

Innkeeper 401

The Innkeeper

Chapter 401: Big Brother

The gray skinned creature shuddered as it thought about its answer. Lex, of course, did not understand why the creature was treating it like such a big deal. It was about to die, but it could continue to live in spirit form, for a time at least, should it accept his deal.

Unfortunately, the matter, for the creature at least, went deeper than that. Accepting the loss of its physical form meant that it would have to accept the end of its bloodline, and if it failed its mission, its entire race. What made it even more painful was that, while not the main instigator behind the doom that had befallen it, the Spirit race played a significant role. How ironic, now, that it would have to become one of them should he wish to survive.

While it underwent its mental struggle, Lex used his Targeted scan on it to get a better understanding of it.

Name: Abroar Kashinga Lilai...(click to expand)... Jameel

Age: 875,955

Sex: ???

Cultivation Details: ???

Species: ???

Condition: Very bad - ???

Remarks: Every inch of its body is worth billions!

Lex almost whistled as he read Abroar's age, as it was nearing a million. This was the oldest confirmed creature he had ever met, and it made him wonder what its cultivation was. He had a very strong feeling that, whatever it had been, it was definitely much stronger than the Earth Immortals he was used to meeting.

In fact, based on what it said, Lex could surmise that it wasn't the creature's age that was causing it to near its demise, but for some other reason. Perhaps he had been gravely injured and had been using these machines as life support. What he did not know, because obviously his view was from the inside, was that there weren't just a few machines linked to its body to keep it alive, but rather an entire spaceship's worth.

"Mary, is there some other way to keep it alive if I turn it into an employee?" Lex asked.

"Not really. If your authority was higher, even higher than it was in the Crystal realm, you could get a time stasis formation and freeze it in time till you figured out a way to restore its body, but currently, you have no such method available. If you keep updating your Recovery pod and room, eventually you'll get there."

Lex gave a mental nod, but outwardly his appearance was extremely impassive. He was waiting for the creature, but he did not have to wait for long.

When it finally opened its eyes once again, they were steady. Abroad had made its decision.

"Your excellency, for the sake of my mission, and my sacred duty, I will live on even as a spirit if that is what it takes. I will forever be grateful for your aid and guidance, and do whatever it takes to fulfill whatever requirements you have for me."

"At ease," said Lex as he raised his ethereal hand. "I do not require anything, for I have done nothing."

A golden key appeared, floating above his hand, the gray creature's eyes fixating on them immediately.

"I have an Inn, a humble little place by the name of Midnight Inn. You can use this key to enter the Inn moments before your death and, in exchange for giving up everything you own, can continue to live on as a spirit within the Inn. How long you can live depends entirely on how much you have to give up.

"This is a normal feature of my Inn, and is the same for everyone, so you do not need to feel any special obligation if you decide to use it."

After giving Abroar the key, Lex's clone vanished. Back at the Inn, Lex gathered his thoughts about the clone and began to plan. He had collected a lot of information on how the clone worked, but just to be safe, he decided to spend one more day testing it out before he made a decision.

He let Mary know that he will be busy for the next few days, and to deny any requests to see him unless it was an emergency. He teleported to various planets, as he had already connected the Inn to the entire star system for each of the planets he was connected to, and began spreading out business cards.

He made sure not to leave them lying around, but secretly delivered to as many high leveled cultivators as he could, to ensure they would actually use it.

He began meeting them, but did not always fulfill their requests or even inform them about the Inn. After all, he was not on a marketing tour, but understanding the extents of the business card. If everyone was a satisfied customer, it would limit his understanding of the clones. Through this, he began to better grasp the extent and limitations of the cards.

While he was busy with that, Luthor applied to meet with the Innkeeper, alongside Gerard. Unfortunately, Mary informed him that the Innkeeper was too busy to meet anyone currently, as he was working on future plans for the Inn.

Luthor clenched his fists as his face grew grim. The fact that despite so many workers the Innkeeper had to do everything himself spoke of the incompetence of his workforce. He had to fix things. They could not continue this way.

Without speaking another word, Luthor left, a tinge of scarlet beginning to fill his eyes. The things he could help the Innkeeper with were limited because he was weak. In that case, he would erase his weakness.

Luthor made his way to the wealthiest, and most influential worker at the Inn, Z. His strength, amongst the workers, was weaker than only Gerard. His influence, however, had lately bloomed making him the most popular in the entire Inn. Along with that popularity, of course, came incredible wealth.

This was because, in an attempt to make the ultimate background music, and hence increase his strength, Z fought in the arena every day, each time tweaking the music just a bit.

Slowly, he changed his reputation from the recluse of the Inn, to the Inn staff's big brother.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 402: Damian Arban Williams

The Gamer's Den, one of the most popular places at the Inn, was no longer managed just by Z. Instead, Z became the assistant manager, still under the command of the ever elusive manager named Leo, with a host of new workers under him.

This only added to the popularity of the Den, however, as not everyone came to it to play games. With millions of guests coming to the Inn every day, things really had become very hectic. The stringent control Lex had over the minor details occurring every day had loosened, resulting in the Inns staff suffering from various kinds of harassment.

Usually security would handle the matters, but not all troublemakers would take drastic actions. Sometimes it would just be persistent teasing and pestering. Due to the fact that all the Inn's workers started with no cultivation, they were inherently weak even after they started cultivating, making them easy targets.

When situations like this happened, all the workers had begun going to 'big brother' Z to handle matters. As a naturally introverted person, Z was not one who could resolve matters by talking and having lengthy conversations anyway.

Fortunately, with Z's love for going to the arenas, a new method to resolve problems became available. Moreover, due to his effectiveness with his bloodline, he had yet to lose a battle. In fact, while his bloodline level was below that of Gerards, everyone agreed that Z had better control over the bloodline itself.

Keeping this in mind, when Luthor was unable to find Z at the Gamer's Den, he went directly to the arena, and indeed arrived just in time to watch Z finish yet another battle. This time, his weapon of choice was not a trading card, but a spinning top BaysideBlade.

His opponent, a beaten and battered alligator standing on its hind legs and wearing boxing gloves, took one last hit on its snout before collapsing for good.

The heat in Luthor's heart burned even stronger as he watched this. He was not as excited as the crowd at Z's victory. Instead, he lamented that the staff had to rely on a mere child to protect their honor. He completely ignored that he himself was only a few days old while Z was already nearing the ripe old age of 1 year.

He waited silently until Z exited the arena, before approaching him. Luthor made no grand declarations about wanting to change the future of the Inn. Instead, he buried his edge and humbled himself before asking Z for a loan.

Z, startled at how polite this new worker was, accepted the request and gave Luthor the amount he wanted. After that Luthor did not waste any time on superfluous words, and directly went to the meditation room, with his eyes having turned completely scarlet now. For the first time ever, he activated his bloodline, Anachronistic Ignition, and began cultivating like a madman. He would first burn away all his weakness, then he would burn all the Inn's enemies.

Though the ballroom looked as pristine as the moment they stepped in, Lex's grandfather no longer carried the same pois. His face was pale and his eyes dug deep into his skull. In front of him stood Serene Williams and her husband, completely fine, as if nothing had happened.

"You have always been rebellious, but not this much..." said Lex's grandfather, doing his best to keep his knees from trembling. He was a dignified immortal, his pride did not let him lose face by falling to the intimidation of one who was still in the Nascent realm.

"I can understand I have not been the best father. I can understand how our relationship became estranged when you married this... lesser born." There was a hint of disgust and disdain in the man's voice when he said the last line, his eyes momentarily glancing at Serene.

"But though she may be of common stock, I acknowledged her when she proved her worth with her sharp mind. I especially became appreciative when she gave you three talented children, using her sharp

mind to ensure that each was born with special talents and skills. I can even understand how that whole fiasco with little Moon... upset you."

He had to be careful with his words, for the matter with his son's youngest daughter, Moon, actually nearly tore their family apart. The wedge created that day still had not been healed and, ironically, it was that lowborn woman who convinced his son not to leave the Williams family forever. For that, he was genuinely grateful to her. After all, he was the most talented Williams family child of his generation - it would be a shame to lose him.

"But no matter how bad things have gotten, you have never behaved this way before. Even going as far as hiding the existence of your son for two decades, depriving him of his family heritage... you of all people know the disadvantage of not cultivating with the aid of a strong enough family. What could it be that prompted you to do this?"

The air in the hall was still as everyone waited for the man to continue with his words.

Damian Arban Williams, Lex's grandfather, finally said the only thing that possibly made sense.

"The only thing I can think of... is a matter related to bloodlines."

He felt a great amount of fear in his heart as he spoke, and an equally great amount of hope. The Williams family had a great history, and should have been one of the top four families of the Jotun Empire, directly alongside the prestigious Butt family which Noman Butt belonged to, under only the royal family.

But while the Williams family shared a sufficiently powerful background, there was one major flaw that prevented them from ever reaching that status. Other than the founder of the Williams family, one of the four advisors to King Jotun himself, no one from their family had been able to unlock the bloodline their family carried.

"But that should not be a reason to hide him," Damian continued in confusion, "but instead bring him to light. He would directly be named heir of the family, and raised with the utmost care. So then, what could it be?"

"It does not matter," Lex's father replied, after slashing one more time and cutting yet another hole in space. "You have already seen what my sword can do. Search for my son and I will personally end the Williams family, the Jotun agenda be damned!"

The couple exited through the slashed space, leaving behind an utterly confused old man. But though the old man was confused, he was not poltroon. Hidden deep in his exhausted eyes was ambition. The fact that his grandchild had been hidden from him meant that there was something special about him, and Damian was not about to let that go.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 403: Midnight Newsletter

Lex dismissed the last of his clones and sat with his back to his chair, letting out a deep sigh. One unexpected, but somehow predictable, result of using consciousness clones was severe mental exhaustion. Even if it was as if he had another brain functioning independently, the energy for all that processing still derived from his original body and soul.

Not to mention that he had been using multiple clones, sometimes even at the same time, to check whether that was possible or not. As a result, he had been completely exhausted.

It was not a big deal, for he had more than a whole day before the assembly began. What he had to decide now was whether or not he would attend, for if he missed this one, he would have to wait 100 years for the next one.

But before making complicated decisions like that, he needed to get some rest. Instead of directly sleeping, Lex first teleported to his own home within the Inn, which was in a space cut off from the main Inn. Removing most of his clothes, Lex slowly immersed himself in the Hot tub and let out a soft groan as he felt the warm water massage his skin.

A strange thing that had happened to him since his upgrade was... most hot things just felt warm to him. Even if he put his hand in an open flame, for a very long time it would only seem warm. Only when the temperature was close to his limit, would he begin to feel that it was 'hot' instead of 'warm'.

Not that any of that mattered, for right now Lex was in a mood to relax. After a short dip, he got out of the hot tub and put on his Bathroom set and let it cleanse his body of all fatigue, as well as filth.

Not bothering to change, Lex then walked into the meditation room, sat down, and began cultivating. Sleep would help him recover, there was no doubt about it, but meditating and cultivating would help put him in the right state of mind for what lay ahead.

Considering he was at the peak of the Foundation realm as it was, all cultivating would do was push him towards the Golden Core realm. But it was not an automatic transition, so until he chose to initiate it himself, cultivating would only end up refilling his reserve of spirit energy and refreshing him.

It did not take long, approximately six hours, before Lex stopped his cultivation for he was completely refreshed. Since he had not been drained beyond normal, or been injured in some way, such a normal way of recovering was more than enough to bring him back to his peak state.

Now Lex had a decision to make, but he received a notification that the Inn upgrade to merge with the Henali portal was complete, and only required him to make a few additions.

Lex had put off dealing with Inn related stuff for now, but this was a simple enough task that he didn't mind doing it.

The Henali portal was similar to the internet, and spanned the entire known universe in the Origin realm. It was maintained not by the Henali themselves, but by the members of the Henali alliance.

This statement in itself brought Lex a lot of confusion, since if the entire Origin realm was under the Henali purview, shouldn't the entire 'universe' be considered as a part of the 'known universe'. Of course, in this regard the universe was only referring to the origin realm itself.

But, regardless, coming back to the portal, entering it required a few things first. A person who was entering the portal for the first time had to go to what was called a Registration point and log in from there. This was because they would take all kinds of information and enter it into the portal.

Once that was done, a person could interact with the portal as simply as by giving it a verbal command, regardless of whether you had a log in device or not. Of course, such interactions were extremely limited in capability.

The proper way of logging in was with a login in device. This could be a simple computer, to let you access the information, or a complete VR immersion kit to let you enter the virtual landscape of the portal.

Once logged in, there were still a few restrictions, such as the inability to hide your identity from the portal, but otherwise it was an open world for you to do as you please. The exact details Lex was not aware of, since the information he got from the system was only related to setting up a registration point and an access point, as well as the very basics of the portal.

After thinking about how to set it up for a bit, Lex decided to put down the Registration point on one of the branches off Main street, but created multiple access points throughout the Inn.

The thing about access points was that it contained both complete immersive VR kits, as well as simple access points. Of course, considering the size of his Inn and the number of his guests, he had to create enough access points to accommodate a large number of people entering.

At the same time, he wasn't sure of how much the demand would be. As such, he created a dozen access points throughout the Inn, with the largest being at the village, and bought new workers to work in them.

He'd check it out when he had the time.

For now, he turned his attention back to the assembly. Even if he decided to go, there was one issue he had to overcome, and had been unable to experiment with. To activate the business card someone needed to channel energy into it, but once the clone was summoned, it was unable to move. Did that also mean it was unable to teleport?

Within the Inn, he was able to teleport his clone anywhere without it disappearing, but he did not know if the same would hold true for teleporting the clone to the assembly. Everything was so risky, and now he had to face a battle between his heart, which wanted to go, and his brain, which said waiting 100 years was not a big deal since now he was a cultivator.

William Bentham was feeling good. Things had only gone from bad to better over the last one year, and not only was his cultivation recovering rapidly, his business was taking off. His secret society, the Rose Society, was gaining influence faster than anyone could imagine, and the best part was, due to the various business deals he had operating through the Inn, no one could trace his income. That meant the Rose Society had no money trail anyone could use to trace it back to him.

What others didn't know was that, soon, he would even receive an entire spaceship. He could use that to transport the rehabilitated work force from earth to another planet, and start a colony on a new world. Of course, such a deal hadn't been without costs, but nothing was without price. He could afford to pay it, so long as it helped him achieve his dreams.

If there was one thing he regretted, it was that his own children hadn't helped at all in his new growth, and instead it was Hera who had helped him. The one bet she had taken so long ago, of not taking a million dollars for the key, and invested in him instead, was paying off big time now. Not only was leading one of the most successful startups in history, she had now become a cultivator as well.

Yes, all was good.

Just as Will was losing himself in his thoughts, sipping a cup of warm tea, something suddenly appeared on the table in front of him. Curious, he looked over and discovered a newsletter.

To be more specific, he found the Midnight Inn Newsletter!

Surprised, as well as thoroughly exhilarated, he plucked it off the table and began to read. Oddly enough, on the entire page filled with interesting news not only about the Inn but the universe at large, Will's eyes were directed instead to a small little corner of the page with a segment called 'Ask Rachel'.

Maybe it was the beautiful font, the alluring color, or the fact that there was a small figure of 'Rachel' drawn over the segment that kept waving at Will and pointing down at the segment, attracting his attention to it. One could never be sure about these things.

The first line, though he felt ashamed to admit, did attract his interest.

It simply read:

'What is all the success, power and prestige in the universe worth, if you have no one to share it with? Looking for help, or some tips on how to start exploring the universe for your significant other? Then look no further and ask Rachel the questions hidden in your heart. She will be the beacon that lights up your road towards a wholesome and happy lovelife.'

The Innkeeper

Chapter 404: Error 404: Not Found

Poor old Velma, who had not really paid much attention to her cultivation, was completely overwhelmed by the responses that she got for her first newsletter. Over 100,000 guests had responded within just a few hours and asked her questions for her segment. How was she to pick which one to respond to?

For the first time, she regretted not having a higher cultivation level. If she did, she would not need to split this task. But either way it was not much of a loss, as she was only sharing the task with her good sister Antia, the pregnant lich. She had a happy and successful marriage with Qawain, the sword that had assumed a human shape after gaining sentience and entering the Immortal realm.

Her romantic advice was sure to be excellent, right?

She recalled that Antia had once shared a story about a romantic date she had when she was still dating Qawain, where he invited 9 generations of a cultivation family that had antagonized Anita and permanently resolved their disputes. It was such a warm and kindhearted gesture. That was exactly the kind of man... -eh, exactly the kind of sword every woman was looking for.

Anyway, whether Velma answered herself or it was Anita, the true identity was hidden behind the persona of 'Rachel' which is why she chose such a name in the first place instead of just directly using her name.

While the hype at the Inn was all about the Newsletter, barely anyone had learned about the Henali portal for it had been introduced at such a time that Velma didn't have time to edit the newsletter. In the next one she would definitely mention it, and anyone could even ask their personal holographic assistants about it, but otherwise it would remain a relative secret.

That was why when Tiffany, the girl who was the chosen of the will of the planet Nibiru wandered into the registration building, it was completely empty.

As a relatively ignorant girl whose worldview had mostly been limited to Nibiru, and the little she could learn from interacting with the Inn staff, Tiffany could not yet even grasp the concept of 'internet' or 'online'. So, completely ignorant of what she was doing or what it meant, she entered the virtual world of the Henali portal for the first time.

A soothing incense filled the room, keeping Lex calm yet focused. He sat in his office chair with his eyes closed, completely still as if he was a statue. In front of him was the epistle, and on it was a countdown steadily heading towards 0. In fact, it was less than a minute away.

Despite his better judgment, Lex decided to attend the assembly. Since he was in the business of hosting guests from across the universe, and currently especially from the Origin realm, the more he understood it the better. He also had to understand what these 'Fuegans' that the Henali strongly despised were, and how large was their population in their realm.

How would the Henali react if he ended up hosting them? Even besides that, there were so many things Lex was unaware of that he didn't even know that he didn't know them. For example, the champions tourney that Dillion, the creature that took up Ragnar's tasks, mentioned. Lex did not even know of its existence, yet had somehow hosted tasks that could negatively influence it.

He needed to understand what the repercussions for such a thing were and what other potential pitfalls there were waiting for him. Also, and this was not in any way a significant factor in aiding his decision, he really wanted to see a living T-rex up close if one appeared there as well.

To be exact, Lex did not really understand how rare 'Daolords' were, but he supposed that a race that controlled over 100 galaxies probably had at least a few, right?

Just as he completed that thought, the timer on the epistle hit 0. Lex opened his eyes and focused on it. It was time to conduct his experiment and see if he would be successful in sending a clone to the assembly in the first place.

Picking up a business card from the cardholder, Lex channeled some of his energy into it, activating it. The, by now, familiar sensation of a clone being formed appeared before he saw an ethereal figure of himself standing before him.

This wasn't the first time Lex had summoned a clone by himself, so he was not surprised, and did not spend several minutes admiring the Adonis-like, perfectly sculpted representation of resplendence that was his clone. Not that he did so during the first time either.

Instead, he picked up the epistle and tossed it towards what should have been his intangible figure, and watched as its descent slowed down drastically while it passed through his clone's body. That was good enough and, using the clone, he activated the epistle.

He held his breath as he waited for the teleportation but... after a few moments, nothing happened, and the epistle fell through the clone's body onto the ground.

Just as Lex was trying to understand what had happened, for this should have theoretically worked, the epistle began to blow, and a projection of a few words formed above it.

The words read:

'Error 404: Connected teleportation point not found'.

It took but a moment for Lex to realize his mistake. He was so used to teleporting right out of the Inn that it did not occur to him that the Inn's protective formation would prevent others from teleporting in and out of it.

Not feeling dumb at all for making such a basic mistake, Lex directly teleported to one of the planets connected to the Inn and repeated the attempt. This time, the clone was sucked into a mini-wormhole, without losing connection to Lex whatsoever.

Lex quickly returned to his office and sat on his chair with his eyes closed. His entire focus, for now, had been diverted to his clone.

The teleportation it was undergoing was not nearly as instantaneous as the one the Inn afforded, giving him a little insight into how incredible the Inn's teleporting actually was. Instead the clone felt himself surrounded by a bubble with the faintest hint of blue in it. Outside the bubble was an endless void of gray... stuff.

Whatever was outside the bubble seemed liquid and solid at the same time. It flowed around the bubble like water flowing around a boulder in its path, yet at the same time it would solidify and form unusual shapes around it. It was like various colored sands mixed in together, forming different shapes, yet at the same time not quite. Even Lex's instincts weren't able to make sense of it, and gave him no warnings or recommendations regarding the substance outside the bubble. It was most likely because even his instincts weren't able to exceed the bubbles' limitations.

The teleportation took several minutes, which is something Lex could only tell because his main body was at the Inn. Otherwise, within that strange gray space, even time seemed somewhat abstract.

When the teleportation ended, Lex's extremely focused mind picked up various bits of information all at once.

Firstly, he was in a room that strongly reminded him of the US congress. But instead of getting a single chair, he had an entire booth. Though he was in the form of a consciousness clone, he could tell that the booth was filled with such... such... excruciatingly, beautifully pure spirit energy that he had never felt anything like it. At the same time, he knew that if his real body had appeared here, neither the Lotus on his back nor the system's ability to absorb energy would have been enough to prevent his body from being overloaded with what was surely the pinnacle of all energies, and exploding as a result.

Even as merely a clone of his consciousness, he had been influenced by the energy, resulting in him feeling such immense, orgasmic pleasure that it nearly drove him insane! Had he not entered the 'Overdrive' state before sending his clone away, it would have taken him a long time to recover.

Fortunately, he had made sufficient preparations. Moreover, the extreme control his Host Attire gave him over his expressions somehow extended to his clone, so even in the brief moment of near insanity, he had kept his expression placid.

The second thing he noticed was that while the room was large, it was not nearly as big as he had been expecting considering this was a gathering that invited 'all' those that had entered the Daolord realm in the Origin realm. In fact, there were probably less than 50 booths altogether.

Moreover, even of the existing booths, very few were actually occupied. Though he was not able to actually see into the booths that were occupied. This was probably one of the safety measures to ensure anonymity.

Well, to be more specific, he could not see in most of the occupied booths. This was because the third thing he noticed was a very familiar figure. It was the Devil Ballom.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 405: Challenge

The hall Lex was in was large and majestic, with every inch of it covered in an intricate pattern carved directly into the very walls of the hall itself. The lighting was a dim yellow, as if a chandelier hung over the hall, filled with old incandescent bulbs. Yet if one were to look directly above, they would see what looked like a miniature version of a star, wrapped in and hung by what seemed an ornamental chain.

Something about the scene was unusual, but even in his Overdrive state Lex found it difficult to focus on any one thing for too long, due to the crashing waves of pleasure the energy kept giving him. He could have sworn that if it weren't for the perfect control his suit afforded him, he would occasionally moan from pleasure.

He looked around his booth, straining his mind to see if there was anything he could use to control and reduce the amount of energy, but he saw none. If things continued at this pace, he would be mentally exhausted long before anything substantial happens. For a meeting that was only held once a century, Lex assumed that it would last, at the very minimum, a few days if not weeks. Now it seemed like Lex wouldn't even be able to last the first hour.

Nothing was happening yet, or at least no one was talking where Lex could hear, which meant that Lex was exerting himself constantly just to stay sane, and not even hear anything relevant.

In fact, he couldn't even spend time trying to observe the other Daolords, for the moment he looked at the Devil who he already knew, the man that was Loretta's dad, and thought of his name, the Devil reacted, and looked directly towards Lex. Lex's mental state was too strained to pick up any details of his expression, and detect whether there was curiosity or recognition in the gaze. It took all his strength just to stop thinking about him.

Lex was in a strange situation, where it would take all of his strength to focus on one thing, due to the distraction created by the energy, while he would also need all of his energy to stop thinking about a certain thing.

To reduce the strain on his mind, he allowed himself to relax a little while until nothing important was happening, and let his gaze wander the hall.

13 of the booths were hazy, meaning that 13 other guests were here keeping their identities hidden while only 5 of them didn't care at all and let their appearance be shown to all. Other than the Devil, there was another humanoid being. She was an angel of otherworldly beauty, with a bearing truly surpassing that of mere mortals.

From that one time the representatives came to send an invite to the Inn Lex knew of a small list of other humanoid beings that existed in the universe, which is why Lex thought that the woman was an angelic beauty. It was because she was literally an Angel!

One of the other beings that were present in the was somehow extremely massive and small at the same time. He was small, because he fit perfectly in the booth that was the same size as the others, but when Lex passed his gaze over him, the image in his mind was so vast Lex could not begin to comprehend its size. The being was a beast of some kind, and that was all Lex could determine.

As for the remaining 2... Lex's feeble mind could not comprehend what kind of existences they were.

To avoid the risk of earning anyone's attention, Lex looked away. His gaze returned to the roof, which was filled with the intricate pattern that filled the room somehow without ever actually making the room look too full, or congested with decor.

The sight was almost as intoxicating as the pleasure provided by the energy, and as he had loosened the reins on his self-control, Lex quickly lost himself in a daze. There seemed to be no end as the swirls went from one to another, a never ending weave forming immaculate shapes... In fact, it was so perfect Lex began to imagine that they were a physical representation of the universe... and through that, he began to see odd shapes and began hearing weird sounds. Despite his best efforts, his feeble mind could no longer tolerate it, and he began to hallucinate.

He began to imagine that the patterns were coming to life, and taking the shape of the characters he used in his arrays. Only, these characters were a hundred million times more complex than any character he had ever seen or used, and just perceiving them subject him to untold pressures.

Colors began to lose meaning to Lex, and bled into sound. Then his sense of touch mixed into the pot, and somehow, his sense of taste as well. All his senses were going haywire as Lex experienced a trip worse and more vivid than any drug Earth had to offer.

By now, his Overdrive state had completely collapsed and even Lex's main consciousness had entered into a trance alongside his clone.

Let alone participate in the assembly, Lex could not even tolerate a wisp of his consciousness being in the room where the assembly was held. In fact, it was a testament to not only the immense strength of his mind, but the Regal Embrace as well that he had been exposed to an environment suited to perfectly host Daolords, and he had not completely collapsed.

In a very accurate way, Lex was now subject to the kind of pressure low level cultivators usually experience around cultivators with levels much higher than their own, except that this time the system was no protecting him since this was not inside the Inn.

The craziest part was that Lex's consciousness clone had not even absorbed any of the energy that it was submerged in - only exposed to it.

Outside his booth, exactly one minute had passed.

"Amana, I'm surprised to see you here," said the Angel, looking at one of the two Daolords the shape of which Lex could not even comprehend. "Are you not afraid that Ra will once again start pursuing you?"

"The last time he tried, I froze him in time for eternity. Had it not been for Ballom, that is where he would remain," replied Amana, showing complete disregard for this Ra that was being referenced.

"My sincerest apologies, Goddess Amana," Balloon said with a casual smile, "but we Devils are businessmen. For a sufficient price, anything is negotiable. In fact, I believe even your sons have availed some of our services."

The Devil's reputation was spread not only in the Origin realm, but many others as well. Like the Henali, they had ownership of various realms, and considerable influence in many realms which they did not directly control.

"Speaking of children, I heard Ra's daughter has left her prison. Does that mean the wedding is back on?" asked the beast. The beast had an amused glint in its eyes - a glint that Velma was all too familiar with.

It seemed that even the highest strata of the Origin realms cultivators could not escape the relentless clutch of gossip and drama.

Before it could receive an answer, however, one of the booths suddenly emptied. The hall became still, as all the Daolords, both that had hidden their identities and the ones that openly displayed their identities turned to look to confirm for themselves at what they had just witnessed. In fact, for the briefest of moments, they even considered the possibility that they remembered incorrectly, and that this booth had been empty all along.

Countless Daolords were invited to these events each time, and most did not attend. But regardless of whether they attended or not, none disrespected the Henali. For someone to come to the assembly, but leave before the Henali even began to convene the meeting... it was unheard of for sure. But then again, it was easy to be courageous when the Henali assured complete anonymity...

As soon as the final thought entered everyone's mind, they erased it, for in the now otherwise empty booth, a single business card hovered gently in their air, supported by the thick, tangible energy that filled it.

On it, in clear and bold letters, was written 'The Innkeeper' just below 'MIDNIGHT INN'. A million thoughts ran through everyone's head, trying to understand why the Innkeeper would leave so rudely. If he hadn't wanted to come, he should have never made an appearance, and if he wanted to leave, there was no reason to leave his calling card.

Other than Ballom, none had heard of this place, but suddenly each and everyone made a mental note to stay clear of it. Whether this Innkeeper was ignorant, or truly someone who did not need to give Henali some face, either way, it was best to keep their distance for now.

Only Ballom developed a small smirk on his face. How interesting. Was this meant to be a challenge?

The Innkeeper

Chapter 406: Crashing faith

Lex lost all concept of time as his mind traveled through a strange vortex of colors that did not exist, and marinated in a pool of sounds his body could not actually hear. It was both an instant and an eternity at the same time, for while Lex was going through the vortex, he could not perceive it. It was as if he was moving forward, yet at the same time, somehow, time was frozen.

But how could there be an after, during or even before if time was still? How could he move through the vortex if time was frozen, for there could be no displacement if time did not exist as a medium through which to displace.

Yet ultimately that is what it seemed like, for when he finally exited the vortex, and time returned to normal, all the memories of his journey came crashing through in an instant.

Afterwards his mind became numb, for it was too exhausted to do anything. In fact, while it seemed like only his spirit was drained, since his spirit, soul and body had all been merged, all three dropped to an extremely low point of activity for they were just too drained to work.

Such a state was extremely dangerous, and was barely better than death, yet ironically it was due to the fact that his spirit had been reinforced by both the strength of his body and soul that he had been able to survive the experience he had just undergone.

Even though he was not there in person, and he had been exposed to the Henali assembly through a mere clone of his consciousness created by the system, it was far beyond what someone at his level could possibly tolerate. In fact, it was only because the clone had been created through the system that the system itself was able to detect when Lex was nearing a point of no return and forcefully canceled the clone.

The forceful disruption of the technique was precisely why the business card had not been used up, and was left behind on the scene of the incident to be misunderstood by everyone on the scene.

Mary, who was deeply connected to the Inn, instantly learned of Lex's deteriorating situation. The problem was... she could not move Lex himself, for she had no body, and she could not ask one of the workers to move him, for the Innkeeper could not be seen in such a weak state. But at the same time, Lex needed to be moved into a Recovery pod as soon as possible, lest there be no Innkeeper left to even protect. Of course, earlier Lex had given her a lot of authority and even made her the assistant Innkeeper, but that was only via the increased authority he had in the Crystal realm. Now she was back to only being able to communicate with the Inn staff at most.

Stuck between a difficult decision, she could only compromise, and summoned Gerard. He was one of the oldest two workers Lex had at the Inn, and while all the workers could be trusted, if she had to take a risk, it was best to be as sure as possible.

Gerard teleported right over to Lex's office building using his security access when he heard there was an emergency, and when he entered the building he nearly collapsed from alarm when he saw the Innkeeper unconscious at his table.

Nearly on the verge of a heart attack, and on the verge of having his immeasurable faith in the Innkeeper shaken, Gerard managed to gather himself back up. After all, if he wasn't able to recover, someone else would need to come, and he could not allow the Innkeeper to be seen like this!

As quickly, yet gently as possible, Gerard lifted the Innkeeper from his seat and teleported to the Recovery room. With the absolute utmost speed he could conjure, he took the Innkeeper to the Recovery pod before anyone could see who he was carrying.

Once the task was done, Mary informed him to keep the secret, and that she would let him know if she needed anything. Gerard, who was thoroughly shook, only weakly nodded and teleported away.

For the first time in his nearly one-year-old life, Gerard chose to take an alcoholic drink that day.

Mary, on the other hand, did not rest, for she was keeping a constant watch on Lex's situation. Technically, Lex was not injured. Instead, it was just his body, spirit and soul which had entered artificial dormancy due to a severe exhaustion. Some external aid, any external aid really, would help him recover.

It was only a matter of time now.

Qawain, the sentient sword, was sitting cross-legged in his abode. When he joined the Inn, he had been asked nothing more than to become a swords teacher for any guests who wanted to avail his service. The extent of his education, however, was left completely up to him. After all, if he felt that a certain guest could not be taught, it would only be a waste of effort to offer him the most in-depth teachings.

As a result of this, he had made his abode within a hole carved into the side of the Midnight mountain by a sword strike. He filled the entrance of his abode with a mild version of his own sword intent, so that any guest who wanted to meet him would, first, get some free benefits by meditating on the intent, and second, so he could filter out as many untalented people as possible.

Still, he couldn't be too harsh, lest he upset the Innkeeper for not doing his job. As such, he reduced his standards to the lowest possible amount. Even still, he ended up becoming revered as an excellent teacher with the harshest possible standards.

Considering he charged 10,000 MP for a single class, and that he avoided as many classes as possible, he should have been mostly free. Yet that was far from the case. He was almost always busy, for the path of the sword was one of the most popular universe wide.

Still, this day, something slightly unusual happened. He saw, through his spirit sense, a lone human wandering towards his abode casually. On his waist, the human wore a sword, though it was of a different kind than Qawain's own body. Still, being different didn't mean that Qawain discriminated, or that the human was weak. On the contrary, his performance was better than most others he had seen.

Intrigued, Qawain decided to increase the difficulty - just a bit - to see how the human performed.

Still, right up until the end, the human did not slow down, and even then, towards the end, all he did was frown.

An appreciative light flashed in Qawain's eyes before he decided to quit testing the human. After all, he was only there as a nominal teacher. He had no interest in taking any personal disciples.

"Your understanding of the path of the sword is pretty good," Qawain commented. "Tell me, what do you need guidance in, and I will guide you how I can."

The human, still frowning, did not speak. Instead, slowly, he grabbed the handle of his sword and began to draw it. His pace was extremely even as he drew the weapon, and the sword whistled sweetly as its body rubbed against the sheath on its way out.

A beautiful Katana was drawn with a sheen of blue running across its edge. Even the human paused for a moment as fondness flashed through his eyes, before they became focused again.

Instead of elaborating on his issue, the human struck forward with his sword with all the strength he could muster, instantly displaying his peak form.

Qawain nodded, as if he immediately understood many things.

"Your sword is one of devotion and servitude, but in your form there is defiance and resistance. You either need to find someone new to serve, one whom your heart can agree with completely, or you need to change your path of servitude."

Anger and frustration flashed through the man's eyes, but he still said nothing, only paid and left.

'If only it were so easy to leave,' Souta thought to himself.

His system had literally made him a slave to his feudal lord, and his feudal lord was incredibly evil. The only way out he could even think of was for his feudal lord to die, but then his system would just make him slave to yet another. After all, it was the duty of the samurai to serve their master.

He could not think of a way out. His future looked incredibly bleak. He could see no way out.

"Ho there friend," yelled someone walking his way, "you look like you've seen better days. What's the matter? Anything you need help with?"

Souta looked up and saw two other humans walking his way, both with an idiotic look on their faces.

"No," was all he replied, and continued to walk forward. That is, until he heard one of the men murmuring, "he's lying."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 407: Brewing trouble

Souta could have ignored the small comment easily. He could have moved on, for his feudal lord would look for him soon. After all, it was an inconsequential comment. How would anyone know whether he was lying or not, especially when he spoke so little? He had long learned how to prevent himself from having any behavioral tells or markers for whether he was lying or not.

Logically speaking, the other person was a scammer and had purposefully let him hear the murmur in order to arouse suspicion and doubt, and cause a disturbance in Souta's mental state. Such a vulnerability would then allow them to try to build a logical premise for how and why he should trust them, before, in a seemingly reasonable and logical sequence of events, going on to scam him.

Souta knew this because of the kind of exposure his feudal lord provided him with. Suzuki was a cunning man, and needed Souta to be well versed in every kind of established falsehood there was, not so that he could prevent them, but so that he could enact them.

Despite knowing all of this, he could not help but stop. Something in the man's voice... the certainty with which he spoke, yet the hush in his voice as if he was speaking only to himself... it told Souta that he wasn't making it up.

Yet when he turned and looked at the wide grin on the partner of the man who had murmured he suddenly had doubts. That was a scammer if he ever saw one.

"The name is Anakin Indiana McClane, friend. Why don't you hold on a minute and hear us out? If you feel like we can't help you, you're always free to leave. After all, there's no harm in just listening."

'Definitely a scammer, this one,' Souta thought to himself. Yet he stood still all the same. It was true, though. With how miserable his life was going, he really had nothing left to lose by listening to them.

"Have you heard of the Chamber of Secrets?" Anakin asked. "It's where we like to hold our meetings..."

Anakin's senses were tingling. He was about to make a huge profit. He just knew it!

An hour passed by and the room where the Henali assembly was taking place was slightly more filled. The participants, those who did not hide their identities at least, continued to chat amongst themselves casually, though there was a tinge of anticipation in their eyes. They wanted to see how the situation was about to unfold.

At the exact one hour mark, when admission to the assembly hall closed, a figure appeared in the center of the hall. Everyone turned their attention to the figure, just as the figure looked out at the room. 2 of its 26 eyes, however, were completely fixed on a single card that read Innkeeper.

It said nothing before it began convening the meeting, but two of its eyes stayed fixated on the card throughout.

The audience was not disappointed by the lack of drama. On the contrary, they were even more enticed by the lack of it. After all, they were beings that did not plan out their day, but instead they planned out their millennia. It was the slow performance that got them riled up, the steady build up to a fantastic conclusion.

For now, just the direction of that single pair of eyes was enough to sate their craving. Of course, this was only for those participants that lived for this kind of enjoyment. Others couldn't care less.

At the same time as the Henali assembly, which was being held by the highest most echelon of the realm, another assembly was being held. This time there was no Henali member to oversee the assembly, only their chosen representative this time.

Thus, presiding over this joint session that included the recognized empires, races and organizations, was a member of a race called the Starguard. A being made up of pure fire, its strength was extremely formidable.

At the same time, however, the Emperor of the Jotun Empire, who was sitting in the assembly, had never even heard of the Starguard race. He was seated in one of the middle sections of the room and even neared the top, even though the human race was considered, in general, much weaker than many of the races that sat even below the Emperor. It could not be helped, for he was not seated arbitrarily. He was seated according to the social rank of humans in the Origin realm which, based on common sense, should have been quite low.

This was because the status of a race was not determined by how large their population was, how developed their cultivation system was, or what kind of military might they held as a race. Instead, it was determined by the single strongest member of their race.

As far as the human race was concerned, in the entire realm, there was none stronger or with a higher cultivation level than him. Moreover, he was not the kind of ruler who sat on a bejeweled throne and passed down orders from behind safe havens.

No, the Emperor was a man so fierce that, besides being a ruler of one of the largest human empires in the realm, he had been hired as a personal envoy by the Henali. In a realm that did not naturally allow beings touching the Dao to be born, he was near what should have been the natural apex.

So his rule began with, and continued on while in the midst of eternal war. It was not his own innate logistical prowess that allowed the Empire to flourish. Instead, it was the secret help the Henali provided him in exchange for his excellent service that shielded his empire from downfall.

As it happened, while he was in the assembly, listening once again to drawl speeches about the future of the realm, and Henali's vision for its development, the Emperor once again received a missive. Once the assembly ended, he would have to visit a place called the Midnight Inn.

From hours to days, time slowly passed. No one sensed anything unusual, for the most part, since they were used to the Innkeeper disappearing spontaneously. But a subtle tension filled the air that extremely few could detect.

Chad, the deputy director of security, directly under Gerard, began to notice Gerard behaving strangely. He was often absentminded and would occasionally disappear without explanation.

Things that were running smoothly up until now slowly began to have problems. Security, for one, began to cause trouble. Having two Earth immortals at the Inn at all times usually ensured that there wouldn't be any problems. But the universe was not without other immortals, and the Inn had already developed enough of a reputation that they could occasionally visit.

Though there hadn't been any direct confrontations yet, a few tense encounters had taken place.

What was strange, though, was that while usually Mary gave excellent orders to deal with the situation, this time she was being hesitant, and kept moving towards tolerating as much as possible.

Another issue was logistics. With an increased number of workers, everything originally ran very smoothly. After all, the system itself took care of so many things.

But with no clear upper management, and Mary herself acting out of sorts, alongside the Innkeeper's absence, many of the workers had to resolve their own issues. This often resulted in clashes or misunderstandings.

For most guests this was not a big deal, but for some of the older or more observant guests, this was a huge anomaly.

The number of Devils at the Inn had also increased lately, and while they created no problems themselves, they sent silent reports of everything that occurred in extensive detail. Who or why they were sending these reports to was a mystery, but they were not subtle at all with their actions.

As if to make things worse, a few days later, in the X-14 star system a huge, extremely coordinated battle took place that spanned multiple planets. The Dimitri family, despite being caught off guards,

somehow managed to repel the attackers - with rumors abound that someone named Tetsuya played a significant role in resolving the attacks.

Yet the real issue that came to light was that the attackers all snuck onto the planets, and would then teleport to the Inn until the right time. Then, when given the order, they would return to the planets and launch an attack.

This information spread very quickly, and painted the Midnight Inn in a very bad light. Yet somehow, that attracted even more guests.

Mary was alarmed, for this was not what the Inn was supposed to represent, yet it was clear that people were abusing the system's capabilities while not breaking any of the Inn's rules. A hundred more minor issues were popping up.

The latest of which was happening today, on the day of Harry and Haileys wedding. A group of party crashers had barged in, and the situation was looking like it was deteriorating fast.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 408: Too ugly to describe

Harry and Hailey had been planning their wedding for a while, by their own standards. It had been a few months, and honestly they could not wait any longer. To be honest, there was no real need to either.

Due to the sensitivity of sharing his identity, Harry was not intending on inviting any of his friends from Earth to the wedding. Not that he returned to Earth much at all these days, but that did not change the fact that he did not want his identity disclosed. What if someone targeted his friends to reach him? He'd seen enough movies to know that greedy people could do anything.

Hailey, as well, did not want to invite anyone from her planet. In fact, she was even reluctant to return at all. She could not imagine going back to the ridiculously difficult and tedious life she had lived previously. Though she always knew she was being overworked, she had no idea just how much of a terrible life she was living till she saw the living standard at the Inn!

Still, while they had no invites from their own planets, they both had made plenty of friends with their identities at the Inn. Just coordinating and inviting all of them was a hassle.

Another reason Harry delayed was that he was secretly hoping the Innkeeper would also become free by then to attend his wedding, or possibly even officiate it. Unfortunately, on the morning of his wedding, the assistant Innkeeper told him that the Innkeeper had important business which kept him busy.

There was a tinge of disappointment in Harry's heart, but he suppressed it. It made sense, after all. The Innkeeper was an important man, he had better things to be doing than attending his employees weddings.

Harry had rented out the entire Midnight manor for the wedding despite the fact that there were perhaps a little over a 100 guests at most. For some people that number may be huge and for others it was small. For Harry, an orphan with no contacts of friends other than the ones he worked his behind off for, and for Hailey, a simple farmer girl previously, the number of guests was massive, and something they were very prideful of.

The guests contained, other than some of Harry's colleagues, some of his regular customers, friends he'd made at the Inn, as well as many of the contestants from Lady Cosmos who became friends with Hailey.

It was an absolute ball, since the wedding style they had opted for was a merger between traditional western weddings and those from Hailey's world.

Yet while they were dancing and singing and playing wedding games, things instantly went from perfectly joyous to deathly still!

A small group of guests from the race known as Gilati were at the Inn, and happened to be nearby the manor. Moreover, while they had not come to the Inn with devious intentions, when they saw Jill, the winner of the Lady Cosmos competition, attending a function at the manor things instantly deteriorated.

The Midnight Inn's security room immediately picked up their malicious intentions, but there were four of them and all of them were in the immortal realm or greater. The security personnel did not even have time to register the situation and try and attempt to resolve the situation before the four of them crashed the wedding with their auras full on display.

The strongest known members of the Midnight Inn were Qawain and Anita who were both at the Earth Immortal realm. They were extremely competent, but even so they could not go 2 against 4, especially when some of them seemed to be at an even higher cultivation realm!

The aura of the four put great pressure on everyone at the event, but even as they tried to understand what was happening, the four miscreants were not following the traditional bad guy sequence. Instead of peacocking and strutting about, as was the stereotype, all four of them surrounded Jill while one of them grabbed her by the throat.

"I heard you were saved by a dragon last time, but the dragon's not here now. I wonder who's going to save you now?" asked one of the four hideous, fat, blob monsters. The Gilati race were not humanoid, but instead looked like a fusion between a slug and a beetle, in that they were too disgusting to describe. All that mattered was that copious amounts of ooze that came off their body, and the many number of creepy limbs.

"This is the Midnight Inn! Do you know what you're doing?" asked Harry forcefully as he gathered himself up from the shock of what was happening, and the pressure of the four beings. Yet instead of answering him, one of them only flicked one of their limbs his way, attacking him from a distance.

Like a cannonball his body launched from the venue at a speed none could follow, his state completely unknown.

Everyone paled and a few guests immediately departed from the Inn, directly teleporting away. But not everyone could teleport away, and the Inn staff had no idea what to do. Even Velma, who had been extremely stressed lately, momentarily faltered, especially because she could follow the trajectory of Harry's body. From the Midnight manor it had launched all the way to the Midnight mountain! There was no way a normal human would survive that attack!

A few hours earlier.

John, one of Lex's few temporary workers, had been working at the Inn for a long time - nearly a year, in fact. Considering his age, this was not actually a long time, but due to the nature of his system, and thereby his profession, he was not suited to stay in one place for a long time.

He had received his system very early in life, so it and the quests it gave out had ultimately influenced John's life more than he had ever originally realized. Only many years later, after he got caught and imprisoned, did he take the time to reflect on his life.

It was inside of a prison cell that he realized that... while his life may have seemed destined to head on this path, it had not necessarily needed to be that way.

Still, these were the thoughts of a man full of regret, and with no hope for the future. All that changed the day he entered the Inn. From the moment he entered, he no longer thought of mundane matters such as regrets, or how his life could have been. Since he saw hope of escape, that was all he was focused on.

Still, the chains that bound him were not simple at all. How could they be, when they so thoroughly bound an Immortal? Moreover, it was so sturdy that it managed to resist any ability or item his system was able to provide him with.

So while he was vulnerable and on the journey to break free of his restraints, he decided to stay at the Inn. Yes, the Inn often had unusual or dangerous guests, but while the Innkeeper was around, John felt incredibly safe. Then the Innkeeper went away on certain business, and things began to head downhill for him.

Without the Innkeeper to hold down the fort, the security of the Inn took a huge hit. More than once people had tried to invade it, though even from far away the Innkeeper managed to provide solutions.

But while security issues were handled, somewhat, more issues arose. The most significant one was... John was pretty sure that the assistant Innkeeper knew about, and could in some way, influence his own system. Though his system did not behave strangely at all after that one quest to eliminate the Raskals, it set his mind at unease.

But while he was thoroughly disturbed by that thought, the reward from that one quest was extremely useful. John ended up getting what was called a 'Jericho puzzle piece'.

Initially, this did not entice him at all whatsoever, but when he got the reward he realized how truly useful it was for him. He learned from the description that this Jericho which was being mentioned was

actually a copy of the first ever prison constructed in the entire universe. While it was just one piece of many, it had a very useful effect. It could help him solve puzzles, and the most important puzzle John had on him were his bindings.

It took him a long time, but he finally removed the chains. But he did not enjoy his newfound freedom as much as he imagined. After all, now he had a decision to make. He could return to his old life, or he could continue staying at the Inn for a while. There was no rush to leave, right?

Either way, he would decide after Harry's wedding. If nothing else, that kid had cut his hair for free for a year, so he owed him that much.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 409: Deteriorating situation

The four Gilati's paid no attention to any other guests, and only focused on Jill. Jill, on the other hand, was too afraid to think. Her mind had frozen out of fear, otherwise it would have occurred to her that she could teleport out of the Inn as well.

But as if the aura of four immortals suppressing her while she was only in the Golden core herself, one of them choking her further shut down her thoughts.

"You should have just obediently returned last time. Now we're going to make you pay for each extra day you've kept us waiting."

Tears started to run down Jill's face and she wanted to cry out that she did not know them, and had not run away from them, but her body was not responding to her wishes.

By now the Inn staff had also begun to recover from their shock and their minds raced as they began to think of what to do. Even Mary was looking for Qawain in a panic, while at the same time she was pleading in Lex's ear asking him to wake up. But Lex was still dormant, his body and mind completely unresponsive to any external stimulation.

There was only one person on the scene who was not reacting out of fear and shock - John. The situation had deteriorated too quickly for him to do anything, and honestly he wasn't the type to stand

out against tyrants to help out a stranger. But when Harry was blown away... something unusual happened.

John's extremely experienced mind immediately judged that Harry was dead, for a mere Foundation realm human could not survive a direct blow from an immortal no matter the circumstances. His entire skeleton would have been crushed to bits and his brain turned into a Jackson Pollen painting by getting smashed against the mountain side.

There was a pretty good chance that his body's situation was even worse than what John had described, for he only accounted for the physical force behind an immortals' attack. If the immortal had used any other kind of force or technique, then perhaps there wasn't even a body to smash into the mountain.

Then he considered the value of each of Harry's haircuts. Considering that during his haircut, he would nourish and relax, and sometimes even reinvigorate the soul, his haircuts were not cheap. Then he considered how long they had known each other.

It was hard to determine, since John had not been keeping count of the exact number of weeks, but let's say they had known each other for 45 weeks. That 45 haircuts, each one worth a lot.

After some mental arithmetic, his valuation for the haircuts, when rounded off, came out to be exactly worth 4 immortal bodies.

"Payment accepted, initiate task!" said John, though for some reason no one heard his voice. Yet in his eyes, the time seemed to slow down, and the four immortals surrounding Jill were targeted in red.

Since his system was an assassination system it, of course, helped him immensely in carrying out assassinations. Creating the most efficient strategy for him was but one of its many abilities. Raising his cultivation whenever he assassinated someone with a higher cultivation level than him was another.

One of his favorite ways in which the system helped, though, was when it taught him incredible attacks. The cultivation world, at least for immortals, was quite different from lower levels. Things such as techniques and weapons, while helpful, took a supplementary role while the main source of an immortal's strength were an immortal's own tenets.

The attacks an immortal could use were also based on those tenets. John, though, as a system wielder, had a bit of a hack which was that the system could automatically teach him incredibly powerful attacks that had nothing to do with his own tenets. This was incredibly helpful, for having rare or powerful tenets was not actually a good thing for cultivation, and instead was often a disability. But for John, he could have all the benefits without any of the drawbacks for those rare tenets.

One such tenet that he had access to, only through the system, was the tenet of agony.

"Harrowing pierce," he whispered, as his body dissolved in the wind. No one seemed to notice his words, or even that he disappeared, the immortals included!

The next second though, something erupted out of the neck of the Gilati that held up Jill. It looked like a bone, still covered in blood and sinew, erupting from its body and extending impossibly high into the air. The strangest thing was, however, that the Gilati did not seem to notice. It did not scream or flinch. In fact, it had not even loosened its grip on Jill. Everyone around him too, continued to ignore it.

As if that wasn't harrowing enough, its blood kept oozing out of its neck, spilling endlessly on the ground. But that was far from the end of things. Another Gilati had a similar looking bone strike out of its body, but this time not from its neck but directly from its back. The third one soon had a similar bone sticking out of its eye.

But while three of them each had a single bone sticking out of their bodies, causing them to bleed endlessly onto the ground, the final one... the one that had struck Harry... it was like a pincushion. It could neither move nor think, for 800 bones were sticking out of its miserable body, causing him to be unable to move at all.

The scene was scarier than any horror movie for even in such a condition, none seemed to notice what was happening. After all, John was not done with them yet.

Immortal? Earth Immortal? A higher realm than even that? Since when did such things matter to an assassin? The life of an assassin was always filled with incredibly strong, incredibly skilled and incredibly hard to kill beings. After all, if it were easy to kill them, no one would hire an assassin in the first place. So an assassin, well at least a true assassin, never looked at such things. An assassin only looked at the opponents weakness, and these Gilati had way too many.

John, who had spent countless years imprisoned, suffering from a bleak future and a cage that suffocated not just his body, but also his heart, and who had also just witnessed someone he could barely call... a friend die... well he was in no mood to let them go so easily.

"Madeline's chambers," he whispered again, and this time pink soft ribbons rose from the ground and wrapped themselves around the four slugs, before they all disappeared. This time, everyone noticed, though they still were not sure what they saw.

One moment the four beings were dominating everything, the next moment they disappeared leaving a relatively unharmed Jill behind.

"I'll interrogate them for their purpose," said John out loud, suddenly attracting everyone's attention. But before anyone could ask any questions, he disappeared also.

There was a momentary stunned silence, before Hailey cried out, "Harry!" Trembling, she fell to her knees, unsure and unaware of what to do. What was going on? She couldn't understand.

One moment, it was the happiest day of her life. The next, everything had been ruined. The culprits had also somehow disappeared, though there was a vague premonition in her mind that they would very much regret their actions, but she did not care about that. She only wanted Harry back! Where had he disappeared to?

Due to her limited level, she did not understand that he had been attacked, only that he had disappeared.

Mary, who quickly regained her focus after seeing John act, immediately summoned Gerard and told him to teleport Harry to the Recovery room.

Gerard, who had just teleported to the scene of the crime, quickly teleported away again. Before anyone could see what happened to him, the old man put his hand on what looked like a meat bag and teleported away.

In a very rare occurrence, the Recovery room began operating the Recovery pod and the Organic Reconstruction Room at the same time, immediately beginning to reconstruct Harry's body.

The fact that this was being done, despite all odds, meant that Harry was somehow still alive - though no one could yet understand how or why.

The situation seemed to deteriorate and resolve itself in the matter of seconds. In fact, everything that happened had not even taken 20 seconds. Yet the fact that an Inn staff member was successfully attacked... and that no one had been able to prevent it... well, the news was like a domino.

The news spread like wildfire, and suddenly the fire of greed was lit in a lot of eyes. The method for the Midnight Inn's instantaneous teleportation from any planet ever... it was too valuable, and many began to have a few ideas.

It did not take long, in fact. Only a few hours later, in the main arena inside the village, the champion, loudly and proudly challenged the Innkeeper to a fight. That is... if the Innkeeper was not afraid.

At the same time, for the first time ever, elsewhere in the Inn, someone was trying to kidnap one of the Inn employees.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 410: War

Everyone was on edge, for usually when an issue arose, even if the Innkeeper did not return, he at least passed a few orders that would, to some degree, resolve all dangers. Now, however, not only was the Innkeeper not returning, but he had passed no new orders.

If Luthor were not inside an extended cultivation retreat, to be disturbed only if the Innkeeper summoned him, he would have been disgusted by the staff's reaction.

They were there to ease the burdens of the Innkeeper, not to become his new burdens. Still, while the staff did not have the same level of determination, they were not pushovers.

Security had been ramped up to the maximum, and no one was taking a single moment lightly. The four Gilati's had been banned from leaving the Inn by Gerard using his authority as the head of security. This gave John as much time as he wanted to conduct a thorough 'investigation' of their motives.

The fact that he had to pass two of the Gilati's to the Galactic Sovereign turtle as fertilizers was an unfortunate failure on his part, for his extensive enthusiasm for conducting his interrogation was too much for them to handle. Fortunately, two still remained to resolve all doubts relating to this matter.

Jill had been placed in protective custody, meaning she had been given a small house which had a defensive formation others could not enter at all without her permission, free of charge. Of course, it was not free at the moment, since none of them could make that decision on Lex's behalf, but the staff were pooling their MP to pay for it, and once Lex awoke, Mary would take the payment from him.

In the security room, it was all hands on deck, as everyone was paying the maximum amount of attention possible to anyone exhibiting any kind of malicious intent at all. Even Qawain was on duty at the security room for now, so that the moment an issue arose that was even slightly beyond the scope of ordinary guards, he would handle it.

With all this going on, it need not be said that Harry's wedding and any other unnecessary event had been put off for now. Harry was undergoing treatment, but no one knew his exact situation, and Gerard, the person who admitted him, was completely heartbroken, for he could not even imagine the kind of pain the child must have suffered to live through his ordeal. Moreover, he had to live with the burden that the Innkeeper himself may not arrive any time soon to resolve their issues since he himself was in some kind of coma.

But there was no real time to be heartbroken, for there was a steady surge of incidents happening at the Inn, ever increasing in absurdity.

Fortunately, the reincarnation of the spirit tree from Nibiru, now known as Young McDonald, had complete access to the Vines hidden under the Inns grounds. Under the guidance of Mary, the plant was actually performing very well - right up until it wasn't.

The fault did not lay with the plant, but with the unusual sequence of events. More and more people started transgressing, even though only moments earlier they lacked all motive and intent for harm. It wasn't even big transgressions, but small ones like suddenly pushing another guest forcefully, slapping away someone's hand or maybe destroying a plate of food a server was bringing.

Then minor fights began to break out. Then guests tried to leave without paying for their availed services or purchases, but the system had precautions against that preventing them from leaving. This, in turn, caused them to start accusing the Inn of mismanagement, harassment and blackmail.

The situation was deteriorating fast - faster than the security team was able to respond to it. Though there was nothing she could do to prove it, she strongly began to suspect that someone was making an organized effort and testing the Inns' bottom line. The longer the Inn was unable to stabilize the situation, the more things would escalate.

It was funny, almost, that up until recently everyone used to think that the Inn was working like a well oiled machine. This was because none of the workers had any internal function, as it was everyone's goal to make the Inn as successful as possible.

But the latest series of events only proved that all they were doing was barely keeping the Inn functioning. If there were any problems, so long as they were within an acceptable range, they would be able to solve them. But as soon as multiple problems occurred at the same time, or the problems escalated even slightly, things went beyond their control.

Fed up of the problems, and unable to come up with a proper solution, Mary made a drastic decision, though she did not think Lex would blame her for it.

"Start banning people," she informed the security team. "For the slightest transgression, evict the guest and ban them from returning to the Inn."

Gerard only nodded and passed on his orders. This was within the range of the authority given to him by the Innkeeper, so it was not like they were making stuff up as they went.

Though the security team wasn't nearly as large as the number of guests they had, within the hour, people began to notice the trend of their swift actions. They did not bother to wait and listen to any explanation, and so long as anyone transgressed, they were kicked from the Inn.

When this happened, a lull began to appear in the number of transgressions. Just as everything was going according to plan, in a very public manner, the champion of the arena very publicly challenged the Innkeeper to a duel!

To be honest, there was nothing wrong with his actions, technically, and it was not necessarily an insult to be challenged as such. The Inns workers, however, did not see it this way. A fire was lit in their hearts, and for the first time they wished to abuse and insult a guest!

But, despite their anger, they could not break the rules. As a result... a standoff appeared.

"You are unworthy of even speaking his title!" scolded one of the workers at the champion, as the rest booed him from the stands.

Yet the champion was unperturbed. He stood in the middle of the arena like a star surrounded by worshippers, taking in their chants as praises. The other guests found the situation both disturbing and amusing.

It did not take a genius to tell that something unusual was happening at the Inn... yet what did that have to do with them? They were only here to enjoy the show!

"All I hear are excuses. Seems to me like he's a coward hiding behind his workers," said the champion, aggravating the situation even more.

He did not leave the arena, and instead kept insulting the Innkeeper more and more. Soon news of the ongoing standoff spread, and almost all the workers wished to go beat him up. With the current lull in incidents, even the Security team turned their focus on to the stage, expecting the situation to devolve any second now. Unfortunately, until he broke any rules, they could not kick him out.

But while the workers attention was diverted, the system did its job dutifully. An alarm suddenly went off in the security room, and when everyone turned to investigate they saw quite a few things that happened suddenly.

Too quick and too suddenly for the workers to react, and even the Vines to prevent, one guest had stabbed another one. The crazy thing was that, even after the stabbing, no malicious intent was actually discovered.

The guests who had been stabbed fell onto the ground, holding their neck, trying to stifle the bleeding.

But that was not all! In another part of the Inn, at the exact same time as the stabbing, someone had assaulted a worker! A young girl, with a cultivation level naught but in the beginning of Qi training, had been knocked unconscious, and was being carried on the back of a leopard Beast. Fortunately, the system had prevented the Beast from teleporting out of the Inn with the worker on its back.

In another part of the Inn, another guest had tried to sneak into the greenhouse and steal things, but fortunately the domain of the sovereign turtle was not so easily penetrated, and the guest had been caught.

Last, but definitely not the least, and possibly even the worst, someone had set off a gas bomb at the Midnight manor! A dense brown smoke began spreading quickly, turning anyone exposed to it deathly sick!

Time seemed to slow down in Mary's eyes as everyone reacted immediately! Even Qawain went out this time to destroy the smoke covering the manor! But Mary focused on none of that as she came to a conclusion.

Someone had declared war on the Inn.