

## Innkeeper 35

The Innkeeper

Chapter 35: Gun

It had been a few hours since Hugo went into the recovery pod, and on Earth it was evening now. The Inn reflected that as the "sun" in the sky was setting. It wasn't an actual sun, but rather a projection of one. The Manor was well lit and tiki torches were placed around the garden along with a large bonfire. These were sudden changes Lex implemented since he had guests sitting outside, enjoying now.

Honestly he was quite surprised that Falak was getting along so well with Chen and Blane, but after listening for a while he realized that it was mostly him telling them the history of their world. He looked like an amicable elder teaching young kids while reminiscing about the past. Lex listened in but after a while he lost interest.

Right now he was just waiting for Hugo to leave the recovery pod, and hoping for him to rent a room. Healing his wounds would naturally take longer than the two soldiers since he was at a higher realm, but it should be close now. Lex was also interested in Hugo's weapons; even if they had the shape of regular guns he didn't believe for a second that they shot normal bullets.

During this time he also looked at his 2291 MP leftover from all his expenditure and considered if he should add a few more features to the Inn. Currently he could add the greenhouse or the meditation room. Once he bought the greenhouse he could buy seeds from the Midnight market or bring some of his own and plant them in the greenhouse to grow. When the plants grow he could use them for various purposes but there was a catch, getting a greenhouse required him to get a dedicated employee. For now he had Velma and Gerard doing multiple tasks, but the greenhouse would require an employee dedicated only to it, regardless of whether there was anything growing or not. That sounded expensive. The meditation room, on the other hand, was a large one time purchase and required no maintenance and was very beneficial to cultivators Qi Training and above, but that single one time purchase was kind of expensive. He wanted to save up to raise his cultivation level, not to mention he felt the need to keep an emergency fund in case he ever failed a quest or needed to make a payment.

While he was considering his options, Mary appeared to let him know that his phone was ringing back on Earth. Curious, he returned back to his apartment and was pleasantly surprised when he saw who was calling. It was Marlo.

"Hello," he greeted picking up the call, only to be responded with the sound of uproarious laughter.

"How does it feel to be rich, huh boy? Bet you already spent your first million!"

Lex smiled and looked at his phone. He'd gotten a notification that the payment had been transferred to his account.

"Not yet," Lex answered truthfully. "I was busy and didn't check my phone. But you can rest assured now that I know the money has been transferred I won't hold myself back from spending it."

"Great! GREAT!" the man roared. "I was afraid you were like one of those people who like to hoard money and spend only a little. You can't grow if you don't use what you have. Anyway, I have your weapon as well. If possible, come over today to pick it up. I have a few things as well I'd like to discuss with you."

"I'll be right over!" Lex exclaimed and left his apartment as quickly as he could. He hailed a cab and in 20 minutes was at Marlo's apartment. The door was opened by Marlo's butler who was expecting Lex this time, and led him directly to the gym where the giant man was attending a call. Noticing Lex's arrival he quickly told the person on the call he had to go and hung up.

The human shaped bear said nothing to Lex and only pointed towards a briefcase with a mischievous grin. This time Lex was also excited as he reached for it and, with trembling hands, opened it. Before him lay a silver handgun in the shape of a desert eagle, with two magazines as well. But this was no ordinary gun - this was a spirit weapon!

"Let me introduce you to your new weapon, the Heavy Harley! Each magazine takes a different kind of ammo," the giant said, picking up the gun. He loaded the first magazine that had a silver stripe on it and aimed at a minion-bot from Rent-a-minion that was standing nearby. Without hesitation he fired five bullets, firmly denting the minion all over its body. The gunshots, surprisingly, didn't make a lot of sound.

"The first kind of magazine fires spirit bullets. The strength of each bullet is equivalent to the strongest attack of a ninth grade Qi Training cultivator. The bullets are quiet and fast, and each magazine can carry upto 100 bullets. Once the magazine runs out you can use spirit tokens to refill the magazine."

Spirit tokens were a relatively common commodity in the cultivator world, at least between low level cultivators. 100 spirit tokens were equal to one spirit stone, in price at least.

Marlo unloaded the magazine and put the other one in the gun, this one with a bronze stripe.

"This one takes actual physical ammunition. The Heavy Harley can take iron ranked low caliber rounds, and can in theory gravely injure an initial Foundation realm cultivator. The magazine can carry 10 bullets."

He fired a single bullet at the minion and its head exploded! This gunshot was still not as loud as he expected, but was like a firecracker exploding next to them.

The headless minion kept standing, as if the head made no difference, but its shoulders slumped as if it was depressed. Marlo fired a few more shots until there was nothing of the minion left standing, only random robot parts on the floor.

Lex grinned and took the gun from Marlo, feeling the cold metal in his hand. It was heavier than expected, but nothing Lex couldn't handle. This was the realization that Lex had; why should he try to be low key and use swords when better and more convenient options were available? Not to mention that it took care of enemies at long distance, according to Marlo there were various spirit techniques available even for guns from as low as Qi Training. As for standing out too much in a low tech world? The world of cultivators was full of mysteries, trying to account for every possible situation would leave one unable to ever leave their homes. He would handle it when the situation arose.

Marlo summoned another minion who stood 20 feet away from Lex, awaiting its fate.

"Try the spirit magazine first, get a feel for it."

Lex swapped out the magazines and aimed at the minion. His stance wasn't that great and considering that this was his first time using a gun he should have held it with both hands instead of one, but Marlo did not comment. Experience was the best teacher, he would value advice more after knowing what he did wrong.

Lex aimed for a few seconds at the minion's head, and then fired. The sound of the shot was still suppressed, but everything else was completely different from when Marlo used the gun. Let alone that he missed the minion completely, the recoil of the shot bent his stretched arm and the gun was now pointing up in the air.

"Damn!" Lex exclaimed, taken by surprise, but Marlo only grinned. The show had just begun. Using both his hands this time Lex lined up the shot and after a few tries managed to hit the minion. It was not that Lex's aim was bad, but that even with the strength of Body Tempering he could not handle the recoil, which deviated his shots.

"Try the other one," Marlo said, swapping out the magazines. If Lex had paid attention he would have noticed the anticipation on the man's face, but he was too focused on the gun.

Lex aimed at the minion again, holding the gun with both hands again. When he felt ready, he fired. Whether the bullet hit the minion or not was something Lex never found out because he felt like his body had been hit by a truck, and he actually fell backwards. He felt an intense pain in shoulder, and knew that he had dislocated his arm. The recoil was too strong for Lex, there was no way he could use this magazine without raising his strength first. Marlo, who had been waiting, finally burst out in laughter. Nothing in life was easy, if Lex wanted to use guns to fight cultivators he was only setting himself up for just a different kind of difficulty.

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Chapter 36: Changes

After laughing for a bit, Marlo yanked the disoriented Lex off the ground and skillfully popped his dislocated arm back into its place. After making sure that Lex wasn't hurt anywhere else Marlo put the handgun back into the briefcase and signaled Lex to follow him. Lex, still in shock at what happened, followed the giant man. The difference between Marlo's steady hand repeatedly firing shocks without any visible change, and himself being launched off his feet after a single shot was too mind-blowing.

They retreated to the lounge where a butler served them some herbal tea.

"Have some, it'll nourish your body. You've been through a lot lately."

Lex took a sip, and was pleasantly surprised. The tea had a very subtle taste of honey, but more importantly he immediately felt a warm sensation spread through his body. It was like his muscles were being massaged from the inside, making him feel very comfortable.

"This is tea from a hidden monastery near Mount Tupungato. It's something I used to drink when I started body cultivating. It's not useful to me anymore, but I still enjoy the taste so I keep it on hand. For you though, it should be very beneficial."

"I can tell, thanks," replied Lex, having recovered from his previous shock.

"Do you know why, even as a Body Tempering cultivator you need to use a spirit gun when it's so difficult to use? It's because regular guns, even high caliber ones, only rely on basic force to deal damage. The basic concept is, if I hit something harder or with more explosive energy it'll do more damage. In theory, that is not wrong, but in practice anything with spirit energy is extremely resistant to any force lacking spirit energy. So against a cultivator, in practice most of the time even an assault rifle will inflict less damage than the weakest spirit weapon. This is only considering a cultivators body that has been tempered by spiritual energy, and their internal spiritual energy. Body armor, talismans, spirit techniques and anything else a cultivator can use only add more variables to overcome. A normal Foundation realm expert, with his average gear, can easily withstand an attack from a tank.

"The Heavy Harley is named as such because of its heavy recoil, but it is the best gun for someone at Body Tempering to use on the market. Once you raise your level a bit, you'll be able to withstand the recoil better."

Marlo explained a bit, in case Lex was dissatisfied with his weapon, although all of this was common knowledge and if Lex did his own research he would learn all this sooner or later. During this period Marlo was relatively calm, and went almost fifteen minutes without bursting into laughter. Clearly he was treating this very seriously.

Lex smiled after listening to his explanation, and said, "I understand. There is no gain for free, if I want to use the gun I need to improve a bit. You do not need to be concerned, I am very satisfied with it. But you could have just sent the gun to me. Since you called me here, there must be something else you want to discuss as well."

Marlo let out a knowing smile before he chugged his tea in a single gulp and put the cup down. He lazily put his back against his sofa and spread his arms on the side. His appearance looked very casual, yet he gave off the aura of a King in his own kingdom.

"I want to know more about the tests you encountered when you used the key. What were your tasks? What were the dangers, how were you evaluated? What do you think I can expect when I use the key? Since I am about to undertake this test, I should be fully prepared, don't you think?"

Lex smiled, and internally he was filled with jubilation. Marlo was finally about to use the key.

"The first time I encountered the key the test was really simple. I was given a cultivation method, and I had to cultivate it in a set time. Who evaluated me, or how they did it I don't know. As a reward, I was given a pill that increased the durability of my body. I'm sure you've already noticed that compared to others, I can really take a beating."

Marlo only grinned, but said nothing.

"The second time, before the test began I met someone and was offered something, and if I accepted the offer I could take the test, otherwise I could go back. What I was offered and who offered it, I don't remember anymore but I remember thinking that this was a valuable opportunity.

"After accepting, I was sent to a different place. Where that place was I have no idea, but I remember thinking it felt like a different world. My task was to kill a certain number of zombies and ..."

"Zombies, did you say?" Marlo interrupted, leaning forward. "Like in the movies and games?"

"Yes, zombies. If they scratch you, you'll be infected after a certain amount of time. But it's not entirely like movies and games because not all zombies have the same strength. Some are stronger than others. One on one I had no problem fighting them, but the hordes are too dangerous because they're too many and the stronger ones mix in and you can't tell the difference..."

As far as his experience fighting the zombies was concerned Lex told Marlo everything. If he lied or made something up, there were greater chances of failure. Since he planned on having Marlo fight zombies as well for his test, this was the most appropriate solution. From time to time Marlo interrupted Lex to ask questions in greater detail or clarify some things. The meeting continued for several more hours before Lex found himself repeating what he already knew. Still Marlo asked him again and again to ensure he understood everything. In the end, when he finished Marlo helped Lex register the gun to his name on the Bluebird portal. As soon as Lex left he got a text message from Marlo

addressing his Beginners Self Defense class where he canceled all classes for the next week, and assigned them some non-mandatory tasks in case they wanted to do some extra practice.

Lex returned to his apartment and immediately returned to the Inn to await Marlo's appearance. A part of him wanted to practice with his gun, but his logical side told him he wasn't ready for that yet and he should not waste his relatively expensive ammunition. First he would go to a shooting range and work on his aim with regular guns before trying to use the Heavy Harley.

When he returned to the Inn he also found out that Falak had returned to his room and the soldiers to theirs. Apparently the soldiers were going to leave the Inn but suddenly felt like they could break through to the Foundation Realm. Previously it was all but impossible, but once they recovered from all their old, unhealed injuries due to the recovery pod their cultivation became smoother. After a few hours to stabilize, they immediately felt like they could break through. They decided to try and see if they could succeed before they returned to their planet as that would greatly improve their chance of survival.

Eventually, Lex's patience paid off. It still wasn't Marlo, instead Hugo who left the recovery room and excitedly asked to rent a room for a week. Lex happily accepted the 350MP from the man's credit card, which was followed by another notification from the Inn that he temporarily ignored, and asked Gerard to take Hugo to his room.

When the man left his view Lex quickly checked his status and was delighted.

New Notification: Hidden Achievement Unlocked!

Hidden Achievement: At maximum Capacity

Reward: Authority +1, 1 Free Inn Expansion, Inn Star Rating + 0.5, + 2000MP

As soon as Lex checked the rewards, a subtle change swept through the Inn. Like a wave, spirit energy rushed across the Inn as the area of the Inn increased exponentially. Lex could not feel the change in spirit energy, but all of his guests were overwhelmed!

The two soldiers, both meditating in their PB rooms, felt a rush of extremely pure spirit energy enter their bodies and suddenly consolidated their cultivation to form their Foundation realm. Their bodies shivered with excitement, but they couldn't afford to stop and continued to cultivate to stabilize their new realm. Hugo, who hadn't even begun to cultivate in his room yet, felt a wave of spirit energy fill his body and strengthen his Foundation to the point where he almost immediately entered Peak Foundation realm! For the first time in years Hugo felt excited for a moment before he stabilized his emotions and quickly sat down on the floor and began to cultivate.

The biggest shock, however, was received by Bastet and Falak. When the wave of spirit energy entered the Inn, it wasn't spirit energy that entered their bodies, but a higher and more complex form of energy! Bastet, who was asleep, woke up to a feeling of horror and excitement! Excitement, because she had instantly recovered enough to where she could leave Earth immediately on her own, and horror because she knew all too well what level of power that energy represented. Falak, likewise, knew what it meant and immediately stood outside Bastet's room, awaiting his mistresses exit in case she needed him.

At this moment Lex didn't know how the changes had affected his guests. As the only person in the Inn unable to feel spirit energy he did not know how tremendous an opportunity he had missed. His focus was on better understanding his reward and thinking about the hidden achievement.

The land available to the Inn had increased by a couple of acres, that he understood easily enough. The half star rating meant he could now better cater to guests at a higher realm, or at least that's what he assumed. He was looking into all the new things he could do with his new-found authority, and they really were exciting!