

Innkeeper 37

The Innkeeper

Chapter 37: Growing

With the increase in authority there were new upgrades for the Inn available for Lex to buy. Firstly, he could increase the size of the building and add new rooms, as well as purchase a private courtyard that could be rented to guests as well. There were three new buildings he could buy as well: a Training room, a Guild room and a Patisserie! The training room had combat dummies at various levels that a person could spar with. The Guild room was less of a place where the Inn offered services and more of a place for guests to interact; guests could put up and accept requests in the guild, at a price of course. The Patisserie, naturally, was a bakery that sold pastries and sweets - though for that he would need to hire an actual baker. Furthermore he could increase the level of the buildings he already had as well! Another very important thing that he was rather concerned about was that he could completely purchase A.I. 's for the Inn, though currently he still had some time with Velma and Gerard.

Lex had to think of how he could use these new upgrades to increase the Inn's income. He had only just begun planning when he noticed both Falak and Bastet exiting the Manor. Falak had returned to his form of a bull, and Bastet was once again seated upon his back in her litter. With a warm smile, Lex made his way to the unusual duo. He had been waiting for Bastet to leave her room so he could have an opportunity to talk to her. Alas, his desire would remain unfulfilled.

"Welcome guest, I hope you've rested well."

"Indeed, I have," the cat replied with her previous pomp reduced though Lex didn't seem to notice. "It has been a very pleasurable experience resting here, but unfortunately I must depart. I wanted to thank you for your hospitality."

Lex was taken aback, he had not expected them to leave so suddenly when they had already paid for a month.

"It's my pleasure to host you. We will keep your room reserved for the rest of your original duration if you wish to return."

The cat hesitated, but eventually said nothing. Internally she couldn't wait to leave! The power she felt earlier was tremendous, and someone with that strength would not be afraid of her father's influence. That meant that she wasn't really safe, and she did not dare to tarry.

In the end the two left without saying anything. Leaving the Midnight Inn for a guest was extremely easy, they only needed to think about their intention to leave and they would be returned to the area they were received from - with the golden key in hand. The bull and cat returned to Earth for less than a millionth of a second before they tore open a hole in space and escaped. The tear was quickly repaired and there was no proof of them having ever been there, except for two keys which eventually dropped on the ground. The two didn't dare take the keys with them, even if it could allow them to return to the Inn as they knew a higher powered being would be able to track them if they carried his treasure. Hours went by and the two keys lay on the barren ground until a hawk from the nearby village was leaving towards the city. He saw a shining glint on the ground and picked them up. He observed them for a while before trying to bite into one of the keys. He wasn't able to leave a mark which meant it wasn't gold, but regardless they looked pretty enough to where he could sell them. The hawk added the two keys to his wares. Lex had no idea that his two keys had been abandoned by his most powerful patrons, and then dismissed by a hawk as cheap trinkets, which was for the best as he would be dumbfounded and unable to react if he did.

In Marlo's apartment, the giant behemoth of a man was nearly ready to depart using the platinum key. He had pushed all his commitments forward and prepared the little gear he planned to take with him. Before him were a few pills that he planned on taking right before leaving, as well as a protective talisman he had planned on activating. But right as he was about to begin, his butler told him he had a guest.

When the man saw who it was he raised an eyebrow in curiosity. It was Lex's female class fellow in his self defense class, Matilda. From head-to-toe she was covered in blood, most of it dried, some of it fresh from her wounds. The scene looked very familiar to how Lex had come to him just a short while ago. His new students really didn't like living safely. That thought put a wide grin on his face.

"Come, let me fix you up!" Without asking the young girl anything he carried her to a small clinic that he had in his apartment. As a multimillionaire, what did he not have in his apartment? He lit up an incense and sprinkled a red powder over Matilda's wounds that made her grimace.

"Clean her up," he said to a nurse who was standing by. "Come to me when you're done."

Marlo walked to his lounge and waited for his student. None of his three students were normal this time around. Lex was someone his family was ordered to investigate - something that would shake the whole world if word got out because everyone would ask the question, who exactly could order around the Bravi family? Lex, as the target of the investigation, naturally wasn't as normal as he tried to portray. His acting was not so bad, but as an experienced man Marlo could instantly tell when he was hiding something. Then there was Larry, the renown good-for-nothing of the once famous Dershaw family. His reputation was so astounding that when the Dershaw family was destroyed, and the few survivors banished to the moon, he was specially exempt from the banishment because his enemies found it amusing to watch him try and struggle. Finally, there was Matilda Ross. At first glance there didn't seem to be anything too special about her, but in the little over a week that she had been his student she had risen from a stage 1 body tempering cultivator to stage 4! She also picked up combat skills like she was picking up money from the floor and her focus was the most extreme Marlo had ever seen.

Marlo continued to muse until finally Matilda entered the room. It appeared as if she had taken a shower and had changed into a pair of jeans and a shirt, with most of her body being wrapped in bandages under her clothes.

"How are you feeling?" Marlo asked, his voice filled with amusement instead of concern.

"Excellent," Matilda replied, as if she did not look like she was at death's door. "I need a little help. I want to enter the Grand Canyon tournament in two months, I need to get an invite but I don't plan on joining any organization."

"You know, you need to be at least a Qi Training cultivator to join, right?"

"Don't I have two whole months to reach it?" Matilda asked, nonchalantly, before getting up to leave. Marlo burst into an excited laughter as he thought about what his student was planning. He never actually said he would help her, and she didn't stay long enough to chitchat either. It was as if just letting her intentions be known was enough. When she left Marlo's building two Bluebird agents were waiting for her, wanting to take her in for questioning. She expected as much, and didn't resist. Her mind seemed to be elsewhere as they escorted her, and her eyes were filled with determination.

Larry Dershaw, the heir to the family that used to be the richest in all of North America, slowly picked himself up off the floor with wobbling arms. He had a black eye and several bruises, but that's what one should expect when they accept a job as a sparring partner in the Greavers Club. The Greavers Club was a small business that catered to the newly rich. They catered to those who had just entered the cultivation world, and had not had enough time to build up their resources and foundation. To train their children in live combat, they would join the Greavers Club and pay for sparring partners - though lately they had tremendous demand for one specific partner: Larry. Who didn't like to take advantage of those who were down on their luck?

Since Larry got paid for it with resources, he usually accepted all requests. The Greavers Club would cover his medical expenses anyway, and weapons weren't allowed so he never got seriously hurt. If his opponents tried attacking too viciously, the Club had overseers to stop them. Even as amusing as it was to bully others, they couldn't afford an inquiry by Blue Bird.

"See you tomorrow kid," said a particularly fat man as he watched Larry leave the practice room. Larry didn't respond, but the fat man didn't mind and simply watched him leave with a mocking look on his face. Who could believe that the welp before him once underwent a \$300 billion procedure to allow him to cultivate, but still failed to do so. Nobody knew why he could cultivate now, but nobody cared too much either. Not everyone in the cultivator community took pleasure in bullying him, but everyone took him as an example of how quickly the mighty can fall in the cultivation world.

Larry was oblivious to all of this. Deep in his heart he knew the only reason he was continuing to struggle was because he had seen a small glimmer of hope. Would that glimmer of hope be strong enough to carry him on his journey? Even he didn't know.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 38: I refuse

Bastet and Falak left quickly and everyone else returned to their rooms, leaving Lex free so he thought about how he could increase his MP earnings. Of the 3 new buildings available none were suitable for purchase at the moment. The Greenhouse could allow him to raise some rare plants but he had no seeds at the moment so that was also useless. The meditation room was the most suitable for purchase, as well as upgrading the recovery room. But both of those had a hefty price and he didn't want to pay that at the moment. Instead, he bought two more rooms for 500MP each as well as a courtyard for 1000MP, spending a total of 2000MP, leaving his remaining MP at 2641.

The rooms were added on the first floor, like the others, but the courtyard was built on the ground. It was rectangular in shape and had two rooms on the opposite end of a small garden that was right in the middle. The garden had only a single Blossom tree, a stone bench and a small pond. The courtyard could

house a total of 4 guests, but 3 of them had to be with the primary guest who rented the courtyard. Even though the courtyard was bigger and could house more people, they all had to be from the same party.

After he was done he decided to curb his spending for the moment and roam the expanded area of the Inn and think of how to landscape it, but before he could start a certain tiny assistant popped up before him in the air.

"Get ready," said Mary, "Marlo is using the Platinum key."

Lex smiled, thinking 'finally!'

"Where will he appear when he uses the platinum key? At the Inn?"

"No," Mary said. She snapped her finger and suddenly Lex appeared in a familiar, white room. "All miscellaneous Inn activities will happen here until you designate a place."

Lex looked around the brightly lit, empty room. Not bad, it looked exactly the kind of room a mysterious organization would use.

"Before he gets here, how exactly is this supposed to work? And what exactly does a valet do?"

"When Marlo arrives the system will give you a detailed report about him and his cultivation. Then you can propose a test, and the system will adjust the difficulty to match the Inn's standards. Of course, the test will have to be relevant to the position they're taking. For example, you cannot test a chef by asking him to paint.

"As for the job requirements for a valet, they are pretty simple. Sometimes a guest staying at the Inn might want to invite others to stay with them at the Inn, or want some personal belongings they left back in their world. A valet's job is to go to the guests' world and escort the 'others' back to the Inn, or bring back their belongings. It's not complicated, but to avoid unexpected incidents it's usually best if the valet has a high cultivation. Of course, if the request is too dangerous for the valet's cultivation level, the system will warn you in advance."

"Sounds simple enough. And once a valet has been hired, will the system pay them automatically?"

"Indeed. The system will evaluate the strength and skill of any employee and pay them through MP according to their level. They can then use the MP to purchase things or services from the Inn."

"Sounds simple enough."

For a moment, Lex quickly analyzed what the Inn could offer Marlo as an incentive. The man was at least in the Golden Core realm. It seems that currently the only incentive he could give currently was the ability to travel to other worlds. He had to make it sound as appealing as possible..

A silver colored door appeared before Lex and through it came the hulking figure of the man Lex was expecting. He was wearing a simple sleeveless shirt, shorts and sneakers. His exposed arms and legs showed off his extremely well defined muscles, as well as numerous scars! At a higher cultivation level scars were actually rare since the body had a stronger healing capacity, therefore the presence of the scars spoke volumes about the strength of those that inflicted them. On his neck was a golden tattoo that hadn't been there previously, and it gave off the subtlest glow. That was it. That was all Marlo had brought with him on this dangerous endeavor, no weapons, no other gear or healing items. Or at least, that's what it seemed like on the surface.

He felt Marlo's gaze upon him, as he also inspected the man. Then he turned to the system's report.

Name: Hanson Marlo Bravi III

Age: 67

Sex: Male

Cultivation Details:

- Spirit cultivation: Golden Core (crippled)

- Body Cultivation: Golden Core Peak (unique cultivation)

Species: Human/Prime Human

Bloodline: Evolving

Remarks: Extremely unstable energy has detected coursing through his body. Please treat him like a walking volcano!

For a moment, Lex went into shock! His Golden Core had been crippled? And what was a Prime Human? This was also the first time he saw a mention of bloodlines. Nevertheless, he couldn't waste time thinking about these things, he had to maintain his prestige.

"Welcome to the Midnight Inn. I am the Innkeeper."

Marlo grinned upon hearing the man talk, and looked around the room.

"My name's Marlo. This is a little different from what I expected."

"Oh, and what did you expect?"

"To be honest, I thought I'd be led to a minor realm connected to Earth and spirit treasure would administer a test for a Nascent soul inheritance. But clearly, this is something else."

"What makes you say that?"

"The spirit energy! There's no place in the entire solar system with spirit energy this concentrated and pure!" Marlo spoke with zeal and his excitement was evident from the glow in his eyes.

"Indeed, the Midnight Inn is not on, or anywhere near Earth. In fact, we are not on any planet, and our purview is not any single solar system but the entire universe!" Lex paused, to let Marlo absorb what he

was saying. "We accept guests from all over the universe, and provide services that they can only dream of! Naturally, an establishment of our size also leaves small tokens of fate across many worlds for those with the strength to seize them!"

"So what I encountered was a 'token of fate'?" Marlo asked.

"Naturally. I won't say it's impossible, but for anyone on your planet it would be incredibly difficult to ever overcome the constraints of their birth and encounter the greater universe! Only through an unsurpassed lucky encounter would they have the chance to venture out to the civilizations beyond your own! It just so happens that you have encountered such a lucky chance by being given the opportunity to join the Midnight Inn..."

"So the test is like a job interview?" Marlo suddenly cut in between Lex's speech. "And if I pass I join the Inn as an employee?"

Lex waved his hand and a silver contract appeared floating in the air before Marlo. The contract stated, in simple terms, his responsibilities and his remuneration.

Marlo, who had been so far maintaining his calm, suddenly started hyperventilating! From the contract he felt the same power that had been tempting him for long through the key. His crippled core started aching again, as if signaling him that through this he would find the opportunity to heal it. The blood coursing through his veins started heating up, as if letting him know that he had found that opportunity he was looking for for a breakthrough! His bones rattled as if letting him know that there were great rewards waiting for him!

"And if I sign this, and I pass the test, will I join the Inn forever?" Marlo asked through gritted teeth. It was a testament to his will that he kept asking questions and hadn't signed it already.

"Naturally," Lex answered, not noticing the peculiar wording of the question. "Through the Inn the universe is within your reach, and it's secrets are yours to discover! Which is why we are very picky with who joins, but once they have joined we take the utmost care of them."

"I'm sorry," Marlo replied, his entire body tensing up, "in that case I refuse!"