

Innkeeper 561

The Innkeeper

Chapter 561: Anything to not be naked!

Lex's first instinct would be to go to the Infinity Emporium. Although it hurt to admit it, as of now, he would be more likely to find higher quality gear there than anywhere at the Inn. The gift shop had long since stopped being able to keep up with Lex's needs. True to its name, its merchandise was more suited as gifts and trinkets rather than being actually useful.

Though, to be fair, it had been instrumental in Lex surviving the initial days of the Inn, so his fondness for it never dropped. But for his current needs it was not the right fit. The next best option was to shop from the Guild room, which is where Lex was heading.

"Hey Mary, isn't there any reasonable way I can convert MP into some other kind of currency? I'm rich as long as I'm inside the Inn, but as soon as I exit it, I'm dirt poor."

The suited Mary appeared in front of him looking slightly guilty as she scratched her head.

"This is a good question, and your authority is high enough to get most of the answer. The truth is, usually, each system has a progression path. Which means it will not give quests that are too difficult early on while most of the system functions are locked. As you complete the relatively easy quests, not only do you as the user grow stronger, but the system's functions expand in a systematic and cohesive way. But... as you already know, the system you got was badly damaged when you got it.

"As a result of interference from the damage, as well as the mismatch between the level of the original system, the proper level of the system in its damaged state as well as your own power as the user, you followed a very unusual path. What the system should have done was give you quests and rewards promoting you to spread the Inn only on your own planet first. Only when your growth potential was tapped out depending only on the resources of your own planet should it have spread to another one, and so on and so forth.

"So, originally, you should have been much better prepared by the time you actually had to deal with so many different planets, races, and all their associated intrigue."

"You didn't actually answer my question," said Lex, not bothering to focus on how he was ripped off. To begin with, the system was something he lucked out upon, not something he arduously worked for. Anything it gave him was a bonus he was never meant to originally have.

Besides, he always felt that the kind of quests he got were suicidal. To this day, he did not even dare to look at the quest that told him to make a connection to a 5 star planet called Dunya. The highest star rating he ever connected to was 2 stars, and it was the crystal realm! It had earth immortals in it. He did not even dare imagine what a 5 star world entailed. Would he see Dao lords around every corner?

Most importantly, the system itself was damaged. If it had been screwing with him on purpose, which he for so long suspected it was, then he would have been pissed. But if the system was so severely damaged, he couldn't really blame it.

Not to mention, he had long decided that his focus should be on getting stronger himself. No matter how useful or useless the system was, if he himself was strong then he would be able to face any and all challenges it threw his way. This was important, because based on all the remarks it gave him, a part of him still believed the system was just screwing with him.

"The answer is, most likely, but I cannot say for certain. All I can say is you're doing a good job. Keep getting stronger, and keep completing quests. That's the best way to unlock new features."

"So basically, there's a chance I won't always be poor. Got it."

Mary had assumed that Lex would have a bigger reaction to the news that the system had increased the difficulty he was facing due to its damaged state. After all, instead of giving him golden tickets that took him to other worlds in his starter pack, it could have given him other rewards that helped him develop the Inn only on earth first. That way he never would have had to fight zombies, or be chased by wolves, and encounter all the problems he had to face. So much could have gone differently.

But what she did not consider was that the way Lex saw it, he was having a much harder time now, sure. But because the system was on such a high level, it was much harder to get discovered by others. That was worth the trouble. After all, even a Dao lord was not able to discover the system in his soul even at close range. Sure, he had not scanned Lex, but that was good enough.

Or maybe Lex had just learned to stop complaining and make use of whatever his situation dictated.

He walked into the Guild room and spared no expense. He bought the best armor available, and then bought 10 more sets of it. After all, he could just store them in his storage bangle.

He bought emergency first aid kits, a few dozen guns, swords, spears, some goggles, gloves and honestly anything else that caught his fancy.

He had MP to spare, and his bangle had plenty of space. There was no harm in filling it up with anything useful that he might need. Basically, he just never wanted to end up nude in front of other people again.

Due to how strong his body was, it was inevitable that if he encountered strong attacks, his armor would be destroyed but he would be fine. Basically, he needed armor with the best defense - to keep him from ending up naked!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 562: Reminiscing

Lex was sitting on a wooden bench atop Midnight mountain, looking out at the Inn. He was playing with an extremely deadly weapon laced with the most lethal poisons available on the market in his hand. Its original name was quite intimidating, but Lex himself decided to call it the 'Fidget spinner of doom' because, well, in Lex's extremely difficult to cut hands, it was naught more than a fidget spinner.

If anyone else were to try the same, their fingers would get sliced off! The only safe way to even use the weapon was using a secondary device that came with the fidget spinner of doom that both held it and propelled it forward like a sling.

He had already finished all his shopping, and now was just waiting for Miranda to give him the locator. Since he had a bit of spare time, he took a seat on this bench and allowed himself to reminisce. Sure, he could get some work done during this brief time, but he was only human. Right now, he didn't feel like working. So he did nothing and allowed his thoughts to wander.

His thoughts wandered to his parents. They were weird, that was for sure. But they had never been bad parents. Sure, they homeschooled him and took him around with them as they traveled for work, and became way too clingy during his teenage years when he wanted to explore with his friends. But wasn't that normal parents' stuff? They never mistreated him or made him feel left out, which is why learning that they might have been keeping secrets from him felt like such a betrayal.

Then his thoughts went to his sisters. Belle was a brute who liked nothing more than bullying others and wrestling. She was extremely intimidating and did not hesitate to pick a fight with anyone, their parents included. But at the same time, she never allowed her siblings to be bullied either.

It was one of the reasons Lex took so long to develop his sense of protectiveness towards his own workers. It was because he had never felt the need to be protective of his sisters, for who on god's green earth would pick a fight with that maniac of a sister that he had?

Then came Liz. Like Lex, she too had been named by Belle.

He paused for a moment when he realized even the youngest, Moon, had been named by Belle. Had his parents even done anything?

Shaking his head, his thoughts drifted back to Liz. Out of all the siblings, she was the most introverted. People assumed it was because she was shy, but that wasn't it. Lex did not pretend to understand her reasoning, but she was the most selective of whom she spent her time with. Other than the siblings, there was barely anyone she was comfortable with - their parents included!

Then came Moon. She was the youngest, the most spoiled, loved, and extroverted of them all. She had more friends than Lex had acquaintances, and she found it impossible to sit still.

He wondered what they would think if they saw the Inn? Lex had no plans of divulging his identity as the Innkeeper, even to them. But even still, he couldn't help but wonder what they would think.

Belle would scoff and call it pedantic. Liz would find herself a hut somewhere far away from the crowds. Moon, well, the crowd would be around her wherever she went.

For all the irritation Lex felt at them, in that moment, he couldn't help but smile.

A short while later, his hologram popped up. Miranda had the locator ready.

He put on his Clark Kent glasses and teleported to the meeting room. Miranda looked somewhat better, with her arm in a makeshift cast, but it was clear from her haphazard clothes that she hadn't spent much time doing much of anything else.

"This is it," she said, handing him a device that looked like a clock.

"It runs on spirit energy so you'll have to power it yourself. I didn't have time to fashion a working battery. But that should locate the facility. Once there, whoever you're sending will have to find someone called Major Gilbert - he's in charge of the facility."

She slid forward a letter on the table.

"You'll have to give him this letter to get him to cooperate. If you don't have the letter, he won't acknowledge you, and chances are he'll resist. But, once he's been convinced, he'll lead you to the servers. The facility is large, and there are a lot of servers. There's also no way of knowing which one the relevant information is stored on, so you'll have to bring all of them back"

"Got it," said Leo, receiving the letter and the locator. The letter vanished inside his bangle, which he had covered by his shirt. He could really have people recognizing that, so he always kept it hidden from sight. The locator he simply grabbed, and would strap on later.

"Can you tell me now how the Inn will help us?" Although the woman had initially tried to put up a strong front, she was barely holding on now. Fortunately, Lex had no plans to dangle the information any longer.

"It's simple, really. Do you remember the Midnight Games? How the Inn was able to turn parts of the battlefield on Vegus Minima into an event?"

Realization dawned on Miranda, and she suddenly couldn't believe that she hadn't recalled the matter sooner!

"Is the Inn going to do that again?" she asked, barely able to suppress the excitement in her voice.

"No!" said Leo firmly. "That was a one-time event. The Inn will not do anything of the sort again. However, that does not mean that you can't host such an event yourself. It will take some work as you'll have to designate a battlefield or many, and you'll have to think of an incentive to get others to fight the battles. But I'm sure you can figure something out."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 563: War crime

"Wait, that's it? You've basically done nothing other than tell me about this! We need help!"

Leo's relatively relaxed expression turned solemn as he looked Miranda in the eyes. He understood that she was desperate. Deep inside, he even felt a little guilty. But this was a decision he had to abide by. Helping out even this much was attracting trouble towards the Inn.

He was lucky that the devils hadn't appeared to hold a grudge against the Inn, but he couldn't say so for others if the Inn kept interfering. As much as Lex wanted to help, he had his Inn and his workers to look out for.

Of course, he wasn't about to explain that to her.

"I made it absolutely clear that the Inn wouldn't be helping you, just providing you with a way to help yourself. Besides, have you done anything worthy of such help anyway? All I asked was for you to find three people. Let alone those people, you can't even get the information on them without my help."

The sudden admonishment woke Miranda up from her desperate stupor. Immediately she knew she had messed up. As someone trained in managing relations, she should have known better than to have such an emotional reaction. Besides, Leo was right. They hadn't really done anything worthy of the Inn intervening on their behalf. She had built up that hope on her own, and had acted out when it was crushed.

She was about to apologize, but Leo already teleported out of the room. She felt concerned for a moment, wondering if her outburst would affect whether the Inn allowed them to host such an event. But wondering wouldn't get her anywhere. She hurried out of the room to go inform the council. If they needed to incentivize others for help, they would need planning.

Lex was not genuinely angry at Miranda. To be more specific, he couldn't be bothered with her. The moment they were done, and he had everything, he decided to teleport away. The quicker this was done, the better.

He strapped the locator onto his wrist, and used a technique called Notorious Anonymity. This was also a 'defensive technique' that he had picked up, and was actually one of Lex's favorites at the moment.

Unlike his other techniques, this one did not create a shield or strengthen his body or anything of the sort. Instead, it covered his face with a very prominent looking mask, and only 'defended' his identity.

That meant the mask wasn't able to stop any attacks, but no one would be able to see his face or scan his identity in any way while he wore it. After he upgraded it, the mask even gained the ability to change its appearance from time to time, alongside the ability to block more types of surveillance which was also an important aspect of the technique. The only drawback was that the mask would never look discreet.

For example, when he used the technique now, a black mask enveloped his face with large, white fangs indented into it right below a massive pair of eyes. It sounded bizarre, but it looked incredibly creepy. Lex could imagine himself as the antagonist in an anime with the way he looked right now.

He changed into his armor and, just for safety, wrapped the protector in a layer of Impervious Shield.

After making sure he was prepared, Lex teleported to earth. It was best not to waste time.

But the moment he teleported, his intuition warned him of something, but he was too close to dodge. A beam of something hot hit his back, nearly burning his synthetic armor! Faintly, Lex felt some warmth on his back.

The fact that it was warm enough to allow Lex to feel something meant it was hot enough to kill others.

Not wasting a moment, he spread his spirit sense around him, gaining an understanding of the situation, which made his expression fall.

His face hidden behind the mask, Lex didn't feel the need to hide his emotions. What he didn't know was that the mask reacted, changing from a mad grin to that of a predator.

It was dark, not only because night had fallen, but also because of the massive ship blocking all star and moon light. Yet one did not need to look at the evil mask to feel the pressure Lex was radiating right now.

Somewhere in front of him were a pair of men, running away. Looking at their clothes, they looked like office workers, and judging by their appearance, they were around Lex's age. They had no idea that in the darkness behind them, a machine had tried to kill them.

Lex also did not need to turn around to identify the machine. Though its body did not look metallic, or like any stereotypical earthly design of robots, Lex knew it was a machine underneath its synthetic skin that looked like it was made of glass.

There was no sound, it did not speak, yet Lex's universal translator picked up what it was saying through the radio frequency waves it was emitting.

"For the war crime of interfering with the execution of resisting slaves, you are hereby sentenced to death!"

The nearly see-through machine started gathering up more energy to kill Lex with another laser beam when something unexpected happened. The organic lifeform replied to it!

"For the war crime of pissing me off, die!"

The pavement under Lex's feet could not contain the force with which he rushed towards the machine, leaving cracks in the ground in a spider web formation.

The glass machine detected his approach, but could not move fast enough to dodge. The last thing it saw before Lex's fist wearing iron knuckles smashed into its body was a demonic face staring deep into its soul! It was also the last image it sent back to the mothership.

The machine was unable to survive Lex's strength, and broke into countless tiny shards as his fist went through its body.

Lex stood there, looking at the ground, covered in the countless remains of his enemy. Despite his victory, he was not satisfied.

In truth, the mask had not looked so creepy for no reason. Lex truly was looking into the machine's soul with his soul sense. Or at least, a wisp of its soul.

Whether it was the fact that a machine had a soul, or that it only a wisp of its soul in its body were both things Lex had never encountered before.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 564: Hard to be indifferent

Lex recalled everything he had heard at the Inn about the 'alien invaders'. A lot of people who faced them called the aliens, while a lot of people claimed to have fought some kind of robots. The assumption he had made was that the invaders consisted of a race that also used a lot of robots.

That was a concept that was easy for him to understand. But this robot having a wisp of a soul inside of it confounded him. Especially because... he was the one calling it a wisp of soul. In fact, he had no idea what it was.

Looking at it, his intuition told him that it was a sort of mirage of an actual soul, but the soul was not present in the robot's body. Instead, it was somewhere else, and was using the wisp to remotely control the robot.

Of course that was only a guess and could not be confirmed, but Lex more or less trusted his intuition.

Based on that, Lex guessed earth was dealing with a highly advanced race that could use robotic soldiers instead of fighting in person. It was an important piece of information to note, and maybe he'd need it in the future. For now, he had other things to do.

He channeled some spirit energy into the locator strapped onto his wrist and waited for it to turn on. The interface wasn't complicated. It was like a compass, but instead of pointing north, it pointed towards the facility he needed to reach.

Lex summoned Fenrir and got atop it, before guiding it in the right direction. He knew that if ever Fenrir was recognized from the Inn, it would make him hiding his identity redundant. But it didn't matter because he kept linking his identity as Lex to Leo.

He was purposefully leaving behind clues, though an ordinary person would not pick them up. Only someone incredibly astute, with enough reach to gather all the clues, would be able to see the connection.

The point was, it was a lot more believable that Leo or Lex were running around on earth with Fenrir, than the mighty Innkeeper. A lot of people at the Inn had already seen the Innkeepers power, so no one would assume that he was actually Lex.

After all, someone that powerful didn't really need to hide that identity, is what most people would assume.

Another important factor was that Fenrir was supposed to be the protector of the Inn. He had gotten a taste for hunting in the Crystal realm. In fact, Lex still sent him there from time to time to hunt.

But the more dangerous situations he faced, the more experience he would gain. Also, Lex wouldn't have to run a huge distance in case the facility was far. But that was completely and totally not the real reason Lex summoned him, and was only a convenient truth.

But Lex barely covered any distance when he encountered another group of robots. They were fighting against what looked like local police who had barricaded themselves, as well as a group of civilians underground.

Technically, Lex could avoid them. He didn't need to get involved. But it was much easier to dismiss helping someone when they weren't being attacked right in front of your eyes. He knew that if he didn't help, they wouldn't have a chance.

"I bet Belle would have no problem ditching them," Lex mumbled as he instructed Fenrir to move closer.

Deep in space, there was a massive war being fought on a rogue planet, traveling through the expanse without anything to leash it. A majority of the planet was occupied by human forces while only a small portion of it was left under Fuegan control. Yet that did not mean the remaining fight was easy, or close to victory, for that matter.

Above the planet, in space, was the venue for another battle. This battle was not being fought by mortal soldiers, but by those nobles who had reached the immortal realm! Even if those immortals happened to be soldiers, by the definition of the empire, they would still be called nobles.

As such, this battlefield which often appeared in space to limit the damage was called the noble battlefield!

On this noble battlefield, there was one warrior in particular who especially radiated an aura that was both noble and domineering. She was clad in the signature armor of the Williams family. Her weapon was a double-ended scythe, and with it she had already reaped the life of an opposing Fuegan.

That was not an insignificant feat, for the death of an immortal was a rare occurrence regardless of what kind of battle it was. Yet she was not satisfied, and attacked aggressively!

But if all it took to defeat a Fuegan was aggression, this war would have been long won.

"There is news from the family head," a voice spoke to her in her mind. In the vacuum of space, spirit sense was the only way to communicate. Of course, masks with inbuilt communicators were also an option, but they never survived the kinds of fights they were exposed to.

"What does he want?" she asked, with no hint of politeness in her voice when talking about her own family head.

"It's good news. The ancestor has shown signs of returning, and even signs retaking the helm of the family to bring it to new heights!" The voice was tinged with excitement, but the woman did not share the feeling.

She took off her mask, revealing her beautiful, yet angry face. If Lex saw that face, he would instantly hide, for he knew what it was like when his maniacal sister got angry.

"Tell that old geezer to get lost. I'm the next leader of the Williams family. We didn't need him before and we don't need him now!"

"Belle, you can't-" the man trying to rebuke her was never able to finish the sentence, for Belle kicked him hard enough to send him hurtling towards the rogue planet.

She looked at the next person who happened to be standing nearby and said, "convey my message to the family head. If he tries to give my position away, I'll kill him!"

The Innkeeper

Chapter 565: Fixing Mindset

The fact that all the robots looked so different struck Lex as unusual, but he quickly noticed a pattern in their bodies despite the varying shapes. First, regardless of whether they were shaped like humanoids, tetrapods, floating orbs, small jets or whatever else, they all boasted a large torso, or central body.

It was not so evident when they were shaped like humans or animals, but the feature became more prominent when they took other shapes. Still, Lex would not have noticed this if it weren't for the fact that his soul sense could detect wisps of souls exactly in those spots. He did not know how significant this discovery was, but it could prove to be useful.

The second, more obvious thing that he noticed was that despite whatever form they took, they all seemed to be using laser weapons. Sure, the weapons had various forms, but all of them shot lasers - regardless of whether they were in the visible spectrum or not.

None of that mattered to Lex, who was not only impervious to their damage, but would punch through their bodies regardless of their shape or size. But before he left the Inn, Velma had sent forward a request to all workers dealing with the refugees to collect as much information about the invaders as possible.

Lex narrowed his eyes. The robots were finally reacting to his arrival, which was fine with him. The police would not have been able to hold them off much longer, especially since they had no weapons with which to shoot back! The only reason they had survived so long was because some of them turned out to be cultivators and were blocking the attacks with some spirit tech!

"Go get them," he said to Fenrir as he jumped off its back. He wanted to see how it handled being outnumbered so that he could understand what its capabilities were.

Fenrir only growled for a moment before leaping towards the robots, completely unafraid of their superior numbers.

Lex deployed an Imperial Shield in front of the underground entrance so they wouldn't suffer any collateral damage during the fight. The police, however, did not realize that.

They were desperately holding off the aliens, completely unable to divert their attention anywhere else, when they heard a loud growl. Before they could make sense of where that sound came from, a gray shield appeared in front of them, blocking their view of the outside world.

That did not reassure them, however, because while the shield blocked their view, and even trapped them inside, it did not block sounds.

The nerve-racking sounds of metal literally being ripped into pieces echoed in the air, along with a symphony of crashing, explosions and deep, spine-chilling growls. An excruciating 10 minutes later, the shield disappeared. Revealed to them was a battleground littered with the scrapped remains of the aliens that had been attacking them just a few minutes prior.

There was no indication of... of the creature that had been growling earlier, as if it had vanished into the darkness.

"Is it safe?" one civilian asked, slowly approaching the stairs leading up.

"No!" the policeman exclaimed and hurriedly signaled everyone to retreat, with no desire to find out what actually happened. He didn't know why his life had become a horror story, but he knew not to tempt fate. Curiosity could kill a lot more than just a cat!

Lex was feeling pretty good about himself as he rode Fenrir away. Fenrir had taken care of all the robots completely on its own, completely surpassing Lex's expectations. In fact, it had done so without suffering a single hit! In that regard, it surpassed Lex!

His own evasive maneuvers weren't that great, though previously he used the excuse that he could not dodge lasers moving at the speed of light as his justification. But this little pup of his had brought out some kind of interference field as soon as it attacked, making it so the robots movements became slow and imprecise. Even as he completely ripped them apart with its claws, they remained unable to actually target him.

Lex even took his time observing their remains once the battle was over to see if he could learn anything new about them, before eventually returning.

So far, fighting the robots had been super easy. Marlo's original assessment of the robots may not have been wrong, the nearly indestructible owner of a universal establishment, riding a beast with the bloodline of a god thought to himself.

But the good feeling didn't last. With his sharp senses, it wasn't long before he identified another group of people struggling with the robots. This time, they weren't fighting. They had been tied up and detained.

Lex could 'hear' the robots speaking in their low frequencies, talking about the new slaves.

His stomach lurched, but as much as it killed him, he didn't divert his direction this time. If he had to stop every time he encountered such a situation, he'd never reach the facility. The best help he could provide, he was already giving through his Inn.

For now, he had to prioritize his own objectives. He had to.

As if sensing his distress, Fenrir sped up. They were heading away from the city, so soon Lex stopped detecting both the robots and the groups of people.

Far in the distance, towards the main city, Lex could see faint sparks of light filling the sky, as if fireworks. But he knew that they weren't fireworks. They were most likely guns, or other weapons since guns weren't as common here.

But soon, Lex could not see even those.

Riding Fenrir across the English countryside, feeling the cool winter wind in his face, Lex almost felt pleasant.

But Lex didn't allow himself to wallow in guilt for too long. He took control of his emotions and fixed his mindset.

It was alright to feel bad when he saw people in distress, but he couldn't let those emotions take hold. The universe was full of strife, and he wasn't responsible for fixing it all.

If enemies came his way, he wouldn't spare them. But that didn't mean his mind could be swayed into fighting every villain that someone encountered. It was difficult, but he had to be firm.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 566: A toy

Lex was lost in his thoughts, reaffirming his resolution as Fenrir ran through the wild. Maybe the decision he was making wasn't the morally correct one, but it was the best one for himself and his dependents.

His mindset was undergoing a subtle change as he contemplated the philosophy behind maturing, and if it counted as maturing if he didn't like the decisions he had to make. Or perhaps, that is what maturity was to begin with.

Alas, his dramatic internal monologue was interrupted by his intuition. He looked up but saw nothing due to the absolute darkness that had enveloped the sky, yet his eyes seemed to be fixed on a moving target.

While his eyes were dependent on light, his other senses were not. His spirit sense had a vague range of about 100 feet (30 meters), where sometimes it could go a little beyond and sometimes is just below. His intuition, however, had no clear limit for how close or far an object had to be before it could detect it.

That is why, in the darkness, even though the approaching aliens' ships were so far that Lex could not hear them yet, his intuition informed him that he had been locked on to by them.

Lex did not ask Fenrir to slow down, however. They continued to run through the wilderness as Lex prepared to face them.

What he really wanted to try was Evisceration, but he wasn't sure it would work. He had no idea what that wisp in their bodies was. If it was a small part of their souls, then the technique would be absolutely fatal. If, however, it was something like a projection of a soul, or maybe even something else that Lex was unaware of at the moment, then the technique might not work.

To prepare for such an eventuality, he began picking out a long distance array to use. He did not believe that these robots would be as resilient as the ones in the pagoda, for right from the get go they had given him much more trouble.

The next few minutes were spent in silence until, even in the darkness, his eyes could pick out the shapes of the incoming ship. His eyes were already sharper than normal, let alone the strange advancements his left eye underwent, so seeing in the dark was not such a big issue.

There were four ships heading his way, and they did not bother being subtle about their approach. From the moment Lex saw them, it only took a couple more minutes till even Fenrir picked up on their arrival. A minute later, the sound of jets rushing through the air could be heard from the distance.

Fenrir growled, but Lex rubbed him behind the ears. The little pup wanted to attack, but as much as Lex trusted him, there was a difference between going up against a robot and going against a ship. It was like fighting against an armed soldier and a fighter jet - they were not in the same league!

In the time that it took Lex to calm his pup down, the four ships had arrived. They did not bother surrounding him, or trying to communicate. They attacked the moment they were in range!

As he put up the strongest version of Imperial Shield that he could manage, he wondered if the invaders were always so aggressive or if it was just him they were specifically targeting. After all, if their objective was to gather slaves, killing everyone they came across would be counter-productive.

Just as Lex suspected, these ships were specifically targeting him. As soon as their scanners captured his image, it flagged him as a war criminal for interfering in an execution and resisting punishment.

They attacked immediately, their laser weapons shooting off short orange blasts that immediately slammed into the Imperial Shield. A large, fiery explosion shook the earth. Orange flames licked everything around them black, turning what could not survive its heat to ash.

Yet behind his shield, Lex was untouched even by a warm wind. It was a good idea to upgrade his techniques.

He looked up in the sky, but did not retaliate yet. The ships were too far for even his array, let alone evisceration. So, he patiently waited for them to come closer.

But that is not what the ships detected. As soon as they scanned the explosion site, they picked up an image of a lone man sitting comfortably on his war mount, looking up at them mockingly.

The massive fangs displayed on the mask had changed into a sneer, as if the ships were unworthy opponents. His eyes looked placid, as if there was no pressure that the incoming ships put on him.

A mistake that Lex made, due to the kind of exposure he had, was that the ships were piloted by the robots who were invading. That was wrong. In fact, the ships themselves were sentient as well. They were just as much invaders as the robots on the ground, and they took great offense to Lex's dismissive attitude!

The ships, now closer since they never stopped moving during this entire ordeal, opened a hull at their base, and brought out a laser cannon. The identical cannons on all four ships began to glow, charging up for their attack.

"Oh?" Lex felt a tingle, as if warning him his shield wouldn't be enough for the upcoming attack.

All four lasers shot, but not at Lex. The four lasers converged midair, and began combining their might, turning into a massive orb of orange light.

"Look Fenrir, the little aliens are trying really hard," said Lex mockingly, this time on purpose.

Though Lex had not spoken aloud, the sensors on the ships detected every word he said! Not only that, since the ships were constantly connected to the mother-ship, his words were broadcast back to their main command!

Unable to contain their anger, the ships launched their attack prematurely!

The massive orange orb, despite its size, hurled at Lex at the speed of light, crashing through the Imperial Shield. Then... then nothing.

The orange ball seemed to freeze in space, right in front of Lex. The ships scanned again, and received an image of Lex casually holding the massive ball off destructive energy in a single extended hand. It looked like a toy.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 567: Priority

Lex naturally could not catch the orange orb at the speed of light. Yet his intuition could predict its trajectory and path even before it launched, giving Lex plenty of time to prepare.

Although the orb was quite a bit larger than his hand, on a whim he felt like testing out Impervious hands.

Using the technique cost a lot of spirit energy, but Lex was not in his flow state, where he always did the most efficient action. In normal life, it was okay to be wasteful sometimes.

The technique's appearance was very lackluster, in that nothing special appeared on his hands. It was as if a technique wasn't being used at all.

Just as he held out his hand in place, the aliens launched the attack. While the orange orb had no trouble breaking through the Imperial shield, the moment it touched Lex's hand, it lost all of its momentum.

Lex experienced something strange. According to the original technique, his hands should have been impervious to damage, and that is all. Yet now, from the moment the ball touched his hand, he felt in complete control of it. That was not supposed to happen as there was no aspect of the technique which extended to control, but that's what happened.

He could feel that the energy propelling it forward had not disappeared, but was simply contained. If he wished, he could use that energy to propel the ball anywhere he wished. If he so wanted, the orange orb could fizzle out, or suddenly explode.

He tried out his control, and the massive orange orb shrunk down until it fit perfectly into his palm.

"Look Fenrir, the aliens want to play catch."

He didn't try to throw the orb back, he didn't trust his aim enough. He just used its existing kinetic energy, and sent it back exactly from the path through which it came!

On the mother-ship, or rather, the mother-ship, which was its own sentient being as well, stuttered for a moment when it received a projection of a laser orb being caught with bare hands.

When it heard Lex's words, it did the robot equivalent of screaming in the air before the feed was immediately cut off. The sensors on the ships near Lex were not advanced enough to track the orb traveling at the speed of light, and so they were unable to record how Lex sent the orb back. But the mothership guessed what happened nonetheless.

"New additional objective," she sent out to all deployed robots in the region. "Anomalous subject identified. Subject has shown capability to physically interact with energy. Securing the anomalous subject is now priority number 31! Objective title: anomalous subject securing. Objective short form: A.S.S. I repeat, A.S.S. is now priority number 31!"

Back on earth, Lex was admiring the massive explosion in the air. It was a shame that he didn't get to try evisceration, but he would get more opportunities no doubt. Moreover, he learned something interesting about Impervious hands.

Fenrir released a low whine, attracting Lex's attention.

"What do you mean that I insulted the tradition of the hunt? I'm the one who taught you about hunting! Besides, I'm learning that it's a little fun to tease your prey."

"Grrr."

"Don't be ridiculous! It's not more fun to immediately kill the prey. Sometimes, when you have full control of the situation, it's a lot of fun to tease your prey a little. Honestly. Try it next time."

Instead of replying to Lex, Fenrir began running towards the facility once again.

"Oh, you're ignoring me now?" Lex asked while laughing.

"Grrr."

"Me? Embarrass you? Are you serious?"

Lex and Fenrir continued to argue with one another as they continued on their path, completely unaware that various robots and ships had diverted their path to locate them. Yet, despite their advanced technology, they were unable to find them!

Whether they scanned the area from the air, or checked their last known location for tracks, there was nothing to find.

Though Fenrir was young and inexperienced, its instincts were strong. After the previous fight, it had immediately deployed one of its bloodline abilities, creating an interference field around them and hiding all their tracks.

The abilities bestowed by a god-bloodline could not so easily be countered, and so thousands of ships flew in the area, searching for them to no avail.

The mothership grew increasingly frustrated at the lack of results, and couldn't help but picture the uninterested look on the mask when it faced those ships. It understood now that the whole reason they even located him the first time around was because he was teasing them. Whoever he was, he never took them seriously for a single moment.

In her anger, the mothership activated a single infantry regiment. All the units it had sent on the ground so far were naught more than scouts. Their true soldiers were very different, and much stronger. In truth, even the mothership could get into trouble if it was detected she deployed troops unnecessarily and wastefully. But that was easy to solve. She just needed to provide a legitimate reason for their deployment.

"Reassigning planet threat level from 1 to 2. Redistribution of deployed units required. Deployment of additional troops required. Reevaluation of danger zones required."

Silently, a change started to occur as more troops approached earth, but this time in camouflage.

At the Midnight Inn, the three nascent cultivators and the devils were finishing up their deal, and shaking hands. The council had just about finished their proposal and were almost ready to request a meeting with the Innkeeper.

Down on earth, Lex finally neared the facility. But while it was protected under a defensive formation, it had also been surrounded by hundreds of robots laying siege.

Even though Lex had it pretty easy so far, he did not dare underestimate hundreds of robots. Even if they couldn't hurt him, they might hurt Fenrir of the facility. Moreover, he didn't know if killing too many would attract attention.

He had to progress with caution.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 568: Drama

Lex was observing the facility, considering how he could enter without attracting attention. The surrounding area was pitch dark, but the facility was still well lit. They probably had spirit energy powered lanterns or something similar. But instead of helping them, the light acted as a beacon for the robotic invaders, attracting their attention and resulting in this siege.

Their defensive formation was like a transparent bubble around the entire building, only rippling when struck by the invaders - so that meant it was constantly rippling. He didn't know how much longer the formation could last.

Before Lex could formulate a plan on how to proceed, Mary called out to him.

"Hey Lex, before you do anything else, I just learned something I thought I should share with you."

"What's up?" he asked without removing his gaze from the facility.

"While the council was temporarily crippled due to the sudden shutdown of all electronics, surprisingly, they actually had contingencies in place for such an occasion! They've finally got a communication network based on spirit tech up and running, and have successfully mobilized a response force."

"Alright. What does that have to do with my current situation?"

"According to their latest reports, the invaders have not attacked all places equally. They are first mobilizing towards high value resources, some of which the council had actually hidden from the world. Moreover, there are a few special zones on your planet termed as danger zones where people don't casually venture in, because anyone who goes in rarely comes out. The invaders are all targeting those

areas first, as if they want to make sure they get everything precious or valuable before they do anything else.

"This information was corroborated by Marlo, who recently just returned to the Inn. According to him, his wife's family's sacred ground was also attacked. Unable to hold them off, she opted to dig out their most valuable tree, and brought it to the Inn's greenhouse for safekeeping."

Lex recalled hearing about that tree, if they were talking about the same one. They had used it to keep Rafael alive despite his horrible condition.

"So what you're suggesting is... the reason there are a lot of robots laying siege to this facility is because it is probably storing something valuable?"

"That is a possibility. There's one more thing. Although he was not clear about the details, Marlo suggested that this invasion might not be so simple. He suggested that it might have been instigated by someone. He said he would not elaborate more until they were able to contact Fernanda, but there's been no progress on that yet."

Lex frowned. Before the invasion happened, Marlo was supposed to be heading towards the 'prison' to deal with whoever had been instigating wars on earth. Considering his history, it might not be a stretch that the same person would be responsible for starting something like this, if he was able.

Suppressing his urge to personally beat up that scum, Lex narrowed his eyes as he looked at the facility. What could the facility be hiding that was so valuable? Miranda didn't mention anything, and he doubted the aliens were interested in the servers.

Just because he had access to the whole universe it did not mean he underestimated the value of things he could find on earth. After all, if earth was so insignificant then the robots themselves would not be interested in them.

More importantly, that meant that as soon as he fought any of these robots, they would likely attract reinforcements. After all, if this was one of their main objectives, they would not treat it lightly.

Lex groaned. The truth was, he had already thought of a way to circumvent the blockade, but he'd been having so much fun crushing robots lately that he wanted to continue.

He sent Fenrir back to the Inn, promising to summon it back if any fighting started. He closed his eyes and started to use the technique he had learnt so long ago back in the Crystal realm, called In-Law effect!

The original purpose of the technique was a sort of last minute escape to save one's life. It allowed the user to teleport their soul away, but due to the fact that Lex's soul was fused to his body, for him it became a teleportation technique.

This was far from simple, as Lex had looked at actual teleportation techniques for Golden core cultivators, and they were incredibly convoluted and difficult to master. They were a lot more reliable and versatile, sure, but it would take Lex months of dedicated focus to master the technique. Without exaggeration, it was one of the most difficult techniques he had seen.

But using the power of loopholes, Lex found a much easier solution. The original technique required Lex to stay still for 3 hours, but now powered by his energy which was a better fuel source than anything a Foundation realm expert could supply, it took him barely a minute.

One moment, he was standing in the distance, looking at the facility from far away. The next, he had teleported inside.

Large concrete walls had surrounded the facility, not only protecting it but also hiding it from view. Now that Lex had crossed those walls he could finally see that it was... a very plain and unimpressive looking gray, rectangular building.

While Lex observed the unremarkable building, his arrival had not gone unnoticed, prompting soldiers to instantly surround him. They pointed their weapons at him and screamed at him to get down on his knees, but Lex wasn't really in the mood for all this drama.

He would not have called it drama if he could see the intimidating appearance of the mask he was wearing, but that was besides the point. He spread out his spirit sense and firmly held all the soldiers, freezing them where they stood, further scaring everyone in view.

"I have a letter here for Major Gilbert. Can someone go find him? I don't want to spend too much time on this."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 569: Not here to steal

An awkward silence filled the air once Lex spoke. The soldiers further off didn't understand why everyone around Lex had frozen still, while the soldiers around Lex knew that they had screwed up.

A majority of the soldiers working here were just mortals who had been at the facility during their routine deployment. When the power went out and the darkness fell, they acted according to the security protocols and locked the facility down. Yet it had been nearly an entire day where the power to the facility had not returned, and then they had come under attack by unknown enemy forces. Nervousness was at an all-time high, and when they had seen Lex, they had simply reacted out of instinct. It was actually fortunate no one had actually shot at him, which was a real concern considering how intimidating he looked.

Lex looked around and asked, "is there any superior officer around? A captain or someone in charge?"

Some of the soldiers who were out of the range of Lex's spirit sense looked towards a young yet mature looking man who had also been locked down by his spirit sense. This was a nifty technique he learned while practicing with his spirit sense, following the online he had been following. As amazing as it seemed, he could only use it on mortals for now, as even a Qi Training expert could disrupt his spirit sense using his Qi. But once he became even more familiar with his spirit sense, he could start using techniques focused on his spirit sense to do much more than lock down mortals.

Lex released the soldier in command, unafraid of any retaliation and said, "no need to be nervous. I'm here on council business. Please send word to the major of my arrival. I'll wait here, so that everyone feels more comfortable."

To the soldiers credit, he did not stutter or act afraid despite his previous situation. He looked at Lex with a grim determination that spoke of his resolve to fight if needed, before turning around and jogging away. He made a few signs with his hands while he was jogging away, no doubt passing along some secret orders to the remaining soldiers to watch him.

"I don't mean any harm, so I'll let the rest of you go as well, alright? Don't over react now."

After giving considerable warning, he slowly loosened his hold on the remaining soldiers.

Most of the soldiers managed to display the same level of control as the young captain, though clearly they were very disturbed. A few stumbled upon being released and showed considerable panic. Two shot at Lex's face as soon as they were released.

The bullets traveled through the mask and hit his face, ricocheting off.

Lex only sighed and once again trapped the two soldiers with his spirit sense. Afterwards, he stopped paying attention to them.

Honestly, he could have avoided the bullets, for although they were quite fast, and the soldiers were near, he had long since transcended the abilities and limits of normal humans. He decided not to dodge because honestly he felt too lazy to, and at the same time he wanted to recreate a scene he saw in a movie once where a bullet crumpled after hitting a superhero. Unfortunately, instead of crumpling, the bullets just bounced off of him. He had wasted a precious opportunity to look cool.

"How long do you think you can hold off those robots?" Lex asked while waiting, but none of the soldiers were willing to respond. Though they were not aiming their guns at him, as they had been earlier, they were still clearly quite wary of him.

Lex shrugged and decided to just wait in silence. A short while later, the door to the gray building opened and a few men came running out in a hurry.

"Stand down! Stand down!" an older man yelled as he arrived. Much like the soldiers, he was wearing combat gear, but his was clearly different. Lex could tell the man was a Foundation realm cultivator, though he was still near the very beginning of the realm. As such, his gear reflected his status as a cultivator, and while it looked identical to the normal ones, bore some hidden enhancements.

"I've already received news of your arrival through the spirit channel, sir! Are you Leo?" the man asked, as he neared Lex.

"My identity is irrelevant," Lex said, and summoned the letter from his spatial bangle.

"Please confirm the contents of this letter and take me to your servers."

Lex had naturally already read the content of the letter using his spirit sense. He could naturally not detect if any orders were passed using any secret ciphers. Simply read, however, the letter used a few lines of some code to confirm their authenticity, before passing along the order to allow the bearer of the letter to have access to the servers.

"Everything is in order Mr. Le... eh, if you'll follow me, I'll take you to where you want to go."

Lex nodded, but before leaving turned his attention to the two detained soldiers. He pulled the guns out of their hands using spirit sense before letting them go.

With the highest commanding officer before them they behaved much better, but the two had gone incredibly pale. Either they were scared senseless or they knew they were likely to get in trouble. Possibly both.

Without passing any comments, Lex followed the major into the boring looking building. Matching the outside, the appearance of the building once inside also looked very plain. Old tiles and yellowing paint made it seem like an old office building suffering from neglect - not at all what one would expect based on the walls surrounding it.

"The elevator isn't working so we'll have to take the stairs," the major said awkwardly as he led Lex to the emergency stairwell, descending deep underground.

"How long do you think you guys can hold out against the invaders?" Lex asked once again, sounding mostly uninterested. Now that the two were alone, it was time to see what he could dig up about this facility. Not that Lex was interested in stealing whatever they were holding, naturally. He would never.

But, say, if the facility fell to the robots, then it wouldn't count as stealing from the council, right?

The Innkeeper

Chapter 570: Manual labor

It was a well known and established fact that Lex was not greedy and was, instead, a humble fellow who had given up his attraction to worldly possessions. The fact that he hoarded dozens of armors in his spatial bangle did not go against this fact, as those were there to serve a functional purpose.

He wore no jewelry or expensive watches, and did not have an expensive shoe collection. Even back when he was a mortal and made 7 million dollars, he did not waste it all and instead invested it. He continued to work at his job in the meantime, and lived a normal life. Yes, Lex was a proverbial monk. His only interest in any treasures the facility hid was purely academic and if, god forbid, the facility were to ever fall to the invaders and Lex intervened, it was only out of a sense of honor and duty. It was his duty as a man, no, as a human, to ensure that the alien robots failed in their objectives.

It had nothing to do with greed, it was a matter of honor. So, as honor entailed, Lex began to... no manipulate, no, never. He simply... aided the major in performing his duties by relieving him of the mental stress of carrying state secrets. Yes, Lex was practically a saint.

In fact, even the expression on his mask changed to that of an honest wide eyed grin .

"If they maintain their current scale of attack," the major began to answer, "then they won't be able to penetrate the formation. It is very strong. However, we cannot maintain it indefinitely. We only carry enough supplies to power the formation for two days."

In truth, this was confidential information that the major should not have been sharing. Lex should have had to work a little harder to get this information out of him. Yet the major had never faced real combat situations before. The stress of the situation had affected his judgment. The change was for the better, in Lex's opinion.

"When the formation was being designed, the council figured that if reinforcements didn't arrive, and someone was able to lay down siege on the facility for two days continuously, then this facility was probably the least of their problems."

"Makes sense. You said you've already talked to someone, that must mean communication lines are back up. Have they said anything about reinforcements for this facility?"

"Yes! Reinforcements are already on their way. It should take a few hours though. According to HQ, alien presence in England is actually very small compared to Europe. I feel bad for them, but it's good for us. They expect to drive out all the aliens in a few days unless they get reinforcements of their own.."

"Good, good," Lex murmured while suppressing an internal curse. "This facility is pretty well guarded for a data center."

This time, the major was not as forthcoming as Lex had wished.

"It's important. Not only is a data center not cheap, but it holds all the valuable information of the council. That not only includes the private details of all the council members, but information on all of the council's various projects and responsibilities. If that weren't the case, we could have just used a commercial data center instead of building one ourselves."

"The building looks old. Did you have to renovate it to turn it into a data center?"

"I'm not sure about such details. The data center was already up and running when I was posted here, and I didn't look into its history."

Lex only nodded, and decided instead to start sweeping the facility with his spirit sense. Walls posed no obstacle to his senses - or at least, they weren't supposed to. Deep underground in the facility, there were walls built of a special material that seemed to block spirit sense. Well, at least if he ever needed to... rescue earth's resources from invading aliens, he'd know where to look.

But while his spirit sense could be blocked, his intuition could not. He could feel that whatever was stored deep down wouldn't personally benefit him or his cultivation, which diminished his interest somewhat.

"Here you go," said the major, leading Lex into a large hall. "This is the first of the server rooms."

The server racks were placed on top of metallic cages, which would allow cold air to blow up at them from underneath, not to mention the air ducts aimed at them from above. Despite the fact that there was no electricity, and the air conditioning clearly had not been turned on, the room was still chilly.

"The first room? How many rooms like this are there?" Lex asked as he gauged how many of these he could fit into his spatial bangle.

"There are 4 halls like this on each floor, and there are five floors of servers."

Lex would definitely need to make several trips to the Inn to transport all of these servers. He should really look into the Inns ability to turn items into cards that can be easily transported. That would save him a lot of trouble.

"Well then, I'll get started."

Wrapping the servers in his spirit sense, he directly transported them inside his spatial bangle, making sure to take as many wires as he could. Taking the servers to the Inn was only the first part. They would need to be turned back on and probably have to go through some configuration once that was done as well. Ideally, the servers should have already been prepared for transport by engineers, but one could not ask for everything during war.

The work was tedious, and while it bewildered the major, Lex felt like he was doing manual labor.

He had to make repeated trips to the Inn, and unload the servers and teleport back to the facility.

After 20 minutes, despite his speed, he was still not finished. But it seemed time was up, as the building rumbled, as if experiencing an earthquake. Lex paused, and turned to look at the major, who was also concerned but tried to put on a brave face.

"Worry not, this building is..."

He did not get to finish his words, as the sounds of explosions interrupted him, followed by more trembles.

"It seems the formation has failed," Lex said grimly as he spread his spirit sense upwards.