

Innkeeper 361

The Innkeeper

Chapter 361: Lucky Sutra

For a moment, Lex didn't register what he read and his mind blanked. Then he rubbed his eyes and read the notification again.

System Notification:

New system detected! Analyzing the secondary system. Murder system grade D+ detected. Host can choose to assimilate with the secondary system and have two concurrent systems, or absorb it to strengthen the existing system. Please note: this decision will be fixed and final, and will result in the same action for all subsequent systems discovered.

System Notification:

Murder system grade D+ detected. Murder in cold blood, one and all, to gain system points and receive a boost to your strength, as well as tools to help plan out intricate murders. The greater the murder, the better the reward. Murdering special, high value targets yields better results and rewards. From weapons to technique to formations and golems, the system will provide you a smooth path to the most efficient murders.

Lex read the notification again and again, his mind racing. This answered one of the greatest questions he'd had about his system for a very long time, and yet also resulted in more questions.

First of all, he was not the only one with a system. While his system may be unique, though he wasn't even sure of that at the moment, it was a fact that others also had systems.

It also did not mention any grade in his system or anywhere else, so he had no idea what grade his own system was, if it even had one.

Moreover, the purpose of the systems did not seem to overlap much. After all, his system was targeted towards hosting guests and even promoted charity work of sorts, while this fellow literally had a system that encouraged murder!

That raised the question, where did these systems come from, and what was their purpose? His system, especially, confused him greatly. As his understanding of the universe was expanding, he began to understand how truly miniscule he was in front of the capabilities of his own system. In that case, what could it ever hope to get from him?

This was a question for which he had no answer. After all, it could directly use its abilities to trap Lex and take whatever it wanted from him, but it didn't.

Maybe there was something the system needed him to do. After all, he did not know if this fellow was already a murderer before he got the system, or had been influenced by the rewards the system promised to enter onto this path.

Whatever the truth of the matter may be, it was a fact that Lex's life had been inherently linked to the systems for good. Even if he wanted to escape the influence of the systems, he would have to do it by getting stronger first. For that, ironically, the system itself played the greatest role. If, somehow, his system could become stronger, then it would aid him greatly. Especially because he was not at all interested in going on random murdering sprees.

Just as he was having these thoughts, a change appeared on the murderer's body, and a couple of items appeared. There was one crystal as well as a wide bracelet of pure gold.

Before Lex could pick them up to observe, he appeared once again in his room back at the tavern, the murderer's body laying at his feet.

He quickly scanned the tavern to ensure all was well and breathed a sigh of relief. Rick was controlling the space array around the tavern, so no monster was able to enter during his absence.

"Mary, do you care to explain?" Lex said, calming himself down. He knew this was not an opportunity he wanted to miss, but before he did anything, he wanted to get as much information about it as possible.

"I do not have the authority to comment on anything related to the system beyond what I've already told you. If you want my recommendation on what option to choose, I am not allowed to comment on that either. All I can say is, think back to your own experience when the system was new. How did it encourage you to complete its quests? How did it threaten you? I am not saying that other systems will do the same, just that it is something you should remember."

As soon as she spoke, Lex's mind flashed back to the early days when the system would threaten him to complete quests by stating the punishment for failure was death. If the murder system gave him a quest and set a similar punishment, Lex would be stuck. He would have no option but to complete the quest.

The thought gave him shivers. He absolutely could not get more systems. As for the Midnight system? It was already strong enough to send him to other realms, and so firmly had his life under his control. Making it stronger would not change that fact, but it could at least increase whatever benefits he could get from it.

With his mind made up, Lex selected to have his system absorb the murder system to become stronger. The murderer's body exploded and a small golden ball rushed into Lex's body the next moment!

A strong sense of déjà vu hit Lex as he recalled a shooting star, but this time, fortunately, Lex was not knocked out. Instead, his system interface disappeared, and only the words 'updating' appeared in its place.

This made Lex nervous, for he used the system for a lot of things, even at the tavern, but all he could do now was wait.

Also, he could clean. For once, the system's automatic cleaning function wasn't available, so he had to clean up the mess created by the murderer's body by himself.

Well over an hour Lex sat back down beside the window he opened to air out his room, and investigated the two items that appeared from the murderer's body.

The gold bracelet looked like pretty standard jewelry, right up until Lex channeled his spirit energy into it. Much like the book that appeared in the ring given to him by John, his worker at the Inn, a scripture appeared in his mind from the bangle.

For some reason, though, reading a single word seemed to drain him mentally. He was only able to make out 'Lucky Sutra' before he became too exhausted to continue. In fact, he became so tired, Lex fell asleep the very moment he stopped reading.

He woke up groggy and with a throbbing headache. It was only after he asked Roan to bring him a rejuvenating tea that felt better, slightly. He put the bangle away, unwilling to look too deeply into it for now, though he seemed to have understood much about his fight with the killer. This so-called Lucky Sutra must have played a role in constantly keeping him alive, and why he mentioned that he was very lucky.

It was definitely something to look forward to - later. Rubbing his throbbing head, Lex reached out towards the crystal and reluctantly poured his energy inside.

This time, instead of a book, the crystal revealed itself as the controlling mechanism for the formation around the town!

"How lucky," Lex couldn't help but comment, his facial expression eerily similar to the killers as he said so. Lex himself, though, did not feel anything odd. It was natural that, if the killer had something to control the formation, it would fall into Lex's hands after the killer had been dispatched.

Not wasting a single moment, Lex started to focus on the crystal, trying to understand how it worked and how he could control it to restore the town to its previous state.

During this time he did not notice at all as he subconsciously wore the gold bracelet onto his left hand. His body, which had gone through an arduous battle, also did not warn him via the usual instincts that anything was wrong, as he subconsciously used a portion of his spirit energy and started channeling it through the bangle.

As the gold bangle tightened around his wrist, Lex felt nothing, and when it began to fuse into his hand Lex was too engrossed in the crystal. But that's when things became odd. The bangle, which at first seemed to be quickly melding into Lex's hand, slowed down. It was supposed to have fused into his hand seamlessly, like a person jumping into the sea holding rocks.

Instead, it became like a person slowly falling in tar. It was thick and sticky, and while the bangle was still fusing with his hand, it was way too slow.

Still, Lex was oblivious to all of this. When he finally managed to figure out the controls of the formation, he murmured 'how lucky' and began setting things straight. Turning on the lights would not make the existing monsters go away, but at least it would stop new ones from forming.

The mayor, if he was still alive, would have a much easier time reclaiming the town.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 362: Overdrive state

Turning the lights back on was not as straightforward as it seemed, mainly because every formation Lex had ever interacted with before this was generated by his system. As such, the formations would directly act according to his intentions and Lex did not need to bother with the details of how the formation actually performed the relevant action. Now, on the other hand, there were hundreds of options for Lex to interact with and he could not easily figure out what they did.

A simple example of this is taking an avian beast that's been flying all its life with the aid of its wings, with each and every manoeuvre easily performed at a whim, and putting it in the pilot seat of a commercial airline. It could not even begin to comprehend what the various buttons did.

After a good bit of trying with no significant result, Lex decided to stop and take a break. He needed to reflect on his battle with the killer a bit. At the time, he hadn't noticed, but the signs of the killer being a system user were all there.

From the get go, being able to teleport Lex without any prior warning was a significant indicator that he was not simple. Moreover, being able to spontaneously summon monsters and mannequins, having a mannequin heal him, randomly disappearing or teleporting away. To be honest, any one of these abilities was extremely powerful, and had they been in the hands of anyone more competent, the fight would have been much harder.

Lex was not belittling himself, for he had literally survived a meteor crash, but he also needed to be aware of the fact that the opponent had a system that directly increased his battle prowess. Should he face such an opponent again, and the possibility that he would encounter such foes in the future was great, he needed to be better prepared.

After all, now that he was sure other systems existed, he would constantly be on the lookout for any hints or clues of system users. Similarly with the renown of the Inn increasing, he had to anticipate that other system users might suspect him as well.

He tried to summarize the similarity between himself and the murderer that could be used to identify a system user and be on the lookout for those attributes, while hiding the same features in himself.

The most common was the random appearance of new items, such as the mannequins. This was bad, as he had already displayed that ability multiple times at the Inn. Next was the ability to teleport. He had displayed that as well.

As for his other peculiarities, Lex suspected they had much to do with the Lucky Sutra and not the system. He would need to do more research on the matter to come to a conclusion.

With that out of the way, Lex then thought of the 'overdrive' state that he had entered during his last fight. It was significantly different from his 'flow' state.

During the 'flow' state, he would achieve extreme mental clarity. His focus would improve and he would be able to perform any and all actions to the best of his physical capabilities due to the extreme control and precision he gained over his own body.

The overdrive state was all that and more. It was not tapping into the maximum mental clarity or aptitude or focus he could physically achieve, but directly increasing it for a short duration. But, for now at least, the increase was limited to the mind only. That meant he was technically not any stronger than his normal maximum physical limit. But, with his mind working much faster and with greater and more detailed control of his body, he could easily create the necessary situation to exceed his limits.

The drawback was, once the overdrive state ended, if he overused it, he would be completely mentally drained.

The greatest benefit, at least as far as Lex was concerned, was that he could sense how to enter such a state. It had originally been triggered by his strong sense of pride. He could feel that, with a little effort, he could enter the state again.

He closed his eyes and focused, concentrating on his pride. What was he proud of? It was not something that appeared out of thin air. Even if he set aside everything the system gave him and his success with the Inn, his repeated success and achievements in the Crystal realm were definitely his own.

Just the fact that the crazy man Vernan wanted to recruit him into strange classes and that everyone mistook him for being born from royalty spoke volumes. Heck, he single handedly took control of various minor realms when even someone like Cwenhild went with a group. He was not just Lex Williams, a simple programmer from New York anymore. He was a genuine cultivator who was cutting out his own path in the universe.

Just as he was swelling on these thoughts, his overdrive state was triggered. This time since he was not overtaken by feelings of wanting to kill someone, he could actually take the time to appreciate all the changes.

He could feel how his brain influenced his emotions. He could feel how each heartbeat affected every step he took. He could feel each breath nourishing his body. He could feel his arm... wait a minute.

Lex turned to look at his left arm and was very seriously surprised to find himself wearing the golden bracelet, but more than that, he was surprised to find it melding with his arm!

Alarm bells rang in his head as he analyzed what was going on, and realized that, even without being conscious of it, he had been running his spirit energy through his arm and into the bracelet. The moment he cut off the energy the fusion stopped and, after a few agonizing moments, the bracelet popped free of his hand and fell to the ground.

He dared not pick it up and checked the condition of his body again and again. All seemed to be fine, and his instincts gave him no warning of anything good or bad happening. It was as if his body failed to recognize this as anything but an ordinary piece of jewelry.

He didn't know if that was a good thing or bad, but he used the space formation to seal the bracelet for now. He dared not mess with it again before the system returned. Maybe then he could use something to scan this item.

In fact, when he thought about it, it was very lucky that he even considered trying out his new overdrive state. Had he delayed the matter for a few hours more, the bracelet may have completely fused with

him. He did not know what would have happened if it did, but he didn't want to find out by experimenting on himself.

Lex exited his overdrive state and went back to the bar. He needed a drink.

As usual, the hall was as crowded as could be. Most people were forcing themselves into a state of escapism by playing board games and drinking all day and night long, and with the tavern at beyond capacity, there was almost no room.

It would have felt extremely congested if everyone wasn't cooperating with each other very well and behaving appropriately. Of course, Lex's firm control over the space in the tavern, and his emphasis on maintaining decorum greatly helped as well.

"You don't normally drink," said Roland, the enterprising young businessman who was sipping hot chocolate while sitting at the bar. He looked sleep deprived and worn out, with heavy dark circles under his eyes.

Lex did not know much about his personal life, despite spending so much time together, but he understood the kid enough to realize he was mature beyond his age. Unfortunately, with that maturity came stress and anxiety that not everyone knew how to manage.

"I'm celebrating," said Lex as he took a sip of a chilled glass of Cocaina Cola.

"Celebrating? What is there to celebrate?" the kid asked in a defeated voice.

"I have a scoop," said Lex, teasingly. "Are you interested in the latest news? From beyond the tavern?"

"From beyond the tavern?" he asked, suspiciously. Unable to guess anything, the kid relented and asked Lex the news.

"The problem with the light formation is going to be fixed real soon," Lex whispered. Roland was startled upon hearing the news, but then gave Lex a defeated smile.

"I'm not a kid, you can't fool me."

Shaking his head in disappointment, Roland got off his seat and went to look for his friends. Although he knew nothing would happen to them at the tavern, he couldn't help but worry.

Lex said nothing and only watched him leave, his hand fumbling the crystal in his pocket. After he got some rest, he would test his overdrive state on figuring out how to manipulate the formation. That should speed things up.

A loud slamming sound woke Lex from his musings.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 363: Abnormal luck

Startled by the sound, the whole tavern looked towards the door that had been swung open. A brutish man, covered from head to toe in filth and monster blood, stumbled in, dragging behind him a massive double sided ax.

Well, it was formerly double sided but now one side had been corroded away by something. Even now the ax gave off the scent of burning metal.

The man looked at the crowded tavern room, his weary face showing confusion and noncomprehension. Before he could say anything, Mario Ricci rushed up to him with a concerned face and checked up on his body. They said nothing, but Lex strongly suspected that they were already talking through their spirit sense.

"Lex, is it possible to get a private room for a short while?" Mario suddenly asked, turning towards him.

Lex raised an eyebrow out of curiosity. He placed a great deal of importance on Mario because of his ring, and possible connection to the Noel family. As such, his current reaction greatly attracted Lex's attention, and aroused his interest towards this mysterious man. After all, as someone who had spent some time at the tavern, he should have known that there was basically no room at the tavern currently.

Before he formed any theories on the identity of the worn out man, Mario continued to speak.

"Let me introduce you. This is the honorable mayor of Babylon, and a distant relative of the Noel family. There are some matters we need to handle that require a bit of privacy."

A distant relative of the Noel family - Lex immediately wished he had the ability to snoop on conversations like he could back at the Inn. At the moment, the only way he had to properly even scan what was happening in the tavern was using the space formation.

Still, the better his relations with these people, the better his chances of learning the secrets of this place.

"Don't take too long," Lex finally said, deciding to accommodate their request. "As you know, we're extremely short on space, and forcing too many people in one space will make everyone uncomfortable."

The mayor was still groggy, and barely registering what was happening as Mario led him by the hand to one of the private rooms Lex emptied out. After spending so much time at this place he had come to understand how excellent the sound insulation in the private rooms were, so he was not at all worried that they would be spied upon. Moreover, any conversation they would have would be through their spirit senses anyway.

After inquiring if the mayor required any medical attention, to which Mario answered no, they closed the door and began their meeting.

Lex too retreated from the main hall, back to his room. So far the monsters that had spawned were not too strong, with only their numbers as their greatest asset. But if even the mayor had been brought down to this level, then things must be getting bad.

He immediately entered his overdrive state and began deciphering how to use the formation crystal properly. Even if he could not restore the lights, allowing communication with outside the formation should allow them to request for help.

The crystal allowed him to observe each and every change that was happening to the formation, so with every proverbial 'button' he flicked using the crystal he looked for changes. He spent an entire hour doing this before he was too exhausted to continue his overdrive state and took a rest. This would be a tedious process.

A teleportation formation flashed, and the crown prince of the Hum nation appeared amongst a crowd of people who were traveling to the Noel family's lands.

Although this piece of land seemed like it was independent of any nation, it was only because geographically it was too far from any of the nations borders. That did not mean, in any whatsoever, that it escaped the influence of the nations. As a human ruler, no matter how far he actually was from Hum nation, there was no way he would be able to continue his reign without the hidden support from Cornelius.

Such was the case for many so called independent states. It was just that the public did not need to know what went on behind closed doors. Regardless of all that, it was that connection that resulted in various teleportation formations that allowed travel even from the farthest regions. After all, it was unknown when they would need emergency help, and even Cornelius himself would take months if not years to travel to the farthest regions without these formations.

In his hand he still held a plastic fork and, after checking something, the prince dashed out into the darkness, uncaring of any monsters in his path.

A short while into his journey, however, he encountered another man making his way through the darkness. Considering that he might be lost and in need of aid, the prince stopped near him.

But, after appearing right beside the man, he stood awkwardly. It had been too long since he had spoken to another person while sober. He wasn't sure what to say.

Pvarti, on the other hand, was as genial and excited as always.

"Hello friend," he exclaimed while slicing an elephant sized monster in half. "Would you happen to know where Babil is? Or Baby? Maybe it was Baba? Ah darn, I cannot remember the name of the town, but it had an amazing tavern."

The crown prince's eyes flickered at the mention of a tavern, but then they dulled. How could he expect to find something that could get him drunk out here in the middle of nowhere?

"I do not know the name, but I'm heading towards a town. You can follow me and ask for directions from there."

"Excellent," he replied, his mood improving drastically.

As soon as he agreed, the prince put his hand on Pvarti's shoulder and carried him along as he zoomed through the darkness. The speed was faster than anything Pvarti had ever experienced and he was startled, but he quickly realized that he was not affected by the speed at all, and began to enjoy the experience. That is, until they reached Babylon and found the formation shutting the town shut.

Both Pvarti and the prince grew extremely serious upon witnessing such a sight.

Four days later, Lex chugged a drink very similar to coffee, except that instead of caffeine, it flooded his body with easy to absorb spiritual energy. Unless Lex quickly used up the energy, it would dissipate and not get absorbed into his body.

But the benefit of this was, if Lex was drastically using up the spiritual energy in his body, it would automatically get absorbed into his spirit energy pool and allow him to continue using energy for much longer.

He needed this drink to facilitate his use of the overdrive state. After four days of continuous use, he learned that it was not only his mental energy that was drained, but it exhausted him physically as well as put a strain on his spiritual energy.

Still, after 4 arduous days, he could proudly say he had gained enough of an understanding of the formation that he could finally return things to normal. It would take one final push.

He entered the overdrive state and immediately began manipulating the formation. He had to be careful, for he had learnt through continuous experimentation that controlling the lights in the town was perhaps the simplest function of this formation.

It definitely did many more things way too complex for him to understand, but they were not his problem. Soon things would return to normal.

But Lex remained unaware that, in the main hall of his tavern, the mayor and Mario exchanged worried looks. Things had turned extremely bleak when an important component of the town's formation had been turned off a few days earlier for just a few minutes. That was actually Lex testing out the function of the formation crystal.

As a result, some energy signatures that the formation kept hidden had leaked for a few moments, and monsters hidden in the deep, dark depths of the sea had been attracted. Those monsters were way too strong for even the mayor to handle. No matter what happened, they needed to make sure that they could request for aid from the Noel family before something else happened to the formation. Otherwise, the repercussions would spread far beyond just Babylon.

Unfortunately, the luck of the entire town had been undergoing abnormal changes of late. Of the millions of buttons, Lex messed with the single most dangerous one, just long enough to attract trouble. And now, at the worst possible time, he finally figured out how to turn the formation off.

Just as suddenly as the town had been blanketed in darkness, the lights turned back on, revealing a town nearly destroyed, and an army of monsters filling the streets.

The gentle hum of various formations returning to life filled the town. The hum was followed by an earth shattering howl as a massive creature exited from the sea.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 364: Fruit trifle

From the dark, ebbing waters of the coast, two massive claws emerged and set themselves deep within the docks. The ground crumbled under their weight, and the earth itself began to split when the creature they belonged to put pressure on them to pull itself out of the water.

A massive head, 30 feet (9.1 meters) large emerged from the water, two equally massive tusks emerging from the base of its jaw and ran closely down the length of its face.

The weight of its gaze froze countless monsters nearby, but their existence was too paltry to even notice to the behemoth. Unable to sense the aura it had traced all the way here, the creature continued to lift itself out of the water, its body emerging from depths like a nightmare escaping a dream.

Zagan, the ocean king, was not impatient. It would take its time and search thoroughly.

On the other side of the town, Pvarti and the crown prince had been testing the formation for its abnormalities. They did not want to take any drastic action until they fully understood the situation.

So when the formation returned to normal, they were taken by surprise. But when the town full of monsters revealed itself to them, their expressions fell. Before they could even completely comprehend the situation and even consider eliminating the monsters, Zagan had revealed itself.

Pvarti instantly reached into his pocket, looking for the emergency summoning talisman for his father, but found his pockets empty. Now, weeks after it happened, Pvarti was struck hard by the truth once more. He was no longer a part of the Noel family.

The prince wasted not a single moment and unleashed his strength in full, the radiance of his immortal aura illuminating the war-torn town with its splendor. With speed mere mortals could not comprehend, he appeared in front of Zagan, only acting in deterrence and daring not to attack first.

Of the many monsters born from the darkness, very few ever reached the immortal realm. Moreover, for them to reach the immortal realm, they would need to live in the darkness for hundreds of thousands of years.

But even amongst the immortal monsters, there was a higher class that not only gained complete sentience, but had strength and recognition so great they had names and titles that were passed down through generations.

Zagan, the ocean king, was one such monster, and the prince recognized him immediately.

"This is human territory, Zagan," the crown prince said in a warning tone. "Withdraw lest the situation escalate."

It was not that the prince feared Zagan. Honestly speaking, the prince feared no one other than his own father. Instead, it was the certainty that if they fought, the entire town would be destroyed that kept him from taking action.

His appearance was right out terrifying, but Zagan did not have a feisty personality. He did not get aggravated or agitated. This was because, with his strength, getting what he wanted was always a certainty. It was merely a matter of getting what he wanted a bit sooner or later.

So Zagan did not bother replying. Very lazily, he focused on the prince and shot lasers from his eyes. In the beaten and battered lands that had just experienced the greatest struggle it had witnessed in years, two immortals began to fight. The mere mortals down below could do naught but cower in fear and hope to avoid even the gusts released from their battle, for it would be lethal.

As anarchy rained from the skies and the laws of the world itself bent in the air, the triplets served fruit trifles to the tavern guests. With illusion formations protecting the tavern from the view of what happened on their doorsteps, and a space formation protecting the building, everyone inside was completely unaware of what was happening.

Lex, after fixing the formation, surveyed everything. Technically, the formation also had defensive features to attack monsters, but he dared not try to activate them for he had no way of differentiating friends from foes.

But now that new monsters wouldn't spawn, the Nascents and even the Golden core cultivators would easily handle the monsters. Especially since the unusual interference to everyone's emotions, making everyone afraid, had also been deactivated by him.

Satisfied with his progress, Lex decided to finally relax a little. He entered the Hot tub room and soaked himself in the warm bubbling water for an hour to allow himself to unwind. Once he was done with that, Lex donned a cozy night suit and slipped into his bed. He fell asleep almost instantly, for he'd had very little actual rest the last few days.

Outside the tavern, the state of the town was even worse. Buildings had collapsed and rubble fell from the sky like rain, crushing monsters left and right.

While Pvarti could not help with the fight, there were other things he could do. Though he was no longer from the Noel family, his entire life had been spent in it so he knew their secrets in and out.

He broke into the formation chamber underground and forcefully severed the connection of the formation with its control crystal and reconnected it to a new one. He searched the town for signs of life, and was elated to discover that a good number of citizens had survived by hiding in underground bunkers.

What he didn't know was that this was not a coincidence. The murderer had created safe zones in areas with emergency survival bunkers and herded all survivors that way.

He immediately began using the formation, which was the only thing unaffected by the fight happening due to it being buried so deep underground, to further secure the survivors.

Well, almost the only thing as the Midnight tavern stood tall and proud on what was once known as Bakers street. It was the only building still standing in the vicinity, with all others having collapsed due to the aftershocks of the battle. Still, Pvarti knew none of that.

Pvarti also enabled the emergency aid broadcast, alerting the Noel family to the situation here. He did not think he'd be meeting his father again so soon, but it couldn't be helped.

While all this was happening, the tenets of the Midnight tavern were playing a game invented by the tavern owner called bingo. It was immediately a crowd favorite, and Lex even allotted a few glasses of very expensive drinks as the ultimate prize to keep the audience hooked.

Around 8 hours later, Lex woke feeling completely refreshed. The first thing he did was check on the status of the system, but it still only said 'updating'.

The long duration of disconnect had made him nervous. He did not know what was happening at the Inn and he wasn't used to it. Hopefully, things were alright.

Fenrir growled aggressively, ready to rend the world asunder under its might. But it was futile. In the face of overwhelming strength, even the little deterrence afforded to it by its bloodline meant nothing.

The Galactic Sovereign turtle lifted Fenrir up by its leg using a vine, and threw him into a pool of water. The dog really needed to get used to showering.

Fenrir yelped and struggled, but the turtle didn't care. It liked its garden to smell nice, not like a sweaty dog.

Little Blue, which had entered the Foundation realm, laughed at Fenrir's state. Its little brother, Fenrir, was far too powerful for the whale to handle or even run from anymore, so whenever it got bullied by the turtle Little Blue would enjoy it endlessly.

Unfortunately, it's fun times were about to end. Under the orders of Mary, Little Blue was about to start its first job. Lex had once instructed them to plan out a play area for kids and, after extensive research, it was discovered that Little Blue had a natural instinct when it came to effectively communicating with kids, regardless of its species.

Although Mary could not contact Lex at the moment, she could not let anyone know. So, unofficially, work was still in progress on all his projects. But, soon, things would spiral even out of Mary's hands. That was because the final for the Lady Cosmos competition was coming up, and more than one complication had arisen.

Things were under control so far, mainly because of Lex's thorough preparation, but she could not guess how long it would last.

Up on Midnight Mountain, the dragon no longer slept and was instead watching the Inn intently. A fight had broken out just a day ago when a rather powerful cohort appeared, claiming that one of the finalists in the competition was their slave and that the Inn needed to hand her over.

The dragon had to personally make a move to prevent the situation from going downhill quickly, for no one else at the Inn, even Qawain, could handle them.

More importantly, there was a notorious playboy whose reputation had been spread across the galaxy who had been attracted to the Inn, and a fight between him and Harry Styles had nearly broken out - and he wasn't the only one who nearly fought with him.

The situation was incredibly tense, and everyone was awaiting the finals to see if any drama would occur.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 365: Dragons wake

Unable to check up on the Inn, Lex decided to have some breakfast before going up onto the roof and investigating the state of the town. Once he confirmed everything was alright, he would go and alert the necessary people about the changes.

Since Lex hadn't really been following a fixed schedule when he slept, it was well into the night when he awoke meaning most of the guests were asleep. The few who were awake sat in silence mostly by themselves, or whispered to someone nearby. Lex paid them no mind and got himself some leftovers, heated them up and enjoyed his meal.

Feeling good at his recent accomplishment, he decided to pair his 'breakfast' with a 10,000 MP glass of warm malt. Taking his time, Lex began to think about what to do during the next few days. It was unknown when the system would finish updating, and he was limited to the tavern building, so the most he could honestly do is cultivate.

He was also thinking of how to keep the tavern guests occupied. Bingo had been a great success so his next plan was karaoke night, but he was not familiar with local songs and did not know if there was much of a culture based on singing.

Lex's musings stopped when he noticed that Rick was walking towards him. Lex was startled, for he was supposed to be controlling the space formation which, for Rick, would usually completely occupy him.

"We haven't been attacked by a single monster in well over an hour," Rick explained when Lex asked. "But I had to solidify the entire space around the tavern, preventing anyone from coming in or out, because the tavern seemed to be suffering from some kind of long range attack."

Treating the matter extremely seriously, Lex took back control of the formation and quickly climbed up to the roof. Yet when he expected to see a brightly lit yet monster filled town, all he saw was a warzone.

The wooden tavern building was the only structure still standing as far as the eye could see, and stood out like a sore thumb. Everything else - every building, every wall, every statue, every monument - had been reduced to rubble under the might of an epic battle.

In the air, a man battled ferociously with a massive monster that looked like it came out of Godzilla's nightmare.

Each gust of wind released from their clash blew fiercer than a hurricane, and carried with it massive boulders like flakes of snow in a winter storm. The town's formation, despite the state of what could no longer be called a town, seemed to be active and running for the battleground was well lit, and it seemed to restrict the monster somewhat.

With each clash the human would release a roar that would put thunder to shame, his fists carrying might that made lightning seem like mere static, yet the monster remained unperturbed.

In fact, the monster was not even paying full attention to the man. From time to time, it would try to attack the ground, as if looking for some buried treasure. The man, who looked more like a single flea in front of the creature, however managed to block each and every one of its attacks.

Lex gulped as his brain finally managed to process the clash straight out of science fiction that was actually taking place before him. It would be fair to say that, at the moment, Lex was at his most vulnerable. He did not have access to the system right now and could not make additions to the formations, or use some other method to help him out from this predicament should the battle divert towards the tavern.

He should have felt fear. Instead, his gaze was focused yet calm. He put on this thinking cap to put him in the artificial state of 'flow' so that he would not make a mistake or miss out on something important. While he could not make any last minute additions to the tavern using the system, he was not unprepared.

From the moment his gut gave him the unusual warning from earlier, he made plenty of additions. While he still lacked a means of attack, as ever, he had more than one formation to protect himself.

In fact, as absurd and crazy as it may seem, Lex spent 780 million MP just on adding different formations to the tavern to increase its protection. It may seem like an absurd amount, but there was no amount of MP Lex wasn't willing to spend for his own protection.

But even though he was willing to spend MP, the reason he ended up spending so much was because he did not know what kind of trouble to anticipate. He had to add various formations to cater to as many possibilities as he could imagine.

"Zagan, this is your last warning," yelled the man, his voice sounding more irritated than angered. "Retreat. If this goes on much longer then even if it means I have to stop holding back, I'll make you regret it."

Lex was startled to learn that the state of the town was a result of a battle where the participants were still holding back. He didn't know what had caused the battle, but he really hoped the monster would be deterred.

Unfortunately, that was not the case. The monster only increased its pace of attack, bombarding the humans and the ground with pulses of energy. The human tried, but he was not fast enough to block all attacks, causing them to create massive craters in the ground.

The lights produced by the formation flickered as the formation was finally being threatened, though it still seemed to be holding on.

"Mr. Innkeeper," whispered a familiar voice in Lex's mind. "I sensed something really, really wonderful underground for a moment. If you can find it and eat it, I think it would be very delicious. Even I'm feeling a little hungry after sensing it."

Lex was startled, but quickly made the connection. Indeed, there was some kind of treasure hidden here, and the formation's real purpose was to hide its aura! Well, Lex couldn't be completely certain of this fact, but it seemed completely plausible to him that someone would build a town here so that the addition of such a massive formation wouldn't be questioned, and it could continue to hide the prescience of whatever treasure was here.

But the monster's attacks seemed to be threatening the integrity of the formation, causing it to leak the aura of whatever it hid.

The World Seed Lotus on Lex's back wasn't the only one to notice the aura. The monster had as well, and its eyes lit up as it began to concentrate its attacks.

But the human was no pushover. True to his earlier threats, he had stopped holding back, and instead of blocking the monster, he now focused on attacking. Cracks seemed to appear in the sky itself whenever he attacked, and the monster was finally forced to take things seriously. It stopped attacking the floor and instead defended itself.

The speed of their fight soon exceeded what Lex could comprehend, and all he could witness was the continuous aftermath of the battle.

Before things reached their crescendo, two more humans seemed to arrive from a distance and immediately joined the battle. Lex had no idea who they were, but they were definitely also extremely powerful.

The fight, still beyond his comprehension, only seemed to be getting more intense with the addition of the new participants. There was no indication that they were close to defeating, or even intimidating the monster. Moreover, the cracks left behind in the sky from the various clashes seemed to be increasing and Lex could feel an acute threat from them.

It was best to resolve the situation as quickly as possible. He thought for a moment which one of his formations would be most helpful, for no matter which one he used, he could not directly defeat the monster, only fool or intimidate it.

There was a gentle shift in Lex's expression as he shifted into his Innkeeper persona, exuding innate confidence even in the face of the most powerful guest.

He activated the formation called Dragon's wake, a formation that had cost him 180 million MP and performed only one function. It acutely replicated the dragon's aura that was released by the dragon back at the Inn, though in greater intensity - even if only for a short moment.

The aura spread from the lonely tavern building and, in the blink of an eye, covered the entire battlefield. Zagan, the crown prince, Bertram Noel and his father, both of whom had just arrived, were washed in the feeling of being eyed by a predator. Their hearts froze as an inborn terror filled them, and in their heads they all saw the image of a single reptilian eye quivering just a little. It was as if a dragon was on the verge of waking up.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 366: Flood of colors

The aura disappeared just as fast as it appeared. It was but a single moment of pure suppression but it had completely stopped the flow of battle. Each participant eyed each other warily, as if to determine if the others knew the origin of the aura, yet they were all equally surprised.

Lex considered making a statement. A simple one liner to let them know that he was displeased or that he would let the matter stay so long as they ended their battle. But the move didn't feel right.

As the Innkeeper, if he gave excessive explanations while in the Inn, it would still make sense since he had to provide an explanation to his guests. Outside, however, he did not need to explain.

Since he was playing the role of a powerhouse, no matter how down to earth he made his personality seem, some things would be beneath him. In such a situation, the fact that he supposedly flashed his aura at them was already enough of a warning. Giving further explanations would make him seem weak.

So, with arms folded across his chest and an impassive face, he just looked up in the air and watched everything. Whether or not the battle continued would determine his follow up. In fact, he was already preparing for the battle to continue.

After all, while he was using the mindset of a powerful overlord to judge the situation, he had to live in the reality where he was pathetically weak in front of those up in the sky.

A single second went by since the aura disappeared. For Lex it was a miniscule amount of time, barely enough to form a couple of thoughts, but for the immortals in the sky, a single second was akin to a lifetime. The speed at which their minds worked was not comprehensible to mere mortals and so, a single second of indecision was actually an immense deal. It showed just how much of a deterrent that aura had been.

Zagan understood that the target of the aura had been him all along, since he was the one who came here and started making trouble. Since whoever released the aura marked this place as his territory, he surely had an understanding with the humans. The only question that remained was if he was willing to risk fighting whoever released the aura for the treasure.

After all, it need not be explained that for a being of such level to reside here, the only attraction was whatever that treasure had been.

Zagan was confident in his own strength, but if he had to fight the owner of that aura, alongside these humans, it would be a little difficult. Zagan hated things that were difficult, for he was somewhat lazy by nature.

Letting out an irritated groan, Zagan turned around and returned to the watery depths.

The immediate threat of the beast was gone, but the humans remained frozen in the air. This was because they did not understand where the aura had come from. Was there some ancient monster sleeping in the area from long before they ever even arrived? It seemed like it.

Yet even as they waited, nothing happened. No monster arrived. There was no follow up.

When they were convinced that all was well, Bertram and Joseph Noel, the patriarch of the Noel family, finally turned their attention to the battlefield that had once been Babylon.

Bertram was especially hit hard by the town's current state because he had visited it so recently. It was hard to believe that there would be a single survivor.

Then they turned to look at the Midnight tavern.

Amidst the broken land, filled with monster corpses and the burnt up remnants of what might have once been houses, a single, three story wooden building stood pristine. The small garden at the front had the sheen of freshly cut grass but other than that, it did not seem like it had even suffered from strong winds. They even noticed that, by a particular window sill, a robin had made a small nest.

It was safely nestled on top of its tiny eggs, asleep without fear or concern of the carnage that had struck the lands. It was too peculiar. If there was any chance of survivors, it would be there.

Suddenly, Bertram was struck by a memory of a visit on his passage through the town.

"Midnight tavern..." he mumbled, softly remembering the place where his brother had last partied.

But, before he even had the time to reminisce, a hole was blown open in the ground, and Pvarti emerged.

"There are survivors," he yelled up into the sky, uncaring that his family would treat him as a stranger. "But the entrances have been buried, and the formation isn't working properly, it's been too badly damaged."

The family that did not expect a reunion so soon quickly began excavating an entrance to the underground bunkers. Finding survivors would help them understand what exactly had happened here, and what exactly that one building was.

Back inside the tavern, Lex descended from the rooftop in a jolly mood and clapped his hands loudly to attract everyone's attention.

"Ladies and gentlemen I have excellent news," Lex said slightly formally, forgetting to step out of his Innkeeper persona. "The town's formation has returned to functioning normally, and all the monsters outside have been taken care of. For safety reasons, I suggest you still stay indoors for a bit longer but someone should be visiting us soon to let us know it's safe outside."

The crowded tavern was frozen still, unsure if they believed what they were hearing. The problem had been resolved? That was... easier than it should have been, right? Though they were crowded, they were never hungry or bored.

They realized long ago that some kind of illusion had been cast on the windows for they could never see a single monster outside. Even now, things seemed exactly the same if they looked outside. But the tavern owner had no reason to lie to them for this was a lie easily exposed. That must mean it was true.

Cheers erupted altogether, and even those who weren't in the hall quickly found out what happened. The kids especially were the happiest, and some started crying. It had been too long that they had been away from their parents, and they were too afraid to even think of what had happened to them.

In the jubilation and merrymaking, no one besides Lex noticed that the front door softly opened and a single man stepped in. He was holding, in his hand, a remarkably familiar looking plastic fork and he was looking directly towards Lex.

The two exchanged glances before the man turned towards the bar and, after hesitating for a moment, went and sat down.

Lex went and sat beside him.

"What can I get you?" Roan, the barkeep, asked.

"The strongest drink you have," the man answered.

"The strongest? You sure? It's expensive."

"Yeah, yeah, I can afford it," he said casually.

Roan looked at Lex who only nodded, before he retreated towards the kitchen. He had to go to the Wine cellar to bring out the truly expensive drinks.

There was silence between the man and Lex, as neither said anything first. A few minutes later, Roan returned holding a small jade bottle sealed by a cork. After showing the man the bottle, and clearly stating the price just to be sure, he poured him a drink.

This single bottle had been worth 1 million MP and held only two servings worth of spirit. Which meant the drink the man was having was 500,000 MP in value.

When he heard the price the man almost thought he was being ripped off, but when the bottle was opened the man went into shock. The plastic fork dropped from his hand and his attention was solely focused on the small white bowl in which the drink was poured.

A milky white drink with chilled fog hovering around it appeared in his eyes, and became the only thing in his world. As the drink poured from the bottle he observed its flow like he was watching the most beautiful woman in the world.

When the bowl was ready the man reached forward with shaking hands, but when he held the cup his hands became steady. In his world silence descended as he brought the cup near his face and took a deep sniff.

Even with eyes closed the man saw an explosion of colors in his mind. Waves of red clashed with yellow and green, forming a tempest of raging beauty. The colors changed form and became a river flowing from the highest peak, filled with fish swimming up and down the stream. Birds chirped as they flew over the river and rainbows bloomed. Grass spurt from the ground along with the most fragrant of flowers.

The man was lost in his own world, for he had gotten drunk just from the smell - the cup still full in front of his nose.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 367: Tears

The crown prince of Hum had lost himself in the intoxicating smell of his drink, his world now a clash of vibrant visuals and obscure concepts. He seemed to have lost himself in the world where grass grew in moments and life flourished in rivers of milk, where honey dripped from trees and the concepts of beauty and peace merged together to form angels with the sole purpose of giving him their love.

The blue skies were filled with Sol birds, dancing in the distance. Fairies formed communities in trees and the wind carried within it the sound of laughter always. It was heaven, for the world was perfect, and it was hell, because it was forever out of reach.

His eyes still shut, the crown prince moved the cup to his lips and took a single sip. As refreshing as the morning dew, the spirit sat in his mouth, refreshing all of his senses. He savored the soft flavor for a while but he finally drank.

The heaven that had filled his mind now enveloped his body, but not as strongly as it had captured his mind. It was like a tingle on the back of his neck, like a teasing wink of a lover just out of reach.

Unable to stop himself, the prince downed the whole cup in one go and let the sensation fill him. It was like the embrace he had longed for, the warmth of a hug he never knew he needed.

He felt everything that was broken inside of himself, and then he felt a gentle hand run through his hair, playing with his curls. He heard a whisper - no one would heal the injuries in his heart for him, but there was no rush for him to heal either. He could be weak, for as long as he needed, until he had the strength to heal himself.

Lex did not know what was happening inside the man's mind. He was simply curious as to the man's mission. He could guess much, simply based on the fork that he recognized.

That was not to say that he believed the fork was extremely unique or completely unavailable on the market. It was more of the fact that the chances of him running into a mysterious stranger who was incredibly powerful and happened to be walking around with a fork that was identical to his. He was more inclined to believe that the man had used it to somehow track Lex down.

When Lex had left the Hum nation, he did not actually know what danger he had been avoiding. He was blissfully unaware that the king himself had made an appearance in search of him, and wanted to procure his cultivation technique. He was also ignorant of everything that had happened after.

It was for this reason he did not immediately make the connection between the man and the King himself. His first thought was that the crazy professor Vernan had sent someone to track him down.

He was patiently waiting for the man to finish enjoying his drink, but was taken aback when the man suddenly started bawling his eyes out. One moment he was fine, and the next tears were streaming down his eyes like a waterfall and he was wailing like a baby. His face had turned completely red, and he had completely lost all control of himself.

Others, who were celebrating, and were caught in the emotional tempest that the announcement of the end of their self-imposed imprisonment in the tavern was ending, saw the man crying and began crying as well.

The triplets themselves were too anxious to work so Roan and Rick were passing out drinks the fastest they were able to, and the presence of the drinks made everyone even more vulnerable to the fluctuating emotions.

The doors to the tavern opened and Joseph and Bertram Noel stepped in, ready to encounter a life and death battle, only to encounter the scene of hundreds of men and women drinking and crying.

They were frozen still, unsure of what to say or do, when an annoyingly familiar voice sounded out from behind them.

"Drinks all around, barkeep! The Noel family will foot the bill today!"

Pvarti, who no longer had any responsibility towards helping his family out, strutted into the tavern and ordered a Dimmelon juice. He had forgotten the name of everything, but he did not forget the name of his new favorite drink.

The crowd did not cheer as he expected, but he could not be bothered as he crossed his family and made his way to the bar. He found Aegis, who he had spent some time with already, wailing away.

Slightly creeped out, Pvarti decided to ignore the man for the moment and just drank on his own.

Lex, upon noticing the arrival of Bertram, dissolved the illusion formation around the tavern. Even if his guests saw the mayhem that had occurred, there were others who would deal with it.

But before he could go greet the man himself, the mayor quickly arrived in front of the duo and began whispering something to them. Lex decided to let them have their privacy and kept their distance for the meantime.

Soon, the crowd began to notice the situation outside the tavern and were struck by horror and disbelief. What was happening? Where was Babylon? Had they teleported somewhere?

Too afraid to exit the building, they gathered by the door and windows and looked outside as a hush fell over the tavern, with only Aegis still crying loudly.

But the mayor was an accomplished man. He did not let chaos descend, and quickly conscripted most into his rescue party. He had sent a large number of soldiers to gather the town's citizens and lead them towards underground bunkers.

The bunkers had now been buried by the rubble, and needed to be excavated. The truth was, this was something that could have been easily achieved if he did it himself but the people could not be allowed time to wallow. They had to work, and helping to save people would give them some hope in this situation where they had been struck by despair.

Soon, the tavern was relatively empty once again. Many of the children had to be put to sleep because they became hysterical upon seeing the destruction, but some, like Roland, managed to keep themselves from acting out.

As he watched everyone leave, the triplets along with the baker and his wife included, Lex had a heavy heart. He was not sure how many survivors there were, but he'd venture that most of those who went out had lost someone.

Even the formerly spoiled workers at his tavern went out to search, doing their best to keep themselves from trembling as they saw the destruction.

Soon, only the now drunk Pvarti, Aegis, Bertram and Joseph were left in the hall. Lex exchanged a look with the two who still stood at the entrance, shrugged, and went to the bar as well and poured himself a drink.

He could not decide what was the best explanation to give as to how his tavern remained unharmed, but decided to be as vague as humanly possible about it.

Upon noticing that Lex was making no moves to approach them, Bertram stepped forward and ordered a glass of Sunset wine.

"We meet again," he said as he swung the wine in his glass, making no actual move to drink it again.

"So we do," replied Lex, as if there was nothing unusual going on at all.

"Your tavern has made quite the impression on me," Bertram said, slowly introducing the topic.

"Thank you, though I must say, the neighborhood isn't as safe as advertised when I bought the property."

Bertram smiled weakly. It seemed the tavern owner was taking a dig at him.

He readied himself to broach the topic directly, since if Lex hadn't shown any hostility so far there was no reason to believe there was any. Yet, as luck would have it, at that exact moment, the Midnight system finished updating!

Along with a mental notification beep that only Lex could hear, a sort of spatial tremor released itself from Lex's body startling Bertram and his father. The tremor did not travel far, only till the boundary of the tavern building, but that was more than enough to give the two much to speculate on.

Lex, who was also taken by surprise, felt an immense change overtake him. Moreover, the system kept giving him multiple notifications, drowning his mind with the repeated beeps.

"Excuse me for a moment," Lex could not help but say to Bertram. "I have a small matter to take care of. Please make yourself comfortable, I'll be back shortly."

Though he said he was back, the Noel family had already received the answer they were looking for. Lex was some kind of hidden expert, and a powerful one. But, he seemed to not want to get involved in others matters, which is why the tremor only went as far as the tavern premises. It was a silent way of letting them know that whatever happened outside the boundary of his tavern was none of his business.

In truth, they were forming their own explanation for what had been a coincidence. Or rather, a lucky coincidence.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 368: Upgrade

At the moment, Lex did not care much what the Noel family was thinking because he was feeling too impatient about the upgrades to his system. The fight with the murderer had been incredibly tough, but at the same time, Lex could feel that the killer himself was too much of an amateur, and perhaps had not been using the system for long.

It was unlikely Lex would ever encounter such a weak system user again. Moreover, even if he did, Lex was not a mindless killer. He could not accept randomly killing someone just to steal their system - unless they provided him with a sufficient reason to get rid of them, of course.

Setting all that aside for now, Lex looked towards his notifications.

New notification:

System upgrade complete! New System status unlocked:

System: Midnight Inn

System Grade: Divine (broken ~ SSS - B+)

System Owner: Lex Williams

System functionality: 12%

System self-repair time: 33,312 billion years

New Notification:

New features unlocked. New features include:

Beyond the grave

Blend reality

Fishing well

Murderer

New Notification:

Inheritance detected! Unlocking the Inheritance lounge. Please submit the inheritance to activate the Inheritance lounge.

New Notification:

Live map function unlocked!

New Notification:

Inter-realm broadcast unlocked!

New Notification:

Murder ground unlocked!

New Notification:

Targeted scan unlocked!

New Notification:

Remote prescience unlocked!

New Quest: Accelerate the system's recovery by absorbing more systems!

Quest Reward: 1 Maximum grade level reward

Remarks: Sometimes, helping yourself is the same as helping others

New Quest: Help your guest overcome his alcoholism

Quest time limit: 3 days

Quest Reward: Midnight Signature Brew Coffee

Remarks: There is more than one way to serve a guest

New Quest: Recruit Zagan the ocean King as a Midnight Inn valet

Quest reward: Rainbow bridge

Remarks: Good luck, bro

Lex blinked several times as he read the many notifications, as there was a lot of information to absorb.

Right off the bat, his system's level was way too high compared to the murder system, so why did it appear as if that system was more proactive in directly helping its user? At least, he seemed to have abilities that Lex would have guessed came from the system because the killer himself did not seem skilled enough to learn them - especially something as complicated as teleporting at his cultivation level.

He had a few guesses of his own, but he ventured that it was most likely because either their systems were of different types, or because his was apparently broken.

As far as system types were concerned, Lex had too little information to make an accurate judgment. All he could venture was that his system was focused around running a business and the killer's was directly focused on a type of action. This was why his system only gave him support in terms of helping that business, while the killer's system focused on making it easier for him to perform that action.

He would need to encounter and study a few more systems to work out how the division happened or what they were based on.

Then came the focus on his system's broken status. Considering the fact that his system could reach the entire universe while being broken, apparently, made it so that the system's true capabilities were genuinely beyond his comprehension.

Apparently it was only working at 12% of its maximum capabilities, which left a lot of room for Lex to imagine what kind of services it really had.

As for the time required for it to heal on its own, Lex completely ignored it. He had no idea what would happen to him tomorrow, let alone 33,000,000,000,000 years later.

Next, his attention directly snapped to the 4 new features the system added. He didn't even need to ask Mary about them, for the system informed him of its own.

Beyond the grave:

If a guest enters the Inn right before the moment of their death, in exchange for all their accumulated wealth, they can continue to exist at the Inn as a guest in the form of a spirit. The amount of time the guest can stay as a spirit depends on the amount of wealth exchanged.

Blend reality:

The Midnight Inn can sometimes merge with portions of the worlds connected to the Inn, allowing guests to directly enter or sometimes see into the Inn.

Fishing well:

Guests can attempt to fish in the well. The well leads to worlds connected to the Midnight Inn and unowned items can be fished through it. The item can be immensely precious or completely common and depends on luck.

Murderer:

Every time the host kills someone stronger than them outside of system grounds, the host can learn one of the victims abilities/techniques

Just these new features were incredible, and Lex could see them becoming very popular in the future. But, a part of him could not help but feel that Beyond the grave and Murderer were not normal features of the Inn, and had instead been unlocked because the system had merged with the murder system.

If this theory was true, then in the future he would be able to unlock new cool features depending on the system he merged with his own. This theory was both easy to prove and incredibly hard. It was easy because all he had to do was merge with a system, while it was hard because Lex had no idea how to look for other system users.

He could spend more time pondering these matters later, but for now, his attention turned to the next unlocked room: the Inheritance lounge. He did not need to wonder what the inheritance was as the next feature unlocked by the system, the live map function, clearly outlined it for him!

It was the bracelet that had the Lucky Sutra inside of it! That was the inheritance.

Not wasting a moment Lex picked it up and submitted it to the system, activating the Inheritance lounge!

New Notification:

Lucky Sovereigns inheritance detected. Malicious karma was detected! Eradicating karma and absorbing the inheritance.

New Inheritance: Lucky Sovereigns Lucky Sutra

The Lucky Sovereign ran out of luck one day and died in the 7 Nation Crystal realm. Before his death, he condensed his ties of karma into a bracelet and embedded it with his Lucky Sutra. Anyone who cultivates the Lucky Sutra would slowly be influenced by the Sovereign's karma. Once they cultivated sufficiently, due to the influence of karma, the Lucky Sovereign would be reborn in the cultivators body!

The Lucky Sutra is not a direct cultivation technique, but rather an auxiliary technique used to influence Luck. One of the many ways it can be used is to allow the wielder to steal the luck of any victim he kills, activating it to save himself from bad luck at critical moments. But beware, stealing good luck inherently attracts bad luck!

Notification: Inheritance lounge can now be placed. Guests can attempt to gain the inheritance, though the chance of failure is high. The Inheritance will not disappear upon being learnt, and can continue to exist in the lounge!

'Bloody hell!' Lex thought to himself as he read the description of the inheritance. On the one hand, he suddenly understood why it was so hard to kill the killer! He had absorbed the luck of so many victims. On the other hand, he had really dodged a bullet by not trying to read the Lucky Sutra. Though, come to think of it, had he not entered his overdrive state he would have absorbed the bracelet into his body, and then may have been forced to cultivate it. He wouldn't be surprised if that's what happened to the killer.

In a way, his luck was pretty good that he chose to enter the overdrive state at that time and not later.

Shuddering at the thought, he set the matter aside, for the system had taken care of it for him! He then turned his attention to the live map function!

It was incredible, and, in a way, was a deeper version of his normal scan function. His scan allowed him to check the status of anyone within the system grounds while the live map showed him everything that was happening at the Inn and the tavern, and highlighted different people and items in various colors, giving him even more information. Stuff like friendly or hostile, treasure or poison, a potential Inn recruit or someone to be wary of were all things that the map allowed him to do.

It was like the maps in video games, only more details. The only unfortunate thing was that, once again, it was only limited to the system grounds or else he'd never have any problems avoiding trouble again.

Lex then looked at the next unlocked feature and his eyes shone with excitement. The Inter-realm broadcast would save him a lot of trouble , and make life much, MUCH easier for him. Most of all...

Lex held out his hand and activated it. After a moment, Fenrir, the wolf he was normally able to summon from the Inn to the various worlds with him, appeared in front of him.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 369: I have a question

Fenrir had been undergoing a growth spurt, but it quickly learnt that the larger it grew, the more obvious its existence became to the bossy turtle. As such, he had been trying hard to repress his growth. He was not able to do that, but by focusing so much on a specific thing, he was able to unlock a bloodline ability that let it manipulate its size.

These days, it spent most of its time either the size of an ordinary dog or the size of a pup. It was unfortunate, since the larger he became, the more love the various guests would give him, which was nice. But the turtle was too scary, he had to avoid it.

As for what made it scary? No matter how Fenrir displayed its bloodline repression, the turtle would remain unaffected. At least in other beasts, this was not an ordinary reaction. Even the grumpy dragon atop the mountain gave him at least a snort when he used his repression.

So, when Fenrir was summoned, he appeared before Lex in the size of a pup. He was asleep, for it had exhausted itself from fighting the turtle. The change in the environment, though, immediately startled it awake. Its size immediately more than tripled as it readied itself for a fight, yet it was immediately assaulted by a familiar scent.

The next moment, its eyes laid on Lex, and its body froze. It sniffed a few times to check, but Lex's scent was both familiar and yet different. Who could blame him? His body had absorbed so many metals, his scent was the least of the changes he had undergone.

Yet it was neither the scent nor the familiar sight that assured them of each other's identity. It was the bond they shared that tied them together as partners.

Fenrir howled in excitement as it quickly leaped onto Lex, not bothering to care that in its current size it was much larger than Lex.

Had this occurred before Lex's breakthrough, he would have fallen over, but now the massive size was naught but a minor inconvenience.

Compared to Fenrir's excitement, Lex was a lot more emotional. It had been months since he had gotten stuck at the Inn, and a part of him believed that it would be years before he ever got a chance to return. He had resigned himself to being unable to meet anyone he was familiar with, and in honesty, he had made decent friends here as well.

That did not change the fact that, deep down, Lex had missed the Inn terribly. Somehow, he missed it even more than Earth itself. As for his family... Lex had been keeping himself from thinking about them for quite a while.

Still, the joy in his heart swelled at finally seeing a familiar face. He had used a support token on Fenrir which allowed him to summon and un-summon him from the Inn to wherever he was. Unfortunately, he had been sent to the Crystal realm, which was not another world but another realm.

Due to the complexities involved in traveling from one realm to another, not only was Lex stuck behind until he gathered enough energy, he could not exchange items from the Inn in the way he usually could. For example, he used to be able to buy healing items from the gift shop and use them on himself, but was no longer able to do so.

Now, with the Inter-realm broadcast unlocked, not only was this issue resolved, it would change the nature of Lex's stay at the Inn.

To be specific, all the Inter-realm broadcast allowed the Inn to do was, when required, broadcast a special signal to other realms, allowing the system to, temporarily, form a connection between the Inn and that realm.

This was different from how the system acted within the Origin realm, which could be accessed by the system at any time all at once. But, by having a broadcast, through whatever unique method it used, the Inn could maintain its normal functionality to other realms as well.

There was only one drawback to this, which is that while in the Origin realm, things like the golden key could instantly connect, in other realms, there would be a considerable delay.

For Lex, this represented two major changes. The first was that, from now on, not only would he be able to connect other worlds, but other realms to the Inn as well.

This meant that the golden door that randomly opened sometimes on planets connected to the Inn would now open randomly anywhere in any realm connected to the Inn.

The second major change this represented for Lex was his current status in the Crystal realm. He had been pulled into this realm by an accident caused by an unknown anomaly, and to return he had to manually gather enough energy to allow the system to return him. He also had a quest to uncover what the anomaly was.

Now, however, due to the existence of the Inter-realm broadcast, the energy requirement to transport him back had dropped so dramatically that the emergency protocol that gave him additional authority had been withdrawn. In a short time, he would eventually link this realm to the Inn, which would allow him to return naturally.

He could still, however, absorb vast amounts of pure energy to speed up the process further. His excitement at the prospect of being able to return actually managed to overshadow his feeling of grief that he no longer had the additional authority. That made many things much easier.

For example, the drink that had been served to the man back at the bar who was crying was something he was only able to buy with his increased authority. He was no longer able to buy such high level drinks. In fact, let alone drinks, even the formations he could now buy were limited to, at most, being able to affect Nascent level cultivators.

But, what was done was done, Lex couldn't be bothered to pay attention to it. He spent a good amount of time hugging and playing with Fenrir before he turned his attention back to the system. There were still many other notifications he needed to understand.

After the Inter-realm broadcast was the ominous sounding Murder ground!

Murder ground:

When on a planet linked to the Inn, you can select a target and instantly teleport both the target and yourself to the murder ground! Neither can leave while the other still lives! Selecting a target requires marking them through physical touch.

Additionally, the Murder ground can be rented out to resolve fights and wars without disrupting the environment of the original planet.

Please Note: surrender is not an option when using the Murder ground, as only the victor can be living to exit the Murder ground!

Lex did not doubt for even a single moment that the Murder ground was an ability the system got from the Murder system. This was exactly like what had happened between himself and the murderer, except that he was pretty sure he had been marked without physical contact. Still, this ability was too powerful and ominous, as it could teleport others away from their home ground. Moreover, the option of not allowing surrender also ensured that the battle would be bloody, with no recourse.

From an environmental perspective it was good, as it would spare the planet from suffering through the trial of war and its accompanying destruction, but by leaving no survivors, it merely channeled that destruction from towards the environment to the opposing enemies.

Lex continued to read the new additions.

Targeted Scan:

The host can scan living beings outside of the system grounds. However, the amount of information received will be diminished as compared to the scan in the system grounds.

He nodded, appreciating the ability. Even if it was limited, it would help him immensely.

Remote prescience:

You can project your image anywhere in the system grounds and interact with guests via the image. The keen observer will be able to detect that it is an image and not a real body.

Lex raised an eyebrow. This was a good ability, especially since he did not intend to stay at the tavern once the Inn was also unlocked. Whether he was at the Inn or the tavern, he could use his Remote prescience to handle matters personally.

Next, he turned his attention to the quests. Whether he was required or not, he more or less intended to help the system recover, though he wondered greatly about how the system was damaged in the first place.

Based on the knowledge that others also had systems, Lex could conclude that there was a great possibility that someone had the system before him. Suddenly, he froze, and a few things clicked in his mind.

He might not have been... the first person to use this system!

"Mary," he said suddenly, his voice very even. "I have a question for you."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 370: Greatest weakness

"Yes?" Mary asked, unaware of what was going on in Lex's mind. She had become aware of when the connection was restored and was waiting for Lex to finish up his business before she began briefing him on the situation at the Inn. Things really were getting bad.

"I know you're probably going to tell me your authority isn't enough but... did the Midnight system have an owner before me?"

There was a moment of silence as Mary did not answer immediately. He did not know if she was hesitating, or investigating the truth for herself, or checking her authority, but the silence itself was very telling. Regardless of what she said, Lex had made a conclusion on his own.

"The last time we had a conversation about systems... I told you that you should become much stronger before you learn about these things. But, since you have already encountered another system user, it is imperative for you to learn as much as possible about other systems lest you are caught unprepared. Since you also have a quest relating to absorbing more systems, your authority and rights to sensitive information in this regard has been adjusted. I will share with you what you can know.

"First of all, a system exists in the form of an item. It is currently residing in your soul, and not inside your body, but from the moment you gained the Midnight system, the system has been operating through that item as its core. When you reach that Nascent realm, the system will successfully merge with your soul. At that point, both you and the system will experience a minor overhaul. You will have a great increase in authority, and the system will have a much easier time operating."

Mary paused again, distress painting her holographic image.

"As you have guessed, this is not the first time your system has had an owner. Such is the case for most systems in the universe, for they have existed for a very long time already. When one owner dies, the system continues to exist and simply changes its owner. But, and this is the most important part, no two systems are completely identical. They may be extremely similar, but they will never be the same. At least, so far it has been like this. This is because, when a system changes owners, only the grade of the system remains the same, not how the system operates.

"So, your system, when it had a previous owner, did not exist as the Midnight Inn, or even a hotel of any sort at all. The only thing that has remained is the grade, though due to severe damage, while the grade remains, the functionality of your system has dropped immensely."

Lex was honestly not expecting to receive an answer, but now that he did, it left him feeling kind of hollow. The user dies, but the system remains. So maybe, there really isn't something special about him that the system wants. Maybe it's just riding in his body until he dies, and it moves onto another host.

"Did you know the previous host?" Lex asked soberly.

"My memories began the moment you absorbed the system," Mary answered succinctly.

After another brief pause, Mary continued.

"While systems have great abilities, they are not omnipotent. Strong beings and cultivators can easily detect the prescience of soul treasures in lower-level cultivators, and if their attention is focused on you they will easily be able to detect the system. The only reason you've avoided this, so far, is because each time you met an overwhelmingly powerful cultivator, it was in the system grounds, where the system has the most ability to hide itself.

"But, that is not the only way to detect a system. Depending on the grade of the system, the way in which it interacts with the universe at large is different. For lower grade systems, there are many ways to detect its interference if one is looking for it.

"For you this, at least, is not a concern because even while your system's functionality has been lowered, the level it is operating at has already transcended the letter grading system."

"Can a system's grade be raised?" Lex asked, his interest piqued.

"All systems began at the E- grade," Mary answered. "If its grade is higher, then it's because its owner or previous owner has raised it himself. For you, this is irrelevant, because the level of your system is too high compared to yourself. The chances of you encountering something that can help you raise your systems level is too low. Of course, you can also raise your systems level by absorbing other systems. But you already had so much trouble facing the Murder system, a grade D system. Trying to absorb higher level systems is something you should completely forget about for now."

Mary paused again, as if thinking about something, then said, "You will gain more authority regarding systems when you reach the Immortal level. If you want to learn anything else about systems before then, you will have to figure it out on your own."

Lex took in a moment to absorb all the information he received, his hand mindlessly running over Fenrir's thick coat. He could not even imagine how strong the previous owner of his system must have been for it to reach the Destiny realm. Yet, he died all the same. Moreover, considering the system's damaged condition, there was a real possibility that the death wasn't pleasant or peaceful. Of course, there could be other explanations, but he put it out of his mind for now.

"Any tips on how to identify other system users?" Lex asked. He hadn't had much time to consider this, but he had been wondering if he had run into any other system users while running the Inn. Considering the kind of business model it was, even if he hadn't yet, there was a good chance that he would in the future.

"A systems greatest weakness... is another system," is all Mary replied.