

Innkeeper 541

The Innkeeper

Chapter 541: Forgot that he was strong

It took many hours for Marlo's private jet to near the destination. Once the pilot let them know they were 30 minutes away, Larry, Marlo, and the few others who were on the plane began to gear up and went over their various plans.

For the most part... the only plan was to follow Marlo's lead. However, the exit strategies were thorough and well planned out.

There were three exit strategies that had been decided early on, and they would only attempt the subsequent ones if the first one failed. Through one of the Guild rooms' most reliable new shop run by Chen Lee and his sister Lily, they had gotten their hands of teleportation talismans.

Since Marlo had an unusual fondness for using talismans, that was exit strategy number one. If the use of the talismans was successful, they would be teleported to some place random within a 1000 miles (1609 kilometers). There were a number of pickup sites that had been decided and they could make their way to the nearest one afterward.

The second strategy involved a number of vehicles that had been secretly planted by Marlo's men near the prison. If, for any reason, the teleportation talisman failed, they would have to make their way to those vehicles and escape that way.

The third strategy, and the one that was most desperate, was to make use of the Inn. If, for any reason, strategy one and two failed, they would enter the Midnight Inn. The Inn had a new set of rules regarding teleportation, and if where they teleported from was a region they were not authorized to be in, they would be teleported to the nearest region they were authorized to be.

This was slightly unreliable due to the randomness of where they could exit. It was sure to allow them to escape the immediate confines of the prison, but they might end up still close enough to the prison once they came out to be targeted.

"Wait, why is the pilot exiting the cockpit?" Larry suddenly asked as he looked towards the front of the plane. Since there was only one pilot, the plane was left unattended!

Instead of answering Larry, the pilot gave a knowing smile, and started putting on a parachute!

"You ready to make an entrance, kid?" Marlo asked with a mad grin. "As I recall, I never finished your self-defense classes, right? Let's treat this as a field trip for an advanced class. Keeping with the logic that the best defense is to kill your enemy first, we will now go over the use of various kinds of penetration techniques when facing a well-defended fort."

Larry had a strong suspicion about what would follow, and due to his new strength, he wasn't really afraid, but... he just sighed and stopped thinking at this point. Thinking would probably hurt him more than help him now.

Marlo opened the emergency exit and jumped out of the plane, followed by the pilot and everyone else. Larry morosely followed. A few moments later, the private jet went through the illusion formation and crashed against whatever was behind it, resulting in a shockwave that was much stronger than a plane crash should have resulted in!

A few seconds later, the illusion formation failed and showed Larry the result, allowing him to suddenly reach a conclusion. The plane they had been riding... had been lined with explosives!

With a sharp, electronic wail the massive spider Lex was fighting finally crashed and exploded! He had to erect a shield around himself to protect his clothes from the flames. The fight had been fiercer than Lex had expected.

Thinking that he was facing a machine and that it would be weak against electrical attacks, Lex had once again relied on using the array he used to summon lightning bolts. Unfortunately, while the spider was indeed a machine, it was not built based on engineering from earth. It did not run on electricity, and none of its internal components, whatever they were, were sensitive to an overload of electricity. In fact, the spider had only become more energized after suffering from the attack and started shooting its lasers much faster.

Avoiding those had been extremely annoying. The thing was, no matter how fast Lex moved, he could not compete with the speed of a laser. The only thing he could do was use his intuition to move out of the laser's trajectory before it even fired - which was easier said than done!

He had only been able to avoid approximately 20% of all lasers, even with the forewarning. The problem was, the spider was actively aiming at him, even if he was moving. Even if he suddenly changed his trajectory, the spiders would continue to aim at him even as he moved along his new path.

He had to rely on various shields and defensive techniques to avoid having his clothes damaged. All the while, he had to retain focus on the arrays he was forming and make sure that he didn't ruin them.

Imagine being required to code a piece of software in the middle of a war-zone, threatened not only by the incoming artillery but also being vulnerable to his computer suddenly blowing up if he so much as used an unnecessary semicolon, let alone writing faulty code. That was literally what Lex's experience was.

Fortunately, his newly enhanced multitasking skills ensured that he never lost focus on his arrays. It took a few different tries to take down the spider, though. Lex's usual reliance on elemental damage, such as the use of fire or lightning, seemed not to work. In the end, he actually discovered how to defeat the spider by accident.

He had spent so long knowing that his defense was strong but his actual strength was weak, that he had forgotten that he had recently undergone a huge boost in strength! After the Lotus had recently remade his body, his strength had grown so much even the Host Attire couldn't perfectly help him regulate his strength.

On top of that, he had undergone a growth in his realm. Suffice to say, Lex could now pack a punch. It was through sheer coincidence and perfect timing that Lex had to block one of the spiders' legs using his arms after the lasers broke through Talk to the Hand. Instead of being pushed back by the attack... Lex crumpled the spider's leg as if it was paper.

It was only afterwards that he recalled that he was actually strong. Defeating the spider suddenly became extremely easy once he changed his tactics, though he was slightly disappointed that his arrays hadn't been as useful.

Next time, he told himself as he climbed to the next floor.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 542: Named after...

The Midnight Inn received thousands of new guests every day, at the very least. Although most of them arrived at the Inn through the use of golden keys, enough of them came from golden doors that opened randomly for Lex to have realized that the occurrence of those doors was not truly random. Although he had yet to figure out the pattern with which they opened, he could determine that they were more likely to open up in areas where they were likely to be discovered.

There was a part of him that suspected there was even more to it than that, as he had seen a few odd patterns in the kinds of guests that arrived through the golden doors. Suffice to say, they were more likely to be interesting or significant characters as compared to those that arrived through the spread of golden keys.

Yet, there was still another subset of guests who came through another method, who often tended to be of even more significance than guests who normally came through the golden doors. They were the pro bono guests!

The golden doors of the Midnight Inn opened, but instead of opening near the ground, as they usually did, they opened up high in the air. An injured Sol bird fell through the door, landing directly on the nearby spaceship. The Midnight Inn's incredible ability to control passive influence from guests and their cultivation kept the temperature from rising around it, though it would not have been enough to leave a single mark on the ship even if it didn't.

The door immediately shut right after the bird fell through, preventing whoever was chasing it from following. The bird took one look to see it was no longer being followed, before it collapsed and lost consciousness.

Lex was thinking over why his arrays had failed to get a result. It was not that they were weak, but that the enemy was uniquely immune to elemental attacks. He had other forms of attacks available to him that he had planned out, but he was too used to relying on elemental attacks so much so that it didn't occur to him until much later.

If there was one thing he was pleased with, though, was the speed at which he formed the arrays. It was finally getting to the point where he could use them quickly enough in battle. While Lex's repertoire of techniques was very limited, his versatility was definitely not low. Not only was he incredibly strong and tough now, his mind worked fast enough to finally turn arrays into an actual viable solution.

Still, just because he liked using arrays it didn't mean he should avoid his other abilities. He quickly went over everything he was capable of before he reached the next floor. Although it did not seem like it, Lex had to admit that the difficulty of each floor was growing pretty quickly.

Although he was unharmed so far, he suspected it wouldn't stay that way for long.

The moment he stepped onto the fourth floor new information was deposited in his mind. Interestingly enough, it was a new array character. However this character was slightly unusual. Unlike other characters which brought about a set and specific change in the universe, this character meant "I". Its effect would change depending on who used it, and how.

Lex stopped inspecting the new character and turned his attention back to his surroundings. Unlike previous floors, which took the form of a massive hall, this floor took the form of a narrow corridor. If Lex spread his arms out, he would barely be able to touch both the sides of the passage.

He smiled because he immediately took in everything this new floor had to offer, and he genuinely did not expect what it had instored. At the end of the corridor he was facing was a swarm of small feline robots rushing towards him.

From the sounds he could hear, he could tell that the same robots were rushing at him from the other end of it as well. But he turned to look back anyway.

Right behind him stood another man. He was the same height as Lex, and like him had a very lean build. Like himself, he had turned around and was looking at Lex. Unlike Lex, who looked like he was on a casual stroll, he had equipped an exosuit and had 6 swords floating behind his back.

"Alexander Morrison," Lex said, a hint of surprise in his voice. "I really didn't think I'd run into you here."

"Do I know you?" Alexander asked, a hint of wariness in his eyes. While previously he cultivated his spirit and his body, under the guidance of the empire, he was now cultivating his body, spirit and soul! As someone who had cultivated only two paths before, he knew exactly how much of a difference his new cultivation path had made on him, and his senses. That was exactly why he trusted his instincts when they told him that the man standing in front of him was extremely dangerous!

"Ah, no we've never met," lied Lex. Well, at least Lex had never met him when he wasn't acting as the Innkeeper. "But who on earth doesn't know you?"

"You're from earth?" Alexander asked, even more surprised. "It's strange then that I don't know you." He could tell that Lex was fairly young, and his cultivation level was on par with him! There was no way someone like that should have been below his family's radar!

Lex shrugged and said, "A lot has changed since the Midnight Inn showed up. I wasn't worthy of your notice before. Though, I believe we have shared the same teacher. I was briefly enrolled in one of Marlo's self defense classes."

Both Alexander and Lex continued to stare at one another, content to ignore the incoming enemies.

"My name is Lex, by the way," he said, extending his hand.

"Lex? Is that short for..."

"Ah not really," Lex said with a short laugh. He knew what Alexander was going to ask. "People often assume that Lex is short for Alexander, but that's not it. My older sister named me after her favorite... uh well, it doesn't matter."

By now, the robots were coming dangerously close, but the two still didn't break eye contact. To Alexander, Lex felt a lot more dangerous than the entire horde!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 543: Increasing difficulty

One of the most frequent questions Lex faced when he was young was what his name meant, or was short for. Depending on his age or mood, Lex would give different answers, ranging from it meant absolutely nothing, to that it was an acronym for 'laudably exquisite xebec', to the name of a famous hero or villain. Many people often assumed it was short for Alexander, though that was not the case.

The truth of the matter was too embarrassing to be spread. When he was born, his parents were having a discussion about what to name him, only to find out that their firstborn, Belle, had somehow managed to fill out the paperwork and had his birth certificate issued with the name Lex.

As absurd as it sounded considering Belle's young age at the time, she had been a little different from birth. She could not be compared to others her age. When they asked her why she chose the name Lex, she claimed that he had been named after her favorite wrestling move: the suplex!

His parents had found the story endearing. He had found the story mentally scarring. His sister had taken the story as motivation to master the suplex, on him no less!

"You know it occurs to me that we actually have a lot in common," said Lex as he turned around and looked at his side of the corridor.

"We're both from earth. We both had the same teacher. We both have similar sounding names. We both are pretty strong, and we both have weird families."

The last part Lex almost whispered. Had it been anyone else, they would not have heard his words against the backdrop of the approaching robots, but Lex had Alexander's undivided attention so he heard the words.

"You know I saw your fights back during the Midnight Games. You were quite impressive back then," said Lex.

"Some say I'm the best on earth around my age," replied Alexander with a sly grin.

Lex almost chuckled at the provoking remark, but he had no time to retort. The feline robots had arrived!

They were not too large, more like a slightly larger house cat. But while their size remained inferior to the more aggressive feline species, the robots were far from weak!

Their small, agile bodies were perfect for maneuvering in the cramped corridor while at the same time making it hard to hit their bodies. To top it off their speed was incredible, their fangs and claws were incredibly sharp and, as robots, they had weapons coming out of unexpected places!

While Lex may have been acting quite casual in his conversation with Alexander, the truth was that he was immediately put to the limit of his abilities as soon as he was attacked! There were too many attacking too fiercely and too fast! As much as Lex wanted to continue the challenge of leaving his clothes untouched, he failed after only a few seconds! While they had not yet penetrated his skin, the robots were definitely strong enough to cut through all of Lex's outdated defensive techniques.

He was forced to resort to blocking attacks with his limbs, immediately entering the flow state and making the best of his limited mobility.

The difficulty of the pagoda was no joke!

He spread his spirit sense along the hall, both to keep an eye on how Alexander was faring and so that he could use it to interfere with any long range attacks. To his surprise, despite the fact that Alexander lacked his immense physical strength and speed, he was faring much better!

Unlike Lex, who was relying on his instincts to defend against the onslaught, Alexander was using his training and prior experiences to deal with the enemies with remarkable efficiency!

Although many thought he had lived a pampered life, that was far from the truth. He was too used to facing enemies with much greater numbers and far greater strength than himself. In this situation, where he was practically alone against a seemingly endless number of overpowered enemies, he was not pushed to his limits. If anything, he was right at home!

All six of the swords were moving in conjunction with his every step, either fending off attacks or cleverly striking at enemies themselves. It was like each sword was controlled by a separate person, meticulously taking advantage of the situation with perfect teamwork and coordination.

Considering that Lex had recently unlocked amazingly overpowered multitasking abilities, using multiple weapons in such perfect conjunction should have been what he was pursuing. Instead, he had been forced to rely on his own physique, unable to deliver even half as good a result as his peer, even with greater capabilities.

For a moment, Lex was humbled. Although he had grown strong quickly, and it seemed like he had mastered his strength, he was far from achieving the best he could do - even in his flow state!

But then the moment passed, and Lex was filled with competitive spirit! From flow, he entered the overdrive state as he turned his attention back to the robots on his side.

He moved his left arm behind his back as an array began forming around it, while he only used his right arm to attack.

Although he had recently had a realization on how he could improve his performance, he had not yet had time to master it, so he went back to his old way of doing things. He relied heavily on his body's endless tolerance for suffering attacks and stopped blocking. He used each opportunity presented to him when an enemy attacked to counter attack, channeling his herculean strength through his fist.

His clothes were torn and his skin covered in white scratches, but in exchange he was smashing robots with every move. As if that was not enough, each robot he punched or kicked would launch into the horde behind it, crashing into its comrades with devastating might.

If not for the fact that Lex had resisted the urge to growl and roar, he would have displayed the perfect image of a savage barbarian hunting wild beasts!

For a few dozen seconds, it seemed like things were under control. They had reached a climax, but the two of them had managed to hold back their respective wave of robots. Now they would silently compete over who defeated their side of the attack first.

But despite how simple and easy as the pagoda had seemed at first, it was no mere child's play. Things changed suddenly when the seemingly random actions of each robot suddenly changed into an incredibly coordinated and strategic attack.

It seemed as if they were not facing off against multiple, individual robots but an army of robots, all with a connected mind. It was like... they were facing off against a hive mind!

Instead of focusing solely on the two of them, some of the robots actually circumvented them, and appeared behind them.

Suddenly, the two went from having each other's backs to both being completely surrounded, and under attack from every direction.

While Lex was largely okay, the number of attacks he began to suffer increased tremendously. While he was still not hurt, the threat that the robots might break skin soon was immense.

Alexander too came under great pressure, but not only did he have a vast array of techniques at his disposal, his exosuit was no joke. He seemed to be surviving.

Still, it became clear to both of them that they would need to work together if they wanted to survive the entire round!

With an unspoken understanding, both of them acted at the same time. Alexander's suit suddenly rippled with a blue light, though more important was the fact that he suddenly became more powerful. The air seemed to ripple around him, before an explosion threw back every robot near him.

Lex, on the other hand, did something much simpler. Since he already knew that the robots were immune to elemental attacks, he had used a different one. Inspired by a video of a devastatingly powerful volcanic eruption, the array he used was one of the few he had already planned out before. It was called shockwave.

Simply said, it sent a shockwave in a specific direction. Practically, the shockwave was so strong and abrupt, it could easily kill. Moreover, it was the perfect area of effect attack!

The momentarily lull in the robots attacks caused by Alexander's explosion and Lex's shockwave allowed the two to close the gap between themselves and truly have each other's backs.

"So Mr. Best-at-his-age, think you can keep up? If you need any help just let me know, alright. It's not a shame to ask your elder for help."

"Tch. You need a bandaid for that scratch on your face?" Alexander asked, instead of replying.

Lex snickered. Indeed, his entire body was scratched up. But not a single attack had managed to pierce his skin so far. Instead of feeling like he was being attacked, it felt more like he was receiving a special massage designed to scratch an itch.

The Regal Embrace, even in its mutated form, was not a joke. Although Alexander seemed to be making fun of the fact that Lex suffered multiple attacks, internally he was flabbergasted at his resilience. He had seen actual armors weaker than Lex's skin!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 544: Shredded!

"Their coordination is incredible," said Lex, no longer wasting time with jokes. In fact, to speed along the communication process, he was no longer speaking with his voice but directly transmitting the message through his spirit sense.

They had barely a couple of seconds before the robots attacked again and they needed to get on the same page before then. Lex could probably brute force this floor because of his incredible defense, but if they became overwhelmed, there was a very real chance that Alexander could die. Of course, there was a chance that Alexander had a way to protect himself in such a situation, but the point was that these trials could be lethal if taken lightly. The fact that even Lex felt overwhelmed on just the fourth floor spoke of how difficult it was to overcome it. Although Jotun did not guarantee that this pagoda was exactly the same as the one he visited, he had to overcome 99 trials to reach the top of the pagoda.

"Their claws and fangs are sharp and are resistant to blunt force damage, but are slightly weaker than sharp or cutting attacks," informed Alexander. Unlike Lex, he had not suffered a single attack yet as his 6 swords cut down any threat.

"I don't have any weapons but I am excellent with arrays," volunteered Lex. By sharing something about himself, he hoped that they could form a cohesive strategy.

"Then you should have no problem surviving while I take care of things," said Alexander with a smirk. For some unknown reason, he was feeling extremely competitive. No one from his generation on earth had ever given him any pressure before. The fact that Lex, who shared so much in common with him, was able to threaten him, awoke something in Alexander that had never existed before.

For someone who was always serious all the time, a juvenile desire to show Lex up had taken hold of him for the first time. Since Alexander had never felt anything like that before, he didn't know how to navigate it, so he allowed it to take hold.

As if to indicate the seriousness of Alexander's claim, a change overcame not only him, but his weapons as well. Lex immediately recognized the phenomenon.

Alexander's grandfather, upon becoming enamored by anime, changed some of their spiritual techniques to give birth to visual effects similar to the aura displayed by anime protagonists.

But while Lex could identify the anime which inspired Alexander's previous visual changes, this one did not bring any prominent anime to mind. Hmm, maybe it wasn't just for show in that case.

Like embers flying with the wind, small red grains started leaking out of Alexander's body and weapons. Although the color evoked images of fire, Lex felt no heat. Although, as more and more red flakes began to come out, Lex's intuition gave him a firm warning - in his current state, Alexander absolutely could hurt him!

Of course, there was a massive difference between hurt and kill. But even managing to cut Lex's skin deserved recognition!

Unfortunately, they had no more time to chat amongst themselves as the robots reached them once again.

Four of Alexander's swords revolved around him, cutting anything that tried to attack him from his back or his sides while he used the other two to coordinate with his attack! Though, despite his eagerness to prove himself, he retained the good sense to not rush into the horde. Lex and Alexander stayed closed.

Unlike Alexander, whose lethality had shot through the roof, Lex was pretty much the same. He immediately felt the pressure of the robots attack, and was left to crush them one by one using brute strength. Yet a part of his focus remained on Alexander. He could not figure out what it was that had empowered him, and if it was an element, it was not one he was familiar with. He had a feeling that instead of artificially trying to look like a protagonist, whatever training the empire had given him was further pushing him along the lines of actually becoming one. He suddenly had an idea, though that would have to wait till he was done with the pagoda.

The robots had started latching onto the walls and ceiling as well, completely threatening to crush the two under their numbers. One of them even fell onto Lex's head and tried to claw at his face, to no real success.

Every fiber of Lex's being was equally tough. He had no 'weak points' at all whatsoever. Still, the psychological alarm of something scratching at your eyes was not easy to overcome! Lex was immediately alarmed, and then pissed! Just because he didn't have anime effects didn't mean he could be picked at!

Lex immediately entered the overdrive state again, and analyzed the horde. If he assumed they had the same strengths as the spider he faced, neither electricity nor fire or any of the common elements would be able to harm them. Or at least, it would require those elements in with a stronger kick.

But the beauty of arrays was, reality was literally in the palm of his hands. He could manipulate the elements as he desired, even into becoming things that didn't naturally exist! Or at least, into things he had only imagined and never seen!

With a decision made of what he wanted to do, an array began to form. But since he needed both his hands to fight off the horde, he decided to form the array at his feet. Technically speaking, now that he was in the golden core realm, he could even form arrays away from his body as long as the flow of energy was never interrupted. But considering the current circumstances, it was best that the array be as close as possible to him.

The shape arrays took was usually in the form of a circle. The main character or attributes of the array would be in the center most of the array, after which would be surrounded by a circle. Then the many layers and nuances of the array were written around that circle, adding as many circles as was required.

The greater the complexity of the array, the greater the number of circles. When he was at the Foundation realm, although the complexity of the arrays he could form was far beyond what normal

cultivators at his realm could do, he was ultimately limited by the capacity of his own mind. That was why the array he formed to defeat so many nascent cultivators was so incredible.

But now the same array wouldn't cut it. It wasn't because the array or attack was weak, but because it was mismatched against the kinds of opponents he was facing. Conversely, although the array he had in mind was technically as destructive as the former, he had a feeling it would be a lot more effective.

The array under his feet quickly expanded from a single circle to two, then to three, and then four. In a few seconds, the entire width of the floor was covered by the array, but unfortunately Lex needed to grow the array further, so it began to crawl up the walls. But even then it kept growing as more and more circles were added, until it eventually started to creep across the ceiling.

Alexander, who was busy slaying the robots, suddenly felt something and scanned the area behind him, and was taken aback. When Lex had said he was good at arrays, Alexander did not expect he was able to sustain such a massive array in the middle of combat.

Moreover, while usual arrays looked ephemeral, and almost transparent due to the fact that they were made only of spirit energy, Lex's array carried a tinge of silverish gold. A somewhat serious expression donned Alexander's face. This was an indication of an affinity, and a very strong one at that if it could color his spirit energy in such an obvious way!

Before he could continue to observe, Lex suddenly moved towards him and grabbed his collar.

"Hold still for a moment," was all he managed to transmit through his spirit sense before suddenly surrounding the both of them with a protective shield. Then a few more. Then a few more again!

The thing about the array Lex just used was... it was an omnidirectional attack! There was no distinction between friend or foe!

There was an explosion of white, and the ground beneath them actually trembled. Since the shields Lex had formed were made of inferior spiritual techniques, they could not survive the strength of his own attack!

Lex groaned in frustration and suddenly forgot about defending himself and instead covered Alexander with a strengthened version of Talk to the Hand. The barrier came up just in time before Lex's last shield broke.

Snowflakes as large as Lex's hand started cutting his body, thoroughly shredding all his clothes. He released another groan as they actually started cutting his skin! Though, of course, the cuts were miniscule, and barely allowed a drop of blood to drip.

Lex had used the characters for storm, sharpness and snowflakes together to create an explosion of ridiculously sharp, and extremely cold snowflakes! Not only could they cut through the robots, the moment they lost their integrity and broke, all their 'coldness' would be channeled into whatever was cut.

Lex planned on using this to not only damage as many robots as possible, but also freeze any that survived the storm so that they could be picked off easily. The problem was, he forgot to consider that his defensive techniques would fail and his clothes would get shredded!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 545: Deal

The explosion lasted a couple of seconds at most, but its devastation could not be understated! It was not just Lex's clothes that had ceased to exist, but so had the robots closest to the epicenter!

Cut and frozen over and over again, the closest of the felines had been reduced to nothing but frozen metallic dust. In fact, even the walls of the corridor seemed to have suffered from the battering, though they were only slightly worn.

But while the epicenter was a zone of utter destruction, further down along the hallway Lex could see the diminished effects. The closest layer consisted of metallic dust that the robots had been ground into. A small distance away from it was the largest region, which consisted of robots which had been chopped into the small frozen pieces.

But farther along, the pieces got bigger and bigger until whole robots finally started appearing. These were also destroyed, as was evident from how they were lying still, but only a small distance from them were robots that were heavily damaged, but still functional.

It was here that the second effect of his attack began to show. Not only were the robots hurt, their internal mechanisms were frozen. Even if they suffered no actual harm, having their components frozen prevented them from moving properly.

If there were any unharmed robots left, they were hidden from sight behind the injured one. Speaking of whom, they were still making their way towards Lex and Alexander, slow as they might be.

"The number of robots is a little ridiculous, don't you think?" Lex said, completely ignoring his nudity. He could not, in any way, show that he felt embarrassed or it would only get worse.

"Each floor of the pagoda is targeting one of our weaknesses. Every time you show some new strength, the pagoda alters something in the next challenge to limit your strength as much as possible."

Lex paused and realized that Alexander was right. On the first floor, he was given a seemingly random challenge, but on the second floor, he faced multiple enemies instead of the one who had excellent coordination. The purpose seemed to be to prevent Lex from dismissing a single, unprepared enemy the way he had done on the first floor.

After he made use of evisceration to get rid of those enemies, the enemies he faced afterwards all lacked souls! Moreover, although Lex had not tried it, he had a feeling that they would be able to resist the teleportation effect of his golden key if he were to use it.

Then, when he used his ridiculous strength to finish off the spider, he faced a seemingly endless horde of smaller enemies. Although his strength was still overwhelming, it wasn't as much of a clear advantage against their endless numbers.

If the pagoda kept getting harder in such a targeted fashion, how was anyone supposed to reach up to the top floor? Not only did this information bring a new perspective about how difficult it was to Lex, he also gained a new respect for Jotun. Lex himself had a number of unfair advantages, yet even he was suffering so much trouble. He could only wonder how exactly Jotun overcame the pagoda.

Still, it wasn't as if Lex was at the end of his rope. If he insisted on continuing, he bet he could continue to climb a few more floors. The reward he got for clearing each floor was also nice. But... he wasn't about to go fight a war naked!

"Let's just get this over with," said Lex as he picked up the frozen frame of a broken robot and casually fashioned it into a makeshift undergarment. Alexander nodded, and refrained from making a comment.

For better or worse... Lex had killed more robots than him and had taken the lead. Such an overwhelming advantage had washed his initial drive away.

With the immense momentum of the robots broken, defeating the remainder was only a matter of time. It was more tedious than anything and by the end of it, Lex was fairly certain that there had been exactly 2000 of them.

While he did not bother counting them himself, his mind was strong enough. The way he did not need to count when he saw a pair of enemies, he did not really need to count for his mind to automatically come up with the appropriate number. This meant that there was 1000 for each of them.

Not bothering to debate against the logic of a lone man fighting 1000 enemies with the pagoda, Lex grabbed the last robot, but did not destroy it yet.

He turned around and began walking towards the other side, where Alexander was killing the remaining robots on his side.

"I have a question for you," Lex said as he leaned against the wall near Alexander, not really helping him finish the rest. In fact, the reason he was holding onto one of the robots was so that the current trial wouldn't end until he was done.

"If my intuition is correct, and it usually is, you're cultivating all three paths, correct?"

Alexander didn't show a reaction, but his guard went back up. Although he and Lex had worked well together did not mean they were allies.

"Perhaps. Why do you ask?"

"Because I am the same, all three paths. It got me wondering, that red stuff you were using earlier, was that from one of the so-called 'true path' techniques or professions? I've never seen anything like it."

Alexander narrowed his eyes and looked at Lex, letting his flying blades do the work while he continued the conversation.

"I'm not sure if you know this, but it's quite rude to inquire about someone's techniques."

"Oh right, sorry," said Lex as he held up his arms, showing he was harmless. "I just thought that, you know, since we're both on a similar path, we could help each other. I'm sure there's a bunch of stuff I know that you haven't been exposed to yet. For example, have you developed your soul sense?"

Alexander did not immediately reply, which caused Lex to grin.

"Oh right, shouldn't ask about techniques. I was only mentioning because soul sense is hard to come by, but it's a really great tool. Very useful."

As if to demonstrate his point, Lex spread his soul sense and covered Alexander for a single moment. The teenager was secretly alarmed when his instincts suddenly warned him that he was surrounded by an unknown force, but fortunately, it disappeared as quickly as it came.

Yet the problem wasn't that there was a force that enveloped him, but that he didn't know how to counter it!

"I haven't really gotten my hands on any true path techniques or professions yet, but I tend to be exposed to some very... unique situations. As a result, I can usually grow in strength very quickly. But as a result, I really end up lacking in more traditional training and experiences."

"You want to do an exchange?" Alexander asked, quickly understanding what Lex was getting at. "You do know that even if I want to, I can't share classified techniques."

"Yeah, I guessed as much, but that doesn't mean you have nothing to share. Besides, the Midnight Inn's library has an increasing amount of techniques, so I can always find something there. But, your training and insight are things I can't find in a book."

Alexander did not immediately reply, as he went over the proposal in his mind. The fact that this Lex had appeared out of nowhere clearly indicated that he had some unusual experiences. Although his moves were very clean and efficient during the fight, they also betrayed his lack of systemic training. For him to be able to grow so strong so quickly, the things he had to offer might really be worth Alexander's time. If he could gain the same boost, he'd be able to exhibit a lot more strength than Lex himself. Not to mention, if Alexander was able to develop a defense as strong as him... even he could not estimate how lethal he would become.

"You don't have to answer immediately," said Lex and he straightened up. "Think about it and get back to me. You can reach me through the Inn. Just tell your personal hologram to deliver a message to Lex Williams."

Lex crushed the robot in his hand, just as Alexander's sword killed the last of the robots on his side. Two sets of staircases appeared, and Lex began to climb one without wasting any more time.

He stopped, however, on the last step before the next floor. Through this step, he could choose to exit the pagoda. If he took another step, however, the next trial would begin.

Lex chose to exit the trial without any regret. Even if he didn't get to experience more floors, his 6th sense told him that Alexander was likely to agree to his deal.

That was good enough for now anyway.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 546: Join the Discord Channel

While Lex was busy with the pagoda, and Larry carried out his revenge on earth, things were as peaceful as usual at the Midnight Inn. The number of guests at the Inn fluctuated considerably depending on the ongoing events, and the Inn was going towards somewhat of a lull due to the upcoming fishing event.

But even if the number of daily guests fluctuated, a certain number of guests had more or less taken up residence at the Inn. Although becoming a permanent resident of the Inn escaped the capabilities of many, nothing stopped them from perpetually renting out space at the Inn.

Amongst the various options was the Small village, which consisted not only of various houses, courtyards and rooms, but a few dedicated facilities as well. With the steep price of 15,000MP a night, it was only suitable for large groups of people who wished to stay together.

Most common amongst these were various sects and organizations. Many of them had discovered the Inn through the mysterious golden doors and then had monopolized access to the Inn on their respective worlds.

As if a higher than usual spirit energy concentration, access to meditation and training rooms and first-class medical facilities was not enough, the endless number of new Minor realm entrances at the Inn were enough to entice anyone.

Someone might have wondered how so many different groups, originating from such various backgrounds, were able to maintain their behavior in their newfound environment, instead of trying to extend their hands and claim more, as was the nature of many species.

Other than the almost perpetual rain of lightning that happened all around the Inn that thoroughly intimidated most of the guests who were actually not so strong, the hearth at the entrance of the Inn that used the souls of the Inn's enemies and fuel was more than enough to set them straight.

So then, having become more or less residents of the Inn, these guests often ran into each other. If their proclivities tended to lean towards violence or disharmony they kept to themselves, but many others took the opportunity to foster friendships.

One such group, formed from the young members of various different sects, sat together as they watched the fishing event kick off. They didn't much care for fishing, but the environment itself was nice and it was a great area where they could just hang out.

"I'm heading back to my homeworld for a few days," said the first youth.

"Lucky you, I'm stuck on pill duty. My teacher accepted a request in the Guild room for 100 bottles of Qi pills to help Qi Training cultivators, and all of us now have to help him fulfill it," said a second.

"That's nothing. I have to accompany my sect into a Minor realm. Don't they know that's dangerous? I've heard people have constantly been getting ambushed by others in the Minor realms. Almost no one has formed a long-term base and they maintain nomadic habits. I really don't want to go," said a third.

"It'll be hard to keep in touch after this, with our random schedules," lamented another youth.

"Not really. I've created a discord channel, so just join it. That way, we can catch up on everything as soon as we return to the Inn. Everyone can respond whenever they're back. It's better than leaving it up to chance."

The youths continued their conversation, completely ignoring what was happening in the competition. It was for that reason they completely missed when the first contestant fished out a spatial ring, and the second fished out a literal treasure chest.

The surrounding crowd, however, had paid attention, and slowly interest was beginning to build in the competition. The more valuable the item fished out, the more the crowd became excited. One of the contestants pulled out a cultivation scroll that gave birth to a massive phenomenon as soon as it was pulled out. A vision of an eternal ice age formed above the head of the cultivator, large enough to be visible across the Inn!

Vera Joel was pacing around her room anxiously. Although they used to have a lot of freedom even as prisoners, since the discovery of the Midnight Inn and its golden keys, they had more or less been kept under strict observation.

Even then, it wasn't as if they were being kept in jail cells. But as far as she was concerned, the situation was no better. As an oracle, she could glimpse into the most likely future. But there was a caveat to her seemingly incredible power, one that almost no one knew of.

While she could glimpse the most likely future, she was restricted to seeing only her own future! The only possible way she could see the potential futures for other people was if it had a major or significant impact on her own life.

The thing about seeing her own future was that while she could take many precautions against upcoming problems, she could not leverage her ability to help or aid others. That meant that no one had any incentive to help her!

While that was not necessarily a bad thing, since she ought to be independent, there were times where that would become an issue. If, for example, she needed to use her ability to make an income at the Midnight Inn, she would not be able to charge people to see their future.

Once again, that did not really sound like a big deal. But given her current circumstances, it was a massive deal. She needed to get to the Midnight Inn and stay there, but she had almost no money with which to pay!

"Calm down Vera," said Kristine, Vera's mother. "Everything will be fine."

Similar to Vera, Kristine was dressed in a tracksuit, and was wearing a backpack stuffed to the brim with valuables. "We'll figure something out."

"It's not so easy. I can't see my future inside the Inn from the outside. We have no way of knowing what will happen!"

"We'll figure something out. For now, get ready. It's almost time."

Though Vera was not able to relax, she did finally stop pacing around. She gave her mother a nod, indicating she was ready. Her mother, in turn, took out her phone and sent a message to a seemingly random number.

If anyone saw the chat history, they would see that Kristine had sent this number various details about their prison as well as their guard formation and protective measures! While the name of the contact had not been saved in her phone, if anyone tried to call, on the other side they would find Marlo!

"It's done."

The mother and daughter left the room, guided completely by Vera. Though she lacked the skill to be a spy, she walked through the halls that made up her prison completely undetected. Her timing was completely perfect, and managed to avoid detection not only of the patrolling guards, but of the security teams viewing the various cameras as well.

As if they completely owned the place, the two made it to a security office and entered. As it happened, the guards were undergoing a shift change, and so there was almost no one in the office.

"Hey, you can't be here," said the only guard in the room aggressively, but the mother daughter duo paid him no attention. Vera began accessing a computer right there, while the other directly attacked the guards!

As it happened, this was the newest guard on duty, and also the weakest. The chances they would encounter him alone were next to nil, but that's exactly what happened, because the pair had been preparing for this day for a long time.

"The defensive formation has been deactivated," said Vera, just in time for her mother to incapacitate the guard. Kristine sent another message on the chat and they began to move.

A few minutes later, a private jet smashed directly into the building!

Such a massive and unexpected incident should have caused countless casualties, but an unexpected incident at another section of their prison caused many of the guards to be moved away. It seemed quite coincidental that the area that the unmanned plane crashed into just happened to lack any guards at that moment.

The moment Lex chose to exit the pagoda, he received the reward for the fourth floor, which was information on how to more precisely control his strength. It was not earth shattering information, but once Lex reviewed it, it would no doubt help him tremendously.

For the moment, however, Lex found it impossible to focus on the information even with the ability to split his mind. That was because the moment he exited the pagoda, his makeshift undergarment disappeared, leaving him completely naked before a host of Jotun soldiers.

Everyone froze as they stared at the man who had just exited, but Lex did not act ashamed at all. With a nod of acknowledgment, he began walking towards the nearest tree as if he was on a casual stroll.

The leaves were not suitable for his purpose, so Lex tore the bark off the tree and wrapped it around his waist, not minding the sticky sap.

"Do you have a helicopter heading back?" he asked the soldiers, who were still staring at him with dumbfounded expressions.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 547: Reprieve

"A what?" the soldier asked, breaking free from his shock.

"Oh, sorry. A slingshot. Do you have any slingshots heading back to the realm entrance?" Lex reiterated, recalling the name of the ide he took to the pagoda in the first place.

"Oh yes, of course. There will be a ride back in about 30 minutes that you can take. Would you uhh... would you like some clothes while you wait?"

"Sure, if you have any to spare I'll take them."

"Follow me, I'm sure I can find you something. By the way, there's a voluntary questionnaire for anyone who enters the pagoda. Would you be willing to go through it? Like I said, it's voluntary, so there's no obligation to do so. But we're collecting information to compile a pagoda guide book. If you go through the questionnaire, you become eligible to receive a free copy of the guide once it's published."

"That doesn't sound too bad, sure I'll take it," said Lex as he followed the soldier. He hadn't ventured too deep into the pagoda anyway and he did not think his experience was too unique. Of course, that did

not mean he would be giving out information about how he overcame each floor. But it wouldn't hurt to answer a few questions. That guide could end up being helpful when he sent his workers to the pagoda.

The soldier led Lex to an impromptu barracks they had set up and handed him a fresh pair of military fatigues which, Lex had to admit, were surprisingly comfortable. The questionnaire afterwards was not a piece of paper on a clipboard, but rather involved Lex meeting with a dedicated team who brought him to a different room where they asked him several questions.

He was pretty honest in answering the questions, including the fact that he met up with Alexander on one of the floors. Even if he did not answer, he expected that Alexander himself would reveal that they ran into each other. After all, unlike him who was answering voluntarily, he did not expect Alexander would have much leeway considering he was a part of their army.

He finished just in time to catch the slingshot heading back.

"How's the event going?" Lex asked Mary while he waited. He expected that the fishing event would cause things to calm down for a bit, though Lex wasn't complaining. There was no shortage of things for Lex to do, not to mention that he hadn't forgotten he was waiting on a reply from the Henali. Although he had given a proposal, they had yet to accept.

He also had to catch up with Aegis to see what progress he had made into discovering the secrets of the Crystal realm. In fact, he should start spreading the golden keys around the Crystal realm and focus on getting the upper echelon to come to the Inn. That would be a much easier way to spy on- eh, no, much easier to establish better relations, and by happenstance learn various secrets about the Inn.

He also had to get around to confronting his family, which was a tedious chore he did not feel like doing at all. He also had to check up on procuring the Shining Irisberry for the turtle.

Lex could not help but release a sigh. Yeah, a small reprieve at the Inn would really be welcome.

"The event is a huge hit. A number of guests who were participating in the first round fished up some incredible treasures, including one old man who inherited a mind-blowingly amazing cultivation technique that caused an anomaly at the Inn! He might not be able to continue in the competition, since he immediately absorbed the technique and began cultivating. I don't think he'll exit in time for the remaining event, but he's already received countless recruitment offers from nearly every organization

present at the Inn. It's already too late for more people to register for the event, but viewership has gone up to 13 million and rising."

Lex's eyes widened in shock as two things suddenly crossed his mind. The first was that the reprieve he was looking for probably wouldn't come. The second was that he couldn't believe he himself never tried the fishing well! If he had known it was that amazing, he would have fished in it everyday!

While their infiltration had been easier than Larry expected, the anticipated resistance eventually showed up. Other than himself and Marlo, there were four others who had accompanied them, all of them in the Golden core realm.

On earth they could have been considered an elite fighting force, yet they were heavily pinned down by the prison guards. In fact, if Marlo hadn't been attracting most of the attention they would have likely already been eliminated!

Smashing away the last of their attackers, Marlo looked back at them without concern for whether he was living or dead.

"Larry, you follow me. The rest will split up and create diversions. We have a 10 minute window where most of the defenses are down. Once the 10 minutes are up we have to retreat, regardless of whether the mission is complete or not."

Everyone nodded, as they all already knew the plan, and began moving out. Larry moved at his fastest speed to keep up with Marlo, and even then he was being left behind as they navigated the halls of the building they infiltrated.

It was eerily empty, which is not what Larry had been expecting, but he wasn't complaining. The less resistance they faced the better. As for how Marlo knew the route, and the destination, Larry didn't ask. He stopped for a brief moment as Marlo set down a small black pouch on the ground before he kept running. Larry didn't inquire about the pouch, or anything else for that matter. At the moment, his thoughts were completely focused on what was about to happen. He was finally, FINALLY, about to get some answers, as well as his revenge.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 548: Sadist

A few moments after Larry and Marlo disappeared, Vera and Kristine Joel walked out of a perpendicular corridor. Showing no inclination to be sneaky, the mother approached the pouch on the floor and picked it up.

Within the pouch were a couple of golden keys, as well as a hundred or so small diamonds. It was not enough to allow them to be extremely extravagant, but at least they'd be able to live comfortably at the Inn for a few years.

"I'm going to miss this place," said Kristine fondly.

"Well not me!" Vera exclaimed before grabbing a golden key and disappearing. It would not be long before her mother found out why she was so anxious to leave. After all, one of the tenets of prophecy were to reveal only what was absolutely necessary. The more details they revealed, the more bad luck they would accrue, and the law of luck was a tenacious one.

A single moment later, Kristine disappeared as well.

Only a dozen seconds later, Larry and Marlo reached their intended destination. There was no hesitation as both of them were on a time limit, so Marlo smashed down the door to the room.

Depending on the situation they would either kill him or kidnap him, with the preference being for kidnapping as both of them wanted to interrogate him. But once they entered the room they did not find a scared or alarmed man.

Instead, they found a mature looking man seated comfortably on a sofa facing the door. He was wearing a velvet robe and swirled a glass of wine in his hand. His gray hair had been combed neatly yet stylishly, perfectly setting his mature yet handsome face.

In his eyes there was only amusement as he looked at the two, as if he had long been expecting them.

But how he looked could not have mattered less to the two. Their movements did not stop as they lunged forward to grab the man, only for their hands to pass through a hologram!

"No need to be so alarmed. Did you really think I would sit and patiently wait for you here?" The man completely dismissed Marlo, not even acknowledging his existence. Instead, his gaze was fixed onto Larry.

For a moment, both of them were confused, but recovered quickly.

"No matter where you're hiding, I'll find you!" Larry swore with gritted teeth.

"I'm afraid that will be a little harder than you imagine, old boy. You see, the moment I realized my fun on this planet was coming to a close, I made other arrangements. I'm already off the planet, and going far, far away!"

"That's impossible. This is a prison specifically meant to keep you on this planet!"

"Well, yes, it's supposed to be," the man continued, swirling his some more. "But I've always just treated it as more of a retreat. You see, I've been eligible to leave for a long time. It's not like this place was meant to be a permanent prison. I'd just been putting it off until the moment was absolutely right."

The man grinned as he watched Larry trying to understand, doing his best to deny reality. He was so close. This was meant to be it. How could this happen?

"How's that metal spirit embryo treating you, by the way? To be honest, I never thought you'd actually be able to merge with it. That's not supposed to happen. You completely ruined all its value by doing that."

"Huh?" Larry's attention snapped back to the old man, breaking free from his ever increasing sense of denial. While he did not know what a metal spirit embryo was, based on the context, he quickly realized the old man was talking about the treasure his father had fused into his body.

While he was born with a body incapable of cultivating, his family had uncovered an amazing treasure that his father had fused into his body using a ridiculously expensive operation. While the surgery wasn't exactly a secret, the use of the treasure was.

"You knew?" Larry couldn't help but mumble.

"Well of course I knew. Why else do you think I had your entire family banished except for you? Someone had to pay for wasting such a valuable treasure. Though, I let you stay because I wanted to see how you'd react to the embryo in your body. And oh boy, was it worth it. The amount of data I collected studying how you eventually began cultivating. Just that alone was worth being exiled to this pathetic planet."

The sadistic old man began laughing, relishing the horrified expression painting Larry's face.

"Larry we don't have time," Marlo interrupted. "Whether he's on earth or not, we have to retreat from here."

"Oh, oh, before you leave children, I left a little surprise for you. Larry, what if I told you that your family wasn't all dead? What if I told you, I brought your parents and siblings along with me when I left earth."

"You... you're lying. You're just saying that," Larry barely managed to say, his entire body beginning to tremble. Even if they were alive, how... how was he ever supposed to get to them? Everything... his whole life had been... had been a game to this man.

"Am I?" the man asked as he started roaring in laughter. "Will you ever figure out if I'm telling the truth? You'll spend the rest of your life wondering!" The man burst into laughter once again, savoring the pain his words were causing.

Marlo kicked the floor and the wall, trying to destroy whatever was causing the projection but it failed. In the end, he decided to leave despite failing and began dragging Larry away.

"Oh, before you leave," the hologram yelled out after the two, "I left one final present for earth. Think of it as a farewell gift from me. It's quite easy manipulating you barbarians. Have fun living the rest of your lives as slaves!"

The man continued to yell, but at Marlo's speed they were out of earshot in mere moments. Neither of them put much thought into his last words as they escaped. That is, until they reached outside.

The light of the sun had been blocked out by a massive spaceship that had suddenly appeared right outside earth's orbit. The ship arrived too fast, no one had detected its arrival. One moment it was absent, and the next it was there, as if it had teleported there.

For once, a sense of dread gripped even Marlo's heart.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 549: World War

Lex did not immediately attend to the fishing event once he returned to the Inn. Regardless of how popular it was, while listing his various tasks he was reminded of a chore too important to put off until later.

He teleported directly to X-142 and entered the Infinity Emporium. Not only had his order of Shining Irisberry fruits arrived, Powell had even arranged for a tree sapling for the tree that grew the plant! He gave plenty of warnings of how difficult it was to planet, but Lex was sure the turtle would be able to handle it.

That was, until he heard that the tree had to be planted on the surface of a star to grow. That... that added an element of complication to planting the sapling, but he was sure he'd be able to figure something out with the Inn.

Then came the issue of payment. Lex once again had to barter some goods he had collected through the Inn to receive his order. He was beginning to get annoyed at the system for not allowing him to convert his MP into currency at a more reasonable rate.

He returned to the Inn and immediately gave the turtle the berries, and informed him of the sapling. The turtle replied that he would look into it once his cultivation was done, and retreated into his shell.

While the turtle disappeared, Fenrir had completely recovered from his difficult breakthrough and became unusually attached to Lex. No matter where he went, the wolf pup would follow him and stick to his side, not that it could be blamed.

Unlike his workers, who were newborns but had the maturity of adults, the pup was genuinely a newborn. On top of that, the person it was most attached to, Lex, barely spent any time with it causing it to feel extremely clingy.

Lex could only laugh and allow the pup to follow. Considering the fact that Fenrir was able to partially change its size, and was usually more than large enough for Lex to ride, he often forgot that Fenrir was actually still a pup.

The two were on their way to the fishing well when Lex received a system notification. He was a little surprised, since he wasn't expecting any notification, but stopped dead in his tracks when he read it.

New Notification: Connected planet Earth is undergoing a world event 'World War'. All currencies have lost 100% value due to global blackout, and will not be accepted as payment for MP. Only physical assets are eligible for payment

New Notification: Guests from earth are eligible for 'refugee' status and will experience a 70% discount on all prices. All refugees from earth below the age of 15 are eligible for a 99% discount.

"What the hell?"

Lex immediately teleported to Velma, who was in the Newsroom.

"What's going on on earth? Have you heard any rumors about any new massive wars? What is the council of new order doing?"

He asked, though despite his inner anxiety, he had to maintain his calm as the Innkeeper.

"War? No, there's been no rumors of any large-scale wars, nor have the order been focusing on that."

"Well pay attention to this matter. A world war has broken out on earth. Gather as much information as possible."

Without waiting for Velma to answer, the Innkeeper teleported to his office. He sat on his chair to maximize his synchronization with the Inn, and began honing in on all new arriving guests.

He started picking out the ones coming from earth, and began eavesdropping on their conversations. He did not know the situation on his planet, and since war had just broken out it was unlikely all the guests were even aware of it yet. Most likely, they would just be suffering from the so-called global blackout.

But at least a few should know something, right?

Unfortunately, reality was out of line with his expectations. Not only did most people arriving from earth have an idea of what was going on, they all kept saying similar things.

Keywords like 'aliens', 'giant spaceship' and 'aerial invaders' kept on being repeated.

As if their worries were not already enough, many of the guests who arrived from earth started getting notifications from their personal hologram assistant. The knowledge that they were eligible for a discount was well received, but the fact that their currencies held no worth made almost everyone immediately broke!

Panic and chaos started to spread amongst the refugees.

Though Lex was extremely troubled by what he was hearing, he did not completely lose his mind. He set a new area where all incoming refugees would teleport to, so that the chaos they would create would not spread to the general public. Moreover, he deployed many guards and workers to calm all incoming people down.

Though they felt like the Inn was taking advantage of them, there was nothing Lex could do about that. MP was one of the few things about the system that had forever been outside the domain of his authority. Fortunately, the system was able to claim their physical assets as payment even if they didn't bring them. Of course, that did not extend to assets such as buildings or land. Yet things like furniture and used cars, apparently, were fully acceptable.

But the logistics and technicalities of how the system accepted payments was the least of what was on Lex's mind.

"Goddammit!" he exclaimed, and decided to teleport to earth. No matter how much he hated his family right now, he could not leave them to fend for themselves.

Even as Lex passed a few instructions to Mary and teleported to earth, he did not stop cursing his family.

If those stupid, greedy, fat, annoying, stupid people had not kept secrets from him, he would have never decided to ignore them, and he would not be in this situation.

No matter how much he hated his situation with his family, he could not help but give them the benefit of doubt. Moreover, no matter what his parents did, he could not abandon his sisters.

Belle... well, Belle would be fine even in war, but his younger 2 sisters deserved better. Unfortunately, due to the very secrets Lex was cursing his family for keeping, he did not know that his family on earth were all spirit clones. Not only that, the clones had all vanished from earth some time ago.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 550: How was he supposed to know?

As panicked as Lex was about the situation, he did not lose his senses. He honed in on all the refugees and paid close attention to whatever they had to say. So far, none of them had a clear picture of what was happening.

Everyone seemed to be reiterating the same things. They had been hit by a power outage, and though some of them had backup generators, none of their devices seemed to be working. Due to this, there was a complete blockade on communication via any electronic devices. As a result, they did not know the extent of what the situation was.

What they did know was that there was a gargantuan vessel, or possibly multiple vessels parked in the sky above the planet. Though the massive vessel itself had not attacked yet, many of them witnessed many distant, smaller vessels approaching the planet.

Out of sheer panic they had escaped to the Inn, unaware of what else to do.

"Mary, have the planning division find a spot to build the temporary refugee spot. I won't force them to separate from the rest of the guests, but I think it'll be good if we have a designated spot where refugees can gather amongst themselves."

Not wanting to wait much longer, Lex decided to teleport to earth. Still bereft of any gear fitting his current realm, he decided to stick to the army fatigues given to him by the empire for not only were they extremely comfortable, they were easy to move in, and seemed durable.

After... well he was unsure exactly how long it had been since he had last been to earth, but it had been a long time.

Lex appeared in an unfamiliar street, causing him to feel slightly confused before he remembered that he was in London.

He looked up and, indeed, saw the massive spaceship hovering above earth. Upon observing its massive, oval shape blocking out most of the sky, Lex decided to dump all the physics he had learned in high school and college, because there was no way something so massive should have come near a planet without being affected by it, or causing an adverse effect in return.

Even the moon caused changes in the tides due to its gravitational pull, so if either the ship was massive enough to block the view, or close enough to cause the same effect, things should not have been so calm.

But then again, there was a global electronic blackout and information was scarce, so there was a real possibility that he was just lacking information.

Lex shook his head. That didn't matter right now. What mattered was that while the street he was on seemed barren and as if it suffered a storm, and there was not a single person in sight, there were also no invaders in sight either.

His senses were sharp enough that if there was fighting even in the distance, he would have picked up on it. Yet while there were sounds of screaming, running and general panic that Lex could pick up, there was no fighting. Or at least, no fighting that wasn't happening between humans.

In the distance, though, he could pick up a seemingly endless stream of ships exiting the ship in the sky and descending towards earth. Whatever was happening, it hadn't made its way here yet, which was good enough for Lex.

He sprinted towards his old home, reaching quickly due to speed. Things were actually progressing pretty smoothly for once. He expected to have to fight through an army of villains who happened to be between him and his family. Thinking about it, that was pretty stupid. Just because he often faced difficult situations didn't mean the universe was specifically targeting him to make his life difficult.

The door to the house was locked, but Lex didn't even need to exert himself to break it. Considering the circumstances, he didn't think anyone would mind.

"Hey is anyone home?" he yelled, as he extended his spirit sense out to search the house. Immediately, he noticed a number of unusual details. He did not recognize the furniture, and much of the layout of the house had been changed. There were fewer bedrooms and the rooms had instead been turned into storage rooms. Moreover, he noticed the distinct lack of certain items he knew his sisters would never leave.

There were still minor details. The most significant thing he noticed was that the house was only occupied by two, extremely senior citizens!

"Stay back, I have a knife!" yelled an old lady from somewhere deeper inside the house. Lex had a daunting realization, though he held out a faint hope still.

Calmly, and prepared to hear bad news, Lex walked forward so that he came into view of the old couple. There was an old, feeble looking man sitting in a wheelchair, while a similarly aged petite lady stood in front of him, holding a kitchen knife in her softly trembling hand.

"Don't come any closer, we don't have any money!" said the old lady, putting on a brave front.

"I... I don't mean any harm. I used to know the people who lived here before, I didn't know they moved out," Lex gently explained. "Is there any chance you know where they might have gone?"

It had been a long time since he came to earth, so it was entirely possible his family moved. In fact, it was highly likely since his entire childhood he lived a nomadic life. Belle had even informed him that she had gotten a new government job, which might have caused them to move. Or maybe his parents came back and decided to go somewhere else on an expedition.

Maybe them moving even had something to do with their secret. There was literally no way for him to know. He suddenly felt like an idiot for waiting so long to confront them about that, but in his defense, how was he supposed to know the world would be invaded? That had never happened before!