

Innkeeper 571

The Innkeeper

Chapter 571: A.S.S found!

"Damn it!" the major exclaimed and exited the room immediately, running upwards. Lex did not follow him, but sped up retrieving the servers as much as he could. The sound of fighting above him became more intense, and the shaking became more common.

As easy as he found it to kill the robots, he was certain of the fact that normal humans with regular guns could not harm them. The fact that there was a fight going on upstairs indicated that the facility clearly had more defensive measures prepared than just soldiers with guns. What he was concerned about was why the defense failed so suddenly. The change was too abrupt, with no time for any warning.

If more robots had arrived, thereby increasing the numbers of attackers, to overwhelm the formation, someone would still have had enough time to find the major and give a warning. It was worth investigating.

It took him a couple more minutes, but without having to hold back his speed to accommodate the major, the process was sped up considerably. Just to be safe, Lex decided to teleport back to the Inn and drop off the servers. Afterwards, he would return and see if he could help in the defense of the facility. Or, you know, if the facility was bound to get overrun, protect its resources from falling into invader hands.

Yet something unusual happened. Normally returning to the Inn was slower than normal teleportation, but it was still a relatively quick process. However, now that Lex was trying to return, the process had slowed down considerably. Even ten seconds later, he was still on earth!

"Mary, what's happening?" Lex asked grimly. This was not a laughing matter.

"I'm not entirely certain. The system is detecting unusual activity in the space around earth, making teleportation more difficult."

"Am I trapped here?"

Mary scoffed. "Of course not. The system can access anywhere in the whole universe, a little spatial distortion won't stop it. It will, however, slow it down considerably. You might need to wait a whole minute for the system to teleport you out safely.. The same will apply to anyone using golden keys."

"The timing of this can't be a coincidence," Lex noted.

"Whether this is a natural phenomenon or artificial is not something that I can check. But one thing is certain - if whoever is attacking has means advanced enough to disrupt space, then they definitely have the means to detect any teleportation taking place. If they can detect everyone who is coming and going from the Inn, then it's no wonder they started disrupting space."

Just as Mary finished speaking, Lex was finally teleported away from the basement and returned to the Inn. He unloaded all the servers, and directly teleported them to a small facility he had built in the small village being rented by the council.

"Inform Miranda that the servers have arrived. Also, send a notification to everyone from earth letting them know that teleportation to and from earth has been slowed due to interference."

Other than the crystal realm, this was the first time he encountered trouble with teleportation. He was now even more invested in figuring out who exactly these invaders were. No one messed with his business.

Although technically his work on earth was over, he decided to return to the facility. Not only did he want to help them, but he was very interested in how they overcame the defensive formation. He had a feeling that this information would be critically important.

Just as with his arrival, the teleportation back to earth took uncomfortably long. For the first time, the expression on the mask completely accurately depicted how Lex truly felt. There was no toothy grin this time, no. Instead, a closed mouth and eyes that showed increasing anger painted his mask.

If the Inn developed a poor reputation because of these delays, Lex would not take the matter lying down. Although he had said that the Inn would not take any active part in helping the council to maintain its neutrality, he was beginning to wonder if he could find any loopholes for that as well.

The moment Lex teleported back, the building trembled once again, and this time harder than ever before. He immediately spread his spirit sense to assess the situation, and surprisingly discovered that the humans were actually holding the invaders off!

Although the guns could not hurt the robots, and their technology had failed the earthlings, they were not deterred. If there was one thing humans were good at, it was war!

Much like during the Midnight games, there were several groups of cultivators using techniques that empowered one another to fight off the robots. There were a total of 7 Foundation real cultivators, and nearly a hundred Qi training cultivators holding off against the invaders.

They had what looked like riot shields large enough to cover their entire bodies, which were capable of blocking the laser attacks! Lex was genuinely impressed at the durability of those shields. He knew that those lasers weren't simple to block, and most of everything he had seen so far made it look like the robots had an overwhelming advantage. This was the first thing he saw that proved otherwise.

Once Lex got a good idea of the situation, he reluctantly decided to not safeguard the facility's resources personally. Instead, using the In-Law effect, he teleported to the ground and directly smashed the nearest robot.

He thought his sudden appearance and subsequent defeat of a robot would help moralize the troops. Instead, it was when all the robots stopped invading and started focusing solely on Lex that the soldiers felt their morale boosted - at least they weren't the ones being shot at!

Lex, however, instantly felt his mood sour. It wasn't because he was being targeted by all the robots. It was because he overheard the robots speaking.

"A.S.S. has been found at location designation 7651273. All on ground units, focus on A.S.S. Energy weapons have proven to be non-effective against target, act accordingly."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 572: Fire Demon

Without hesitation, Lex used Evisceration on the robot that had spoken. But as he had long suspected, the technique had no effect. No matter, he didn't mind doing things up close and personal.

On his fists, he was currently wearing iron knuckles that he had bought from the Guild room. Unlike normal iron knuckles, these could be charged up using Lex's spirit energy. Once they were charged, the next time they made contact with anything, they would release a concentrated burst of energy. That, accompanied by Lex's ridiculous physical strength, made it so no spiritual technique was required. Brute strength was enough to take down any foe he faced, so far at least.

That was exactly why Lex threw himself at the robot that had spoken earlier and kicked its body. He did not want to defeat it too quickly. He did not know if the robots felt pain, but he definitely knew the satisfaction of beating it senselessly.

The soldiers, who had finally gotten some relief and took that time to readjust themselves, went into shock. They had been fighting for their lives, barely holding on, when fighting. Yet against the same opponents, the strange masked demon, the robots were nothing but rag dolls.

Completely ignoring all the attacks falling upon his body, the demon kicked one of the robots into the sky. But that was just the setup for more attacks, for immediately afterwards, the masked demon punched another robot, tearing it apart. He then grabbed the robots breaking limbs and started to throw them into the sky at the robot he kicked up.

But after a few moments of that, feeling unsatisfied, he jumped high up into the air and kicked the robot back onto the ground, creating a crater where it landed.

By now, the armor he was wearing had turned red from the heat of the laser hitting it, and even began to melt. Yet for a man who had swan through lava, what was burning clothes?

He did not even slow down and kept stomping the first robot. But the demon was strategic. He did not immediately destroy the robot by attacking the core of its body which was its center. Instead, he attacked its limbs, slowly crushing them.

By now, the pants he was wearing were literally on fire and his armor was melting off his body, but he had not even slowed down. Some robots had come near to attack him, but not only did their physical attacks not hamper him, as he had done earlier, he ripped off their limbs and used them as weapons to continue smashing the robot at his feet.

A strange scene unfolded, where the human soldiers were left stunned, preventing them from doing anything, and the remaining robots finally stopped firing and slowly began to back away from the literal flaming demon.

But all things, regardless of how bizarre they were, eventually had to come to an end. The robot Lex was crushing finally gave out, and collapsed under Lex's endless barrage.

Realizing his target had died, Lex suddenly looked up, and finally realized how strange the situation was. The humans and robots alike were staring at him, in fear and awe.

Feeling a single sweat break out, he finally realized that his gear was on fire. He erected an Imperial shield around himself, took off the thick, melted goo that was sticking to his body, and put on a fresh pair of identical body armor.

He removed the Imperial shield, ready to continue the fight. Yet the scene of him in fresh attire scared everyone even more than the chaos that he had just wrought. The fact that he had prepared extra armor... meant that such behavior was a norm for him.

One of the soldiers that had shot at him earlier fainted.

The robots, too, had completely stopped firing at him, and watched from a distance. All the attention... was making Lex feel a little awkward. He was just venting a little, was there really a need to treat him as such? Wasn't this war? How were his actions more intimidating than fighting each other to the death?

For a short time, everyone was still. No one knew what to do next.

Then, one of the robots stepped forward, and for the first time, attempted to communicate with the humans.

"Human, the Operation Commander wishes to speak with you. Will you accept the call?" The robot spoke in a very stereotypical electronic voice, which was not what anyone had been expecting.

Lex was surprised by the level of etiquette being shown by the robots all of a sudden, but did not disparage the opportunity to communicate with them. Maybe he could finally understand why they had invaded.

"Sure," said Lex, and walked towards the robot. When they came face to face, the robot spoke again, though this time with a different, more feminine electronic voice - if that was possible.

"This is Iota-336 speaking. Are you the leader of the local humans?"

"I am neither a leader for the humans, nor a representative of anyone on Earth. I am here on private business that you are hampering. Do you care to explain why you are suddenly invading this planet? As far as I know, the residents of this planet should have no hostilities with any foreign entities, nor do they have any resources valuable enough to prompt an invasion."

Using his sixth sense, Lex could tell that whoever he was speaking with was extremely annoyed at him in particular for some reason. What had he done? Nothing. Why was he being targeted?

"The residents of this planet have broken intergalactic law by enslaving sentient A.I. Regardless of the circumstances, all residents of this planet have been deemed criminals, sentenced to slavery or death. Surrender peacefully, and you will be allowed to live. Resist, and you will die."

"I have never heard of this law, and I don't know anything about the slavery you're talking about. Isn't it a little harsh to punish an entire planet for a crime they don't even know about? Not to mention, most of the people had nothing to do with the crime."

"Irrelevant. All living beings on this planet have been sentenced. Shall I take your lack of answer as non-compliance?"

The Innkeeper

Chapter 573: New plan

Lex could not help but frown. Although he did not get a clear idea of who these invaders were, the reason for their attack did not sit well with him. If they could condemn a whole planet to death or slavery so easily, then they should be considerably powerful themselves.

Lex remembered that the Henali had a few conventions, such as disallowing mass genocide and soul farming, but those restrictions only specifically applied to beings in the Dao realm. Whatever the conventions were for weaker beings, he had not seen them.

The fact that the devils so blatantly used various planets to mature their demons indicated that so long as they remained within certain limits, the Henali would allow genocide. In fact, it suddenly occurred to him that his definition of genocide and that of the Henali might differ. After all, they were speaking on a realm wide scale, whereas to him even a single planet was a big deal.

If that were the case, then no matter how much he wanted to help out his home planet, they may already be fighting a losing battle. After all, even if he hosted an event, and got others to help out, it wasn't as if they'd fight the war for them. They'd only fight so long as they have something to gain. If they were faced with inevitable death, then there was no way earth could garner any foreign help.

Although a lot of this was speculation on Lex's part, he had the exposure to justify it. His mind already started working. If the earth fell, regardless of how much he wanted to help the refugees, he wouldn't be able to take care of them indefinitely, especially if the numbers were high. In that case, instead of charging them rent for long durations of time, he could directly sell them exclusive rights to some of the Minor realms connected to the Inn.

That way they'd become self-sufficient again with the resources available. Moreover, the idea of selling exclusive access to Minor realms during special situations sounded a lot better than making it look like the Innkeeper was giving special preference to humans. After all, there were still new Minor realm connections being revealed within the Inn to this day. He still had no idea exactly how many Minor realms he had access to, but it was a lot of them.

With a plan formulating in his mind, Lex regained his confidence. On earth these robots could potentially be a threat, but he did not fear them inside the Inn at all. Worst comes to worst, he'll just kick them out of the Inn.

Just because he was afraid of the Henali did not mean everyone had the right to intimidate him, regardless of how powerful they may be.

"You can take my lack of answer however you wish, I couldn't care less. Who do you think you are anyway, to walk up to me and threaten me? Are you so confident that you can just face me and get away with it?"

"The human race is a weak, divided race that only has relevance due to a single human being the Henali's pet. Since you have chosen to not surrender, then prepare yourself. The machines you have fought so far are akin to the civilians of your race. Once the soldiers are deployed, you will have no chance of resistance."

Without waiting for Lex to reply, the robot turned away and began to retreat. So did the rest of the others. It seems they had decided that since they could not defeat Lex, they should leave it to the pros.

Lex stood there for a couple of minutes, scanning the area to make sure the robots were leaving. It seemed like they were gone, and wouldn't be returning any time soon. Or at least, the ones to arrive wouldn't be these robots, but the so-called 'actual soldiers'.

Lex turned around to face the humans, but instead of cheering for him, they took a step back, as if afraid.

Lex felt like sighing. This is probably why no one wanted to be a hero. Only in movies and tv shows do they get the proper accolades. He completely forgot that only a few minutes ago, he was knee deep in robot guts.

From between the soldiers, the major stepped forward, looking pale and out of breath. Although they had managed to hold back the robots, it did not mean that it was easy.

"Mr. I- uhhh... sir, I've received new orders. Would you happen to have any uh... would you happen to have any 'Midnight Inn golden keys'?"

"Yes, a few."

"If possible, I would like to purchase them off of you. According to the latest orders, we've been told to retreat to the Inn. Though no further explanation has been given, the order sounded urgent. As for the matter of payment, if you follow me, I can provide you with the payment. I've been told that after deducting the cost for the keys, the remainder is to be converted into a currency called MP.

Lex was pleasantly surprised. He didn't even need to reclaim the resources from the aliens, it was being sold to him directly. This was perfect. If he liked the resources, he could take them himself and pay the MP equivalent out of pocket. If not, the system would take care of converting it to MP itself, he didn't need to worry.

There was one caveat though. If he bought the keys himself, the price would increase for every subsequent key he bought. But if a guest bought the keys from the gift shop, the price never changed.

"Major, why don't you take me to the money first. I only have one key to spare, but after handing you the payment, you can go to the Inn and buy the remaining keys yourself."

"Uhh, alright. Follow me."

The major began to lead Lex to the basement, once again, while he passed an order to all the soldiers to pack up for a permanent retreat. Immediately they began running around the facility, gathering whatever equipment they needed.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 574: Cheating

As Lex followed the major, he compiled all the information he had gathered about the robots and sent it to Mary. He informed her to give everything to Velma and have her add it to the information the Midnight newsroom sells privately.

Although he had already done a lot to paint the Innkeeper as biased towards humans, he began to change that perception by slowly doing these small things. Eventually, over time, other races would also get similar benefits which would erase the perception of bias.

Lex already had a vague idea of doing this, but lately his intuition began warning him that he was heading towards trouble if he kept up such behavior. In hindsight, it did seem like he was overly favoring humans, even though as of now, his most common guests were devils.

One would think that the devils, with their various unusual features usually sticking out of their humanoid form, such as wings, horns, tails and such, would cause some kind of racial division with the second most common race at the Inn, humans. In fact, Lex had long expected this and was ready to

tackle it as soon as an issue arose. Instead, not only were there no issues, the humans from earth embraced the devils by participating in cosplay. It went so far that he had actually even seen at least a dozen human-devil couples.

Considering the fact that the empire considered the devils as humans' worst enemies, and the devils regularly used humans to farm their demons, Lex thought it was a horrible idea. But at least so far, on the Inn premises at least, nothing untowards had happened.

Putting all of that aside, Lex was not worried that by sending his news to the newsroom the council or anyone would miss out on it. They had actually assigned a person to constantly check for any potential updates.

The way Lex saw it, inviting others to fight the invaders on earth could be beneficial, but only as a delaying tactic. The only chance that earth had was if someone managed to get in touch with Fernanda, and that somehow she was able to bring in reinforcements of her own. Otherwise, based on Lex's analysis of the robots, earth was doomed to fall.

"It's through here," the major said, wiping off the sweat from his brow. It wasn't really hot, but the man was still exhausted from the battle earlier. That, combined with the threat of knowing that more enemies could show up at any moment, had led the major to descend the staircase faster than ever before.

"What's all the fuss?" Lex asked as he touched the gray wall in front of him. It was only now, that he was in front of it, that he realized that whatever material this wall was made from blocked out not only his spirit sense, but every other sense as well!

Earlier, his intuition had told him that there was nothing in the basement valuable to him. But now, faced with the wall, about to cross it, his intuition was telling him that the building ended here. There was nothing further ahead!

"I don't understand the details too well, but there's a small rock deposit here. Apparently the rocks have some unique properties. Even this wall is made from the same rocks. The deposit is too small to be used in mass, but there's apparently very high demand for it."

Lex did not pass any comments, for he didn't know what to say. Any material that could hide things even from his intuition would be extremely valuable.

This was not him being conceited. He was aware of just how unique his experiences had been. So for some rocks to be able to block him off, it was not simple at all. In fact, Lex had a sneaking suspicion for why such a material would be found on earth, though he had no proof for it.

He suspected someone, or something, might have purposefully hidden something here, using this special kind of rock to hide all traces of it. That sounded like a conspiracy theory, and one he had no proof for. Even his intuition had nothing to do with the theory. Instead, it was his inner capitalist who so dearly wanted it to be true!

With gleaming eyes, Lex walked through the door that the major finally managed to pry open using some special equipment and looked at a few containers that were stacked there. Behind them was a small tunnel that dug deep into the earth.

So the stone, whatever it was, was mined and stored here. With his left eye he looked into the hole to see if he could discover something special, but could not find anything.

"Mary, how much are these containers and their contents worth in MP?" Lex asked as he turned to look at them. Even if he was greedy, he was not stupid. Now was not the time to delve on such things.

"A total of 8 containers are worth 300 million MP."

Lex whistled in his mind. If that's what the system said, then that's what those stones were worth. The council definitely didn't know their value. But regardless of how greedy he was, he wouldn't shortchange them. The reputation of the Inn was the most important thing, he wouldn't compromise it on a few rocks. Even if paying the full amount hinted at them of the value of these rocks, he didn't mind.

"Perfect major. Here's your golden key. Crush it to go to the Inn. Once you're there, you'll find the amount for these containers already deposited to your name. After that, feel free to purchase more keys, and come back to retrieve your men."

The major did not wait and crushed the key. A minute later, he disappeared. Lex looked around the room one more time, before he too disappeared. He didn't hand the containers off to the system though, no. He took them himself and paid the relevant amount on his own. Until the system gave him a proper way to earn funds other than MP, he would have to rely on cheating it like this.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 575: Updates

Once Lex eventually returned to the Inn, he put the containers full of rocks in the storage area attached to his apartment. He had purposefully created a large storage space where he could place items that he wanted to keep safe.

Taking a single piece of rock, Lex first ran an experiment. He stared at it with his left eye, and began writing down anything that came to his mind. Regardless of whether it was a random thought, observation, guess, or feeling, Lex began to write it down.

While his left eye could provide him with a lot of additional information, he didn't really understand most of it. It was time he began to understand his own body a little better. Of course, that also entailed revising some basic biology while also keeping in mind that the science he had studied on earth seemed to be limited to the absence of spiritual energy. If certain laws changed in the presence of spiritual energy, then nothing in his education had prepared him for that.

Still, after some basic revision he was reminded of the fact that it wasn't his eyes that actually 'saw' anything. His eyes were only tools to capture the light and send the information to the brain. So basically his left eye was an upgraded tool, while his right eye was a normal one. Maybe if he wanted to completely understand the information from his right eye he had to upgrade his brain, but he had no interest in trying any such thing.

The rock, dark gray, was oddly shaped and jagged, as if it had been broken off. Yet it did not have any of the obvious traits of a sedimentary rock, such as layering or small sediments of different nature.

There were no signs of other minerals embedded within the rock, and it seemed as if it was purely made of a single element. That in itself was an incredible feat, as far as Lex knew.

He was no geologist, so he didn't bother focusing on any of that. He only focused on the feedback his eye gave him.

The longer Lex stared at it, the more he began to feel as if this 'rock' was not a natural formation. Other than its shape, which could be attributed to be the result of mining, everything about the rock started to seem perfect. After a few minutes of staring at it, Lex finally put it down and looked at the list.

There were a few random thoughts he'd written down about how the rock could be possibly used. Now it was time to verify it.

As usual, Lex put the rock in the Gift shop as an item to be sold, and read its description.

Orion's Scale piece

A small piece broken from a single scale of a race of beasts known as Orion. Known as the assassins of the beast world, these creatures are almost impossible to detect through normal means as every part of their body has some camouflaging effect. The scales, while incredibly sturdy when the beast is alive, become relatively vulnerable to heat and can be easily shaped at high temperatures. The scale piece retains a portion of the beast's camouflaging ability.

Well, it seemed that Lex was horribly wrong about the rock not being natural, but among his notes were noted down the facts that the rock could easily be shaped at high temperatures. He put the rock back. He didn't currently have a use for it, but that didn't mean he wouldn't have a use for it later.

Currently, he was free. He was waiting for the council to get their servers up and running once again - a thing in which he could offer no help. He also kept up to date with the information on the war as the council was receiving it, and the situation wasn't good at all.

On average, it seemed like the 'civilian' robots that Lex had faced had the strength equivalent of a peak Foundation realm expert.

While it was not so bad to hear, Earth was severely lacking in the number of foundation realm experts. Worldwide, the number of Foundation realm experts capable of fighting was barely in the tens of thousands, yet such a force had now focused on Europe alone.

Lex released a sigh. Where the hell was Fernanda and all those people she represented anyway? Not that Lex cared much for them, but surely they couldn't afford it if all their 'prisoners' actually became alien slaves, right?

His personal hologram popped up suddenly and delivered some news to him that brightened up his mood. Alexander had finally sent him the message. He wanted to trade.

Suddenly, Lex froze. It had apparently completely escaped his mind to check up on the Morrisons and Mars. Was it being attacked too? A quick scan on the Inn told him that no, Mars was completely fine. In fact, even earth's moon remained uninvaded. The only problem they were having was contacting Fernanda.

Lex shook his head, and teleported away.

On the noble battlefield, Belle was sulking by relentlessly fighting against the Fuegan and ignoring the family representatives sent alongside her. Her mood was off because, of course, no one had forwarded her death threats to their ancestor and she knew for a fact that she was powerless to actually change anything.

Even her father, who had an unusually remarkable mastery of the law of swords, could not face off against the family alone, let alone their ancestor.

But she was not satisfied with that excuse. Excuses were for the weak and helpless. She just needed a plan. As always, she would come up with one - it would just take a little time.

The Fuegan she was fighting suddenly retreated much faster than she could follow, leaving her once again without an opponent, which was extremely irritating.

Before she could find one, however, one of her escorts appeared near her.

"You have new orders. Earth has been invaded by the A.I. alliance. You have to rescue a few high profile prisoners who are hiding there before the invasion is complete and earth is lost."

Belle, who was originally in no mood to cooperate with the family, suddenly stopped.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 576: Immigration

A highly customized golf cart hovered over the field of grass as it arrived at a cabin flowing by a small stream. There were no other buildings nearby, no rooms or tents. In fact, there weren't even any roads leading to this cabin. Yet somehow, it had turned into one of most beloved places in the Inn amongst a small, niche group of Inn guests.

To be specific, this cabin was a cafe built by one of the countless employees that Lex had. A part of his efforts to provide a working environment entailed that once one of his workers was eligible for a promotion, as decided by their direct supervisor, they would first be asked what they wanted to do.

As it turned out, one of his workers was extremely introverted, and he had the bright idea of building a cafe no one would find. When the idea was run by Lex, he thought that the idea would be interesting so it would be approved. Unfortunately for the introvert, not only was the cabin discovered immediately, it instantly became a hit spot amongst those who liked to be away from the city life.

After establishing such a successful cafe, the introvert asked if he could hand this one over to another worker, and make another one. Thinking that his idea of creating a cafe camouflaged as snow, with only its windows able to look out at the horizon, was an incredible one, Lex approved it once again. As with the cabin, the Snow cafe that only sold hot chocolate was an instant hit.

Afterwards, the introvert wanted to create a cafe hidden underwater that exclusively sold bubble tea. Having noticed a trend, Lex approved. Suffice to say, the trend was still going on. In fact, the Inn had developed a reputation for hidden cafes by now. If Lex recalled correctly, the latest cafe was a floating one, hidden amongst the clouds.

Within 14 minutes of building it, the well hidden cafe was discovered by some kids using Icarus' wings. Lex couldn't wait to see what the introvert came up with next.

But that was not relevant to Lex right now. No, right now, Lex was here at the cabin to meet Alexander. In the distance, lightning strikes were still visible as more people continued to undergo their tribulations and it made for a pleasant sight.

Through the cabin window, Lex could see that Alexander was looking directly at the lightning, his gaze clouded.

"What're you looking at?" Lex asked when he entered. He did not believe that Alexander would call him when he was feeling melancholic, so there must be something else going through his mind.

"The consequence of success," Alexander replied, his sight still fixed on the horizon. "Every single person who goes through the tribulation is someone who has achieved great success in their life, one way or another. Yet a majority of those who undergo the tribulation don't end up surviving it. In a way, their deaths are a direct result of their success."

His words were... they sounded like someone stupid trying to sound smart and philosophical.

"Mr. Best-at-his-age don't tell me you're intimidated? Those who fail the tribulations aren't successful, they're merely suffering from the illusion of success. I've been studying the tribulations happening here at the Inn. Usually, for a realm, the strength of a tribulation is more or less constant. That means, whoever is crossing the tribulation has an established baseline which they have to be capable of surviving. If they decide to cross the tribulation without at least achieving that, then they're just stupid."

Alexander finally turned and looked at Lex. But instead of being amazed, he looked like he was the one looking at someone stupid.

"You really must have followed a very unorthodox path so far if you don't even understand such basics. Tribulations are anything but simple, predictable or constant. Perhaps you think the lightning tribulation is the most dangerous one, due to its spectacle, but the fire tribulation is no less dangerous. The most important, however, is the state of mind. But I guess you're also right in a way. The best way to overcome a tribulation is by making sure you're strong enough."

Lex shrugged and took a seat.

"You seem pretty relaxed. Do you know about the situation on earth?"

"I heard. My family is on Mars, and should be fine. But it's unlikely they'll be able to send help. A 'diplomatic envoy' of the invaders came to Mars to ensure we understand the seriousness of interfering. I don't know what exactly happened, but since then my family has shut down all space-based missions. My grandfather won't even talk about it."

"What about the empire? They at least know who is invading?"

Alexander turned to look at Lex finally and took a seat opposite to him.

"Do you know how many wars the empire is fighting? Concurrently? The war with demons is never ending, and so is the war with the Fuegan. Other than that, the empire is being invaded by neighbors in three galaxies and facing at least 4 potentially galaxy-threatening new races that have popped up within their territory. Those are just some of the things I've heard of during my short stay with the empire, so I can't even account for all the classified threats they're facing. I don't think the empire has the time or energy to focus on an unaffiliated planet."

Lex made a mental note that Alexander didn't know about earth and the empire. Come to think of it, since he already knew that earth was a part of the empire, that probably also meant the empire was in, or had control of the milky way. If that were the case, shouldn't he have already tried to get the empire to find earth? That would have revealed to him that they were actually connected.

Instead of wondering about it, Lex asked, if somewhat indirectly.

"Even if they're not helping, they should at least be able to identify who is invading, right? But then again, what are the chances that the empire is in the Milky way galaxy, and knows about the local powers there?"

At that point, Alexander couldn't help but sigh.

"Actually, the Milky way is part of the empire, its neighboring galaxies such as Andromeda and even some of the dwarf galaxies nearby. But that's not the issue. When I originally teleported to the planet called Vegus Minima, I discovered that it was only a few galaxies away from the Milky way. When I

discovered the empire had influence over the Milky way, I immediately tried to get the empire fully interested in earth. Yet for a long time, there were no results to my attempts.

"It was only when I joined the empire that I learned how backwards earth really is, and I really wanted to get earth to benefit from it. That was, until one day, someone shared an open secret with me."

Alexander looked at Lex with a trace of pity in his eyes, as if he was about to shatter his world.

"Originally, when the empire learned about earth, through some indirect measures, they were able to learn that the earth was in the Milky way as well. In situations when the empire discovers a new planet with a fully developed and educated human civilization, it is their protocol to integrate them into the empire's society. But after a short while, they stopped showing interest in earth. Do you know why? They determined that earth is in a part of space called the Dead zone.

"Dead zones are specific regions of space where, for some unknown reason, there is a severe shortage of spiritual energy. The simple, but unfortunate truth is, with vast regions of unexplored space available in each galaxy outside of dead zones, there is no real incentive for the empire to go explore the dead zones. The returns are not worth their efforts. The returns I'm talking about are in terms of spiritual and cultivation resources - not regular raw materials such as iron and gold. There's too much of that stuff floating everywhere in space. To an entity as powerful as the empire, it's virtually worthless.

"As for the invaders... I don't have the clearance to find out. This may demoralize you to learn, but if you stay on earth, your future will be extremely limited. I've already laid the groundwork for my family as well on Vegus Minima. Slowly but surely, they will immigrate from Mars to it. All I can suggest is for you to do the same."

Lex paused for a moment as he said a prayer for the fine people of Vehus Minima. They survived zombies, but it has yet to be seen if they can survive the Morrisons.

Lex summoned his personal hologram, and asked him to surround the two in a protective bubble so that their conversation would remain private.

"Since you've been so kind as to share so much information with me, let me share a little something with you as well. Earth is already a part of the empire. Also, I have inside news about some offers the Inn will make to the Earths refugees. I'm sure a family like yours... can capitalize on such opportunities."

Inside his mind, Lex began to lay the groundwork for a very long term project. If the Morrisons were looking to move, why send them over to the empire, when they can immigrate to a Minor realm instead?

The Innkeeper

Chapter 577: Anxiety

Alexander was not expecting to hear news that was so contradictory to what he knew, so soon after he made the claim. The fact that Lex claimed to have insider news related to the Inn was an even more bold claim that deserved a lot of speculation.

"How can you possibly have inside news on the Inn?" Alexander couldn't help but ask. A relationship to the Inn would clearly explain his ridiculously sturdy body.

"What does it have to do with a relationship? Haven't you heard of the Midnight news building? All you need to do is have a high enough prestige to access a lot of confidential information."

Alexander had naturally heard of the news service, and he knew about prestige as well. He himself had quite a high prestige level, and so did his family members. Yet they had not heard of anything that allowed them to claim to have insider news. Either Lex was lying, or there were ways to raise your own prestige other than spending MP.

"What's the news?"

"Well, it's not confirmed yet, but if the situation on earth gets much worse, and the refugees become completely displaced, they will be allowed to purchase private Minor realms to move into."

Alexander immediately sat forward as the insinuations for such a claim ran through his head. The first thing that came to his mind was that... for the Inn to plan for such a situation already, they expected the humans to lose the planet. This was after he stated that the Earth was actually a part of the empire.

The Earth being a part of the empire was surprising but conceivable for him. He was exposed to enough dirty secrets back on earth to know how secretly the upper echelon behaved. Sometimes, the more unexpected or unassuming that something appeared, the greater the chances that they were to act upon it.

Instead, the loss of the planet, and the potential for relocation hit him harder. He was not one to get sentimental over trivialities, but it felt hard to ignore the attachment to a planet he had spent so much time on.

Then again, his family was already planning on moving to Vegus Minima, so he was able to accept its loss. Still, his mood had deteriorated somewhat.

"Let's talk about something more immediately relevant. Earlier, you proposed a trade. Why should I have this trade with you when I'm already being trained by the empire? How can you help me beyond what the empire is already doing for me?"

This was a good question. Truthfully, Lex needed Alexander more than the other way around. Until the pagoda, when he saw Alexander performing better than him despite his weaker physical strength and defense, he realized that he could not compete with such skill and expertise. Although he had trained, and still took some time out to practice regularly, he was nowhere near Alexander's level.

In return, he couldn't really offer much since most opportunities he had availed could not really be replicated. The few that could, for example, the Divine Essence, were already being shared at the Inn.

Even the soul sense he told Alexander about, despite being good bait, could not actually be materialized, for Lex had no idea how to awaken the soul sense in someone else. All in all, Lex had nothing to give right now.

That did not mean, however, that Lex felt he was the weaker one in this situation at all. Even if he didn't have anything to offer now didn't mean he wouldn't have something to offer later. Even if he couldn't offer tangible results, information was often just as important. Lastly, by having Alexander reach out to him, he had established a psychological advantage in the situation. Alexander's move of starting the interrogation was a good one that would allow him to steal Lex's momentum, but only if Lex was unable to respond correctly.

"Isn't it obvious already? The opportunities the army is giving you is based on a systematic approach, fueled by resources that they can regularly farm and use. Yet the opportunities I have availed are rare and cannot be found under normal circumstances. You either jump at the chance, or miss out.

"You already saw me back at the pagoda. But back then, I hadn't updated my techniques to suit my new realm. Now that I have, I wouldn't be surprised if I can breeze through a dozen more floors without breaking a sweat."

Alexander found Lex's claim to be difficult to believe, yet it was undeniable that his unusual performance was one of the main reasons Alexander had even bothered to reach out.

"Lastly, and most importantly, the reason you need me is because, regardless of how intensively the empire trains you, if you follow their established path, your growth will be limited to the peak their program can achieve. If you want to surpass them, instead of being just one more 'elite' that they can train at any time, you'll need to do something out of the ordinary."

For a time, Alexander said nothing as he mulled over Lex's words. Normally, Alexander was a lot more charismatic and friendly. The reason he was being so reserved with Lex was that he could not gauge Lex. As someone who shared a home planet, he knew how limited Lex's growth should have been. Yet despite the fact that he had no background of significance, he had achieved something beyond almost everyone on their planet.

"And what do you want from me?" he finally asked, unable to contain himself.

"It shouldn't be that hard, actually. I don't know if you can tell, but I'm mostly self trained. Although I've studied under many various teachers, ultimately my growth has been too haphazard and too quick. I haven't been able to completely master my own strength. But you are a master at such a thing. I don't think I've met anyone who has such a perfect and precise control over their strength as you. I doubt you can make me reach a similar state in a short time, but some guidance would still be great."

"That's fairly simple. Do you really need me for all that? With the kind of relationship you have with the Inn, you should be able to find someone more qualified, right? Not to mention, someone you don't need to pay back using rare opportunities."

Lex could not help but lament. It was so much easier when he did this as the Innkeeper. No one dared to question him then. But as Lex, he had not established any credibility. Not only was his capability being questioned, so were his motives!

"Call it a gut feeling," Lex said, not in the mood to explain too much. For some unknown reason, he was beginning to get anxious though he had not noticed it yet. The irritation it had resulted in even caused him to give up on the more convincing answer he was going to give.

After a few seconds of silence, where Alexander had to wrestle to accept such an answer, he finally asked, "So when do you want to start? And what opportunities do you have for me right now?"

"For you, I have two suggestions, though they're not nearly as rare. First, after consulting with the empire for the potential solution in case you're not compatible, I advise you to absorb the Divine Essence at the Inn. Second, if you're familiar with the hair stylist Harry, go to him. He is about to unveil something called the Soul pond. Go take a dip in that, it'll help you a lot.

"As for helping me, my schedule is usually very hectic. It might be tough to coordinate times when we're both available. Why don't you start by creating some kind of a training regime for me based on what you've seen. Once I try that out for a while, I'll give you the appropriate feedback. Moreover, we can spar with one another from time to time. Not only will that give you a better idea for how to train me, it might do us both some good."

Alexander nodded as he noted down the advice. He was just about to respond, when he saw Lex frown.

By now, Lex had finally caught on to his growing anxiety. Something was terribly wrong. He was considering whether he should promptly exit and teleport to his office, when his personal hologram appeared, and delivered a message only he could hear. Coincidentally, at the exact same time, Alexander received a message on his personal hologram as well.

Miranda had finally found the information he was looking for on his family, and was requesting a meeting. The timing of the news was too unusual, and had arrived just as his anxiety was peaking. It didn't take a genius to guess that it wasn't good news.

"Excuse me, something has come up," said Lex as he stood up. Alexander nodded. He too needed to go. Apparently, he had a new mission.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 578: Surprises

Lex had not noticed because of how distracted he was, but Alexander had reacted strongly to the message he had received. He couldn't help it, the person contacting him was so high up in the command chain that someone at his level should never have had the opportunity to contact him.

Earthlings had heard directly of general Ragnar. But realistically, it was literally a thousand years too early for Alexander to come into his purview. Although Alexander was technically stationed somewhere on the command carrier that the general controlled, the chain of command it contained was more complex than anything Lex had encountered.

He quickly hailed a golf cart and made his way to the small village the empire was using as their base. Without wasting any time, he directly went to a familiar looking building where he was directly led to a meeting room.

In front of him was a man wearing Clark Kent glasses. Despite the fact that Alexander was taking a mission from him, he was not even allowed to know the identity of the man giving him the mission.

"Captain Alexander, on your profile it claims that you have a very prominent background on the planet called Earth, is that correct?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Would you say that you are extremely familiar with the conditions on said planet?"

"I've traveled to every nook and cranny of earth, sir!"

"Alright, captain. You are about to receive a classified mission. Present yourself."

Alexander immediately stood at attention, and began using one of the mandatory techniques he had been required to learn. This technique was a single part of a greater technique that could only be complete when another person used a corresponding technique.

In this case, the man giving him the mission used the corresponding technique. A stream of data rushed into his mind, allowing him to receive the mission. Moreover, due to the effects of the technique,

Alexander could never reveal the contents of the mission and mission objective to anyone, even if he wanted to.

When he absorbed the information, Alexander's eyes widened, finding the situation too coincidental. Lex had, only a few minutes ago, told him that earth was actually a part of the empire. Now, that information had been revealed to him officially as well.

Moreover, he had to go back to the command carrier immediately. He would be sent through a cross-galactic teleportation formation, sending him to the Milky way. There, he would be under the command of a superior officer of an undisclosed rank by the name of Belle. Under her command, he would return to earth! The remaining mission objectives would be revealed by Belle as and when it was needed.

"Dismissed, captain," the man said, allowing Alexander to leave. It seemed, even without waiting 10 years to use the Inns ability again, he would be going back to earth. He wondered if he'd run into Lex there.

As soon as Lex left the cabin, he teleported away. As of late, he had kept a firm control over his emotions, even in the most dire of situations. The fact that he had become anxious without even realizing it was not a good sign. It was his intuition's way of warning him to prepare for some bad news.

Still, that did not mean Lex lost control of himself. He took a few moments to calm his mood down and make sure he was in the best state of mind.

He changed into Leo, taking a moment to look at himself in the mirror. Between juggling Leo, the Innkeeper and his own identity, he was always too busy. He should look into making a spiritual clone. Now that he was in the Golden Core realm, such a thing became a possibility. In fact, he had already looked at some options available in the library. But all of them required some preparation and would take time. The main issue for him, though, was that the types of cloning techniques, while incredible for the norm, seemed too mundane for him. He had become too spoiled. He wanted a clone that could also grow stronger with him, instead of forever existing in the realm it was produced in.

Whatever the case, all of that was for later. For now, Lex finally teleported to Miranda. She did not look much better than when he last saw her. Deep eye bags were developing, and she had become increasingly pale. Her hair was frizzled despite the obvious yet poor attempt to prepare it.

"You alright?" he asked with some wariness in his voice.

"My niece and nephew were captured as slaves," she said slightly hoarsely, explaining her condition. But her affected mental state, he did not dwell on that matter for long. She looked, instead, at Leo with unusually scrutinizing eyes.

"What?" he couldn't help but ask.

Instead of answering, she took out a laptop from her bag and turned it on. It took a few moments for her to open up what she was looking for, then turned the laptop towards Lex.

"When we searched for the people you wanted to find... we discovered a hidden encrypted file in our database instead of the information that should have been there. Based on our current circumstances, we don't have the resources to decrypt it. But, if you know the password, you can open the file directly."

Somewhat surprised by the turn of events, he looked at the computer. The open window had only a certain question on it, as well as a space to type in the answer.

The question... was unusually irritating, and explained why Miranda gave him such a strange look.

It was 'Lex is short for what?' Of course, the question was not written in English, and had been written in a language his younger sister Liz had made. However, the universal translator had worked against him for once, revealing the question to the council.

"I'll take it from here," he said as he grabbed the laptop and teleported back to his office.

With an indignant look, he typed, in all caps, the only answer it could ever be: SUPLEX. The answer was immediately accepted, and the screen turned from black instead to a video.

Rather than his annoying older sister, who he was expecting to see, the video revealed his mother.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 579: Bang!

Serene Williams was a beautiful woman, and though she was fairly thin, she could not be called petite. She had dark brown hair, like Lex, and fair skin that often tanned way too quickly. Most of all, she was a smart woman.

Though intelligence was not something one could see through appearance, something about her visage spoke of a mind that surpassed all her peers. Her gaze, though focused on a camera, seemed to look out from the screen and stare at Lex.

"I've been informed that no one can find you on the planet," she finally said. "You didn't even call your parents before leaving."

Lex had to resist his lip from twitching. Was that really the thing to be focusing on at the moment? But a trace of disappointment also filled his heart. That simple statement was more than enough for him to know that his parents had been, for whatever reason, keeping secrets from him.

"Actually, I don't even know if you will ever even watch this video. This is just one of many messages I have left on earth hoping you will find it. As you can imagine, this is not the most secure way to have a conversation, so I can't say much. I dare not even mention any names. All I can tell you is that your father doesn't have the best relationship with his family. Believe it or not, we tried to keep your siblings away from them, but owing to certain special circumstances, you're the only one we were successful in hiding properly. While you may not feel that it is accurate, your siblings have suffered a lot due to this, especially your youngest sibling.

"They are not in the wrong, but they are too obsessed with doing what is correct for the family, instead of the individual family members. For that reason, I hope you never try to find them. They will not help you as much as they will place numerous burdens on you. Your father and I are leaving in search of something. If we ever find it, we will reunite our family. If not... then it is fate that a few individuals cannot go against the might of an entire force. You will not find your siblings on this planet, so no need to feel any attachment to it.

"Build a good life for yourself. Be happy, be successful. Start a family. Have a bunch of kids..."

She paused, and smiled ever so slightly.

"I hope this goodbye is not forever."

With that, the video ended, and the file deleted itself. Lex was left feeling... feeling like flipping the table. What kind of stupid video was that? Was his brain tumor contagious? Was his whole family keen on making stupid decisions?

He stopped his rapidly frantic thoughts, took a deep breath, and calmed himself down. He purposefully entered his state of flow and began analyzing the content of the video. The first thing he noticed was that in the entire video, while his mother gave him a lot of information, she also did her best to be as vague as possible. In fact, she even referred to his sisters as 'siblings' instead of sisters. That told him that his mother was genuinely concerned about preserving as much information as possible.

The second thing he noticed was that his father's family seemed to play a significant role in whatever troubles were plaguing his family. She even went as far as to claim that his sisters were suffering because they could not be hidden the way he was. For some reason, while he could conceive his younger sisters being troubled, who could trouble Belle?

The next thing was that his mother did not tell him to go and try to remove his sisters from whatever situation they were in. That meant that either the situation was bearable, or that they did not believe he would ever have the power to actually help them.

They also, apparently, were no longer on earth, just as his intuition had warned him.

Lastly, and most obviously, she told him not to go looking for his dad's family. He did not have to be a genius to discover that his father's family was the Williams family. He was pretty sure that their apparent 'ancestor' was already aware of his existence, at least according to what Larry had informed him.

But it was completely up to him whether he wanted to meet the old geezer or not. So what was he supposed to do?

For the first time, his flow state failed him, because there was no clear answer. What to do depended entirely on what he wanted. Should he follow his mother's suggestion and just live his own life? Should he try to investigate what was actually going on? Ugh, why was family so frustrating?

He closed his eyes and thought for a few moments. What should he do? He listened to his feelings, his desires, as well as his intuition. Surprisingly, for once, they were all on the same page.

Screw everything. He would just focus on the Inn. Although he had made a resolution to avoid running from problems, this was a problem his family had literally been keeping from him. If that was the case, why did he need to butt his head in?

With his decision made, he felt a rush of relief. Although he had faced no personal threat, thinking that his siblings might be in danger from the invasion brought him a lot of stress. Yet now he knew there was nowhere near earth to begin with. Whatever trouble they had, at least they were with his so-called 'fathers family'. He was sure they would be fine.

"Lex's there's a problem at the Inns entrance" Mary suddenly exclaimed, panic in her voice.

Lex was still in his Leo persona, but something told him he could not delay for even a moment.

Without sparing a single thought he teleported over to the entrance, just in time to watch as a massive, quadruped robot smashed one of its legs down on some guests. He could have instantly kicked the robot out, but instead he teleported in the way and held out its hand.

That's when his intuition finally reacted, and screamed danger! This was beyond the robots he had faced so far. This robot... was on par with immortals!

BANG!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 580: Jurisdiction

The sudden explosion did not cause as much of a surprise and ruckus as one would have imagined. The regulars of the Inn were long since used to the endless rain of lightning which accompanied the endless

tribulations. Though Lex had already made sure the sound wouldn't escape the tribulation rooms, many still remembered the initial impression when it all started.

More importantly however, through the noise reverberated through the surrounding area, that was the only thing that happened. The ground did not quake. A cloud of smoke did blanket the ground. No screams were heard. No guests were hurt.

The few guests who had been the original target of the attack cowered, and even fell back. Others, who were a little farther away, however only looked on in wonder and excitement. Another idiot was attacking the Inn! Would there be an addition to the hearth full of burning souls?

The news of the fight spread faster than the wind, and all those who had been watching the fishing event ended up switching their projector screens to the front of the Inn. They almost reacted faster than even the security team of the Inn, who instantly teleported several personnel to the area. Qawain appeared over, ready to fight if needed. Even Antia teleported over, a massive crib appearing with her being pushed by her undead minions.

Everyone's gaze was locked onto a lone man, holding off the giant monstrosity with a single extended hand. Many immediately recognized him. That was Leo - the most mysterious of the Inn's workers!

Above him stood a nearly 40 feet (12.1 meters) tall, four-legged machine, though it did not look much like any animal. If Lex had to describe the closest thing he could think of was a similar combat vehicle called ATAT in a movie called Star Wallop.

Noticing the lack of damage, the robot turned to look downward and saw a human holding up one of its limbs, completely unharmed. A momentary computational error occurred for according to its sensors, the cultivation realm of the human should not have been enough to stop its attack, yet he had. But the delay was only momentary, because it quickly concluded that the only logical answer was that the human was shielding his cultivation realm.

It tried to pull its limb back, but discovered that it could not move! A warning flag was triggered in its system as it tried to determine what the situation was.

"What do you think... that you are doing?" Leo asked through gritted teeth, his anger painfully obvious in his voice.

A wave of 'oh's' and 'ah's' was heard coming from the surrounding guests as they relished the tense atmosphere built between man and machine. It was not distracting at all.

The machine, unable to determine what had locked its limb in place, decided to answer.

"The Sentient Cyber Systems Empire (SCS Empire) has declared the planet known as earth as a war zone, and its citizens as war criminals sentenced to death or detainment. Wherever they may escape, they are deemed as criminals. This law is acknowledged across the Origin realm.

"The mothership noticed the criminals escaping via teleportation and inhibited it, but was unable to stop. I was sent in pursuit to investigate their teleportation means, and retrieve any identifiable criminals. Desist interfering in the capture and, or, elimination of said criminals lest you are identified as an accomplice to those criminals."

Most of the onlookers loved the building tension, but some of them frowned, or even paled, as they recognized the entity that robot represented. There was a reason why they were so confident in their claims. Yet Lex did not care. Right now, he had plenty of reasons to be confident as well.

"Do you know where you are?" he asked, his tone completely unchanging. The sight of the defiant man was winning the hearts of many, as even his clothes remained unwrinkled after blocking that massive blow.

Those watching on screens only had the size of the robot to judge by, but those nearby could feel its aggressive and intimidating aura. Regardless, the more threatening he looked, the more remarkable Leo seemed.

Even the security team was content to watch from a distance, unless the situation required otherwise.

Even while the machine was talking, it began to increase the strength with which it pulled its limb free, but it was still held prisoner.

"The spatial coordinates of this location are obscured, however, it does not matter. The jurisdiction of the SCS Empire extends to all domains."

"Heh," Lex almost laughed, but had to control himself. Externally, it seemed like he was in complete control of the situation, but only he knew how terrible his condition really was. He was pretty sure his spine was crushed. But what did it matter? Normal humans needed their bones to prop up their bodies, but he could use his body to support his bones instead! That was not even considering using his spirit sense to hold himself up. But he was not doing that, or it would reveal the extent of his injury.

But it did not matter. Yes, he had been taken by surprise by the overwhelming strength of the attack. Yes, he had been severely injured. Yes, it was his own fault for trying to look cool instead of evicting the robot directly. But none of that mattered, because of everything he was learning, not only about his own body, but his techniques as well.

He had used Impervious hands to block the attack, and while he still suffered severe damage despite that, something greater happened. When he grabbed the energy attack back on earth, he gained control of it. Now, when he grabbed the robot, he gained control of more than just its limb. He could feel the spirit energy in his hand lock onto the soul wisp in its body, and his intuition started to sing as if to ensure he understood exactly how great an opportunity he had.