caused by the lord's family usually caused an influx of lesser nobles and various other wealthy people searching for some way to gain their favor.

The surge in work, the recent death of the captain and a number of prior debts and agreements with private investors caused the ship on which Big Ben worked to be seized. All those who happened to be on the ship at the time were hired or given other jobs, while the rest were left to sort out their own matters.

At the same time, the serial killer inhabiting Babylon struck again. But this time, having learnt from his previous mistake, he killed in a place with no witnesses. He killed his victim in his own home. Moreover, due to his research, he knew the victim lived alone, so it would be a long time before anyone actually discovered the murder.

This was not a bad idea. Killing people in their own homes provided him with a new kind of satisfaction. It just so happened that this victim was neighbors with the triplets who were applying for new jobs at the tavern. The triplets had a large family, so they were protected from being targeted by the killer based on the premise that he was avoiding any witnesses to his murders - for now.

While all this was happening at the Midnight Inn, a number of odd coincidences were taking place as well.

Larry caught up with Noman and tried to investigate his motives. Before the conversation could even begin properly, or rather, before Noman could no doubt flawlessly act his way out of the situation without arousing any suspicion whatsoever, someone recognized Larry and called out to him.

It was Marlo, followed by his wife Sophia, and their son Rafael. In this way, three people with unusual secrets, Larry, Noman and Rafael, came face to face for the first time.

In another corner of the Inn, Ragnar was looking at the Dragon sleeping atop the mountain. Unlike humans, who were born weak and had to grow in strength, dragons from the first moment of their existence were near the epitome of the entire universe. Were it not for their very individualistic nature, Dragons could establish a civilization at the Overlord level, or even beyond, if such a level existed.

Most civilizations, human or otherwise, were at the Ground level, stuck on the planet where they originated. Many had reached the Sky level, meaning they could escape their planets and spread their influence within their star system. Some eventually grew to the Star level, meaning they could spread their influence between star systems. Very few could grow to the Galactic level, such as the Jotun empire, and span several galaxies.

Above the Galactic level was the Overlord level, such as the mysterious Henali. Ragnar knew next to nothing about what kind of a level the Overlord level really was, or who or even what species the Henali were from. All he knew was that the Jotun empire relied heavily on them for protection, and abided by their rules.

In the case that the existence of the Jorlam was proved, it was Henali that the Jotun empire would rely on to resolve the issue, for only someone at their level were qualified to deal with such an existence.

So then the presence of a dragon, a being that could potentially rival Henali, reassured Ragnar that he had made the correct decision by coming to the Inn. Of course, he would not approach the dragon himself. These things were still better left to the Innkeeper. He exchanged a look with the other generals before continuing to follow Mary.

Elsewhere in the Inn, Remy Lavern, the Atila-Morpher who caused Lex to get the quest to establish a space for a secret organization, appeared once again. Casually, he walked to the cabin he had rented out for a year and entered. This cabin had been especially redesigned by Lex to meet Remy's requirements, and was the space in which he was planning on convening his secret organization.

A short while later, a second person arrived at the cabin.

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The person outside Remy's cabin waited for a while until yet another person appeared and then politely knocked on the door. Remy opened and welcomed his guests, but the three exchanged no words.

The three descended into the basement and each of them entered one of the rooms with the unusual environments. Remy entered the one with a lava pool and began setting up some kind of formation, while his companions did the same in the freezing room, and the room with dirt.

A few hours later, when they concluded their work, the three entered the fourth room that happened to be completely normal. There they worked together to finish setting up the formation which, when finished, created a small Minor realm around 2000 square feet large.

The three entered the realm that not only already had air and gravity, but was completely furnished with comfortable sofas, tables, various stationary, and warm lighting. Just because they were from a secret organization, it did not mean they had to meet in a dark and dingy environment.

"Remy, Remy, Remy, you've done it this time. This place is great. Once we spread enough golden keys across the galaxies, the organization will be able to exchange information and hand out tasks much faster. The bishop will definitely reward you."

"It's still not completely safe," Remy pointed out. "I have no idea if this formation and minor realm will be able to prevent the mysterious Innkeeper from listening in."

"Why would the Innkeeper even be interested in what we have to say? Besides, he's running an Inn, so I'm sure he will respect his guests' privacy," replied one of the other men. The third person had his lips stitched, so it was unlikely that he would speak.

"I'm just saying this is something we need to keep in mind. Now let's get onto business, I can't stay at the Inn much longer, I have work. If I disappear for too long, people will become suspicious."

"Fine, our most urgent task right now is to get these golden keys in the hands of as many members as possible. This is a task that will likely take years, but we must begin immediately."

"Agreed," replied Remy. "While we do that, though, I have to update you on my latest missions from the empire."

Remy was actually someone in the employ of the Jotun empire. He was usually tasked with extremely sensitive matters that involved great secrets, such as investigating the Midnight Inn itself when they suspected Lex of being a Dao Lord. Yet at the same time, during his investigation of the Inn, he directly informed Lex of his purpose, and now apparently he was also a part of a secret organization. Despite his cavalier attitude, there was clearly more to him than met the eye. Or he was just really lucky.

"There have been a lot of unusual phenomena taking place on the planet of Hozath, and the involvement of a Dao Lord is suspected. They want me to..."

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A few hours later, Lex exited the meditation room feeling extremely satisfied with his progress. His plan currently was two-pronged. First, it was to completely memorize an array of... arrays, all with different purposes, and practice employing them at a moment's notice. Second was to better familiarize himself with the process of creating new arrays, so that he could easily improvise a new array in an unusual situation.

He had made great progress with both of those, and was feeling quite accomplished.

It was late afternoon now, so he opened the system to check if he had any guests in the tavern while he was busy, and was taken aback by the numerous notifications.

He quickly checked them and learnt about Ragnar's visit and his requests. His request of putting up his task, but only for qualified people, was actually very simple. All it would require was further upgrading the Guild room, so that tasks could be divided into various levels of difficulty. Finding someone capable of fulfilling those tasks would be the actual hard part.

But there was great incentive for Lex to do so, because he received 1% of all transactions through the Guild room.

Mathematics was sometimes very complicated for people when involving massive numbers, especially for people who stood to profit, causing them to recheck their calculations multiple times. In this scenario, no matter how one checked their working, the answer would always be that 1% of 100 trillion MP was 1 trillion MP. That was 1,000,000,000,000 with 12 0's involved.

Lex could not comprehend such a massive amount of wealth. Even as a billionaire, he struggled to fully understand how to best use his money. He could blindly throw it at randomly upgrading the Inn, but doing something blindly, and doing something with direction and purpose gave vastly different results. The difference between the village Lex made, and how the planning division made alterations to make it more cohesive was an excellent example of this.

Still, what to do with the money was a worry for later. First, he had to acquire it. Furthermore, Mary claiming that this could solve their energy requirements made him realize a simple oversight on his part.

He was looking for energy manually here, whereas he could just simply put up tasks in the Guild room with MP as a reward. Doing things like this opened up another path for him in his quest as well. Since the same races could exist in different realms, he could search for information on Kraven from the Inn as well. While that would not tell him the origin of Kraven in the Crystal realm, having a deeper understanding of Kraven could guide his search here as well.

Before he began upgrading the Guild room and setting up his tasks, Lex checked the rest of his notifications, and was pleasantly surprised to discover that one of his quests that had been pending for a long time finally ended.

Quest: Host a secret society.

Quest Complete! The Host's rewarded is being calculated:

- Hosted an intergalactic secret society
- Hosted a secret society related to multiple empires
- Hosted a secret society in the first year

Reward Rank: A+

Reward: Chamber of secrets

Remarks: No copyrights were infringed upon in the creation of this chamber

He had no idea what exactly caused the quest to be completed, but he wasn't complaining. He investigated the details of his reward.

Chamber of secrets:

Some secrets can weigh heavy on your mind, body and soul. The Chamber of secrets allows users to deposit secrets, effectively erasing them from your memory as well. The secret will be protected, even from the Innkeeper, and can only be withdrawn by the user, or as per the user's conditions, at the time of depositing the secret. The price of depositing the secret varies and depends on the user's cultivation.

The chamber of secrets was an interesting reward, but Lex did not know how useful it would end up being. He placed the building which looked like a small, round chapel near the Midnight manor. Since the price of each secret would vary, Lex did not set any price variables and let this building function without any profit for him. He wasn't worried, as he didn't know how much use this building would get in the first place.

Next he diverted his attention to the Guild room. Using his increased authority, he upgraded the Guild room to level 5. This effectively divided all tasks into different levels, and changed the layout of the guild room as well.

Anyone could set a request at any level, but the moment anyone set a request at the immortal realm and above, they would need to pay a 50% deposit to ensure guests would not randomly place requests.

To view the request would, however, require relevant authority. There were two ways to get the relevant authority. The first and easiest was to be of the cultivation level or greater than the one required for the task. For example, a Foundation realm guest could not view tasks at the Golden core realm, but the opposite was true.

The second way to get the appropriate authority was to complete sufficient requests of a steadily increasing difficulty to prove that, despite a lower cultivation realm, you had sufficient strength and recognition.

This meant that when Ragnar came back, he would be able to set a request, and had to pay a deposit. While Lex would not have access to the MP in the deposit, the thought of it still excited him.

With that done, he diverted his attention back to the tavern. Even if more guests did not come, he had to interview the triplets, as well as look for more workers. The tavern required more work and supervision on his part than the Inn, but that was okay with Lex for he was the one who planned this.

He was also looking forward to meeting some guests and chatting with them. Last night's party was too hectic to do any research, but now he could take his time and get a better understanding of the wealth of this region, and more about the lords of this land as well.

Having human rulers presented a problem for him. He just ran away from Cornelius, so if the rulers of these lands had any relations with him, it might cause problems.

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Chapter 335: The Goatfather

That day, the Sol-birds in the sky disappeared on the horizon, giving birth to a rare sunset in these lands, and bringing forth darkness that would last for many days. The temperature dropped drastically, so much so that fog started to form with every breath.

The tavern wasn't temperature controlled in the way the Inn was, and the addition of a fireplace was something Lex hadn't thought of at the time of his initial renovations. After considering the situation for a moment, Lex purchased a simple formation to resolve the problem. But, instead of deploying it directly, he had Rick set it up manually, for his guests to see. It would take a few hours to set up, and would only cover the main hall, but that was good enough.

Yes, this was nothing more than a simple tavern. Even the formation for heating was simple.

Unlike the academy, which had Sol-light perpetually all the time, and had well-defined and automated systems for when the light disappeared, the rest of the realm was quite different.

The darkness was absolutely lethal in this realm, in more ways than one. In the absence of light, for reasons unknown, spirit energy would begin to mutate, poisoning anyone who tried to absorb it. Even the Crystal race and Kraven were not immune to this kind of poisoning.

If the darkness persisted, the mutated spirit energy would begin to clump together, giving birth to strange monstrosities. There was no fixed pattern for the kind of evil entity the darkness could birth, and there was even a widely popular theory that the Kravens themselves were born of the dark, due to the black slime that covers their entire body.

The monsters formed had basic sentience, just enough to fill them with avarice for flesh and blood of any kind. Fortunately, the monsters formed were usually weak, and it would take months of darkness to actually give birth to monsters strong enough to actually threaten entire towns. Still, lone travelers, small parties and unsecured outposts of any kind were vulnerable to such monsters, and actually consisted of the main casualties.

These still were just the most common form of danger that existed in the dark. The longer an area suffered from darkness, the greater and more unique the danger would form.

This was why towns and cities in the Crystal realm operated differently based on whether it was light or dark. The single most important difference was that all travel outside the town area would be strictly restricted. Most people were given either paid holidays or had reduced working hours based on their jobs.

There was no danger of mutation or poisoning in the town itself because any kind of light at all would prevent this from happening, so all towns were well lit. The danger, usually, was from the areas surrounding the town.

For Lex, the sudden arrival of darkness actually meant an increase in business. From sailors to haulers, from menial workers to rich merchants, from farmers to landlords, all of them had a habit of enjoying themselves the most during the first few days of darkness. Work hours were reduced, and there was little to no danger from the surroundings.

Of course, not everyone got their time off immediately, but enough people did that Lex suddenly went from an almost entirely empty tavern, to one where all the seats were nearly filled in less than an hour.

The triplets immediately got to work, showing off their skills to Lex. Considering the fact that Lex was still short staffed, he expected them to struggle more in handling the crowd, but their experience of living in a house with 9 other siblings made them particularly skilled in handling a crowd.

He immediately decided to hire them. Which brought him a new challenge, which was he wasn't sure how much he should pay them, for he didn't know what the normal salary was in Babylon. He'd discuss it with Dino later.

The day passed by quickly, and though Lex's tavern was full, it was not nearly as boisterous as yesterday. Lex took this time to acquaint himself with some of the locals, while at the same time spreading the word that he was still looking for a good chef.

As the night was concluded, Lex nodded at himself for successfully getting through the day without any accidents or problems. Yes, he was running a completely normal tavern with nothing excessive or mysterious going on.

Of course, that was only his opinion based on his perspective. Because of the limited time he had spent in the cultivation world, and the unusual experiences he had, he was completely oblivious to the fact that the Midnight Tavern had already developed a certain reputation, with the tavern owner being the most mysterious.

Ignoring the fact that he suddenly moved in and opened up a tavern seemingly overnight, without anyone hearing about it prior to the actual opening, there were still a few things that struck out as odd or impressive.

His behavior under the pressure of an immortal need not be mentioned at all, for it was already understood that that single action marked Lex as someone with a powerful and mysterious background.

The way he was able to converse with Pvarti, treating him as a normal guest instead of fawning all over him also attracted a lot of attention. The timing of him opening the tavern too was suspicious, just in time to receive the Noel brothers.

But these few things were just noticed by the keen eyed. Moreover, Lex knew that not cowering under the pressure exerted by Bertram would attract some attention, but his plan was to solely build up some kind of deterrence against the rowdy and aggressive folk. This was something he was planning on taking time with.

No, what really caused the Midnight Tavern to develop an inexplicable reputation was that the drinks he served were just too good. Even the cheapest drink he served not only had excellent taste, they had yet to give a single person a hangover, and even left many people feeling healthier the next day. No matter how ordinary Lex behaved, just this simple fact was destined to never let him seem ordinary.

Currently, there was no real consensus on what Lex's background was, as the rumors had only just started to develop. What everyone seemed to agree on, however, was that it was extraordinary.

The 'everyone' here, though, only referred to the actual customers he had received so far, which was a miniscule number. Many others had only just heard of the tavern, without a significant impression of it.

Just as the last of Lex's guests were getting ready to leave, three such men, who had only heard of the tavern, without really understanding it, entered. As a respectable tavern, the bar and kitchen were not open all night, and Lex was just about to inform them as such, when he noticed the energy in the room change.

His guests, who were getting ready to leave, stopped, their eyes glued to the three men. There was a look of apprehension on their faces, mixed with a trace of pity.

The guests' actions seemed extremely prominent, especially since they were openly looking at the three men, but the men in question seemed not to notice.

The two men standing at the back were large and muscular, while the man in front was short, shorter than Lex even, but his appearance was striking for another reason. He was wearing formal clothing, but his attire seemed mismatched. It was as if his clothes were close to working well together, but the colors were just a fraction away from being cohesive. Moreover, the hat he was wearing looked very odd as well. It was rude to judge or assume, but at a glance, it seemed like the man was trying very hard to replicate the wardrobe of someone from a higher stratum of society, without a proper understanding of what it actually entailed.

Still, none of that had anything to do with Lex, and he was not really one to judge others based on superficial things.

"The bar's about to close for the night," Lex said in a regretful tone. "You can still check into a room though, if that's what you're looking for."

The short man, who was up until now surveying the hall, turned and looked at Lex. He gave a warm, enthusiastic smile, took off his hat and put it on the bar.

"Oh, that's no trouble. I was in the area, and I heard about the crazy party you had here last night. I just wanted to take a look and make some introductions. The name is Elio Ricci."

"Pleasure to meet you Elio, I'm Lex."

"Ai Mr. Lex, you seem very young for someone who owns a tavern, I'm impressed. If you don't mind, I'd like to bring my father here tomorrow to enjoy your hospitality. If there's one thing my father enjoys, almost as much as a mean drink, it's meeting new people and making new friends."

"It would be my honor," Lex replied very simply. So far, Elio had done nothing unusual, so Lex would not treat him differently from a normal guest. Yet he was all too aware that his other guests were still frozen in their place, meaning Elio was anything but ordinary.

"Very good, Mr. Lex. Very good. I'll see you in the morning." With that, he picked up his hat and stepped out of the tavern, followed closely by his goons, maintaining a warm smile throughout.

His exit, however, finally allowed the remainder of his guests to relax.

"That was Mr. Ricci's son, Elio Ricci," Naki, the oldest of the triplets, whispered to Lex. "Bakers street is a part of their territory. They take protection money from all the shops."

Lex suddenly understood what he had encountered. Instead of being troubled, Lex was actually excited. Yes, yes, as an ordinary tavern, he definitely had to pay protection money to the local gangsters. Maybe they'd have their secret meetings often in his tavern. Maybe the head of the gang, or, dare he say, mafia, was called the Goatfather like a very famous movie from back on Earth.

Oh yes, Lex was definitely getting excited. His one mistake, though, was that he forgot to hide his excitement, leading everyone in the tavern to look at him oddly.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 336: The chronicle of Faloofa

The planet Nibiru was an extremely energy rich planet, causing it to develop a vibrant and diversely populated world. Not only were tens of millions of different species of beasts found in this world, but they also had incredible strength.

An unexpected result of this, however, was that it became an extremely chaotic planet. Battles happened night and day, and only a few overlords who could control large regions of space managed to bring some semblance of calm to their lands - if they chose to do so.

But in the endless battlefield that was this planet, there was a certain mountain range that gave birth to a very unique environment. The mountains themselves contained hundreds of spirit stone mines, buried deep in their cores. But instead of the spirit stones leaking out energy, as these mines sometimes did, they expanded until they ended up combining with one another. With regions of higher and lower concentration of spirit stones, yet an endless connection of underground mines that somehow managed to form a closed loop, the mines somehow formed a natural formation.

This formation gave birth to a land completely separated from the struggles and strife of the outside world, creating a sanctuary for the beasts living within. Those beasts, living in such an environment for hundreds of thousands of years, evolved without the need for any kind of combat ability.

In such an environment, they flourished, and established entire nations. Among the many such nations was one called the Bunny nation. Populated only by rabbits, some with fur as white as snow, others orange like the light of the setting sun, and others still brown, like a young oak tree, these rabbits were at the forefront of science, technology, art, literature, music and much more.

Such a flourishing nation had many influential rabbits, but none more so than the bunny known as herald for the birth of a new ideology, pontiff Faloofa.

The latest generation of rabbits were not satisfied with living in a cage, and as the voice for these new and heretical thoughts, Faloofa took it upon himself to educate the masses of the kind of preparations they needed to bring to even consider such a pilgrimage. His ideas were just as hated amongst the older population as much as his wisdom, foresight, and thoughtfulness were appreciated by the young.

But before the debate between generations could be settled, fate took it upon itself to provide them with an answer. In the Midnight games, the planet Nibiru won the prize known as Bailey's Vitalizing Dwarf Star Ferment. The single drop of the ferment caused the planet to undergo major changes, as it prepared itself for a rise in its star rating.

All the inhabitants of the planet underwent some degree of elevation in their strength and bloodline, and the environment of the planet underwent some changes as well. The mountain range, already rich in spirit stone mines, underwent an evolution and came to life in the form of Earth giants.

The formation protecting the lands disappeared, and the many nations underwent an upheaval. Many died, simply due to the giants standing up from where they were born, and entire nations collapsed in the earthquakes that followed.

The few survivors were then, for the first time in living memory, faced with the ferocity of the beasts outside.

What ensued could not be called a war, for slaughter and slavery were more apt descriptions. Pontiff Faloofa, during this upheaval, was separated from the Bunny nation. With no idea of his strength, or cultivation level, since it had never mattered before this, Faloofa faced the endless onslaught of madness with his ears held up high.

With kicks that could shatter not just hide and bone, but the very will of his enemies, the pontiff scoured the lands for his fellow bunnies. Over time, the pure white fur became synonymous with terror as he slowly went from surviving, to thriving, to hunting.

Lions kneeled at the sight of his fluffy cheeks, wolves ran in terror at the sound of the hopping hurricane, snakes coiled up under his gaze and, eventually, even the earth giant crawled back into the ground and pretended to be mountains at the sound of his name.

Yet pontiff Faloofa, the bunny wearing only a black bandana across its head, like the hero from the movie *Roomba*, was not satisfied with his achievements. He did not crave strength; he craved a safe land for his people. No matter how strong he was, the Bunny nation could not thrive if they relied on him alone.

Not to mention, he rarely ever found his fellow countryrabbits. The few he found were filled with fear and covered with scars. He could not leave them alone, for they would never survive.

In the beginning, this was fine, for they were few. But when they grew in number, and word spread that the nightmare Faloofa was trying to protect his people alone, all those who feared him banded together

to hunt him down. Unable to exert his strength because he was too busy protecting his fellow rabbits, Faloofa feared the worst.

But then, like a holy blessing from the heavens themselves, at the moment before demise, a shining, golden door appeared. With no recourse, the pontiff led his fellow rabbits into the light, hoping for salvation.

What he found, instead, was the Midnight Inn. Millions of humans, hundreds of thousands of beasts, base animals, all mingled happily and seamlessly without any violence. It was a land that smelled sweeter than carrots, felt warmer than the fuzziest fur, and felt safer than the deepest burrow.

But how would they stay? The projection that appeared before them like a holy deity told them that this was an Inn, and that they could stay as long as they paid. Faloofa had no concept of money, but he had undertaken the gravest of dangers to protect his cohorts, so he was determined to take this burden upon its tiny shoulders.

It was then that, like a holy messiah, a kind and benevolent turtle appeared before them, followed by a whale flying in the air, as well as a lone wolf with fur almost as white as Faloofa's. Almost.

The turtle that had a single horn on its head looked at the refugees from the Bunny nation with kindness in his eyes.

"Oh dear, oh dear," the majestic turtle exclaimed, the rumble in his voice shaking the very ground beneath Faloofa's feet. "You children seem to have a very special bloodline. Would you like to work in my greenhouse?"

When the turtle spoke the words that were sweeter than the best honey, he seemed to be taking on the position of one requesting for help, yet it was the Bunny nation that was saved. The survivors, one and all, accepted the turtle's offer. Yes, the survivors accepted, but the nightmare that Faloofa had evolved into did not enter the hallowed lands known as 'the greenhouse'.

Instead, he made a pact with the turtle. The pontiff would return to Nibiru in search of his lost brethren, save them from the hell that land had turned into, and bring them to this heaven. All the bunnies that Faloofa brought would be hired by the turtle as its workers, tending to its garden.

The turtle accepted the deal and gave Faloofa a golden key to return to this kingdom with golden chariots known as golf carts.

Yet, just before Faloofa left, the fire in his heart reignited, an angel in the shape of a human came to him. Faloofa was a rabbit pure of heart, and had eyes only for other rabbits, but even he had to admit that this lady who introduced herself as Anita was spectacularly beautiful.

She asked the pontiff his life story, as well as the history of Bunny nation. She promised that in exchange for his story, she would personally take care of the rabbits he brought to the Inn.

Enamored not only by her beauty, but by the heart that offered safety in exchange for a story, Faloofa began his recitation of the history of the bunnies.

He told her of the great bunny pope, the first to enlighten the simple minds of the rabbits. He told her of the king, who turned random rabbits in a garden into a nation. He told her of mother Treesap, who brought love and peace to the hearts of the rabbits. He even told her of the rumors of the one true bunny god, his true name forgotten in the annals of history, now known only by his holy title 'Bugs'. He also told her of the nightmare, who had sworn an oath to never remove his bandana until every last rabbit was saved.

When he had told her all there was to tell, he promised her that he would tell her more every time he returned, and she accepted.

Faloofa looked one last time at his fellow rabbits who would, no doubt, take a long time to recover, before returning to Nibiru. So it was written and thusly recorded in the Midnight library, the first chronicle of plaintiff Faloofa, the roomba rabbit.

## The Innkeeper

### Chapter 337: Preparing for a heist

That night, Lex finally decided to get some sleep. He could have meditated or practiced his techniques some more, but going too long without sleep was still detrimental to him, despite being a cultivator.

Speaking of sleep, Big Ben was still knocked out as well. His new fiancée was very concerned about him, if for nothing else than because he hadn't eaten in a while, but Roan, the barkeep, assured her that he would be absolutely fine.

As he got into his bed in the cozy little room he'd designed for himself in the backyard, he asked Mary for an update. Other than the usual stuff, there were only two things worth mentioning.

First was that the Galactic Sovereign turtle had encountered some beasts with a unique bloodline that would aid him in managing the greenhouse, and thus had taken it upon himself to hire them. Viewed only on the surface level, there was nothing wrong with this. In fact, it was even great since the greenhouse was getting big anyway, and it required specialized workers to manage.

The issue with the situation was that even Mary could not directly hire people on behalf of Lex, let alone anyone else. The hiring process required the potential employee to undergo a test generated by a platinum key, and only then would they be acknowledged as a proper employee. Even when Anita and Qawain entered the Inn, and directly expressed their desire to work there, Mary needed Lex to generate the platinum keys.

Yet on more than one occasion, the turtle had shown itself to be an exception to this rule. Not only did it hire itself as Lex's gardener, it adopted Little Blue as a pet, and now it had hired beasts to tend its garden. The turtle, although having only helped Lex with everything he needed, proved itself to be immune to the rules of the system. Or at least, it was able to interact with the system in a way no one else could. Heck, even Lex could not hire someone officially without using a platinum key.

Since Lex was trying to get a deeper understanding of the system, this was something he needed to pay attention to. While he was at it, it would be best if he did some research on the details of the turtle's species.

The second thing was that the date for the Earth Expo was coming up. Miranda, the representative for the council back on Earth, had a huge list of requests for the expo venue and itinerary that Mary required Lex to approve.

With everything else done, Lex went to sleep. Tomorrow would be an interesting day. He would have to pay protection money. He wondered how much was an appropriate amount. He would have to talk to Dino about this as well.

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Earth, USA

Anakin Indiana McClane resisted the urge to smile. He had to look like a normal employee, and not attract any unnecessary attention. He had been planning his heist for months, from the first moment he got his hands on a golden key to the Midnight Inn.

He was not some idiot who would pull off a heist, only to get caught later. He had planned this heist in excruciating detail, so much so that he had shaved every hair on his body, put on a wig, and was wearing an artificial skin suit with fake fingerprints. Using modified shoes, he looked taller than he really was, and had especially learnt a spiritual technique to alter his voice.

All of these were necessary, for he wasn't acting as a person he made up. No, he had taken the place of the real employee who worked at this bank. He didn't harm the man, he just put him to sleep with a powerful sedative.

It was easy to get away with using this identity, for he hadn't replaced the bank manager, but the janitor who cleaned the bank.

He did his job regularly, right up until he saw someone heading towards the bank vault. He activated a special talisman he'd bought from the Midnight Inn guild room, and turned invisible. He followed the customer into the bank vault and, instead of robbing the bank, he activated the golden key and entered the Inn. A few hours later, when the bank closed, the heist would begin.

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The next day, Lex woke up refreshed and full of energy. After washing up and making sure he looked presentable, he quickly exited his tavern. It was still early, so the street was mostly empty, especially since it was still dark, but fortunately Dino's bakery was open.

After getting a suggestion from him about what kind of salary the girls expected, he brought up a question about Elio Ricci. This greatly troubled Dino, and it was clear that he was hesitant to say anything on the subject, especially since his relationship with Lex was still new. In the end, he said

enough to let Lex know that should the Ricci family feel like he owed them money, they would be very open and clear in communicating it. Before then, he should not offer to pay them, as that may actually end up offending them.

With a better understanding of what to expect, Lex returned to the tavern. The streetlight outside was well lit due to street lights as well as lights embedded directly in the streets. There was no room to allow even shadows to form too deeply.

This was starkly different from how things were when either Sol or Frio birds were around. Though the Frio birds brought along with them snowstorms, they gave off an ethereal light that could somehow shine through the snow softly, similar to moonlight. As such, whether it was Sol-light or Frio-light, when they were around, no one needed to be so careful of the dark. An example of this was how you could sleep in a dark room without a night light.

Overall, there was not enough darkness to contaminate the spiritual energy. Now, though, with the town surrounded by the unending void, they had to be extra careful.

After appreciating the beauty of the well lit town, he returned to his tavern. Whether it was dark or light, it did not matter to Lex. After all, the town's security was handled by someone else, and since the town had survived this long, they surely knew what they were doing.

The day seemed slow, not only for the tavern, but for the whole town, as the number of people walking on the streets had visibly reduced.

Around noon, however, things suddenly picked up for the tavern. A small crowd of sailors entered the tavern with a thirst that could only be quenched by the strongest of drinks. After chatting with them a bit, it turned out they were a part of a merchant ship that had to take an emergency break at Babylon after it got dark while they traveled. They would have to stay till some Sol-birds returned.

Lex was especially active while chatting with them, for he wanted to understand what kind of trade the merchants in the area conducted. The answers he heard only confused him and betrayed his expectations.

Time seemed to fly, for Lex had joined a group of sailors on their table and, while conducting his investigation, listened to the various stories they had to share. As interesting as this new group was, however, Lex eventually had to get up, for the guests he was most anticipating had arrived.

Elio Ricci walked into the tavern followed by eight other men, all of them sharing the trait of looking large and mean, while he himself followed another man. Unlike Elio, who had once again attempted to dress formally, the man in the lead made no such attempt. He had his sleeves rolled up to his elbows and wore loose and casual pants. His hair was long and messy, despite being tied in a pony, and he was growing stubble that told it had been a few days since he last shaved.

The man looked older than Elio, but in no way did he look old. This was the one thing about cultivation that Lex could not get used to. A person's appearance usually had nothing to do with how much they had aged, so it was often difficult to tell someone's actual age.

"Mr. Lex," Elio said, his tone warm and his smile casual. "Meet my father, Mario Ricci. I told you we'd come."

"Yes, of course. It's a pleasure, Mr. Mario."

Mario, after he was done surveying the tavern, looked at Lex up and down. Finally he said, "no need to call me Mr. Mario, just Mario will do. I'm not like these young kids who pay attention to so many things. Back in my day, respect was in one's eyes, not in one's words."

'What does that even mean?' Lex thought, but did not let it show on his expression.

"In that case, Mario, have a seat. What kind of a drink would you like? I'm sure you'll enjoy our selection."

Before Mario had a chance to answer, however, the door to the tavern was loudly slammed open, followed by a jeering voice.

"Is this the trash heap that's claiming Pvarti spent the night here? How drab. This place is too dirty even for my servants."

## The Innkeeper

### Chapter 338: Something snapped

The carriage was absent of all conversation as it rolled into the Loen manor. Only the sound of the creaking of the carriage wheel and the occasional growl of the lion pulling the carriage could be heard. From Pvarti to Bertram to their sister Greta, to the carriage driver and, as well as all the guards and workers around the manor, they all maintain silence.

As much as he tried to avoid or delay it, eventually they returned home. The pale-looking Pvarti smiled weakly at his siblings, but did not have it in him to crack jokes. It was time to face the music. Regardless of the circumstances, it was true that Pvarti had ended up breaking his engagement and ruining the wedding his father had arranged. His father was well known for not handling bad news well, and the news of his ruined engagement, and all that it entailed, made bad news look like a sprinkle before a thunderstorm.

Even the pampered Greta did not have the courage to say anything today. The dark and Sol-bird absent sky seemed fitting for today's events.

Pvarti took a deep breath, clapped his brother on the back, and jumped out of the carriage before it even stopped. Whatever was going to happen, it was best he faced it alone.

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The tavern fell dead silent as everyone turned to look at the woman who yelled. Standing in the doorway was a woman with fair and delicate skin, her purple dress falling elegantly across her supple figure, her arms arched and pressing against her waist. She wore a twisted yet satisfied grin as she surveyed the hall, looking at all the people who were beneath her.

The hall lacked the disgusting stench of poverty she had been expecting and was surprisingly clean. For a moment, she was almost confused. After all, the lower class should have the characteristics of the lower class, and be covered in filth, ripe with a stench of desperation, and begging to be saved by the rich and the beautiful. This place clearly was not.

But then her sight fell upon the sailors. Wearing ruffled clothes and covered dried sweat, they reaffirmed her belief that this place was truly the lowest rung of society, and all the people here were beneath her.

"Do not speak too loudly, Hena," said a man who entered right after her. "You must take care of your singing voice. Should your performance later be affected due to all these..." he paused for a moment, as if thinking, but then shrugged and continued. "Should your performance be affected due to all these, then even if they sell their souls, they will not be able to make up for the travesty."

Lex was momentarily stunned in his place. He could not believe that there were actually people this snobby and rude, and moreover, he could not believe that they had the gall to act this way in public. Were they not afraid that someone in the tavern would show them the repercussions of such behavior?

His first thought was that they must be incredibly powerful, and thus, were arrogant. Yet a simple scan showed that these two were just in the late Foundation realm. His next thought was that they must be from an influential background, possibly even the upper echelon of Babylon or a nearby town or city.

A few more people walked in behind the two, almost assuring Lex that his second guess was right. What he needed to consider now, however, was how to react. If the Midnight tavern were just a normal tavern, how would the owner react?

He would probably tolerate them, or at most, try to get them to leave. A normal tavern owner would not pick a fight with nobility, or, at least, important people.

"Pvarti has such a benevolent heart, spending his time in such a base environment. He never tires of providing the charity of his presence, even in such a slum."

Lex's lips twitched as he suppressed his irritation.

"Excuse me for a moment," he said to Mario as he stepped away, who only silently nodded. While the entire tavern had their attention on the two who were badmouthing everyone there, Mario and Elio had their gazes fixed on Lex. They said nothing, nor did they exchange any looks. They just wore an amused smile as they watched. Mario even ordered a drink from Roan.

"It's not about charity," the woman who had been addressed as Hena said in an instructive voice. "It's about making use of his noble character for their own nefarious purposes. Pvarti is too gracious to bother with such rumors, so they probably spread them to gain customers. Maybe if the mayor or even a noble ever actually visited this place, they'd hug their legs and beg for charity like they always do."

"I assure you," began Lex as he approached the duo, trying his best to maintain decorum and resolve the situation before things escalated. Yet before he could say anything else, the man promptly lifted his cane and pressed it against Lex's chest.

"Keep your distance, vermin," the man commanded. "You may speak to us, but keep your face directed towards the floor. Your gaze is an affront to the civilized. Not to mention, who would bear the consequence if someone ended up smelling your breath. I'm getting sick just thinking about it."

It was not Lex's lips that twitched this time, but a vein running down his forehead. In his life Lex had never been insulted like this. But, showing great tenacity, Lex managed to control himself.

'Just an ordinary tavern,' Lex repeated in his mind as he struggled to control himself. He had managed to cool himself down, and was about to 'kindly' request these people to leave the tavern.

It was at this time that Nani, the youngest of the triplets, exited the kitchen holding a tray full of food previously ordered by the sailors. Lex did not notice, for he was focused on controlling himself.

The man with the cane and the woman Hena too did not notice, for they were focused on belittling Lex. Hena, in fact, had a hint of an excited grin on her face. They were putting these poor people in their place. Pvarti would secretly be pleased, surely.

The group accompanying the two, however, did. One of the men, feeling proud and excited, found the young and energetic Nani pleasing to the eye. Without warning or any prior indication, he reached out and yanked the waitress towards himself.

Lex heard a sharp yelp and the clatter of falling plates and when he looked, he found his new waitress having literally fallen into a man's arms. Something snapped.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 339: Losing inhibition

Lex William had grown up with three sisters but, oddly enough, never in his life did he ever feel like he needed to protect them. He had traveled the world with his family, so he was quite familiar with the fact that in most countries, brothers were culturally taught to be protective of their sisters. Even in the

countries where this was not a thing, simply out of sibling affection, brothers and sisters would look after one another.

Yet, despite knowing all this, he never felt weird for not feeling protective of his sisters. There was one very simple reason for this. His elder sister, Belle, was a freaking maniac. Not only was she cold and aggressive, she actively made it a point to be as merciless as she could possibly be. To top it all off, she had not a shred of fear in her body, and could not be intimidated at all. Even when they were kids, Lex clearly remembered that Belle would not shy away from scolding even her parents if she thought they were in the wrong.

But, at the same time, despite the fact that she portrayed herself as an emotionless robot to the whole world, it was very evident that she cared for her younger siblings. In his entire life, Lex never even had the opportunity of simply facing a bully, let alone actually being bullied, because Belle was always around. His parents were a little quirky, but the moment Belle felt like they were affecting her siblings' education or normal growth, she would set them in place. In a way, she was the parent for the whole family.

As such, Lex spent his entire life without a strong feeling of responsibility towards protecting the women in his life. That didn't mean he would leave them to suffer should they ever face danger, but just that the thought never crossed his mind.

In the moment that he saw Nani pulled into the arms of a strange man, though, something inside Lex's mind snapped. He had been handling the stress and pressure of being stranded in a different realm, far away from home, and everyone he knew quite well, but that did not mean he didn't feel it. Moreover, less than a year ago, he was just an ordinary man, living an ordinary life. He never faced mortal danger, never was hunted by animals, was never burnt alive by lava, never had his mind, body and soul assaulted by slimy monsters.

Overall, he handled the stress of the change well. But clearly it had been building up somewhere in Lex, and now, suddenly, with a tide of anger, it broke through whatever dam Lex had built up inside of himself, and tore away at all his inhibitions.

Lex clenched his fist, not to punch, but to control the formation in the tavern. He had already planned that, should he ever encounter trouble, he'd put the offender in a room made by the space formation, trapping them. In his mind, he had planned on simply creating a small, invisible room to isolate them from the rest. Yet when he acted out of anger, he overcame limitations that he had on his understanding of how the formation worked.

Who said that the invisible 'room' he created using the spatial formation to trap people had to be cubes or cuboids in shape? He instantly created several rooms, exactly in the shape of these 'important people', and trapped them in it.

They suddenly found themselves unable to move in the slightest, and felt something squeezing against their bodies, trapping them, yet they couldn't see what it was. Standing still, and suddenly being forced to become as stationary as a statue, were vastly different, and everyone in the room immediately noticed that something had happened, but they couldn't understand what.

Ignoring everything, Lex walked to Nani and helped her get out of that man's arms.

"You're alright now," he said in a warm, soothing voice. "Everything is fine. It's over." He checked her hands to see if she had any bruises and, fortunately, she was not harmed. Fortunate for the people who stood frozen.

The girl who had suffered more from the surprise of being pulled than anything else, quickly calmed down. Lex had reacted all too quickly, so much so that she had not even understood someone had grabbed her by the time Lex pulled her away.

Her two sisters, who had heard the yell, suddenly came to the hall as well to investigate, but Nani seemed to be fine.

"I apologize for not stopping the man sooner," Lex said sincerely. "I was distracted, it won't happen again."

"Oh, it's nothing," Nani said with a laugh when she finally got her bearings. "We wouldn't be in this business if we couldn't handle a little trouble."

Though she said she was fine, she quickly grabbed the fallen tray and retreated to the kitchen. Even a blind man would notice by now that some guests in the hall were... unnaturally still. Though their expressions remained frozen, since they didn't even have the space to maneuver their faces, their eyes kept darting about in fear and confusion.

Lex nodded and turned back to the 'cream of society'. To be honest, he was extremely pissed at them. Not only because they assaulted Nani and insulted him, along with everyone else in the room, but they also destroyed his attempt at seeming like an ordinary tavern.

When something snapped in Lex, it wasn't a blind rage that filled him, though there was definitely an abundance of anger. It was more like his inhibition broke. He kept holding himself back, keeping himself from showing all his cards. It was definitely smart to not reveal all his secrets, for his life was in greater danger while he was not at the Inn. Yet now that he had the tavern, and the system's functions could help him once again, there was no reason to be so repressed.

Lex clenched his fist harder, and the 'room' that had been trapping all the offenders tightened just a bit more, squeezing their bodies. It was not lethal, or even dangerous, yet, but it definitely wasn't comfortable.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 340: Convenient coincidence

Lex was deciding what to do with these fellows. There was no way he would just let them go. Not only did they need to be punished, but they needed to understand that if they tried to retaliate against Lex or his workers at a later date, there would be far worse consequences.

But first...

Lex turned to the rest of the guests in the hall, mainly the sailors, and said, "I'm sorry you had to see that. At most you can consider it a little bit of entertainment. For those of you who feel like you want to avoid trouble, now would be the time to leave. If, however, any of you feel like watching some drama, then feel free to stay and enjoy."

The sailors cheered and hooted, and none of them moved. Why should they give up free entertainment for no reason?

"Now that that's out of the way, does anyone recognize any of these guys?"

The room fell silent. It was to be expected, as these sailors were not locals. Mario and his crew said nothing either.

Lex frowned, then walked right up to the man with a cane and freed his face so that he could talk.

Immediately he started gasping, taking big breaths as he looked at Lex with horror and panic on his face.

"You... you.... You can't.... You can't..." the man started stuttering, unable to finish his sentence. Lex on the other hand, did nothing. He stood in front of him, and continued to look at him with an impassive face.

The sheer extent of the indifference on Lex's face scared the man even more for some reason, and he quickly found himself unable to maintain eye contact with Lex. When he looked away from Lex, Lex finally nodded and began to speak.

"Who are you, and where are you from?" he asked, making sure to leave his voice as bland as possible.

"I... I... You..."

"Stop," Lex suddenly said, realizing the man wouldn't be able to speak. "Just stop. Take a breath. Calm down. And answer my question."

The man obeyed Lex's orders, but when he calmed down, and finally was able to talk, he also regained a bit of his wits.

"Do you know how much trouble you're in? Do you know who I am?" he asked, his voice still trembling, though he was trying to seem more confident.

"Obviously I don't know who you are, otherwise I would not ask. And before you try to threaten me with your identity, know that I don't care in the slightest about it. So, now, answer my questions carefully. Or else, I'll just throw you lot in the back room and wait till someone comes to find you, and then I'll ask them instead."

Lex's threat seemed to do wonders, and the man quickly began to explain their background, no doubt doing his best to exaggerate as much as he could. In summary, the law was very loose in neutral lands,

and as long as one wasn't too excessive, they could live as they liked. Since this neutral territory was controlled by a human, many powerful and wealthy human families settled in this region, forming a society of elites who more or less treated themselves as kings and queens. So long as they didn't antagonize the Noel family, they could do pretty much whatever they wished.

After he understood everything, Lex freed one of the random followers from his bindings, and instructed him to go find their backers, whoever they were. He was very clear in explaining the fact that he had no intentions of letting the rest of the group go until each of the respective families or powers behind them came. Since he had already messed up his 'ordinary tavern' routine, it was best to go all out.

Once the freed man scurried away, Lex turned his attention to Mario. Without saying a word he came and sat opposite to the man, his mood clearly very different from when they started their conversation earlier.

"You know, I've heard about you. Not a lot, but just enough to get an impression," said Lex, slowly.

"Oh? And what is your impression?" Mario asked, curiously.

"My impression... is that it's quite a convenient coincidence that the stupidest lot of self titled nobles came to cause trouble at my tavern the very day you came to visit."

Mario raised an eyebrow in question.

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Anakin I. McClane finished his drink and stood up reluctantly. The Lady Cosmos show was just too... too amazing, making him want to never leave! Moreover, he heard a rumor that a bikini segment was supposed to come up.

Yet as alluring as it was, he had to get to work. He knew that the moment he entered the bank vault, chances were high he'd trigger some kind of alarm. He could have bought more stuff to help him remain undetected from the Inn, but if he had the money to afford that stuff in the first place, he wouldn't be robbing a bank.

He picked up the various bags he'd left in a room he previously rented at the Inn, put on a mask and exited, coming out right in the middle of the vault.

Surprisingly, the vault was well lit even at night. It only made it more convenient for him. Not bothering with any kind of stealth, he took out the only weapon he bought from the Inn, a heated knife that could easily cut through the toughest zombie hide. He'd blown all his savings on this, but it was about to pay off.

Starting from a random corner, Anakin began to cut open the safety deposit boxes and began filling his backpacks with whatever he found. There were an annoying number of documents, a lot of nudes, some computer hard drives, but mostly it was just cash, jewelry and gold.

Anakin did not get greedy, as soon as the alarm he set on his wrist watch went off, he packed his bags and returned to the Inn. Maybe he would have had more time, and maybe his little heist hadn't even been noticed yet. Or maybe it had. None of it mattered.

Anakin had set rules for himself, and he would abide by those rules. Besides, he had money to spare now. Just to be safe, he'd be spending a week at the Inn before he tried to return.