

Innkeeper 481

The Innkeeper

Chapter 481: Nothing can possibly go wrong

Estonia, Earth

In Tallinn, the capital of the country, a man entered an inconspicuous house. From the outside it seemed to match every other house in the neighborhood, and in fact, the interior seemed ordinary as well. But the facade was broken when the man reached a particular storeroom and, in a practiced fashion, unlatched a trap door in the ground and began to descend into a hidden basement.

He was not greeted by a dim hall or makeshift construction, but a brightly lit hall with remarkable ventilation considering its depth. The marble floors, the patterned wallpapers and beautiful paintings did not give the impression that the man had descended into a secret layer, but rather the lavish home of a rich man.

Further down the corridor were a series of doors, but the one the man entered opened into a large laboratory that had numerous computers as well as testing equipment, as well a chair hooked up to a number of medical equipment.

"How was it?" asked a middle aged man who had already been present in the room, talking to a number of scientists.

"The transaction went through without a hitch. I have the program, and he made sure to destroy all the equipment used to design this in front of me," replied the man as he produced an ordinary looking USB.

"Excellent. Begin testing immediately. Once we've run all the diagnostics, we can upload the program."

With his orders given, everyone in the room began to work. Despite the secretive nature of the operation, nothing sinister was being done in this underground lab. The man giving the orders was called Adrus, and was one of Will Bentham's partners in the Rose Society.

Despite his advanced age, the man was stuck in the early stages of Qi training. No matter how much money he had or spent, he was unable to speed up his cultivation. The matter became even worse when he discovered that his own kids shared his ineptitude in the way of cultivation.

Even the appearance of the magical Midnight Inn did not seem to improve his situation much, though if he had participated in the star rating upgrade ceremony things might have been different.

But he was not resigned to such a fate. As a highly educated man of means, he created his own solution instead of relying on others. Investing heavily in the medical and technological sectors for many years already, the man ultimately reached his end goal.

As he sat down in the chair attached to numerous medical equipment, he couldn't help but feel excited. Soon he would be put to sleep, and when he woke up, his life would be completely different.

Using the most advanced technology earth had to offer, alongside the numerous advances inspired by alien technology, he had designed an implant that would be attached to his skull and linked to his brain. The implant would be run using the latest and greatest artificial intelligence on earth, ChatGDaddy!

The A.I. only had one directive, despite its advanced capabilities. It would run Adrus' cultivation technique for him all the time, maintaining peak efficiency, allowing Adrus to raise his cultivation quickly.

This was completely a good thing, and couldn't possibly lead to anything bad at all.

The moment Lex exited the chamber of secrets, his connection to the Inn was fully restored, but at the same time he felt himself forget a lot of information. He remembered clearly what he had shared with the group, as well as the discussion about how they would all proceed next. Yet he forgot everything relating to whatever secret Anakin and Rafael had shared. Souta hadn't shared much to begin with, Larry hadn't shared at all. For Noman he could clearly remember his ability to tell the truth, as well as the fact that he had discovered a curse on him. This was because Noman himself volunteered to allow them to remember this information.

"Hey Lex, if you're free, why don't I introduce you to my girlfriend," said Larry, whose usual grin had returned. No one was better than him at masking his emotions, Lex included.

"I have a few things I need to take care of," said Lex with an apologetic smile. "But I definitely want to meet her. How about we all meet up when you find that spiritual treasure for me?"

"Sounds good," Larry said, and waved goodbye.

Although Lex himself had forgotten many things, the rest had also forgotten about his identity as Leo. That did not, however, go against Lex's plan to drop a few hints about his identity all over. Any hints he had to drop had to be extremely subtle, as if he had been genuinely trying to hide his identity. After all, anyone who would try to investigate his identity at the Inn would need considerable discretion as well as skill. Such people would also be very intelligent, and would detect obvious hints in a heartbeat. But if they had to work hard to discover a lead, they would not suspect that it had been planted, and instead would feel like they had outsmarted the target.

"Lex, there are some guests here who want to meet you," told Mary as her hologram appeared beside Lex.

"They can wait a bit, I have a few things I need to do," said Lex, before teleporting to his office.

While there were many things he forgot, he remembered clearly that the empire was no longer a suitable target for help regarding the matter on earth. Even if Lex found the fact that they had to give up on interfering with earth acceptable, which he did not, there were other things that required his attention. While he had forgotten Rafael's secret, he clearly remembered the scale of importance he felt that his secret had. It was quite high.

Higher than Rafael, though, was Anakin. Due to his ostentatious personality and non-serious display, it was easy for people to underestimate him. But Lex had made too many mistakes to easily underestimate anyone. The fact that he seemed the most forgettable of the entire group... made him the most dangerous and valuable, potentially.

Lex opened up a diary and began taking notes. If he was going to analyze his entire interaction with the group to try and determine what their secrets were based on that, he would need to write down everything.

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Chapter 482: Recently deceased

Lex twirled a pen in between his fingers as he looked at the page filled with his notes. It hadn't taken him too long, an hour at most, to list everything he knew about them completely and try to analyze what secrets they hid.

Larry's was pretty straightforward, especially since he had seen his fight in the Murder grounds. Perhaps it was his affinity, or maybe his cultivation technique, or something else entirely, but it was obvious that it had something to do with metals.

Using the clues that he had, as well as the nature of the universe to do absolutely absurd things, Lex concluded that Larry's entire body had either turned into metal or was in the process of it. He had complete control of the metal within his own body, as well as potentially complete control of great influence on external metals. He could heal his body using metals, and there was a huge possibility that he could also cultivate by absorbing metals as well.

A single glance was all it took for Lex to locate the various metal extraction requests he was doing through the Guild room. That information only reinforced all the guesses that Lex had about him. In fact, he further went out on a limb and guessed that the whole reason Larry was being hunted, and that his family had been targeted, had something to do with his metal related abilities.

It was very standard protagonist stuff, with extreme potential for growth. If Lex could provide him with a continuous supply of metals, he had the potential to become a great worker at the Inn.

Next was Noman. His utility need not be explained, and Lex valued him a lot as a potential worker. His curse was a potential risk and a threat, and would require Lex to do some research on it.

With Rafael, Lex was unable to guess his secret, but Lex firmly concluded that his personality had already developed greatly, and that he was a man with a goal. It would not be easy to influence him unless it related to his goals, so regardless of how valuable his secret might be, he was not a good candidate as a worker.

That left behind Anakin and Souta. Anakin seemed easy to approach, but he hid his true intentions deeply. Or at least that was Lex's conclusion. As a result, it was best to observe him some more before making a decision.

Souta, on the other hand, was very straightforward despite his secrecy. Lex only needed to find a single way to penetrate his wall of secrets, and then everything that he was hiding would be displayed openly for Lex to see.

He took a few more minutes to stare at the page while he devised a plan of action, before turning his attention back to his festival. More or less, things had been going well so far. Now it was time to plan for the series of events that would kick off at the start of the third week.

Lex smiled as he pulled up the proposals brought forth by the planning division. There were 3 main things that would occur during the next few weeks, and two of them would require a major redesigning of the Inn - even if it was temporary.

The more he looked over the designs, the more Lex smiled. The latest proposals had even sought to include the endless shower of lightning tribulations at the Inn into the next two events.

It was bold, and Lex liked it. He began working to finalize all the changes and configure them so that they would automatically be initiated at the start of the third week.

While these two events would cater to the common, or less adventurous guests, the third and final event was targeting those who had more of a taste for risk and reward.

The minor realms that had been connecting to the Inn had reached 337 in number, and there were still more that were being connected. While Lex could completely control the opening of the gates to the minor realms, as well as their locations, he could not look inside of them. As a result, he really had no idea of how dangerous or safe they were. But they were a part of the Inn now, so it wasn't like he could ignore them either.

The third event would include a hunt to first locate the entrances, which Lex would hide across the Inn's landscape. Then, after signing a disclaimer stating that the Inn was not responsible for any danger or harm that befell them if they chose to enter, the guests would be allowed to explore the Minor realm freely.

This way, not only did Lex get a great event that could entertain guests who weren't particularly interested in festivals, he could begin to gather information about those Minor realms. Once he knew what those realms actually contained and the amount of danger they wrought, he could incorporate

them into the Inn regularly, and charge guests to enter and explore. That would happen after the event was over, of course.

"Hey Lex," said Mary, who appeared beside him. "You remember that area you were planning on building for your spirit guests specifically?"

"Yeah, I remember. I'm planning on focusing on it once the festival is over and I have free time. I want to research it properly before I establish it. Why?"

"Well, I think you may want to establish it a little sooner," she said with a shrug. "Pretty much everyone who died trying to overcome tribulations is turning themselves into a spirit. We already have 12, and at the rate that things are going, I think that number will only increase."

Lex was surprised at what he heard. He scanned the Inn to see what he could find, and just as Mary said, found a total of 12 permanent spirit guests. What she had failed to mention was... 11 of those spirits had fit themselves inside a trench coat and some jeans - God only knew where they found those - and were walking around the Inn pretending to be a normal man.

Was this really the kind of behavior someone recently deceased should have?

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Chapter 483: Wait and watch

Lex observed the spirits in trench coats for a while, but when they did not seem to be doing anything suspicious, he let them be. He did, however, turn his attention to the lightning tribulations. After isolating the abodes, Lex had not paid much attention to the tribulation, for they never really struck anyone other than their main target. Even the massive spaceship did not seem to be an obstruction, as wherever the ship was an obstruction, the lightning clouds would just form under it.

But it seemed like he could not just let them be. After all, since he was instructed to create a tribulation room, and it would become an eventual facility, he should get it done as quickly as possible so the maximum number of guests can benefit from it.

It would be so convenient if he could just look up the information on tribulations on the Henali portal so that he could prepare for them, but unfortunately, no information showed up when he searched. He

suspected this was, once again, something he would need to raise his permission or authority within the portal to search up.

But all was not lost. Since he couldn't research it online, he instead paid the utmost attention to it in person.

At the moment, 4 guests were undergoing the lightning tribulation. That was a ridiculously high number, and was a sight even the most prosperous of nations would never give birth to. Yet it had to be remembered that the Inn had been flooded by devils in the millions, many of whom were at levels too high for Lex to even see.

It was no surprise that many of them were undergoing such tribulations then, for the devils had sent anyone who could come under such short notice and was near someone with a golden key.

This only benefited Lex, for he observed the tribulation from every possible angle from start to finish. He saw the formation of the lightning, gathering power within the cloud, to how it struck down and hit the target. He saw how various targets would deal with the lightning. Most devils let it fall onto their bodies, for their resilience was formidable. Others, however, had employed protective formations around themselves, or straight up tried to attack the lightning with their own attacks.

Each tribulation was very long and took anywhere from a couple of hours to a whole day, depending on how successful it was. As such, Lex spent the next 30 hours carefully studying the tribulations.

Perhaps it did not require so much time studying, but considering how success or failure would literally determine the life or death of his guests, he wanted to get things right. In the end, it was a good thing he paid attention for so long, because the fire tribulation, which was a lot less conspicuous than the lightning tribulation, would start a few hours after the lightning one ended.

But any and all who underwent the fire tribulation never actually caught on fire, or interacted with flames in any visible way. Despite that, however, black smoke could be seen escaping the cultivators' orifices and their skin would often crack up. The unlucky ones who could not survive were often only left as a husk while their insides literally evaporated away with the smoke.

It was... disturbing, to say the least. He could not understand what exactly the fire tribulation involved, and so wasn't sure how to combat it. After all, while the lightning tribulation could be blocked using attacks or arrays, it didn't seem like the cultivators made much preparation for the fire one.

During the time Lex was studying the tribulations, he also allowed a portion of his mind to check up on the rest of the Inn. He finally got around to looking up who the guest was who wanted to meet with him. It did not take him long to figure out that the man in question was literally the emperor of the Empire!

Instead of feeling a rush to go and meet with him so that he wasn't left waiting, Lex instead decided to make him wait even longer. After all, he absolutely could not meet someone of his caliber if he didn't have his spirit sense in control.

He also 'accidentally' spied on Larry and discovered that his girlfriend was a Neko, meaning a cat-human!

'Kinky,' was all Lex was able to comment.

Like this, Lex remained satisfied that he wasn't ignoring anything too important happening at the Inn while he studied the tribulation. When he finally concluded his study, it was time to turn his attention to the Room Design.

But, worried that he might not be able to use the feature effectively, he decided that his first official room would be for his spirit guests. After meditating for a short period to calm his mind and help him refocus, Lex began to work.

On Main street, there was a massive gray cathedral that could even be described as gothic! The various gargoyles and demons displayed as statues all over the building built an ominous atmosphere, while the stained glass depicting angles made it look holy.

It stood out from all the other buildings on Main street, not only because of its appearance, but because of one other very special reason. Although there was no official facility attached to this building, as even when guests entered they would not be offered anything special or experience anything out of the

ordinary, it needed nothing extra to attract guests. All the guests needed to know was that the giant wolf pup, which was commonly believed to be the Innkeepers pet, had made a home in the cathedral.

While such a thing would normally attract many guests, currently only a flying whale was found inside. Little Blue had gained in cultivation as well due to the recent upgrade, but its breakthrough had been easy. Fenrir, on the other hand, seemed to be going through immense pain!

Its once massive body had shrunk down so that it could fit perfectly into the black marble bowl in the center of the hall. His body was being bathed in the diluted divine energy of the hall, and bit by bit, it was replacing the spiritual energy in its body.

The flying whale flew in circles around it as it tried to suppress its anxiety. If only the turtle was here to look at the pup, but it was also locked in cultivation. All it could do now was wait and watch.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 484: 2 new rooms

Spirits were beings that were extremely sensitive to any kind of energy fluctuation, mostly because they could interact with energy directly with their souls! This was very crucial information to keep in mind when designing a room for them. But the question was... how was Lex supposed to actually use it?

The first thing he did was use the feature of the meditation room to gather spiritual energy and multiplied its effectiveness. But was just raising the concentration of energy enough? That was unlikely, or else spirits would all just congregate in areas of high energy concentration. No, there had to be something more. Something soothing. Something warm and comfortable. Something like... a hot tub!

Lex then used the hot tub room and... turned the entire room meant for spirits into a hot tub. But instead of water, the tub was instead filled with extremely concentrated spiritual energy. Considering the fact that the Inn was now in a 2.5 star ranked realm, that was the easy part. Not only had the ambient spiritual energy increased, it had become cleaner and purer as well.

He couldn't really think of any other features to add to the room, for now, as every further addition would need to be extremely important. That's because the more complicated he made a room, the more expensive it would be to use, as well as to create.

That was because, unlike previous rooms, which were completely calibrated by the system, these would require him to calibrate himself. While he had a theory for how the two features of the room were supposed to work together, he had to make sure they operated according to his theory, which was a delicate process.

Furthermore, there were a few different configurations he could reach for the room balance, but some might cost more than others, so he had to be sure.

Ultimately, he ended up creating a room he was satisfied with, though it was somewhat expensive. The room cost 860 MP a day and literally was just a hot tub of energy, so Lex decided to charge 1000 MP a day for a profit of 140MP.

He placed the room in the village and then had the system send all the spirits a message about the room to notify them.

There was one massive flaw in this plan, which was that spirits would have already expended all their wealth to turn into spirits. Lex had no solution for that. It wasn't even as if the 860 MP was a single time expense which could be shared by all the spirits. That just covered the energy expense for one spirit to be in the room. Were that not the case, Lex even thought about just having the room running for the spirits at all times, but if he had to pay for each individual spirit, it would quickly become infeasible for him.

But whether the spirits used the room or not, Lex was satisfied with the results, so he turned his attention to the tribulation room.

He already knew what features he wanted to add after 30 hours of study, the real trial would be calibrating the room to work as expected. He didn't even care about the costs this time, and would only consider lowering them if everything else already worked as he intended.

The first feature Lex added was a dampening formation. That was a kind of defensive formation that was available for the Inn to use. It would not block any attacks from entering it, but it would absorb a great deal of energy from anything that crossed the boundary of the formation as fuel to keep itself running.

Forcefully absorbing energy, ironically, used up a lot of energy so the formation would never have a surplus of energy. The benefit of this formation over one that would attempt to block the attack directly

was that this one would stay in effect as long as the tribulation lasted. Otherwise, if it directly started blocking the lightning, it might last a few hits, but then would eventually break. Moreover, Lex was unsure if the lightning carried any beneficial effects, which is why he didn't dare to block it out right.

The second feature he added was the effect of the meditation room which helped the user concentrate and focus more easily. The third feature was that of the recovery room, which accelerated the natural healing of the user, allowing the cultivator to start healing even as he was being injured. The final feature he added was one he wasn't exactly sure would be beneficial, but he added it anyway.

It was a chilling formation which had to be manually activated. Once it became active, it would rapidly cool down the room to an extreme amount. He was not sure how else to help combat the fire tribulation, for he wasn't able to get an in-depth read of it. He hoped the drop in temperature would be able to provide some kind of relief.

There were only four features, but balancing them out and making sure they work together was far from a simple ordeal.

The real issue was that each feature worked in a certain way. The way the system created an environment that boosted concentration might clash with the way the system promoted self healing. When these two features, which were supposed to exist together, clashed against one another, the simplest way the system resolved it was to brute force it, which would result in an explosion in the price of the room's function.

Lex's part came in when he could reduce or increase the activity of each feature, hoping to create a balance where they don't necessarily clash with one another. It was manageably complicated with 2 features, but with 4 it was a massive headache.

It took Lex another 12 hours of working with full concentration to get the room working, and reduce the price as much as possible. Still, the room cost 74,000MP a day to use. Lex rounded it off to 100,000 MP and sent out the notification. Besides the MP cost, a cultivator would need to have prestige level 3 to use it, though for the duration of this festival, that requirement had been waived.

Now, it was time to see if it was actually helpful or not to begin with. But first, he needed sleep. Just in case, however, he told Mary to wake him up if anything went wrong with the tribulation rooms.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 485: Vacation

When Lex woke up on his own, completely well rested and refreshed, the first feeling he had was of relief that no problems had occurred. It wasn't as if he was suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) but actually yes, that's exactly what was happening.

He stretched in bed, producing several cracks from his various joints. His body no longer did that naturally, as there was no need, but due to his increased control over his body, he could do it anyway. There was just something so satisfying about it.

He spent a couple more minutes in bed, allowing his brain and body to relax a little. Even if nothing was wrong, the moment he stepped out from the comfort of his bed, he would be inundated with work and would have no time for rest.

But the peace eventually had to end. Besides, it wasn't as if he dreaded all the work he did at the Inn. It was quite enjoyable in fact.

"How long was I out?" Lex asked Mary as he finally let his feet fall out of the bed and slip into his bathroom slippers. Considering that he had worked continuously for over 2 days without rest, and had been allowed to sleep till he naturally woke up, he expected that he had logged in quite a few hours.

"Just over 3 hours," Mary replied, appearing in front of him. This time she was dressed as an astronaut, with her visor open, showing her little face.

Lex froze. 3 hours? Wasn't that... too little? But he was feeling so refreshed. How could it be?

Lex shook his head and just accepted the fact that with his advancing cultivation, his need for sleep would be greatly diminished.

"You received a hologram message from your friend, Larry. Do you want me to play it?"

"Sure," said Lex as he walked into the bathroom to take a shower.

The message was merely him providing an update, letting Lex know that his treasure would arrive the following day.

"How are the tribulation rooms performing?" Lex asked from within the shower. For some reason, he was feeling a little lazy today. He didn't feel like working so much. He just wanted to enjoy the Inn, so he decided to push back any less important plans for the day.

"Not bad at all. Every single person about to undergo a tribulation is using them. It's still too early to tell how effective it is, but it seems to be well received by the guests."

"Makes sense," was all he said. He had not received the quest reward yet, which probably meant it would wait till one or a few guests used the tribulation room to determine its effectiveness before rewarding him. After all, since the reward was based on his performance, the effectiveness of the room had to be determined first.

After a nice, warm shower, Lex checked his closet for some of his old clothes. It had been a long time since he wore anything that he hadn't bought from the system, but since he decided to relax today, he wanted to wear some of his own clothes.

His attire wasn't phenomenal, but there was just a level of comfort a man's favorite pair of jeans delivered that even more comfortable clothes just could not. Instead of a usual T-shirt, he went into vacation mode by putting on a Hawaiian shirt, with large floral patterns.

All dressed, he teleported out of his room as himself, and in the garden behind the Midnight Manor. It did not matter to Lex that the emperor was in the vicinity - what did he, Lex, have to do with the fact that the emperor wanted to meet the Innkeeper?

He sat down on one of the free lawn chairs and ordered an entire buffet's worth of food. That would serve well as his appetizer. After all, with his new cultivation, the rate at which his body digested food was phenomenal. Moreover, he had to make up for quite a few missed meals.

It was a sad fact that since Lex was so busy, and his body did not develop any sensation of hunger, Lex had completely forgotten to eat multiple meals. It was likely he would do more of the same in the future. But for now, he would feast!

Lex closed his eyes and lost himself in the sensation of the warm sunshine falling on his skin. He felt the wind blow through his hair. A few other guests were sitting nearby, though they had employed sound isolating formation bubbles so the sound of their conversations didn't carry over. Instead, it was the sound of moving animals that Lex heard.

A gray cat came up and started rubbing against Lex's foot. That was strange. Lex remembered bringing in various animals, but did he bring in cats?

Lex didn't think about it for long, for the workers started bringing out the food and laying it on a table in front of him.

"Hey, you mind if I join you?" asked the cat with gleaming eyes when it saw the food. Lex looked at the cat and was about to scan it, but decided not to. He was on vacation. He would act like any normal guest. Besides, the cat sounded like a small child.

"Sure, drag a seat," said Lex, already cutting through a plate of sausages.

Excitedly, the cat transformed into what looked like a young boy of maybe four or five years old, and quickly dragged a lawn chair. He climbed up, with some difficulty, and turned around only to realize the table was too high for him on that seat.

Lex chuckled and asked one of the workers to bring a highchair for the kid. Lex noticed that even in this form, the kid had cat ears and a tail. Was he a Neko? He had to be, right?

Lex didn't think about it much and instead looked at his watch. It was less than a minute until noon.

"Hey kid, want to see something cool?" Lex asked in between bites.

The kid only nodded, though his eyes never left his plate of nuggets.

"Look up," Lex said, just as the clock hit 12.

Just as the child looked up, the third week of the festival officially began. Fireworks lit up in the sky, though they were severely outmatched by the flashing lightning nearby, and buildings began to appear.

The Midnight Inn had thousands of acres of land, though most of it was undeveloped and was covered in various plants. Now though, for this specific period, that would change, as various roller coasters and slides and rides began to appear in the entire undeveloped areas of the Inn.

Moreover, in between the sprawling amusement park that was beginning to appear, was a racing track that was also spread out across the Inn.

The next part of the festival was all about theme parks and golf cart racing! Lex smiled at the magnificent sight, though the smile didn't last long. He had to eat, after all. He couldn't waste time grinning when he could be chewing!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 486: I believe I can fly

The kid completely missed the dramatic revelation that Lex timed for his eyes never left his plate. Lex only shook his head and continued to eat as well.

Planning this portion of the festival had been harder than Lex had imagined. The idea of theme parks was great, and Lex could easily come up with various ideas that the system would allow him to implement, which would have been too hard to do normally. But the issue was that while all the ideas Lex had would be great fun and excitement for mortals, they would lack the element of thrill for cultivators. Moreover, the greater the cultivation realm, the lesser the excitement would be.

Of course, such a situation only lasted a short while. Not only did he task the planning division to look into if there were any amusement parks or the like for cultivators, he himself had spent some time on the Henali portal doing some research.

As it turned out, the solution was simpler than expected. All he needed to do was throw money at the problem and watch it solve itself. Or, well, in his case, throw MP at the problem.

While a majority of the rides were for everyone, some rides would require the rider to be of a certain cultivation level at least. This was because, alongside the usual pattern that rides followed, various

formations could be added to the rides for added effect! Moreover, since these were temporary formations accessed through the event panel that had nothing to do with offense or defense, there was a much greater variety.

Illusion formation, formations designed to disrupt a sense of direction, formations that increased the sensation of fear or excitement, formations that could slow or speed up the perception of time, and many, MANY more formations were used throughout the theme parks to make the rides as diverse and entertaining as possible.

Moreover, the idea of using formations made it so that the rides for mortals became more unique as well.

As if that was not enough, there was also the race course! There was one, massive race track that spanned the entire Inn, as well as a few smaller ones here and there. Of course, simple race tracks would be boring so the tracks were not only bizarre, they were full of unexpected traps, treasures, hidden shortcuts, and dead ends!

Individual races and smaller tournaments would begin as early as today, but a main racing event was also planned that would only begin a week later. To even enter the main racing event, the participant would have to first win one of the individual races or tournaments. This way, when the main race began, most of the drivers would already be well known and have a following.

As for the vehicles used in the race? They were, of course, golf carts.

Some who were familiar with traditional golf carts might complain that golf carts were too slow for a racing tournament. They were not wrong. But there was nothing normal about this race to begin with.

One of the reasons the participants were required to win a race first was so that they would become familiar with the technicalities of the race, for Lex had drawn a lot of inspiration from one of his favorite racing game: Marlo cart!

In the distance, Lex could already hear the sound of the race commentator that Lex had hired. While he had originally planned to delegate this job to one of his workers, while he was planning the event, he came across a guest who seemed perfect for the job. Since Lex didn't want to go through the hassle of having him go through a proper text and actually hiring him, Lex just hired him as a temporary worker.

The commentator was named Awry, and the vigor and charisma in his voice would no doubt excite all the countless viewers the races would gather.

"Hey kid, do you have any parents or guardians with you?" Lex asked as he looked at him from the side of his eyes. Soon, the lavish meal would end and Lex was planning on going to the theme park to take in a guests' experience. He wouldn't feel right about just leaving the kid alone though, which is why he was asking.

"Yeah, I do," he replied, pausing eating just long enough to get those words out.

"Well, where are they?"

"They told me to go scam a sucker while they cultivate," the kid responded, not even taking a second to think about what he was saying.

Lex suddenly regretted asking in the first place.

When he finally finished his meal, he looked at the kid again, who was still busy munching, and shook his head. Informing a worker to keep an eye on the kid and let him know if anything was wrong, Lex left towards the nearest theme park.

"Hey Mary, I know he didn't request it, but let Gerard know he can take time off to participate in the races," said Lex just as he walked up to his first ride.

It was simple enough as it was a merry-go-round. Except that the speed of the ride would slowly and steadily continue to increase until, eventually, it launched the rider alongside his seat into the air! Of course, the ride was supported by the system and the landing location was guaranteed. This was just a festival version of a train or taxi. Why waste time walking from one place to another when the commute itself can be a part of the ride?

That was the philosophy he planned this ride with, alongside many others.

Grabbing some cotton candy on a stick, Lex got on the ride and strapped himself in. He could not suppress his smile when he saw all the other excited guests get in as well, though many of them were also actually quite nervous.

"Hey," Lex called out to one of the riders sitting near him, a young girl who looked both excited and scared.

When she looked over, Lex asked, "do you believe you can fly?"

She was confused for a moment, until something clicked in her mind and she responded, "no, but I'm definitely going to touch the sky today."

Oh, that reminded Lex. Silently, he gave instructions and had Captain Cirk raise the hovering height of the ship. Theoretically it was too high for any guest to reach it with any of the rides, but Lex didn't want to take chances.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 487: So beautiful

The sensation of being launched out of a speeding carousel was much more enjoyable than Lex expected. Of course, that was primarily because the pressure generated from the spinning carousel didn't affect Lex at all, and secondly because he wasn't wearing anything like a skirt.

Too caught up in the novelty of the experience, though, Lex completely forgot about his cotton candy until it was about to fly away! Fortunately, he used his spirit sense out of instinct and caught the fluffy treat right in the air beside him. His spirit sense firmly locked onto it, and kept it close to Lex regardless of where he went.

Strangely, he found that in the matter concerning his cotton candy, he could maintain perfect control of his spirit sense. Maybe instead of a spiritual treasure, he should just get more of that.

Once Lex was launched in the air, he only had a couple dozen seconds to soar through the sky before he landed comfortably. He tested out trying to get off his mount, just to see if he could deviate from the flight pattern of the ride. But he was held firmly to his seat with straps, and the ride did not deviate from

the intended path. After all, flying freely through the air was just an illusion, for in truth, the ride had a fixed path.

Feeling pretty good after his first ride, Lex did not wait and quickly got on another. This one was a rollercoaster with a minimum requirement of Golden core cultivators to ride. So then the question was, how was it different from normal roller coasters?

Well, first of all, instead of sitting, you were only wearing a few straps that would take you forward face first. As if that wasn't enough, the speed of the ride, the intensity of the turns, the drops and the rise were all beyond what a normal being could tolerate. Moreover, using various illusion formations, it seemed more than once the ride seemed like it was about to crash, or had broken down in the middle, or ended in the lair of a dangerous monster.

Psychological excitement melded extremely well with the physical strain the rider underwent, creating a thrilling ride, even for cultivators. Moreover, this was just one of the strategies they had employed. There were so many more!

Planet Orange Bastion, Pental System

An unusual-looking spaceship approached the planet and landed in a landing zone amidst a mountain range. The signature orange soil of the planet had made its way even here, high up on these rocky peaks, giving the snow a shade of something that had spoiled.

The cold air felt harsh to breathe in, and the wind carried with it a cold bite that could pierce the skin and freeze the blood vessels beneath. None of the inhabitants seemed to care, or rather, they were not given the luxury to care.

Chained beasts of different species walked around, doing menial labor. A small group waited by the ship, and when it finally opened, it revealed hundreds of other creatures, similarly bound. There were even some humans amongst them, and they were similarly naked and chained.

The air was filled with the sounds of whips, shouting and screaming as the group began to move out from the ship, though no one looked at them even twice.

A creature flew out of the ship from another exit and moved towards a nearby building, ignoring everything happening on the ground. The creature was 3 feet (0.9 meters) tall and had four, extremely short, thin arms and two equally sized legs. It had four thin, nearly transparent wings on its back. It had four eyes, two in front and two in the back, and two mouths, once again one in the front and one at the back.

Once inside the massive building, the creature made its way to a special chamber, where another creature of the same species was comfortably sitting in what looked like a pool of blood.

"Inform the sect leader, I've brought back valuable treasure," the creature said in a hissing voice, both its mouths speaking in unison.

"Treasure? Weren't you sent out to catch slaves?" the creature sitting in blood asked, jealousy evident in its voice.

"Indeed, I was," the first creature said, pride oozing from every fiber of its being. "But I found treasure as well. Now hurry, go inform the sect master. Someone at your station need not worry about details that are above you."

The creature squirmed in anger and hatred, but left silently. The first creature derived great pleasure from seeing the other suffer. They were not enemies. In fact, the creature had never seen the other before. But as a Diplo, the creature had sadism imbued into its very being.

The creature unceremoniously sat in the pool of blood that the other had left behind, and waited patiently for the sect master, fiddling with a small leather bag hanging across its chest.

When the sect master finally arrived, a Diplo of even smaller size, not even reaching two feet, he also took a seat within the pool.

"This better be worth it, or you'll be joining the slaves," the sect master said, its voice cold and arrogant.

The first Diplo did not waste any time and quickly took out all the items from its pouch. All of them were shiny, and all of them had auras of dense spiritual energy.

The sect leader checked them one by one with great interest - by biting each one. Most of the items crumpled under his massive jaw strength while a few survived. One particular golden key, however, broke entirely and teleported the two Diplos away.

They immediately became wary of their surroundings, but they were taken aback when they actually saw what surrounded them.

Metallic contraptions filled the air with thousands if not hundreds of thousands of slaves strapped or held in, being flung around and tortured in the most spectacular way.

"The promised holy land," the sect leader whispered as he saw a few slaves just being randomly catapulted into the air. They were not even using the slaves for work, they were just torturing them for no reason. It was so beautiful, it brought tears to his eyes.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 488: A Holy Land

The Diplo was not a very prevalent species in the origin realm, but that surprised no one. Their short stature, weak bodies and general ineptitude in cultivation put them on the low end of almost every food chain that existed. Though they were an intelligent species, their generally disgusting appearance did not earn them any favors with most other intelligent species, leaving them to live an unfortunate existence.

At Orange Bastion, though, something unusual happened. The planet used to be like any other that could support life, and was ruled by a naturally powerful predatory species. Eventually it was colonized and other intelligent species started living there, though the Diplo did not receive favorable treatment despite being natives of the planet.

All that changed, however, when an evil sect was created. Through means that were still unknown even to most of the Diplo themselves, the first sect master gained the inheritance of an evil cultivator that gained strength through the blood of other beings. The stronger the being whose blood they absorbed, the greater the boost in their strength would be.

Using that inheritance, which the sect spread amongst all Diplos, the previously irrelevant race waged war on the entire planet, eventually succeeding in taking control. It was unknown if it was a side effect of the evil cultivation technique, or if it was just a suppressed trait of Diplo's themselves, but once they gained power, all of them were revealed to be extremely sadistic. They took great pleasure in torturing and agonizing others, especially if the other race was perceived to be stronger than the Diplo's themselves.

As such, the sect master and the Diplo who had discovered the key in the first place were in complete awe of the amusement park. From children to adults, screams could be heard echoing far and wide within the strange metallic jungle.

What was absolutely strange was that the 'slaves' who were being tortured would voluntarily get into the torture devices themselves. The sect master suddenly felt so small, not in size, but in his outlook of the world. This place was built by an absolute master, and the sect master was determined to steal all these designs and implement them back on his planet. Excitement filled his eyes as he began to wander the ground, his personal hologram appearing to inform him about this place and what was going on.

A few minutes after the Diplos disappeared, members of two other sects appeared, though this time they appeared from a golden door rather than a golden key. They were humans, and the members from each sect could be easily be distinguished based on how they were dressed.

The first group was dressed from head to toe in heavy armor, with a massive shield that covered half the length of their bodies in their left hand, and a single, long, straight sword in their right.

The second group was dressed in simple Daoist robes, and had a relatively shorter sword flying right beside them.

The two groups appeared ready for combat, and looked around at their new surroundings warily as they absorbed everything.

The appearance of this specific group was a big deal, not because of who they were, but because of how far they had come from. So far, the reach of the Inn had stayed within a certain region. Even when connecting planets from different galaxies, the galaxies were relatively nearby. But this group in particular had come from so far away the Jotun empire held no sway in their territories, though they were familiar with the empire due to the Henali portal.

The reason they could appear here was the golden door. Since Lex gained the upgrade Inter-realm broadcast, the golden door had gained the ability to not only spawn on planets that the Inn was connected to, but anywhere in any realm that the Inn was connected to.

"Paladin Lovis, what do you make of this place?" asked one of the daoists. Though they followed different cultivation paths, the daoists and paladins were fast allies, and often worked together. It helped a lot that the paladins were a righteous force, sworn to protect the innocent and fight tyrants.

"It is the noble, holy land of our people," the paladin Lovis said, removing his helmet. He needed to gaze upon the sight before him with his eyes unobstructed. The paladins had a different cultivation system, focused on tempering their will and using it to manipulate holy energy. And this place... it was as if it was designed to temper the will of warriors under the most rigorous of circumstances.

"Look, how they temper even their children to face unavoidable death," he said, pointing to a particular rollercoaster. Due to how the ride was shaped, it seemed to the riders that they would slam into a wall, right before the coaster dove into a hidden, completely dark cave with great speed.

"If we learn from the architect of this great training ground, we can bolster our forces. Within a few generations, we can turn the tide of war!"

"Look at the rain of lightning," said a daoist, pointing in the distance. "It truly is a holy land. Cultivators come here to face death and overcome it!"

"We will need reinforcements if we are to explore this entire place," said the paladin, just in time for his hologram to appear and begin telling him about the Midnight Inn. The two groups began walking together as they learned of the wonders of the Inn.

Only a few minutes later, through yet another golden door, another group appeared, though this time they were not human. Instead, they were elves. More specifically, they were elvish outcasts who had been shunned from their communities for reveling in technology rather than nature.

"A holy land!" one of them exclaimed as they looked out into the endless forest of amusement park rides and the massive spaceship up above.

"We have found our home," said another one, wiping tears from her eyes.

"Our prayers have been answered."

The group also left, under the guidance of their hologram, but the cycle of new guests continuing to appear continued. Slowly and steadily, the crowd at the Inn started becoming more and more diverse.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 489: Reaving Dread

"Hey look at this," said a finely dressed man, perusing through some names in a book. "This is quite interesting. I signed my name down, yet I'm so far down the list."

The man's four companions made their way to what was revealed to be the guest registry.

"What is it?" asked Jotun, leader of the Jotun Empire. It had been too long since he'd last taken a vacation, so he'd basically spent the last few days drinking nonstop, though, of course, he could not get drunk.

He also sent a missive back home to have the golden keys delivered to his favorite wife. Even if he had learnt nothing else about the Inn, its ability to teleport people from anywhere was phenomenal! He finally had a way to spend time with his family. There were tactical benefits to this place as well, he knew, but he could not be bothered to worry about them. He had people who made plans according to his desires, so they would see to the gritty details.

"It's called a guest registry," said the man who had signed his name, Nisar Butt. "When you sign your name, it ranks you according to the achievements in your life. The top 1000 get rewards, and the higher the rank, the better the reward. I signed up, but barely made it to the top 80s."

Nisar's statement might have sounded simple, but only someone who knew him would understand the weight that it carried. Not only was Nisar one of the founders of the top 3 families in the Jotun Empire, he was a businessman whose influence spanned multiple galaxies. His individual wealth, in the entire Empire, could only be surpassed by the empire itself. He also had the strength to be able to afford such wealth, yet he was only in the top 80s!

The rest of the group was intrigued and similarly signed their names. The names of the other three ranked similarly, with two of them not even making the top 100, while Jotun himself earned the rank 10.

While the ranking seemed unbelievable, especially since each person's achievements weren't listed, they had no one to argue with. So they looked at the other names in the top 10.

7 of the top 10 were devils, all of which were well known. One was Jotun, one was from the Deathsworn family, and the top one was Lex. They had no way of knowing which race the Deathsworn, who was ranked 5, was, for the Deathsworn family was unusual. They were not a family bound by blood, but by their creed, and as such, included many different races.

But even if they did not know who Aslan Deathsworn was, they at least understood his background. Instead, it was the top person, Lex Williams, who was completely unknown.

"Hm, this really is interesting," Jotun said, though not because he cared whose names were above him. He could feel the various anchors the book gave him, and he immediately began to comprehend their value.

But his attention on the registry did not last long. He did not reach his level by coveting the prizes of others, and so he did not care who were the people above him. He would take whatever rewards he had gotten, for they were free and unexpected, and continue to focus on his very important task of relaxing until the Innkeeper showed up. The rest, though, kept their eyes locked on the top 100. These were names worth knowing, and one of them, which was currently standing on 99, was actually a guest whose name they had heard of.

"Marlo..." one of them muttered. He was a human, and he was in the top 100, which meant they should find the time to introduce themselves.

Lex had spent a few hours enjoying himself at the theme park before he decided to return to his duties. Amongst the very many minor things he needed to oversee, the first and most important was to meet with the replacement the griffin had summoned.

Lex did not appear in person, and instead used his Remote presence ability to appear in front of the figure surrounded by black fog, and scanned him.

Name: Shroud

Age: 67,000

Sex: None

Cultivation Details: ???(Too high for host to detect)

Species: Abyssal fog

Midnight Inn Prestige Level: 1

Remarks: Silent AND deadly, so you won't want to know where it came from.

"How is the Griffin doing?" the Innkeeper asked, his voice devoid of any dissatisfaction.

"I believe he is undergoing a bloodline evolution, which is why he was unable to stop himself. I have been called in as his replacement. On behalf of the Reaving Dread mercenary corp, I would like to extend my apologies for such an unprofessional display. You will be given a satisfactory explanation for this once the Griffin is finished with the evolution."

"I am not concerned about that," said Lex, shaking his head. "Instead, I care more about how he summoned you without using the proper means. I do not believe you used a golden key to come here, correct?"

"Ah, that is easy to explain. All high-ranking members of the Reaving Dread have a spatial anchor carved onto their souls. In emergency situations, such as the one the griffin faced, they can use the anchor to call in reinforcements. The moment I was summoned, I took his place in the contract you have, so you do not need to worry as I am bound to the same restrictions as the Griffin."

The projection retained a neutral expression, but Lex's true body frowned.

"Does that mean you can teleport anywhere when needed?"

"Indeed," the black fog answered honestly. "Though the Reaving Dread only operates in a few realms, within those realms, its members can teleport anywhere. The Reaving Dread corp aspires to be the best mercenary group in the entire universe, if it hasn't achieved such a rank already."

The Innkeeper only nodded before disappearing, while Lex made a mental note. He was fairly certain he had just discovered another system. Moreover, with how the Fancy Monocle used to be a product of the Infinity Emporium, and how the system hired security from this Reaving Dread mercenary group, if he assumed both were systems, then it meant that systems were able to interact with one another. He had all but confirmed as much.

The thing that actually caused him to worry, however, was the fact that the mercenary group could teleport directly into the Inn, because it was in the Origin realm.

A sense of urgency filled him, and he scanned the Inn for a few targets. Unfortunately, everyone he knew from the Crystal realm was currently cultivating. All he could do was wait for them to finish cultivating, or hope that Zagan completed his test soon.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 490: First race

Over the next two days, Lex spent his time working, though he minimized his appearance as much as possible. Even when he had to appear, he used Remote presence instead of appearing personally. Larry had also delivered the spiritual treasure with which he could train his spirit sense, so he was simultaneously practicing with those as well.

At some point, during the second night, when Lex was able to pick up a dumpling with his chopsticks using only his spirit sense, Lex felt a great sense of achievement. It was not only eating the dumpling that made him feel great, but all that he accomplished. Even if he set the Inn and everything associated with it aside, just the fact that he was able to spend two consecutive days focusing not only on working, but working on multiple things all at the same time, was amazing.

Had this been a year ago, just the thought of how much he had to work would have sent him into a procrastination spiral. Sure, he wasn't as irresponsible as some other people, but it would have required great effort on his part, nonetheless. Moreover, he would have probably smoked before he got started as well, though he had always tried to limit himself with that habit. To be clear, it was not the cancer or possible health risks that made him reluctant to smoke too much, but the fact that he heard it affected taste buds. He loved food just too damn much to diminish the experience.

As if to keep the positivity coming, it was around the same time that his quest to set up a tribulation room was considered completed, and he got the reward.

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

- Reward upgraded for improving survival chance by 21%

- Reward upgraded for raising Inn's prestige dramatically

Reward Rank: B+

Reward: Lightning vessel, Firefighting gloves

Remarks: The real tribulation is the price for the room!

Lightning vessel

A small container in the shape of a lightning bolt. It can be used to store one strand of a unique lightning bolt!

Firefighting gloves

Gloves that let the wearer touch fire as if it were a physical entity!

The rewards were simple enough, and considering how he had to provide materials to upgrade rooms he designed himself, he felt they perfectly fit his needs. After all, he had a lightning and fire tempering room, and he would need various kinds of those elements if he wanted to upgrade the room.

Lex was almost afraid to admit it, but everything was going extremely well. No one had tried to crash his event, and there had been no arrogant third-generation spoiled brats coming in to pick fights. Soon he would master enough of his spirit sense to meet the emperor confidently, and most of all, his event was going really well.

Everything was going so well, in fact, that Lex decided to actually take another break. So, on the third day, he teleported out of his office and reappeared as Leo, standing in front of a racing track. Yes, he had signed up for an individual race.

Moreover, he planned on winning the race, and competing in the Midnight Inn Grand Prix. For these preliminary races, everyone got the same standard golf cart. Of course, standard here meant the standard for the Inn, not the standard golf carts on earth.

Xeon, a drake refiner who long ago once upgraded Gerards golf cart, had now, finally, become an official Inn employee, and he was the one who set the standard for the Inn by personally upgrading each cart.

The reason it took him so long was because Lex was vetting his ability and totally not because Lex forgot that he existed.

But all of that was irrelevant at the moment. 'Leo' got into his golf cart and looked around himself. The track he was on was one that he had no part in designing, so that he wouldn't have an unfair advantage. After all, he wanted to win as fairly as possible. Sure, he was more familiar with the mechanics of the incoming traps and bonuses, but everyone had been briefed thoroughly plus the races had been going on for a few days now so everyone should also know them all.

There were 3 rows of golf carts in front of him, with 3 carts in each row, and several rows behind him as well. Everyone was placed according to when they signed up for the race, so there was an element of luck involved here, but there was more than enough time and opportunities to negate that starting luck.

To win the race, there was only one thing you had to do. You had to be the first person to complete 3 laps. There were only a few rules of the race, besides the obvious such as no getting off the track, the most significant one was that no one could attack other cars using spiritual techniques or otherwise. All techniques could only be used to defend, that's it. You could not create traps, speed up, slow down, do anything other than defend.

That was because the race itself would provide more than enough methods to attack, anyway.

Leo revved the engine for his golf cart, though the cart was very silent so no one could hear anything. Lex felt the vibrations of the engine though - he definitely felt them. Looking around, he did not see anyone familiar, which was perfect. He wouldn't need to hold back out of courtesy.

A loud buzzer went off, announcing to the crowd that the race was about to begin. A massive red crystal appeared above the race, which, a few seconds later, turned yellow. All eyes were focused solely on the crystal, and the moment it turned green, the race began.

The initial acceleration of the cart was much greater than most of the riders anticipated, Lex included, but he adapted much quicker than the rest. Showing no hesitation, Lex slammed into the car in front of him to push it to the side. He was planning on getting first, and he wouldn't do that by playing nice.