

Innkeeper 601

The Innkeeper

Chapter 601: Alpha male

Lex smiled politely at the mother, while doing his best to resist cursing her. It was extremely important to get along with her because her family was the main target for the existing quest. He also had to keep in mind that while he had to make this wedding as exquisite as possible, he had to cater to the family's wishes and requirements as well. To do all that, he had to maintain a cordial relationship with them, so he had to put up with the unnecessarily eager mother...

"My name is Lex. It's a pleasure to meet you."

"No, no, the pleasure is all mine. My name is Jolene, but everyone just calls me mom."

Before the conversation progressed any further, Pvarti had finally recovered from the... from the tackle he received from Jasmine and spoke up.

"Hey, hey, hey, hey, this is moving way too fast. I didn't agree to any of this. Don't think I'm a man who can be forced into things!"

Although Pvarti usually played a very casual and carefree character, Lex had to admit that it took a certain level of conviction and determination to reject such a marriage, even at the risk of personal consequences. If his personality was really of the lovable town idiot, he would not have been able to bear such a burden. Lex had genuine respect for that aspect of him.

Unfortunately, Lex was invested in this wedding now, so...

"Allow me to have a word with him," Lex said with a smile before anyone else could speak up.

Using the spatial manipulation formation, he formed a separate room, containing only Pvarti and him. This way no one would be able to hear them speak. Lex also surrounded themselves with dark Imperial Shields, blocking their sight to prevent lip reading.

"The situation does not seem to be in your favor," Lex said, a trace of sympathy in his voice. "Tell me what you want, I'll try to help you get it."

"I want to be free from that girl," Pvarti said, his voice extremely forceful yet somehow lacking conviction. "I mean, didn't you hear her? She played with my entire life on a whim, when I was being kind to her! If I stay with her, she'll play with my entire life as if it were a game!"

Lex nodded, as he could clearly understand what Pvarti was saying, but didn't immediately respond. Instead, after a short pause, he asked, "tell me Pvarti, what do you envision your future as?"

The young noble was taken aback by the sudden question, but did not hesitate to answer.

"I may not have the financial support of my family anymore, but they can't take my knowledge away from me. I have the understanding and the techniques required to raise my cultivation further. I'll grow strong, and eventually start my own family. Maybe I'll even take control of a small region somewhere."

"An admirable goal," Lex commented, genuine praise in his voice. "But now, I want you to imagine the scenario for a moment. Let's imagine that you've managed to dissuade Jasmine's family, and have once again rejected the wedding. You did this so that they don't interfere with your life, or in your own words, play with your life anymore. Do you really think they will just let you be after that? Or let you grow strong? Or establish your own power?"

Pvarti frowned. This was not the first time he had thought of this concern. Truth be told, he had only formed a tentative plan of relying on the Midnight Inn for refuge if things got too troublesome. But the fact that the Inn was too expensive to rely on indefinitely without any real income was a major issue.

"I don't want to force you into something you don't want," Lex continued upon seeing that Pvarti was not replying. "However, I will give you a suggestion. Just think about it and consider for yourself what is best. Regardless of whether you get married or not, the interference of Jasmine and her family in your life will not be over. If you do get married to her, and you happen to reenter your Noel family, then she will be forced to join your family, instead of you hers. Then you will have a lot more control over the situation. Moreover, with the power and resources of both families available to you, you will be able to go much farther than you can go by yourself."

Lex paused for a moment to let Pvarti absorb all this information, and contemplate for himself what was the right course of action. Just because Lex had presented the information did not mean he believed that Pvarti would follow it blindly. He had to let him reach the conclusion on his own.

In fact, Lex planned to divert Pvarti's attention by adding another layer of complexity to the situation. It burdened Lex's innocent heart with immense guilt to do this, but it was for Pvarti's own good, and was not at all hitting two birds with one stone.

"If I'm being perfectly honest, although I genuinely think this is the best course of action for you, I also have a bit of an agenda in persuading you towards this marriage."

Pvarti narrowed his eyes and looked at Lex. Although he had not mentioned it, he of course noticed that Lex had taken a side for the marriage instead of helping him.

"The reason I'm telling you this," Lex lied in a very modest tone of voice, "is because without your help, even if I push this wedding forward I won't really gain anything. That's why I'm being up front with you as well. If we can come to an understanding, we can move forward with the situation, making sure to benefit the both of us. If not, then I can help you avoid the family's pressure, and you can figure out a way you think is more suitable to handle this situation."

"What exactly do you need?" Pvarti asked suspiciously.

"I need information. Extremely sensitive information. I want to know why the human royal family, as well as the other races, aren't fully resisting the Kraven invasions. There are secrets related to the Kraven that only a very few know, and I want to find out what it is. Even Aegis, the crown prince of Hum, did not have this information - though that was mostly a result of his own lazy attitude.

"I believe that Jasmine's family will have some records or details about the truth. If you can join their family, and become an important member, then you can help me get that information. In exchange, I can use some resources from the tavern and the Inn to help you increase your importance to the families. That way, you solidify your position, and gain the support you need, and I get the information that I want."

While Lex was not lying about wanting information about the Kraven, that was not his priority at the moment. He was just using one truth to hide another - that he really wanted Pvarti to agree to the wedding!

"Jasmine's family is a vassal force of the Cornelius family, so they definitely have an important position in the empire," Pvarti confirmed. After spending a few moments to consider, he decided that what Lex said was the truth. If that was the case, then he could rely on Lex to help him. After all, nothing was more reliable than a relationship of mutual benefits.

"Fine, what you say makes sense. But you have to help me negotiate with them and make sure they agree to my conditions before the wedding takes place. Jasmine HAS to join my family instead of me joining hers. Otherwise, I'll never be anything more than a puppet, and I cannot accept such a thing."

"It's only fair," Lex agreed with him shamelessly, and shook his hands. Once they had reached a resolution, Lex dismissed his shields and dispersed the separate room.

"I have excellent news," Lex announced with a massive smile "After a brief conversation, Pvarti has realized that he indeed desires this union."

Lex looked towards Jasmine, and continued.

"Naturally, as a prime dominant alpha male specimen, he has to ensure that Jasmine can match his caliber."

Ensuring that Pvarti's demands would be met would require Jasmine's support, and since Jasmine was such a fan of how 'manly' Pvarti was, that was the only card he had to play to convince her.

He was cringing internally as he spoke, yet his words seemed to resonate with Jasmine. No one had dared make demands of her family in such an up front manner before, and it excited her even more. Pvarti truly was the man of her dreams.

Suddenly the look in her eyes became feral, and she once again pounced on Pvarti, but this time her brothers responded in time and caught her beforehand.

"Lex, why don't you and I speak privately for a moment as well?" Jolene asked, winking at him.

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Chapter 602: Developments

The situation on earth had taken a turn for the worst. The casualties were catastrophic during the first few weeks of fighting, but had recently started to decrease. The prime cause of the decrease was not that the fighting had diminished. No, far from it in fact. The level of fighting had increased drastically.

The real reason for the drop in casualties was that of the remaining population, over 90% over the ages of 15 had become cultivators in some capacity. Most had become followers of Amana and Adamas, with men usually leaning towards Amana and women leaning towards Adamas.

Although that alone did not raise their cultivation levels through the roof, it raised their survivability.

The second thing that raised the survivability of the humans... was the appearance of a few devils, and a whole lot of demons. No one knew how they arrived on earth, probably in a similar fashion to the deities, but they strongly supported the factions led by the old powers of earth, namely Richard, Sam and Fateh the Fatty! Brandon and Elizabeth were the only ones who had not participated in this coalition.

Due to their long history and sudden increase in power, a large chunk of the surviving humans flocked to them as well. The deities also did not object to the devils, so that made it extremely convenient, although when news spread, the Jotun empire strongly condemned this action!

A strange power shift was occurring on earth these days, with the battle being slowly limited to a few regions on earth, and sometimes in space. The greatest change was the fact that the new powers, the deities and the devils, both restricted the use of golden keys to escape earth. The act of running away not only weakened earth, it reduced morale - at least according to them. As such, fewer and fewer people were running away from earth these days, instead choosing to stand and fight.

The situation seemed to have reached an equilibrium of sorts, despite the fact that the fighting never stopped.

Amidst all of this, there was one tiny power that had somehow survived, untouched both by devils and deities. The Kingdom of New York, under the rule and protection of King Marlo, its armies led by genius general Rafael, heir to the Kingdom, managed to protect its sovereignty using only its own forces.

There were also rumors of a special elite unit consisting of a samurai, a man of metal impervious to all damage, and the final, mysterious member known only as the Dark Invader, who seemed to have control over the darkness. This elite unit had no name, since officially their existence had not been announced, but those who whispered of their strength had started calling them... the Powered Rangers!

On a battlefield near Niagara falls, Larry was moving from one robot corpse to another. Although most of the initial invading force of these robot aliens had bodies made of organic matter and were varied, the ones who had been coming most recently had started to show signs of mass production and had more of a uniform structure. That also meant more common materials were used in their manufacturing - though common here was only a relative term.

Only an approximate 15% of their bodies were made up of metals, but that was more than enough for Larry. He would not let a single scrap of this metal pass him by, as these metals could not be found on earth. Moreover, they were excellent conductors for spiritual energy, and were thus excellent fuel for him to raise his cultivation realm.

His eyes were completely focused as he performed his tasks, but hidden deep behind them was an unwavering conviction. Jeffery had thought he was condemning Larry by having the planet invaded by aliens. Instead, he had provided him with excellent resources to power up, and once Larry was strong, he would get his revenge!

"Lex, why don't you and I speak privately for a moment as well?" Jolene asked, winking at him.

Lex had already steeled himself by now, so he did not have a strong reaction to her antics. He was, however, somewhat surprised at her relentless pursuit, even though she was supposedly facing someone so dangerous. Even her sons, who were much stronger than her, acted with an air of caution while she completely maintained her role as a mama, looking for a husband for her daughter.

"Why not?" Lex said, as he erected Imperial shields around them and locked them in a separate space, much in the way he had done with Pvardi. Though he had no intentions of falling for her antics, he had to admire her commitment to the cause.

"I love my children, but sometimes it's good to just talk between adults, don't you think?" she asked with a warm smile, as if she were addressing an old friend.

"It is easier to talk to someone with a level head," Lex answered, completely ignoring the fact that despite being called an 'adult' among children, he was actually the youngest in the room.

"Before we get into the thick of things, shall we properly introduce ourselves? Everything has happened a little abruptly. I was not prepared to run into such a distinguished establishment out here."

"Of course, it is naturally for the best. After all, if you intend to hold your daughter's wedding in my humble establishment, then you must understand the place well. My name is Lex, as you already know, and this is the Midnight tavern. There's not much to tell, really. I enjoy the company of people, and bringing happiness and joy to all, so I opened up this little place where guests can come and unwind.

"Drinks flow freely, and though my selection is a little more limited for more distinguished guests, I do have something in the cellar that can be brought out for such a wonderful occasion. Although the Noel family has been very gracious to me, and even the crown prince of Hum nation is a good friend of mine, I prefer the simple life and tend to stay away from... unnecessary politics and strife. So long as no one comes and bothers me, or my guests, I will not bother anyone in return."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 603: Relentless

Jolene maintained her smiling appearance while Lex spoke, and did not show any changes, keeping her thoughts hidden. Naturally, such a thing was completely ineffective against Lex. Not only did he have his sixth sense giving him feedback, his intuition was also providing him with a sense of what she was feeling. Moreover, after confirming with his intuition that it was safe, he conducted a little experiment with his soul sense.

He used it to observe any fluctuations in Jolene's soul. Lex could not observe in too much detail, as she would likely sense something amiss even without a soul sense of her own, but it was enough to simply observe from afar.

Although her thoughts did not cause any prominent changes to her soul, Lex could clearly determine that she was in an excited yet tense state. Basically, she knew she had stumbled across an opportunity, but also knew that she had to be cautious to make use of it.

After noticing that Lex did not respond to any of her previous hints and suggestions, she decided to make one final attempt. If that did not work, she would employ less direct, and more long term measures.

If there was one thing she was adept at, it was finding spouses for her children. Considering that noble and powerful families existed for thousands upon thousands of years, they naturally had many children. As such, many noble families had their children marry one another.

Obviously, not all noble families had an equal status or power, but it was impossible to expect that each child would marry into an equally powerful, or even more powerful family. That was one of the reasons the Noel family had an opportunity to connect to theirs in the first place - besides the obvious developing business connections.

Now that she had encountered a new independent and potentially untapped power, there was no way she wouldn't try to secure the connection for one of her children. The fact that he had a friendship with the genius crown prince only added more legitimacy to his establishment.

"I envy your freedom. Between managing my husband's estate, and all the numerous political appearances I have to make, I barely get time to attend my own childrens weddings. My husband is Laurent Phillips, Duke of the Phillips province, home to one of the few Etherium mines in all of the crystal realm. The fact that King Cornelius let our family maintain operations of the mine, instead of controlling it themselves, speaks of the close bond and trust we share with the royal family."

Lex was, naturally, familiar with Etherium, though it had to be admitted that the only reason he remembered it was because of his improved memory and intelligence. He had taken a list of all the commonly sold valuable items at the Infinity Emporium, as well as their uses. Etherium was listed there, with its description stating that it was an incredibly valuable ore used in the manufacturing of machines, gear and weapons suited for immortals. Etherium mining was one of the profitable businesses in the entire Origin realm, so much so that inter-galactic wars had been fought over especially large mines.

If what Jolene said was true, then they truly were very closely associated with the royal family. That posed both an opportunity and a risk for Lex. He wanted to avoid the king and his attention, but the close relation meant that the Phillips family probably had all the valuable information he needed.

"I'm sure their trust is well placed. It is an honor for me to host you at my humble establishment."

"Not humble at all," she rebuked, waving her hand. "Don't think I will let appearances fool me. Although you've styled your place to seem nondescript, I can immediately identify Dribble Oak wood. Even my husband would not complain while staying here."

The Dribble Oak wood she was talking about came from a round of upgrades the tavern underwent when the Midnight Inn underwent the star rank increase. Since the star ranking of the tavern couldn't be increased, since it was not in a separate realm, the entire tavern building and its entire structure was upgraded.

The Dribble Oak wood was a special kind of wood that was especially sturdy, and generally was considered indestructible. That was because the more physical force that was applied to it, the stronger it became. Cutting the tree required immortals using their personal strength and vast amounts of spirit energy.

Other than being sturdy, it also cleaned the air of impurities, gave off a fresh smell and would generally attract spiritual energy around itself.

Lex only smiled at her comment but said nothing else.

"Now that we have been properly introduced," Jolene began, "let's talk about the issue at hand. Although it was not my wish, it is clear that Jasmine has taken a great liking to young Pvarti. It seems inevitable that they will get married, regardless of what anyone says."

"Indeed that seems to be the case," Lex said while nodding. "Though I don't see why you wish to discuss that with me. I am only here to provide services should anyone need them. I do not interfere in my guests' business - at least unless they are about to harm my tavern or my guests."

Lex did not even flinch as he lied shamelessly.

"Hmm, indeed I do not wish for you to interfere in this matter, nor would I want someone else to handle my business. No, what I wish to talk about is the potential political repercussions that we'll have to face as a result of this. I was hoping to have your cooperation so that we can mitigate any potential fallout, and keep the event going as smoothly as possible. After all, not everyone will want to see this union take place. Anything can happen at any time.

"As such, I'll be assigning one of my most competent daughters to work with you, so that she can coordinate on my behalf as events unfold. Naturally, with all my duties, I cannot be here all the time, so she will take care of that for me."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 604: Repulsive

Lex could already determine what Jolene was trying to do. This was probably a relatively common custom amongst nobles and powerful cultivators, where he would spend time with Jolene's daughter to determine if he liked her or not.

Lex had no doubt that she would be a wonderful woman, but he had other concerns. Romance was the last on the list of things he was concerned about.

"I look forward to working with her," Lex commented. "Just so that I know, when are you expecting this wedding to take place? Since you have already contacted your family and told them to arrive, shall I expect the wedding to take place as soon as they arrive? Of course, whatever your thoughts, I'm sure Pvarti and his family will also have some considerations."

"My daughter, no doubt, is in a great rush to get married. As much as I would like to indulge her, these things can never be quick or simple. Were these ordinary circumstances, an engagement period of even 10 years would not be unusual. As it happens, due to the various... complications that have resulted due to the very public rejection and then reunion, the process will be sped up as much as possible.

"Various important guests will be invited and some backdoor negotiations will take place. Even at the earliest, it will take a couple of months."

Lex did not show any reaction, yet he was internally disappointed. Waiting a couple of months, at the very least, was already too long. He could not afford to sit here and wait while this happened, but at the same time, he more or less expected as such.

The only real option he had was to begin his journey, heading towards either Valesco, to meet the Crystal race elder, or anywhere else he could expect to find some answers. In the meantime, he could use his remote presence ability to coordinate with Pvarti, Jolene, her daughter, or whoever else.

"Is there anything else you want to talk about?" Lex asked. Although talking privately made things more convenient, nothing they talked about really required a separated conversation.

So that meant that whatever Jolene really wanted to talk about was still left.

"Actually, the matter I wanted to talk about is unrelated to the wedding. Your tavern, due to its deceptively humble appearance, has provided a remarkably opportune location to facilitate... certain tasks that I would rather confidential."

"I'm glad you find my establishment to be of use. How can I help?"

"It is nothing too complicated. Over the next few days, someone will come by and drop a package with you. Afterwards, at some point, I will come over and pick it up. Holding onto the package is not the issue. The issue is that the package's container will not be able to restrict its aura for very long. If someone detects the aura of the items contained within the package, it would be quite problematic. As such, the package needs to be placed in a completely isolated and enclosed environment. Naturally, when I come by, I will replace the packaging, and take it away."

"That is not an issue at all," Lex confirmed. "All the person needs to do is rent a room for the duration he wishes to keep the package hidden. I'll place the package in the room, and no one will come out or go in. I'll even place protections around the room to ensure none of the aura is leaked."

Jolene nodded, but she wasn't completely satisfied.

"This exchange means a lot to me, so I can't just go ahead with it without testing it out first. I'll pass along a sample to you that will behave similarly to the package I'm expecting. If you're able to block its aura for three days, then I will proceed with the deal."

"It's not a problem," Lex commented simply.

Jolene activated her spatial ring and summoned a small, palm sized black box with no obvious. For now, the box appeared to be completely normal, but if what Jolene said was true then soon it would begin to leak out a very noticeable aura.

Lex reached forward and grabbed it, but while his spirit and soul sense could not detect anything from the box, the moment he touched it a grotesque and repulsive feeling filled him. The feeling was so potent that, even with all the practice he had maintaining his expression, he could not help but reveal a frown.

The feeling was coming from his intuition, and it was telling him clearly that whatever was in the box was absolutely putrid.

Lex brought his gaze up to Jolene, who seemed startled at his frown, but said nothing. After a moment, Lex put the box away in his own spatial bangle.

"In three days, I'll come to collect the box from you," she said sheepishly. Lex only nodded, and without confirming the conclusion of their conversation, removed the shields surrounding them.

They were once again reunited with the group, but instead of continuing the conversation with the group, Lex stood up.

"There's much left to discuss, but matters have happened fairly abruptly. How about an intermission to collect ourselves and our thoughts on the matter? After all parties involved have had a chance to discuss amongst themselves, you can reconvene to continue planning."

Pvarti was not expecting such a sudden break from the meeting, but despite the private meeting Lex had with Jolene he was sure that Lex was on his side. In that case, going along with the plan would only help him and not harm him.

Jasmine was the most reluctant, but her mother's stern grip on her hand ensured that she did not misbehave. As it happened, Fenrir showed up once again and, forlornly, handed the necklace back to Jasmine.

Although the pup had wanted to keep it for himself, Lex had used their connection to get the pup to return it.

Jolene, Jasmine and the rest departed, leaving Lex and Pvarti behind. He did not plan on leaving, since the Phillips family was probably heading towards the Noel family mansion anyway. Instead, he used a communication talisman to send a message to his brother with a brief summary of what happened, and waited for them to contact him first.

"Is everything alright?" Pvarti asked, sensing something off about Lex. Although he did not ask directly, even he could sense that Lex was unsettled after the private meeting with Jolene.

"A small matter, unrelated to you so no need for you to worry. I have a few tasks to take care of, so if you need me just leave a message at the bar."

Pvarti only nodded and went back to the main hall where the flutist and dancer were finally taking a break.

Jolene had already paid for a room for three days, but instead of going to one of the usual rooms, Lex went to the hidden rooms underneath the bar. There, he placed the repulsive black box in the middle of a room.

Originally Lex was planning on just blocking the room off using the spatial formation, but suddenly he decided that he needed to take more precautions.

He summoned some of the Orion's scale he had stocked up at the Inn and encased the box in them, before locking the space around them. That should be enough to hold off whatever aura the box was supposed to release.

A part of Lex was extremely curious about what the box held. He had never felt something so repulsive, and he wanted no part in whatever business it involved. But technically speaking, Jolene was not breaking any of the rules for his tavern. He was bound to run into more situations in the future where he encountered unsavory things.

He needed to decide how he would deal with them. For now, he was maintaining his neutrality, but if it began to wear on his consciousness he may try something else.

With that done, Lex left the tavern. Although he planned on doing his best for this wedding, that did not involve wasting his time. Since he could manage the wedding using his remote presence, there was no point in sticking around.

His first destination was the sea. His instincts had told him that there was something valuable under the water. Although going deep underwater was extremely dangerous, for it was always dark and served as the breeding ground or endless monster, if the seas' dangers made them completely untraversable then there wouldn't be so much trade happening.

Although he made no special preparations to keep his presence hidden, almost no one paid much attention to him as he made his way to the port. It was an extremely high traffic area so there was no reason to find his behavior suspicious.

Moreover, he walked so calmly and confidently that no one felt he was out of place. Even as he walked up to the water and suddenly jumped off the pier, no one noticed.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 605: Under the sea

In a cold, gray-stone room, a single lamp produced a dim blue light. The light was barely enough to see, but more than enough to produce long, dark shadows that spread to the distant walls.

On a throne similarly made of stone sat a repulsive slug-like creature, known as a Gilati. It looked weak and tired, yet the aura it radiated was overbearing. Only those gray stone slabs could support the pressure, and the lamp, of course, though barely.

In front of the Gilati, some distance away, stood a devil in its non-human form. It was ten feet tall, with a body seemingly made of black rocks, with veins of magma pulsing between them. There were two curved horns on its head, and hovering in the air between those horns was a rock emitting a beautiful scarlet glow.

"It has come to my lord's attention that you have had some problems with the Midnight Inn," the devil said, his voice grating to hear.

The Gilati released an angry garbling noise and its aura exploded, but then it calmed itself down - though barely.

"Yesssss!" it hissed. "My slave! My slave! They are keeping my slave from me! During its final reincarnation, my precious Dreamy Fox somehow escaped, and was reincarnated somewhere else. But I have its soul signature recorded. How can I not recognize it? I need it back before it matures!

"A Dreamy Fox on the verge of its final evolution is the most important ingredient in the pill I'm refining. Without it, I will not be able to survive the tribulation that will occur when I enter the next realm. I have delayed my breakthrough long enough!"

"My lord too wishes to acquire something from within the Midnight Inn. He is inviting you to join him. The only chance we have of success is if we pool our strengths."

"Are you not afraid of the Daolorddddddd?" the Gilati hissed again, angrily!

"My lord, Rockefeller's father too, is a Daolord. As you know, we Devils have no shortage of Daolords. We fear no one."

This time, the Gilati did not hiss. Instead, after spending some time contemplating, its body lifted into the air, and it approached the devil.

The sea water was pleasantly cold, though the water near the pier was somewhat grimy. It was not too deep either, as Lex could clearly see the surface when he reached the bottom.

Of course, it also helped that this near Babylon, the seabed was imbedded with numerous rods, emitting a soft red light.

In fact, these rods were spread on the seabed for a few miles around the town, to ensure no new monsters were spawned there. The town's navy would inspect them almost weekly, alongside having numerous hunting expeditions where they cleared the nearby waters of any monsters.

Lex practiced moving his arms to see how the water pressure affected him. At his current depth, the resistance he faced did not hamper him by much. He took a look around him, but besides the odd fish here and there, he saw nothing of interest.

For a moment he wondered how fish managed to survive in these monster-infested waters, but then shrugged, slipped his hands into his pockets and began to walk forward.

He was not concerned about holding his breath, as his body could go days without needing to breathe. Moreover, he could divert spiritual energy towards his lungs, and somewhat replace the function of air with it for a period of time. Not to mention, there were countless techniques out there that could allow Lex to breathe underwater - not that he was planning on relying on any of these methods.

Instead, Lex planned on using a very simple, single circle array on the roof of his mouth that would produce air. He would breathe out any excess air and just take a fresh breath every few hours. Of course, he had to be careful with the amount of air he breathed.

The deeper he went underwater, the greater the pressure and the more the air would shrink. He was not too worried about anything on his way down, but he had to be careful when returning to the surface. If he wasn't careful about how air expands, he could seriously injure himself.

One would think that Lex could ignore such minor details due to his impressive cultivation, not to mention how sturdy his body was. To an extent, that was true. But Lex was not deluded enough to think he could take on all of nature and come out undefeated. The line between confidence and arrogance was thin, and he did not intend to cross it.

Also, his intuition told him not to mess around underwater, so there wasn't much left to argue on.

Not that any of this should matter. Lex's destination was not too far, or else his intuition would not have been able to detect whatever he was heading towards.

After walking for about twenty minutes, Lex had descended deeper into the sea. He was pleasantly surprised to find that instead of unspeakable horrors; the seabed was actually quite amazing. Once he moved away from the grimy, polluted waters near the town, he encountered a lot more fish.

The seabed was teeming with life, so much so that Lex even detected signs of life from numerous rocks - or at least things that looked like rocks. He found a lot of debris as well, of broken ships and what looked like remains of old buildings, and all of them had been turned into habitats for the local marine life.

It felt like he was walking through an aquarium. The density of fish continued to increase, right up until he came across an underwater forest. The fish swam happily through the seaweed wrapped trees, but a sense of foreboding stopped Lex from taking a step forward.

It was confusing, for his intuition was both telling him it was safe to proceed, and that he would encounter danger if he took a single step forward.

What, did he have to swim instead of walk?

Lex shook his head. The answer couldn't be so simple. After a few moments of thought, Lex reached out with his spirit sense and touched one of the trees.

"Excuse me, is it alright if I cross?" he asked.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 606: Peculiar Trelops

Silence followed Lex's question. He was not in a rush and waited a moment, thinking of other ways to enter the forest.

The trees were thick and tall, with the shortest of them being at least 80 feet (24 meters) tall and 5 feet (1.5 meters) thick. The bark, if there was even a bark, was completely wrapped in seaweed making it impossible to see. But the seaweed also grew between the trees, like the grass on a forest floor.

Lex had suspected...

"Why are you so goddamn polite!" a voice suddenly echoed in Lex's mind.

The forest groaned, as if each and every tree was frustrated, but then quickly returned to the normal state. The fish had all been startled and began swimming out in droves, which frustrated the forest even more.

Lex smirked. He had suspected the danger he was feeling was because the forest was actually a Trelop, and it seemed he was right. It was safe to traverse, so long as he had permission. If not, then he could face great danger.

"Isn't it natural to ask for permission before entering?"

"What do you goddamn mean, natural? Down here, ain't no goddamn thing has any etiquette, which is the whole reason I moved here. I ain't on anyone's territory, so I can goddamn do as I please."

"So if someone is impolite and enters recklessly, you punish them?"

"Well that all depends on my mood now, doesn't it?"

A massive goldfish made of seaweed emerged from the forest and swam around Lex, as if inspecting him. Since the Trelop-fish was inspecting him, Lex saw no reason not to reciprocate. He used his targeted scan ability.

Name: Toro

Age: ??

Sex: ??

Cultivation Details: ??

Species: Trelop

Remarks: Since its not yet a guest, it can be classified as a seaweed wrap.

The targeted scan only revealed partial information, and was not very consistent in what it revealed, but that was fine as Lex was no longer totally dependent on the system. Based on his own experience, as well as his intuition, alongside some basic inference, Lex could determine that Toro was an Earth immortal. He was all too familiar with the unique pressure that immortals radiated, and his intuition gave him an appropriately severe warning for Lex to be able to determine it was an immortal. Not to mention, it was unlikely a weak Trelop could survive underwater where it was likely to encounter monsters.

Sure, the humans cleared this area often, but who could really predict when an immortal level monster might show up? Hadn't Zagan passed through here just a short time ago.

"So what about me?" Lex asked. "Can I enter now that I've asked politely?"

"What do you goddamn want by entering?" Toro asked, irritated. He had been looking forward to punishing the stupid human for its insolence. But the feeble being was so inconsiderate that he had even asked nicely, leaving Toro with no good excuse to punish him.

Sure, Toro didn't really need a real reason if it wanted to harm Lex, but that would be breaking the rules of its own game. If he broke the rules, then the fun of the game would disappear, and he would turn into a mad tyrant instead of a discipline instructor, as it thought of itself.

Lex considered whether to answer truthfully or come up with an excuse, but eventually decided that there was no use in lying. He could not hide his activities with the Trelops territory, so lying would instead get him in trouble.

"I can sense something valuable in your territory, so I came to investigate."

The goldfish bared its teeth as if it did not like Lex's answer.

"Of course you goddamn sense something! I'm the one using the lure!"

The goldfish started twisting and turning in agitation, squirming in frustration.

"Why are you so bloody goddamn freaking honest!"

The fish continued to throw a tantrum, and Lex just stood there, watching in amusement. Eventually though, Toro calmed down and glared at Lex.

"Follow me," he said bluntly and swam into the forest. Lex followed and was surprised to discover that all the water pressure disappeared, not that it bothered him to begin with. But he quickly realized why it was so necessary.

There was a tribe of some race Lex had never seen before living in the forest, worshipping the seaweed fish. In merely a few minutes Lex saw thousands of those creatures which looked like... humanoid squids.

Despite their massive numbers, Lex could sense that not a single one of them were stronger than the foundation realm. They probably depended on the forest to project themselves not only from the water pressure, but from the monsters as well.

"Quite the community you have here," Lex commented appreciatively. He had begun to gain an understanding of Trelops. All the Trelops he had seen before had a massive number of beasts and sentient and semi-sentient creatures living within their territories, not to mention the unique personalities they had.

If what Toro said was right, he had released the aura of whatever it was holding in its territory itself to attract others. Despite his strange obsession with wanting to hurt trespassers, Lex suspected he wanted more inhabitants for its territory.

"There was an earthquake some time ago and it revealed this pool of a strange liquid I've never seen before," Toro suddenly started to explain.

"Its aura is extremely attractive, but the moment I tried to touch it, it began corrupting my body. The same happened with any other creature that touched it. Originally I thought I'd just seal off the area, but the pool is beginning to grow and I cannot seal it. The reason I allowed its aura to spread was so that others could come and I could see if anyone had a solution. If you had been impolite, I would have let you access it without the warning I'm now giving you."

Lex frowned. His intuition was telling him he was heading towards something extremely valuable, but could he be wrong? It wasn't so easy to trick his intuition. What could this be?

The Innkeeper

Chapter 607: Money maker

While Lex was wondering what he was about to encounter, various things were happening out in the universe. Even on a smaller scale, the Inn itself was constantly busy, so much so that it was impossible for Lex to track everything that was happening in it all the time.

Naturally, when something important happened, he would be notified or updated, but for the mundane or common things, he would not pay too much attention. As of late, even his MP accumulation was something he paid little attention to.

With the amount of MP he was making, he did not need to worry about running short any time soon. But even as far as knowing he had a lot of MP went, if Lex were to check his balance right now, he would be greatly surprised for an additional 500 billion MP had suddenly appeared.

This income was not random, but was deposited to his account due to some of the tasks that Ragnar put up being completed. At this rate, it would be long until Lex earned the 1 trillion MP from his 100 trillion MP transaction.

But of course, Lex would only realize this much later. For now, he followed the massive fish as it led him deeper within its territory. Even if the fish did not lead him, Lex would be able to reach the destination, for he was heading in the same direction that his intuition was guiding him to.

The closer he got, the stronger his intuition urged him to hurry up. If he had not been warned by Toro, he would have genuinely believed he was about to discover ambrosia, instead of a possibly toxic pool.

There was something deeply unsettling about this. Either the pool had to be used in a certain way to gain its benefits, which the Trelop was ignorant of which is why it suffered. Or else, the pool was something extremely sinister, with the ability to bait the senses of intelligent beings.

Considering the fact that a most likely earth immortal level Trelop was hurt by the pool, Lex did not allow himself to feel arrogant for even a moment. He had to treat the matter very seriously.

Soon, Lex identified the area where the pool most likely emerged. He did not need to rely on his intuition or even the fish to tell, for the forest around it had decayed. The trees were wilting and the seaweed growing from the ground had completely disappeared. A cage surrounded the area, blocking off the multitudes of fish and other races that were trying to enter and reach the pool.

An ominous feeling filled Lex's mind as he saw the influence the pool had wrought. This was especially so because by now it wasn't only his intuition that was informing him of how valuable the upcoming pool was, it was his actual physical body. He could feel a physical attraction pulling him closer, as if his body had been parched for eons and a glass of water was almost within reach.

Lex felt like asking Toro some more questions, and so quickly thought of the politest way to phrase it. Although the Trelop had a peculiar personality, as long as Lex remembered to stay polite, he should not encounter any danger.

"The reason you allowed the aura to escape was to see if anyone could get rid of the pool, right? If you've discovered something, could you please share it with me? I would be most grateful."

Toro's body trembled, as if he had been electrocuted. He glared at Lex, but they were in a relatively public place now, so it refrained from cursing the previous 17 generations of Lex's family. After all, as the lord of this region, it had an image to maintain.

"Although to an outside observer, it may look like my territory is only this forest, but they would be wrong. My territory extends as deep as the roots of the plants go. As such, I know for a fact that there was no such pool under the ground that the earthquake could have brought to the surface. In fact, even now, though it may appear as if the pool is emerging from underground, the truth is that there is no source down below.

"Though the pool appeared after the earthquake, it has no real source. It suddenly appeared, and I cannot tell how it is growing. It's a goddamn menace!"

Toro was, of course, speaking to Lex through its spirit sense, so no one could hear it.

"I do, however, have suspicions. The more materials it corrupts and dissolves, the greater the pool grows. I can only guess that, whatever the pool is, it is turning everything into itself."

Toro paused as they approached the cage and stared through to a glow visible in the distance. Even at the bottom of the sea, a small pool was distinctly visible inside a bowl shaped rock. The pool could not have been bigger than a dozen liters, at most, yet its presence was massive. It had a white and silverish appearance and gave off a beautiful and mesmerizing glow.

The only word Lex could think to describe both its visage and aura was 'holy'. The pool seemed the very definition of pure and felt as if it could cradle all of life. The impression it created was so strong that Lex almost ignored the dichotomy of the sight where every living thing near it had already died.

"Do you know what kind of power immortals wield?" Toro asked Lex, his voice strangely devoid of anger and frustration.

"No, not really."

"The power of an immortal comes from his tenets," Toro explained, strangely calm. "Do you know what laws are? Universal laws? Tenets allow immortals to, very barely, interact with the laws of the universe. The only way I've been able to slow down the spread of this pool is by suppressing it with my tenet. But even then, it is only able to suppress it, and not stop it."

Lex appreciated the information, especially since it was giving him revelations into information he had no access to before. But the fact that Toro was not insulting him, or resisting the urge to insult, and was revealing such sensitive information without prompting was highly suspicious.

"Why are you telling me this?" Lex asked, his gaze still stuck to the pool. How could it be so beautiful? He wanted nothing more than to take a sip of it.

"Because, other than me, you are the only one who has not become completely enthralled by it after looking at it. I hope you have a solution."

As soon as Toro spoke, Lex realized that all the creatures that were trying to approach it were simply being blocked by the cage. They were not fighting against it, trying to destroy it, or finding some other way through. They were simply pressed against the cage as they tried to approach the pool, like mindless zombies.

It was strange, now that Lex thought about it. Although he was feeling a very strong urge to drink from the pool, it was nowhere near irresistible, nor did he feel like his mind was being influenced in any way.

Lex had no way of knowing what the liquid in the pool was, but he had a few ideas of how he could find out.

"Can you let me through to investigate?" he asked, remembering to retain his politeness.

"Sure," Toro said, and wrapped Lex with some seaweed. "In fact, if you discover a way to get rid of it, or take it away, you can have all of it. I won't stop you."

Lex wanted to nod, but wrapped in seaweed, he could not really move. Toro was not imprisoning him, merely encasing him in his tenet so that Lex could enter the cage. After a couple of minutes, when Toro released the seaweed, Lex discovered that he was already inside, right beside the pool.

This close, Lex could practically smell the liquid in the pool. But, of course, he could not really smell it. It was the 'smell' of the spiritual energy that the pool was giving off, and it was as sweet as the kindest melody, as gentle as a lover's kiss. Lex could feel as if the world itself was softly hugging him, providing him with warmth, comfort and security.

It was the most pleasant sensation Lex could imagine feeling. A part of Lex wanted to bottle up this liquid and just hide a bit of it in his most expensive rooms at the Inn. His capitalist senses were tingling. Yes, drinking it might be wonderful, if it wasn't an all corroding, poisonous. But making endless amounts of MP from it and raising the prestige of the Inn beyond what it already would be even more wonderful.

With a grin that went from being wholesome to sly, Lex took out a glass bottle from his spatial bangle. It was time to see if he could collect this new money maker!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 608: Unexpected reactions

The glass bottle that Lex took out was only a very mundane glass bottle. It was not made from any spiritual material, nor did it have any mystical abilities. The reason Lex took this out first was because he wanted to get an idea for how quickly the liquid worked, and if it worked on ordinary materials as well, or was it restricted to living beings.

In scientific terms, if Lex were conducting an experiment, then the glass bottle would be the control. Once he had an understanding of how the liquid, which Lex had started to call Holy water temporarily, behaved, then he could find a suitable container for it..

Using his spirit sense, he grabbed the bottle and lifted it into the air. Slowly, so as to not cause a splash, he dipped the bottle into the Holy water and filled it to the brim. Then he lifted the bottle up in the air, holding it directly above the pool in case the bottle also dissolved.

But Lex did not even have time to properly get in position. Even just as he was about to begin waiting, the glass cracked, and then shattered. The pieces fell into the pool alongside the extracted liquid and quickly settled to the bottom. Suffice to say, the Holy water was not harmless.

Next, he took out a jade bottle. It had some medicine Lex had stored for emergency situations, in case encountered someone who was hurt, and removed it. Even as far as special containers went, this jade bottle was still not the best, but it contained a trace of a spiritual attribute, used to retain the medicinal potency of whatever it held. It was also sturdier than glass, and not as easily broken.

He repeated the process, but did not get much better results. Although the jade did not immediately shatter the way the glass bottle did, it was immediately covered in small cracks, which eventually grew until the jade broke apart.

Next, Lex took out something he hadn't used in a long time: a bottle of Botlam Dew! It was not the dew Lex was after, but rather the bottle it came in. Regardless of all its shortcomings, the one thing Lex could never accuse the system of was giving him low quality items.

If this bottle didn't work, then Lex would officially run out of containers. It wasn't as if he went around with his spatial bangle full of bottles to use for various situations.

Once again, he repeated the process, but although the bottle resisted for a little longer, it too eventually broke.

By now, all the shards of glass and jade that had fallen into the Holy water previously had disappeared, and Lex detected the slightest increase in the size of the pool. The increase was so small he would not have noticed it if he weren't looking for it.

Lex paused for a moment and considered the situation. Although he planned on conducting a few more tests, it seemed fairly certain that anything he would use to try to contain the liquid would dissolve. That was an issue, for if he wanted to submit the liquid into the Gift shop so that he could discover what it was, he would need to at least contain it for a few minutes. After all, returning to the Inn from the Crystal realm took quite a bit longer than normal.

If he had to go on by what Toro said, the only thing that could contain the liquid were his tenets, but that was only because they interacted with laws.

Based on that, he could think of two ways to contain the liquid. Either he could use arrays, or he could try his own spirit energy since he had suspicions that it had something to do with laws.

But it was best to be sure first, so he continued his tests of trying to contain the liquid. Since he had run out of containers, he tried other things. He tried soaking the liquid up in some cloth. He tried storing it in the curves of some metallic armor. He tried freezing it so that it would become solid. Nothing seemed to work, as any material it interacted with would dissolve, and temperature seemed to have no effect on it.

In the end, Lex became too impatient and began to devise a way to trap the liquid using an array. His plan was simple: he would store a single drop of liquid trapped inside an array which kept it floating in the middle so the liquid would never actually come in contact with the array. The array itself would then be fit inside a container so that Lex could move it around.

He would make the array so that it would last for at least 30 minutes, which would give him plenty of time to send it to the gift shop and read its description.

Coming up with the relevant array was pretty easy. Lex had long devised his own way to create arrays by implementing structures similar to functions in programming languages. Of course, this was only true for simpler arrays; if the array had to perform complex actions, or bring about extremely powerful reactions, he would still need to spend more time working on them.

A minute later, he finalized the array and activated it. At first, it seemed to work. The drop of liquid was suspended in the air, kept there by a gentle yet constant push generated by the array. Even Toro, who was watching from afar, seemed surprisingly hopeful.

But then something happened that Lex had not foreseen. The array ran out of power all too quickly! According to Lex's design, the array should have lasted for 30 minutes, yet it had not even lasted for 3 seconds! What's more, as the drop fell back to the pool, it turned into two drops right before Lex's eyes!

This... he couldn't believe it. This time, he tried again, but with an array designed to last much longer. This time Lex spent well over 20 minutes to design the array, making sure there were no flaws and that it would last at least a couple of days.

He did not mind brute-forcing a solution, but the premise was that the consumption of the array's energy stayed constant to what Lex had already witnessed.

He tried again, and once again a single drop was suspended into the air.

1... 2.... 3... Lex counted in his mind. When he reached 10 seconds and saw that the array was not destabilizing, he felt himself relax. If the array lasted at least a few minutes...

Before the thought was even complete, the array collapsed, and this time, the single drop turned into dozens of drops, causing a ripple in the puddle when they fell back.

"Don't do that again," warned Toro. "It's increasing the size of the pool too fast. The more the liquid accumulates, the stronger its effect becomes on the surrounding creatures."

Lex frowned.

The more troublesome this liquid was, the more he wanted to get his hands on it. But he was running out of ideas. The only thing left to do was try out his own spirit energy, or perhaps his own body.

There was a reason Lex hadn't tried directly using his spirit sense on the liquid. Since it could corrode even an immortal, chances were it would do the same to him, and he really didn't want to face the hassle of recovering from another injury.

He wasn't really concerned about any significant damage to himself, though. Although healing was very annoying for him, he had all the benefits of a body cultivator and more. That meant that, at this point, even if he lost a limb, with enough time and energy, he could grow it back.

With a sigh, Lex steadied his mental state. He assumed that, even if the liquid did not corrode him, once he touched it his desire to drink it would multiply. But until he verified what this liquid really was, and what it did, he could not take that risk.

He used the technique Impervious Hands and slowly dipped the tip of his finger in the liquid. As soon as he felt any harm he would immediately pull out, but he was not at all ready for what happened when he touched it.

The Lotus tattoo on his back stirred. The Lotus had fallen asleep after the immense effort it put into refining Lex's body when he was previously injured, but the moment Lex touched the liquid it began to wake up.

It wasn't that the Lotus was attracted to the liquid. No, instead, it felt great danger!

But even before the Lotus could fully wake up, and respond to the danger somehow, a stream of information rushed into Lex's head from a very familiar source.

Regal Embrace had identified the liquid, and immediately told Lex to drink it up! This was the kind of resources that he desperately needed to evolve his cultivation technique, but could never hope to actually encounter!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 609: Cosmic Erosion Elixer

Lex had previously already given out a strict set of instructions to Mary and the various workers of the Inn to go by, not to mention the fact that every so often he would use his remote presence to drop in and monitor things.

Many important things were happening at the same time during this period. First, the festival at the Inn had entered the winter phase. The weather of the entire Inn had changed for the first time, blanketing it all in snow. The architecture of various buildings had changed to suit the new weather, and the kinds of services being offered had changed as well.

The golf carts had turned into snowmobiles, and hot springs had cropped up all around the Inn. Some specific regions even had extreme weather, dropping well below -100 celsius, though of course they were far away from the densely populated areas.

One Minor realm had been selected to be sold to the refugees, and the council had, under the supervision of Luthor, come up with a payment plan for it. Since a one time payment was incredibly difficult, the refugees would continue to pay installments for 50 years. Moreover, since this wasn't a transaction through official system channels, Lex had set up a few conditions.

The overall price of the Minor realm was set at 30 trillion MP. This was not a lot, considering the fact that the Minor realm not only had better spiritual energy than earth itself, but was full of various natural resources that would belong to the refugees to harvest.

A portion of that price would be paid in MP, but the larger portion would be directly transferred over to the Inn in physical form. That meant Lex would collect the payment in the form of valuable resources such as gold, spirit stones, metal ores, valuable medical herbs, secret treasures, unique spirit tech and more.

The first deposit of 300 million MP had come from the accumulated personal wealth of all the millions of refugees, as well as some of the council's reserves. Although the situation on earth had developed so that fewer and fewer refugees were coming through, the council still treated the Minor realm as their failsafe in case the war went poorly. In fact, some council members had already completely given up on earth and decided to focus on developing the Minor realm into their own personal kingdoms.

Other than these, the Inns workers had also selected a Minor realm which would solely belong to them.

The Jotun empire had also by now begun to promote their private Minor realm to humans, attracting many to go and train at the pagoda. In fact, many were already in there, including a few prominent people such as Z, Gerard, Will Bentham and Noman Butt the human lie detector.

Oddly enough though, despite the many people entering, very few were able to make it as far as Lex and Alexander. It was only now that so many that were entering that the soldiers in charge of recording the pagoda information realized how remarkable their achievement was.

All in all, the scene at the Inn seemed peaceful and prosperous. In contrast, the seeds of war were beginning to bloom across the entire Origin realm. The change brought about by the energy released into the Origin realm by the Innkeeper was finally becoming noticeable. More and more powerful cultivators and unique beasts and creatures were beginning to appear, their strength increased by the sudden surplus of cultivation materials.

Previously, such growth would be slow and natural, meaning that the status quo would be undisturbed as everyone would naturally find their place within it. But with such a sudden surge in powerful beings, everyone believed themselves special, and wanted to resist the greater powers to have their own organizations and influence. Normally, such actions would have brought them a swift death, but the sheer scale of the event was actually bringing about great pressure on the pre-established powers.

Even the Jotun empire was showing signs of trouble, but it was fortunate that the three great noble families had suddenly become very active, and began suppressing dissidents. All of this was not even considering the sudden upsurge in Fuegan attacks.

This could no longer even be called the calm before the storm. The storm was already arriving, and chaos was brewing. Conspiracies thousands of years in the making were coming to fruition, empires seemingly indestructible were crumbling from within and races that had long been suppressed, and were waiting for an opportunity to revolt, were beginning to make their move.

Amidst all of this, numerous students of the acclaimed Ventura academy were once again returning to their respective powers - at least in the Origin realm. If they were coming to help their powers tide over difficult times, or if they had some secret agenda was still to be seen.

None of this should have had anything to do with Lex, but the Innkeeper and the Midnight Inn could not escape its influence. The Henali had given their response to the Innkeeper.

The Inn's battlefield was decided, and it was in a galaxy that had almost no human presence at all. Instead, it was a galaxy controlled by Elves called Suera. Coincidentally, or perhaps not so, that was the same galaxy the mysterious man had told Lex to visit to find an unknown valuable item.

But while the Henali had decided on the Inns battlefield, the order had not yet reached the Inn and thus Lex. Which was fortunate, because Lex was thoroughly preoccupied at the moment.

He stared at the shining liquid, which was anything but the Holy water Lex had originally decided to call it, an ominous look in his eyes.

His cultivation technique had given him a detailed description of the liquid which was known as Cosmic Erosion Elixir. This extremely rare liquid was produced in only two known circumstances: it could either be produced by a Daolord by using their power to slowly and carefully grind space out of existence, or during a relatively very brief period of time when a seemingly stable realm begins to destabilize, on the course for self-destruction!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 610: Reverence

The circumstances required for the production of Cosmic Erosion Elixir were extremely stringent, even on a universal scale. In fact, even if many Minor realms or realms were destroyed, they might not produce this elixir.

The first most important requirement was that the realm needed to be extremely stable, and should otherwise appear completely inline with its normal lifecycle. The stability of the realm meant that the space it constituted would be extremely stable, and capable of healing normally and naturally should anything happen.

The second requirement was a significant and constant destabilizing factor. This factor should be strong enough to strain the laws of the realm constantly, but not strong enough to actually unravel the functionality of the realm or its laws.

The third requirement was that the realm should not be fully mature, and should still be in the growing phase of its lifecycle.

The fourth requirement was a sufficiently long enough duration of time to pass without any of the prior requirements changing.

The natural inclination of the realm to grow would increase the stress on the laws of the realm caused by the destabilizing factor, without unraveling them. The otherwise stability of the realm alongside the increased stress would, in random locations, cause space itself to begin to disintegrate.

The byproduct of this disintegration was the Cosmic Erosion Elixir, which was a physical manifestation of the various laws that used to occupy the space that had been destroyed. The reason why this liquid was so attractive to all living beings was because of those said laws, which could directly elevate them to a higher life form. Lex himself had undergone such evolutions through the natural sequence, which occurred every time he rose from one cultivation realm to another.

But if he followed this path, then his maximum ceiling for evolving higher was fixed to the number of cultivation realms he could cross. Items and treasures which could elevate the lifeform without going through the process of raising a cultivation realm were so rare that they were essentially never sold. There was no price for them in the market because it had never happened before.

Yet the reason no one could make use of this Cosmic Erosion Elixir was because it had to do with laws, and their bodies could not handle the strain on directly touching laws. The only reason Lex was not suffering a similar fate was because his body had literally used fragments of laws to upgrade itself.

If he used the elixir to reach a higher life form level than he was supposed to be at, he would begin to understand how important and valuable such a thing was. But it was not meant to be, for now at least. His cultivation technique had called first dibs, and informed him of how he could use this liquid to slowly augment the existing laws that made up his body as well as influence his affinity, so that slowly it would change in a direction which would allow him to enter the next realm.

Of course, the elixir alone was not enough to achieve such a thing, but it was a start.

That gave Lex an amazing idea. Not only could he use this elixir, he could transport it to the Inn.

He would use however much of it was needed for his own upgrade and trade the rest to get other materials with similar effects so he could continue to upgrade himself. After all, although he knew he could fix his cultivation if he got an SSS+ rank on a quest, such a thing was easier said than done.

Every time he had completed a quest with such a high ranking, it had been completely based on luck, and was a result of the involvement of extremely high leveled cultivators.

A part of him wanted to keep the elixir forever, continuously feeding it items to allow it to grow, but such a thing was not possible. Apparently, the elixir would only exist for a very short time before the laws within it would naturally reorient themselves, causing the liquid to disappear.

If there was one fortunate thing, it was that he now knew how he could transport the liquid.

Since his body and spiritual energy would not be corroded by the elixir, he only needed to use them.

He used a curved Imperial shield, and scooped up all the elixir into it like a massive bowl. He would first take it back to the Midnight Inn before consuming it. He did not know what kind of reaction would occur once he did, and did not want to leave himself vulnerable to external influence.

"I'll be back," Lex told Toro, before eventually disappearing to the Inn.

He teleported to his personal meditation room before using his influence over the system to create an especially expensive and powerful basin for the liquid before pouring it in.

He did not know how long the liquid would continue to exist, he had to be quick.

The Lotus, which had finally woken up, was frightened silly when it sensed Lex drinking the elixir! That was not soup, but laws! Even it did not dare absorb such a thing for if he was not able to perfectly influence how those laws were absorbed, its body itself would instead be absorbed by the laws!

That was a fact that Lex's cultivation technique had already mentioned, but had already given a solution to. So, while Lex went ahead and augmented his cultivation, the incredibly powerful Lotus on his back was filled with reverence for the incredible Innkeeper. He was truly beyond common sense.

With that thought, the Lotus went back to sleep. Since Lex's body was a carrier for the Lotus, the stronger his body, the faster the Lotus would mature. With Lex doing something as daring as drinking the elixir, there was no doubt the Lotus' maturing speed would continue to increase.

It was fortunate that the Lotus had gone back to sleep, for the reverence it had built up might have been severely affected when it noticed that, instead of entering a state of cultivation upon drinking the elixir, Lex immediately teleported to the restroom!

The elixir had given him a bad case of diarrhea!