

Innkeeper 49

The Innkeeper

Chapter 49: House arrest

Alexander stared at Marlo for a while, his thoughts hidden behind his stoic face. Externally Marlo looked completely fine so Alexander could not tell how severe the man's condition was, but he must have gone through something extremely drastic to change so much.

"Did you say this is an Inn?" he finally asked, turning away from his old mentor and towards the mysterious Innkeeper.

"Indeed," Lex answered, glad to have his customers' attention back. "Our patrons come from all across the universe, and come to get away from the troubles of mundane, everyday life. Come, let me give you a tour. Your friend will need some time to heal."

"Thank you. My name is Alexander, my friend's name is Helen. I apologize for not introducing ourselves earlier."

"Nonsense, there is no need to apologize. You came here to resolve your troubles, and that is the first thing that you did once you arrived. It is only right."

"Do you get many guests from Earth?" Alexander asked as the Innkeeper led him out of the Recovery room. The Midnight Inn must be a huge secret since he hadn't heard of it before. Lex, on the other hand, found his lack of response at there being sentient life out in the universe interesting, as other than Bastet and Falak, the few guests he had all were overwhelmed.

"A few," Lex responded. "We have only recently connected the Inn to Earth, which is why it is understandable that not many Earthlings have had a chance to visit so far. I expect that it should not be long before they start visiting more often."

"And anyone with a Golden Key can enter?"

"Naturally. We accept all guests, so long as they do not break any rules of the Midnight Inn. Golden keys can be randomly found across your planet, and anyone who has been a guest receives another one when they leave. Of course, if a guest desires to get more keys to give out to friends and family they can purchase them at the Gift shop."

As Lex took Alexander to walk around the Inn, he noticed that his guest took everything in his stride. The Inn, the scenery, the peaceful environment all seemed as if they were completely natural to him. Based on that Lex guessed that Alexander's identity might not be simple on Earth, but he would not intentionally probe him. At most, he would search him up when Lex returned to his apartment. When Lex took him to the Gift shop, however, he finally received the shocked and surprised reaction he had come to enjoy from his new guests.

Looking at the few items on display Alexander naturally would not recognize them, however each time he focused on an item he would somehow be informed of its use in his head.

"How long do you think Helen will need before she recovers," Alexander asked, his attention still on the items in the Gift Shop. The items on display were only a few, and it wasn't as if he hadn't seen other treasures with similar effects, but they were rare and would not be sold easily. What really amazed Alexander was the Tier 4 Core, which would help Golden Core Body refiners. Items that could affect Golden Core cultivators were EXTREMELY rare on Earth, let alone ones that could affect Body Cultivators. He needed to confirm if it really did as it was promoted.

"It should take a day or two at most. It really depends on how quickly her own body adapts to the poisons."

"In that case, if I rent a room can she stay there?"

"Yes, if you rent a regular room one other guest can accompany you during your stay. If you rent a courtyard, three other guests can accompany you."

"I'd like to rent a regular room for a week then, and I'd like a Tier 3 Core as well." Alexander once again took out his black credit card and Lex quickly swiped it for a total of 1850! His total MP was 2241 now, filling his immediate need for MP!

Velma, who was behind the counter in the gift shop, took out a Tier 3 Core and transformed it from a Core into a card with a picture of the Core on one side and the initials MI on the back in gold! This was the packaging for items sold through the Gift Shop. Instead of getting the item directly, it would be transformed into a card. When the guest would need the item he would only need to think about it while holding the card, and it would transform back into the item sold. This did not seem so important at the moment, but in the future if a guest bought many items, or items of a considerable size this would make it easy for them to transport the items.

Alexander's eyes gleamed as he saw the core turn into a card, and when Lex explained to him how to use the card he was most pleased! This was a very discreet way of transporting items, if he could somehow learn how to turn items into cards the benefits would be endless. Yet he was not so delusional as to think anyone would casually teach him such a technique. Little did he know, even if Lex were willing to teach him, Lex himself had no idea how to do it. This was a function the Inn performed automatically.

Alexander took the card and followed Gerard, who had appeared with a tray of lemonade, to his room. Alexander was in a bit of a rush, he had to return to Egypt quickly, but he wanted to confirm the Core's ability first. It was too important! It would drastically change his plans if the effects were real. As soon as he entered his room he turned the card back into a Core and sat down with it in his hand. He closed his eyes and started absorbing the energy in the Core. He wanted to start slowly, to be careful in case some accident happened, but the energy burst into his body like a raging flood and he was not able to control it. Yet he also knew immediately that the effects were real, and much better than he had anticipated! When he had broken through to the Foundation realm earlier, he had broken through in his body cultivation as well as spirit cultivation. He did not expect to make any progress in the short term, yet right now he knew that that would not be the case.

Lex was swooning as he truly admired how amazing his luck was! Just as he desperately needed MP to continue healing Marlo, a guest had appeared out of nowhere to shower him in MP! Based on his reactions, Lex suspected that this Alexander would not shy away from buying even more things from the Gift Shop.

But he was also curious about how Alexander got his key, and who exactly told him that Helen could be healed here. After thinking about it for a while, he could only assume that Bastet had passed one of her two keys to him. That made Alexander's identity even more worthy of notice!

He returned to his apartment and opened up his laptop to search the names of both of his two new guests to see if he could find anything on them. But before he could do anything he received an emergency notice from Blue Bird:

"All cultivators are immediately put under house arrest! Any non-authorized cultivator found roaming the city would be persecuted as a terrorist! All organizations are to cease any ongoing activities immediately."

Before he could fathom exactly what could prompt such a drastic notice, his computer screen was flooded with tempest posts about war breaking out in Egypt! Civilian websites were reporting a terrorist attack, but according to random posts on Tempest a battle between cultivators had broken out! A.D.F. was unreachable and no one could tell what was happening on ground because all networks in the area had been shut down.

While Lex was absorbed in the shock of what was happening his phone started ringing. He picked it up and was slightly surprised to find that Larry was calling him.

"Hey Larry," Lex said in an unsure tone.

"Hey Lex," replied the voice in an anxious tone. "I don't mean to inconvenience you but I was hoping for a favor. I'm in the city but my apartment is too far out for me to return to it quickly. Would it be possible for me to stay at your place for a short while? I really don't want to be arrested by random BlueBird agents for not getting back home quick enough!"

Lex was stunned for a moment, but quickly told Larry to come over. He sent him the address to his apartment and began waiting. Maybe Larry would have a better idea of what was happening.

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Chapter 50: ICPA

While waiting for Larry, Lex continued to search the Blue Bird Portal for details of what happened. There were countless rumors, about war breaking out in the region, about an ancient heritage that had been uncovered, about a unique treasure that had been uncovered that attracted all the rich and powerful. However there was no credible news. Neither Blue Bird nor any other organization released a statement about what was actually happening, just that all cultivator activity had to cease temporarily. Regardless of whatever it was, Lex was most confused about why he would be affected by it in New York if a battle

happened in Egypt. Based on everything he knew, despite the fact that there was always a lot of security cultivators engaged in battles all the time.

Lex was lost in his thoughts for a while before he was woken from his reverie by the sound of knocking on his door. He opened the door a badly bruised and sweaty Larry, standing at his doorstep with a small duffle bag full of clothes.

"What happened?" Lex asked out of concern. "Are you alright? Did you get into a fight?"

"No no, don't be alarmed!" Larry said, his voice still as energetic and cheery as ever. "I was at work when the Blue Bird notification went out. I work as a combat partner, a few bruises here and there are pretty common. Normally I go to a doctor after my sessions who fixes this right up, but the Club had to shut down in a hurry so I didn't get time. I was gonna go home but the commute is usually an hour long, I didn't know what the Blue Bird agents would have done to me if they found me still out so long after the emergency broadcast. I didn't want to risk it, I hope you don't mind."

"Not at all," Lex said, bringing Larry in. "Why don't you shower and freshen up first, we can talk after."

"Thanks," Larry said, showing a grateful smile, and walked into the bathroom with his bag. Lex grew a little more curious about this class fellow of his. He didn't doubt that Larry worked as a sparrer or trainer or whatever, but Lex had seen Larry fight during the self defense class. He wasn't so easily beaten, nor was he so easily bruised. There was more to his situation than he let on, but since Larry didn't want to say he would not intrude. While waiting for Larry he continued to surf the portal for more news.

There were countless conspiracies, but little of anything concrete. Someone had even brought to attention the fact that Marlo had canceled some of his business meetings for this entire week and had recently just disappeared from public view. Although Lex knew that Marlo was famous, he was surprised that someone would so thoroughly check his details and bring him into whatever this incident was.

Half an hour later Larry exited the bathroom in a fresh set of clothes, and although his bruises were still there at least he wasn't sweaty anymore.

"That felt great," Larry said, throwing himself onto the couch. "Sorry for intruding like that, I hope your girlfriend doesn't mind me staying here." Larry winked at Lex lecherously, and looked around the apartment for any signs of the 'girlfriend'.

"I live alone," Lex said, amused at Larry's obsession with girls.

"Ah, living the bachelor's life. That's fair, no reason to tie yourself down."

Lex shook his head, not bothering to explain. In this regard, Larry was hopeless.

"Do you have any idea what happened? Why did Blue Bird send out an emergency broadcast? Whatever happened, it couldn't have been that big. I mean, the non-cultivation world seems to be going on with business as usual."

"I don't know, but I can take a guess. It must be something to do with one of the International Cultivator Policing Agencies (ICPA). Like Blue Bird takes care of New York and a few other states in North America, there are a bunch of such agencies across the world. Whenever one of these agencies encounters an emergency, all agencies worldwide employ a cultivator house arrest. It's not common, but it has happened before."

"But isn't that a little extreme? I mean, as far as I can tell whatever the cause, it happened in Egypt. Why do we need to be placed under house arrest here? Or the rest of the world for that matter?"

Instead of replying immediately, Larry looked at Lex with an amused and entertained look. "Come on my friend, chasing after girls is fine. But you can't be so absorbed in the act that you become completely uninformed about the rest of the world."

Lex rolled his eyes. Which of the two of them was completely absorbed in thoughts of girls?

"I can tell you haven't really joined any organization, or met any other cultivators outside of class. Otherwise you wouldn't be asking such a basic question. Or at least, you'd have some idea of the reason. Ah I guess it's up to me to educate you. This is going to take a while, do you have any food?"

Lex had no food at home as he had been eating at the Inn lately, so he ordered them a few large pizzas. It might have seemed too much for the two of them, but Lex enjoyed a larger appetite since he started cultivating.

"Have you ever heard of the God complex?" Larry asked, once Lex finished ordering. But before Lex could answer, Larry continued talking. "The God complex is when a person starts believing themselves to be infallible. They start thinking their abilities are better than everyone else, or that they themselves are inherently better. Amongst mortals, very successful surgeons are known for developing these complexes. Among cultivators, it's even more common." Larry's voice had lost its jovial tone, and for the first time he seemed to be taking something seriously. "That's not to say cultivators become bad people. No, most cultivators stay lawful and peaceful and live their own lives without thoughts of hurting others. But the longer one cultivates, and the stronger they become, the more a cultivator slowly starts to see themselves as more than they once were. I mean, with such clear cut divisions in cultivation it's only natural that as your cultivation rises you think of yourself as better and better. After a certain amount of time, without realizing it, cultivators start thinking of themselves as different, or superior to mortals. I mean, just think about the terminology for non-cultivators: mortals.

"For the most part, it doesn't make a difference in anyone's day to day life. But out of a thousand cultivators, if even one develops an inflated ego, can you imagine what that person would do to any mortals he didn't like? If a Body Tempering cultivator can completely dominate mortals, can you imagine what a Qi cultivator who is having a bad day could do to mortals? Or a Qi cultivator who feels a mortal has offended him? Have you ever been bit by a mosquito? Did you feel like squatting all the mosquitoes in the world after feeling that irritating itch?

"In the past, it was ridiculously common for cultivators to kill mortals over the tiniest inconveniences. That is the real reason the ICPA's were formed. To protect mortals from cultivators. Yes, they do much more than that. But if a cultivator killed another cultivator, they may take action, but depending on who the offender is they may get away with a slap on the wrist. However, if a cultivator is caught killing mortals, even if it's a Golden Core cultivator the ICPA's take serious action.

"So when an emergency situation occurs, all the ICPA's in the world enforce a house arrest. You're saying whatever the incident that happened was in Egypt, so most likely the authorities over there have their hands full and can't focus on anything else. To avoid cultivators going there and taking advantage of the situation, everyone is put on house arrest. Most people won't even think of taking advantage of something like that, but it only takes one Golden Core cultivator and the damage can be beyond imagination."

A solemn mood hung in the air as Lex absorbed everything Larry had told him. The fact that this is such a big deal means something like that must have happened in the past.

"But aren't the ICPA's full of cultivators themselves? Who's going to stop them if they're the ones who want to take advantage of a bad situation?"

Larry shrugged.

"I don't know. That's the kind of stuff those higher level cultivators need to think about. We're just at the bottom of the barrel for now, none of this has anything to do with us. Anyway, come on let's see if there's any news on what actually happened. I was too busy before, I haven't been online at all."

Lex agreed as he was also curious about the cause of all this commotion. Surprisingly, when he went back onto the portal the first headline he saw read 'Alexander Morrison assassinated in Egypt!'. The familiar name took him by surprise so he completely missed the horrified look on Larry's face.