

## **Innkeeper 611**

The Innkeeper

Chapter 611: Potent fertilizer

Regal Embrace had given Lex detailed instructions on what to do to absorb the elixir. He would first start using his cultivation technique, and only after he had used it for one complete cycle would he take a single sip from it, while continuing to run his technique.

As soon as he took the sip, his cultivation technique would stop absorbing spiritual energy from the air, and instead use the elixir to increase his cultivation. The actual process of what happened next was quite complicated, but all Lex needed to do was ensure he didn't stop cultivating.

As soon as he took the sip, and his cultivation technique began using the elixir to affect his body and infinity, Lex was hit with a sensation he hadn't experienced in quite a while. He needed to use the restroom, and he needed to use it now!

The urgency of the situation nearly interrupted his cultivation, so he immediately entered the Flow state to ensure he did not mess things up. This way, he teleported to the restroom while still running his cultivation technique.

What happened next was... disastrous. There was no Mexican food on earth Mexican enough, nor spice strong enough to devastate Lex's stomach the way it was now. If Lex was not in his Flow state he definitely would not have been able to continue cultivating.

The gurgles in his stomach were like rolls of thunder. If Lex were not at the Inn, and had been elsewhere, earthquakes would have rocked the area around him.

Although the method was... unconventional, Regal Embrace was using the laws in the elixir to perfectly stabilize his body, so that the laws he contained would be in perfect equilibrium instead of being a random hodgepodge. Moreover, although laws were incredibly powerful and definitely beyond Lex's level, thus increasing his strength drastically, not all laws were suitable for him.

Due to his breakthrough while the Inn was undergoing a star level increase, a random assortment of laws had been absorbed into his body. While he had survived the experience, it did not mean that those

laws were actually helping him. In fact, many of the laws that made up his body were going against the natural foundation he had built up since he started cultivating.

It was the difference between randomly getting a power up through the use of treasures beyond one's level, and a conscientious effort using the most optimal resources to systematically increase your power. While both would give you a power up, one would leave you unable to grow further, while the other would not only give you a higher power ceiling you could achieve within the same realm, but also make your final destination much higher than before.

In a way, Lex was already on the path to transcending the original description of the Regal Embrace. That did not mean his defense would be even higher than it should have been. No, the cultivation technique had already aimed for the highest possible achievable defense right from the get go. Instead, besides the ridiculous defense, Lex would also gain other incredible attributes.

For example, besides Lex's abnormal affinity for defensive techniques, he may gain an affinity for other types of techniques as well. Since he could learn defensive techniques at a glance, and even upgrade them, imagine if he could do the same for movement techniques? Or offensive techniques? Techniques based on the applications of space?

Lex could only use such thoughts to distract himself as his cultivation technique slowly and effectively removed the unnecessary, or even obstructive laws that his body had. In their place, the laws within the elixir were being used.

Although he was once again undergoing a fundamental change in his body's make up, he was more embarrassed than in pain. No, he couldn't continue to dwell on the matter or even his state of flow would be broken.

He turned his thoughts to something else that had occurred to him when he found out about the elixir, but didn't have time to contemplate on. The elixir was formed when there was an instability affecting the realm.

It was not a big jump to assume that whatever anomaly he was supposed to be investigating was the very same instability that had put the Crystal realm on the path for destruction. He did not know how much the local powerhouses of the Crystal knew about the anomaly, but he was fairly certain they didn't know that the realm was on the path to destruction.

According to his original guess, they were using the anomaly and the Kraven to fulfill some grand plan, or perhaps they were farming some extremely rare resources. All in all, there was some secret plan they were exploiting the Kraven for. But if they knew that their continued exploitation had likely put their realm on the path to destruction, he doubted they would behave so audaciously.

This piece of information was more than sufficient for him to venture towards Valesco and meet that Crystal race elder. In the meantime, there was also the chance that he could learn more from the Noel and Phillips family.

Lex could feel that he was incredibly close to solving this mystery.

While Lex was busy thinking every possible random thought he could to distract himself, there was a certain area of the Inn he had purposefully blocked off all news from to himself. No matter what happened there, for now, Lex would not know.

There was a simple reason for that. The Midnight Inn was a closed system, meaning that everything that happened there, stayed within.

The remnants of the laws that were being... released from Lex's body were not mysteriously vanishing. No, they were being recycled, and then transported to the special area that Lex had blocked all news from: the greenhouse!

"Oh dear, such potent fertilizer," commented the turtle as bags of fresh fertilizer were being teleported to the greenhouse. These would be extremely useful in helping the vine growing beside the Fire Temple.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 612: A deal

One excruciating hour later, Lex was finally done. His digestion of the single sip of elixir was complete. Although he could immediately go and start digesting the second sip, he was mentally drained from his experience.

This was not a comment on his emotional trauma from the experience. The difficulty of keeping his cultivation technique running under such strenuous circumstances had actually drained him. It would take him some time to recover before was in any condition to undergo another round of cultivation.

But that did not mean he had any time to waste. There was no telling how long the elixir would last. According to the information given to him by Regal Embrace, the elixir would last, at most, for a week.

He had no time to waste. Instead of returning to the Crystal realm, Lex instead went to X-142. This set of planets had been very fruitful for Lex, not only because it was a great source of various guests, but because of the Infinity Emporium.

Although Lex had not purposefully sold a golden key to the emporium, considering the fact that a lot of people on the planet were becoming regulars of the Inn, he was surprised that the emporium had not discovered it yet. Or maybe it had, but was purposefully avoiding it.

Whatever the reason, so long as they continued to be useful to Lex, he would not pry too deeply into their matter either.

As usual, he saw many guests walking in and out of the emporium, but knew that when he entered, he would be alone in the shop.

He saw a vaguely familiar person exit the store, and then quickly scurry away. Lex paused for a moment as he tried to recall if he had actually ever met that person, or if he was an important guest. It took only a moment for Lex to recall a tavern he had stayed in on X-142 when he first arrived called Bent Benches. The tavern keeper had been some poor fellow with extremely severe anxiety issues.

Lex turned and saw that the man was still quite jittery, and was doing his best to stay away from people as he continued on his path. Lex shook his head. Anxiety was truly an unfortunate ailment to have.

Putting the matter behind him, he entered the shop to once again be greeted by the familiar Powell.

"My friend, it is always a good day when I see you," Powell exclaimed with genuine joy in his voice.

"Haha well then today is about to be a very good day for you," Lex said walked up to the counter. "I have a great deal for you today."

"Why the rush to talk of business? Why don't you relax a little, you look weary."

Not waiting for Lex to respond, Powell brought out a bottle from underneath the counter as well as a couple of glasses and poured Lex a drink. Considering the fact that Lex was a high level member of the emporium, not only did he have access to some of their best items and inventory, he could get amazing perks as well. This drink, it seemed, was one of them.

Lex did not reject, and took a sip from the hazel colored drink, only to feel reinvigorated immediately! All his exhaustion disappeared with a single sip! Unfortunately, Lex wasn't too happy about that. This only meant he would have to go back and cultivate.

"I wish I had the time to relax Powell, but I have a time sensitive matter that I need to handle."

"Tell me about it," Powell said, not prodding Lex to relax any further. Considering Lex's status, it was only normal for him to try and maintain a good relationship with him. But if the man was focused on work, who was he to keep diverging from the topic?

Lex smiled for a moment, as he anticipated Powell's reaction to the matter.

"Have you ever heard of Cosmic Erosion Elixir?" he asked, leaning forward.

For a moment Powell did not respond, as he tried to recall the name. The moment he did, his expression changed minutely but he tried not to show it.

"Yes I've heard of it. But if you're hoping to buy, unfortunately we do not have any way of getting our hands on it."

Although Powell was rejecting him, he was unable to hide the hint of expectation the man had on his face. Obviously he had a suspicion, but he did not allow himself to hope it was true.

"That's even better, because I want to sell some. The rarity of it should help me get a better price."

"Are you sure?" Powell asked, barely keeping himself from jumping up. "Are you sure it's the elixir?"

"Completely sure, though before I am able to sell it to you, I'll need something from you. I'll need a few containers in which I can store the elixir. Everything I have completely dissolves when I try to store the elixir in it."

"That's no problem at all!" Powell said, completely understanding. "In fact, as long as you really have the elixir, and sell it to the emporium, I'll give you a few containers for free. They're extremely valuable, and can be used to store even other precious liquids."

"That's great. But now, let's talk about something much more relevant: the price. What can the emporium pay for the elixir?"

Powell suddenly put on a serious expression and lifted a latch on his counter, inviting Lex in.

"Follow me, let's discuss this in a better setting. For something of this level, I'll need to contain our head office, so it'll take a few minutes to get the relevant data."

Lex followed Powell into a very luxurious room and took a seat on a sofa while Powell pulled out a tablet and began working furiously. He did not know how far the so-called 'headquarters' were, but the communication was quite quick if it only took a few minutes.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 613: Powell and Powell

Lex watched in silence as Powell excitedly interacted with his tablet. Sometimes the man was so professional, yet at other times, especially when it was a matter of his own commission, he could show a childlike giddiness.

Soon he put down the tablet and looked at Lex.

"Good news. Because of your level at the Infinity Emporium, as well as our history together, I've been promoted significantly. Headquarters will give me special training so that in the future, I will

permanently deal with all your transactions. There will no longer ever be a situation where I need to contact headquarters to give you an answer to one of your questions.

"Moreover, you yourself have become a VIP member of the emporium. Your level is no longer denoted by number, as you are completely eligible for the highest authority the emporium has to offer.

"Moreover... moreover, the owner of the emporium has taken notice of your latest request, and is personally making his way over. This deal... he will complete himself!"

"The owner?" Lex asked, surprised. He did not expect to attract the attention of the owner of the emporium, although it made sense. The description of the elixir stated that it was extremely rare, and there were only two known ways of making it, the first involving daolords. Moreover, while Lex knew how he could personally use it, he didn't really know what other actual uses it had. Surely they were extremely useful.

The only concern was... how long would it take for the owner to reach them? Lex was in a time crunch.

Before he could ask, however, the door to the room they were in opened, and an extremely familiar man walked in.

"You've done a great job, Powell," the man said, his voice confident yet smooth as butter. "For now, you can go on and report for your special training. I will take care of things from here."

"Yes sir!" Powell exclaimed full of energy, and saluted the owner of the emporium, before he bowed excitedly towards Lex as well. Then he ran off outside, practically giggling, and shut the door behind him.

Meanwhile, Lex said nothing as he was thoroughly confused. The man he was looking at... was Powell himself! There were two of them?

This should not have been such a big surprise, for even on earth there were identical twins. But the thing was, Lex was not only looking with his eyes. His intuition, spirit sense and soul sense all told him that he was looking at the same man!

Both Powells were... exactly one and the same. Lex could have explained such a situation by saying that one Powell was the clone of the other, but then why did they have different memories, feelings and identities, yet seemed to be the same person.

The remaining Powell looked at Lex with a smile, and seemed to understand exactly what he was thinking.

"Before we begin, Mr. Lex, allow me to say, I am incredibly honored to finally meet you. Though there was not an opportunity to meet before this, I have long paid attention to your transactions. I would like to thank you on behalf of the emporium and all its employees for your continued loyalty and support."

"Your service has always been excellent. I have no reason not to come back," Lex replied with complete composure, despite his confused state.

"I know you are in a bit of a rush, but would you like a bit of a proper introduction to the emporium? Perhaps that will answer some of your questions. Or if you have other commitments, we can get right to work, and then you can ask Powell any questions you have in the future. He will have the knowledge and authorization to answer you when you meet next," the owner ensured.

"Please, have a seat," Lex said, pointing towards a nearby sofa. "Although I am in a rush, it is not to the level where I can't even sit for a simple conversation."

\*\*\*\*\*

Velma had become extremely busy as of late due to her new profession as well as the immense responsibility the Innkeeper placed on her. If she had to do all that, while maintaining her passion of gossiping, she would need a hundred clones of herself. So, lately, that is what she had turned her attention towards.

She visited the Midnight Library and found some of the best cloning techniques available. None of them were exactly what she was looking for, but they could meet her basic requirements if only barely. But her cultivation was too low for the best techniques, so she had begun to remedy that.

She was cultivating nonstop, and had even visited the soul pond built by Harry. The pond helped her increase her soul strength just enough, where she could use one of the most basic but effective cloning techniques.

It involved splitting a small piece of one's soul and storing it inside a sufficiently strong treasure. This would not be any random treasure, but a specially designed treasure for this specific purpose. Once a soul was stored inside, spirit stones could be added into the treasure to form a spirit energy clone which was completely controlled by the clone.

The clone had half the strength of a mortal, but otherwise was perfectly able to replicate a normal human. For Velma's purposes it was enough, for all the clone needed to do was pay attention to gossip and compile the newsletter while Velma herself focused on raising her cultivation level. It did not really need any significant strength for that.

Moreover, all the information the clone received was immediately shared with the main soul so long as they were within a certain range, so it was not really an issue.

But within her meditation room Velma suddenly opened her eyes in shock and quickly ended her round of cultivation. She just received important news about a person the Innkeeper had told her to keep an eye on.

Garlin, the snake which had won the fishing competition, had been assassinated on its home planet!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 614: Not as good as the Innkeeper

Lex and the owner of the emporium sat face to face, leaning comfortably in their chairs as if they were old friends catching up instead of two people about to conduct a business transaction.

Lex's intuition, as well as his great experience, gave him a very clear warning. The person in front of him was ridiculously powerful, to the point where Lex did not even risk using his targeted scan ability. Besides the single moment where Lex first saw him, and ended up using his spirit and soul sense, he did not dare to even bring them out of his body now.

Despite all that, Lex remained perfectly calm. He could no longer be intimidated by powerful cultivators the way he used to be before.

Moreover, a business deal was a type of war on its own. He could not give up his psychological advantage due to the difference in cultivation levels. Lex had always pretended to have a powerful backer in his transactions with the emporium, so he would continue to behave that way.

But he was curious about one thing in particular. According to his information, Emperor Jotun was supposed to be the most powerful human in the entire Origin realm. But even if that were the case, the owner of the emporium should not have been an unknown person. Lex had perused the top 1000 strongest humans list compiled on the Henali portal. Although it was an unofficial list, it contained a lot of information. Yet this person was completely unknown. Or perhaps there were secrets Lex had just missed out on.

"Allow me to first introduce myself, and then my emporium to you," the man said, not allowing an awkward silence to develop between them. Yet by speaking first, he had voluntarily given up the psychological advantage. He had placed Lex in a superior position, where he was the one giving Lex the explanation.

Either he was not interested in such mindgames, or he was so powerful and confident that he felt like he could ignore their consequences.

"My name, as you may be able to guess, is Powell," he said with a bright smile. "You might find it slightly confusing, but you can consider all the workers at the emporium as clones of myself."

"All the workers?" Lex asked, not hiding the surprise in his voice. In this situation, maintaining perfect composure would build a distance between them. It would seem as if Lex was from too large a background, and did not care about Powell. But by reacting where Powell might expect him to react would give the man a sense of satisfaction and give him a positive impression of Lex.

Of course, he could not take it too far. Lex was only trying to build a good relationship, not trying to become a yes-man.

"They are not exactly clones in the traditional sense, but you may consider it as such. It is an aspect of my cultivation technique. Moreover, there is no employee more reliable than myself."

Lex disagreed. He felt like the Inn's employee's were the most reliable, but he didn't voice the thought and allowed him to explain.

"I started the emporium with a dream. I was young and broke when I dreamt of endless riches, so much so that even the stars could not shine as brightly as my horde. But other than just wealth, I wanted my wealth to come from a place that made a difference. I wanted to start a business that could benefit everyone! So in pursuit of my humble dream, I am trying to bring the emporium to every corner of the Origin realm. I want the emporium to be the biggest commerce entity in the entire realm!"

The spiritual energy buzzed with the excitement and passion in Powell's voice. Even if he wasn't trying, the world around him was reacting to his emotions. It reminded Lex of the way the Inn's weather was affected by his mood when he became upset.

"I have come a great way, though I am still a little far from reaching my goal. Let me share a small secret with you, to thank you for your faith in the emporium so far, and to assure you of our capabilities to serve you even in the future."

Sitting in his chair, Lex felt like he could give Powell some pointers on marketing and customer psychology. He too had dealt with guests at the Inn, but Powell was going about it all wrong. He could be appreciative of guests and their patronage, but he also needed to display a certain level of detachment. Powell had gained great success, no doubt, but in the end, he was no match for the Innkeeper.

"You may have noticed that every time you enter the emporium, you arrive at the shop alone regardless of how many people may be going in or out."

"Yes, I found that extremely fascinating when I first arrived," Lex admitted.

"The truth of the matter is... the moment you enter the emporium building... you're no longer on the planet you entered from. Each and every emporium building in the realm is linked. As soon as you enter, you are teleported to the 'main branch' as it were."

Lex was surprised, and perplexed. Sure such a mass scale teleportation, especially one so seamless, was extremely impressive. But what was the purpose? Moreover...

"But many times I've encountered situations where I had to wait for deliveries because I was told it was being transported from elsewhere in the galaxy, or realm. Don't tell me I was made to wait just to keep up appearances."

"No no, nothing like that," Powell said, waving his hand. "It's purely logistical and supply chain matters that delay deliveries. Although having every customer come to one destination makes it easy, as we don't need to maintain separate warehouses or actually transport goods across the wide expanse of space. But getting items to the original warehouse from wherever we are sourcing them also sometimes takes some time."

"I must admit, situations where our clients have to wait for deliveries are usually very rare. It's only your... unique requests that often end up stumping us."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 615: Negotiation

Lex could not help but smile a bit. His requests were either incredibly specific, such as the very specific ore he needed to alter his body, or the millions of cultivation techniques he'd requested. To this date, he still regularly received batches of new techniques which he kept adding to his library. The problem was, the number of techniques had to match the kind of payment he'd made. But Lex's payment had touched upon something that touched the Daolord realm, so there was literally no value that could meet it. In the end, they could just continue to provide techniques endlessly until it became a priceless collection.

Eventually, Lex planned to have them start providing Nascent soul level techniques. Although that would speed up the emporium's payback of its debt, Lex did not actually need endless Golden core realm techniques.

Powell continued.

"The reason I told you this was because, in the future, no matter where you enter the emporium from, you will be brought to our main shop, which is reserved for our highest level members. Moreover, you can establish an account with us, meaning that once you sell something, you will accumulate a special kind of credit called Emporium Credit (EC). You can either cash that out to a currency of your choice, or keep it to purchase items later on. It's a much easier way to keep track of your payments, and the value of each transaction."

"It's easy enough to understand," said Lex, as if it was the first time he was encountering such a thing.

"The ease and convenience of our clients is our first priority. I can take you to the store and you can peruse our premium selection at will, but first I'd like to discuss the transaction you previously mentioned to Powell."

"Yes, the Cosmic Erosion Elixir. I wish to sell some, but first I need a container in which I can transport the elixir itself."

"If you don't mind my asking, how much elixir are you looking to sell?"

Lex leaned forward now, and established eye contact with Powell. Everything before this was merely a prelude to the conversation that was about to take place now. As an item with no fixed price, how much Lex would be able to gain would all depend on his own negotiation skills.

Although Lex may have gained a psychological advantage before this, it would matter little if he failed to gain any tangible benefits. Moreover, he was about to find out if Powell in fact was so self confident that he did not care about mind games, or if Lex really was superior to him in this regard.

"I have quite a considerable amount of elixir," Lex confided. "Yet I am also using a portion of it for my own purposes. What I want to do is sell the amount I don't need before it disappears. Since I harvested the elixir today, I'd say I have about a week to make the most of it. How much of it I sell to you... depends entirely on the price you're able to pay. It could be anywhere from a few drops, all the way up to a liter."

In fact, Lex had a lot more of the elixir than that. But he was not sure exactly how much he needed, not to mention he was planning on holding an auction in the Midnight Inn as well. He had already told Mary to spread the word about this specific auction, but only guests with a prestige level 4 and above were to be informed.

There were very few guests at that prestige level, as they would need to spend at least 10 million MP at the Inn to reach such a level. In fact, the only reason the number even entered double digits is because those who performed transactions at the Guild room were also counted.

Powell did not react too strongly, but at the same time he did not hide his surprise at the possible availability of an entire liter of the elixir. He did not, however, show any surprise to learn that Lex was using the elixir himself.

The truth was, his body projected a powerful aura of laws since his body contained laws to begin with, yet did not have the power to suppress the aura. But once his body stabilized, the aura disappeared. Yet now that he was once again adjusting his body's makeup by drinking the elixir the aura had once again appeared.

Although the aura was not completely oppressive, as it was when Lex was still undergoing his body's reconstruction, it was enough to give a casual cultivator some pressure. Even a nascent cultivator would feel pressured in Lex's presence during this period.

Suffice to say, Powell could tell that Lex was somehow tempering his body using the elixir. As for how that was possible, he did not inquire. As a businessman, he respected others' personal secrets.

"There are many ways in which the emporium can pay you, but I think what really matters is what you're looking for. Why don't you give me an idea for the kind of remuneration you're looking for."

The small exchange where neither of them openly quotes a price was a sort of power play by each, trying to understand the others psychological range for the price. If one of them said a price, such as Lex, but it turned out that it was much lower than what Powell was ready to pay then Lex would be the one suffering the loss.

This was the problem with priceless items. In the end, the final price was entirely dependent on what and how much use the buyer had for it.

As it was, Lex was at a slight disadvantage since he did not know the actual value of the elixir and how it could be measured. So, instead, he opted for another option.

"The elixir, as you may know, contains the physical manifestation of laws. I can sell some, but I need other items which contain laws in a similar fashion."

## The Innkeeper

### Chapter 616: Barter

"The elixir, as you may know, contains the physical manifestation of laws. I can sell some, but I need other items which contain laws in a similar fashion," said Lex as he began to explain his demands. "Since I know items on the level of the elixir cannot usually be sought out, and depend on luck, I won't be so harsh as to ask for items on the same level only. Inferior items are also acceptable, but then the quantity needs to be increased. How much elixir I give you depends on the kinds of resources you provide. After all, I've approached a few other circles as well, and if their offer is better than yours, then they will get more of the liquid."

Powell did not show any surprise, relief or competition on his face upon hearing Lex's demands. He remained extremely professional, and immediately delved into relevant matters.

"One of the reasons the elixir is extremely valuable, excluding its rarity, is because it contains laws pertaining to space," he explained. He did not ask if Lex had an understanding of laws, and if so how deep it was. Instead, he chose to explain or reiterate some of the basics. That way Lex would either learn about some things without his ignorance being exposed, or he would be able to bring attention to his own upcoming proposal easily.

"There are a few accompanying laws, of course, such as the law of pressure, the law of power, the law of foundations, but the primary makeup is still space. That is also one of the reasons it is so difficult for it to naturally occur. Moreover, the potency of the law also depends on the maturity of the realm from which it is created.

"Assuming the potency of the elixir is average, there are already very few items directly as valuable as the elixir. Like you said, lower value items can be exchanged, but then the quantity will have to be adjusted which is another hassle of its own.

"Based on your requirements, I can offer you a few options and then you can choose which one suits you the most. But before I get into it, do you have any special requirements in terms of laws? Meaning are there items of certain laws that you are more partial to, or will any laws do?"

This was a good question. Technically, according to Regal Embrace, Lex could absorb any items with laws and the technique would use those laws to reorient, or replace the existing laws that were interfering with his cultivation. To be clear, if Lex wanted to use this method to fix his cultivation technique so that he could cultivate to the nascent realm, it would take far more resources than even his elixir could afford him. But at least it would put him on the right path, while increasing his strength in the process

However, what laws he absorbed would have a longstanding effect on him and his cultivation. For that reason, he was more partial to certain laws that sounded powerful. That was the only criteria he could use to understand laws, for as of right now he knew nothing about them.

"Any laws at all will suffice, but I will give preference to laws that have to do with healing, energy and speed."

Powell only gave a nod and continued his explanation.

"Many of our VIP clients often have requirements for rare or valuable resources that are not easily accessible. As it happens, we have three clients who have put in a request for the elixir, for a long time now I might add, and have offered remuneration in exchange that match your requirements.

"If you wish to proceed, I can show you what they're offering, and the trade can take place using the emporium as the medium. The third, however, has a few qualms. As it happens, the third client has, in fact, offered an item associated with the laws of healing, but the trade cannot be conducted by the emporium. To complete the trade, you will have to visit the client yourself. Though, you do not need to be alarmed, as the emporium will take responsibility for taking you to and from his planet.

"Other than those three, you can also sell the elixir to the emporium. Unfortunately, we do not have items of the same calibre matching your requirements available at the moment, but we can pay using lower level items. During this time, I will also personally try to get my hands on items you might find suitable to trade for. But since I do not have any such items on hand, I will not mention them yet."

"Can you share the details for the items your clients are willing to trade. I'll have to see whether I'm willing to move forward with those trades. At the same time, you can provide me with a list of what the emporium can offer. I'd like to deal with this matter as quickly as possible, so that the next time I visit, I bring as much of the elixir as is needed."

Powell did not hesitate and handed Lex a tablet which had an extremely detailed description of each of the items his clients were willing to pay with.

The identity of the first two clients was hidden, and only their offers were listed.

The first one, coincidentally, was a diamond personally formed by Adamas the deity of diamonds, and contained the laws of impenetrability.

There was a lot of unnecessary drivel about the origin and history of the diamond, and its ceremonial and religious importance. Lex didn't care about that, for to him it was naught but a snack. The law of impenetrability would pair well with the Regal Embrace, however, so it wasn't bad. Alongside the diamond was the required amount of liquid Lex would have to provide to get it.

It will only 300 millilitres, so Lex found it acceptable. After all, he did not understand the value of the elixir, only that the diamond would not disappear in a week so he could take his time to use it.

The next item... the next item made Lex tremble, and not in a good way...

The Innkeeper

Chapter 617: Chatrooms

After the diamond, the next listed item was a single teacup with an accompanying saucer, with an extensive floral design all over it. It was neither the cup nor the saucer that caused Lex distress. Instead, it was the law associated with the items. It was the law of femininity.

Even with his vast imagination, Lex did not dare imagine what would happen to him if he allowed such a law to take root within his body. This was a trade he absolutely could not participate in!

Immediately, Lex swiped the details away and looked at the final offer. This time, not only was the item listed, but there was a detailed introduction about the client as well.

The name of the client was Zuri Adisa, and she was originally a common four-leaf clover. Now, after the passage of countless years, she was recognized as one of the strongest beings in the origin realm - at least according to the emporium. She had clones across the realm in hundreds of thousands of galaxies, and her influence and power were beyond imagining.

The trade, if Lex agreed, would be conducted by one of her clones on a planet she inhabited. Actually, technically speaking, the entire planet, which was about 70% the size of earth, was actually her clone.

The item in question this time was a single blade of grass, within which was contained the law of regrowth. As if that was not enough, a number of other laws were also mentioned that played only a minor supporting role. The laws included the law of vitality, the law of refinement, and the law of healing.

Although it was slightly inconvenient to go over to another planet to make the trade, this was by far the most useful to Lex. If consuming that blade of grass somehow improved Lex's healing, even if by a small margin, it was worth it.

Then came the list of items the emporium offered. Although technically they were not as valuable as the previous items, they made Lex's eyes glow. These could go a long way towards not only helping Lex, but they could directly improve the Inn.

In fact, in the list of items Lex was presented with, there were a number of them that had no relation to laws but were valuable nonetheless. They would especially come in handy, especially since he wanted to strengthen his workers as quickly as possible without harming them.

Just as Lex was delving into the list and beginning to pick out things that would be useful to him, Mary called out to him.

"Lex there's... there's a situation. Strictly speaking, it doesn't really require you to do anything, but I think you might want to pay attention to future developments."

The hesitation and concern in Mary's voice drew Lex's attention. This was extremely out of the ordinary.

"What happened?" he asked, mentally readying himself to hear bad news. It was always bad news. It was never anyone dropping off a picnic basket for the Innkeeper.

"Do you remember Garlin? The snake that won the system from the well? You told us to keep an eye on him and get back to you about his activities. Well... something happened to him that we learned about very recently. Apparently, he was assassinated.

"Velma was looking into the details of how it happened, and originally I thought I'd just update you when you come back to the Inn since there's nothing you can really do about it. But just a few minutes ago, when Velma discovered the identity of the assassins, we also discovered that they had already entered the Inn after the assassination. But even that wasn't enough to get me to specially update you. What really drastically changed the situation was... that the assassins directly went up and challenged Ming Jie, the mountain-man, and John to a fight in the Murder Grounds."

"Wait, they just went up to them and challenged them?"

"Pretty much. I suspect they would have already picked a fight directly if they didn't want to end up offending the Midnight Inn."

"Is that other system user from earth at the Inn?"

"No, currently he is on earth."

"So they pretty much immediately challenged all the existing system users at the Inn?"

"Yes."

Lex was much too experienced to let his thoughts show on his face, but his mood underwent a drastic change nonetheless. An ominous feeling overtook him, and he decided to speed up this meeting as much as possible.

\*\*\*\*\*

At the Midnight Inn, three Rhinocentaurs stood face to face, their massive heights overshadowing the other guests. Their lower bodies were that of a rhino, with thick sturdy legs, hooved feet and a midsection that was packed with imposing muscles. From where one would expect a neck, instead a human torso appeared, though its proportions were much larger than normal humans. With biceps larger than most people's calves, a chest built like a warhammer could not budge it and a long, curved horn emerging from the human forehead, they put on a fearsome appearance. Each of them were at least 14 feet(4.2 meters) in height.

Behind them was the even more imposing figure of the mountain man. To the frequent guests of the Inn, the excitement of this particular guest had long passed. He did naught but sleep, no matter how one tried to interact with him. Even the three Rhinocentaurs were unable to wake him, at least without crossing the Inn's rules.

"It is pointless to wait here. We can just hire someone to keep an eye on him and alert us once he's awake," said one of the rhino's using his spirit sense.

"I say that is a waste of time," said another. "We should just sell his location details to someone in the chatroom and get immediate benefits."

"What about the other one? The Inn's employee?"

"That is also a tough situation. Based on our preliminary research into the Midnight Inn, the owner, the Innkeeper, is a devastatingly powerful cultivator. It is best not to cross him. Unless this 'John' accepts our challenge willingly, I do not see a way we can get his system either."

"Are you sure this 'Midnight Inn' isn't a part of a system either?" the second one asked, a hint of reluctance in his voice. It would love it if it could get and absorb a system that could grant something as impressive as the Inn.

"I've told you, according to the device, the Inn has nothing to do with a system. It has never failed before, so there's no reason to believe it'll mess up now."

"Easy for you to say," one of them complained. "You've already gotten your hands on the 'Overnight Celebrity system' from that snake! We're the ones still lacking."

"That's also why I have to be even more cautious from now on. Although I myself am a member of the organization, there's always a chance one of the other members will target me. The same goes for you guys. The moment you get your hands on a system, you'll have a target on your backs."

The three Rhinocentaurs went silent as they contemplated what to do. They did not want to give up so easily, especially since they were so close. It had taken them years as members of the organization before they actually found actual system holders!

Finally, in tacit understanding, the three of them pulled up an interface in front of them. Strangely enough, the interface was not that of the Midnight Inn's, and it was not visible to anyone else other than themselves.

On the top of the interface were the words 'System hunters chatroom'. The chat room had hundreds of billions of members across not only the Origin realm, but thousands of other realms. Yet none of them were worried that the secrets of the chatroom would be divulged, their identities leaked or the existence of the chatroom itself discovered. That was because the chatroom itself was responsible for maintaining its secrecy.

Even if one of the members of the chatroom was interrogated under torture, or their memories read, the chatroom's existence would not be discovered. That was because the chatroom would automatically erase all knowledge and traces linking itself to the member from existence.

No one knew how the chatroom came into being, but among the basic members of the chatroom there was a theory that the creator of the chatroom was the founder of their organization which hunted system users across the universe, and that he himself had a system linked to chatrooms. No one could say for certain as there was too much mystery associated with it.

The three of them exchanged a look, before a new post appeared in the chatroom. It was auctioning the location of two system holders, though there was a disclosure given that the system holders' environment was extremely dangerous. Within 1 second, the post had over 1 million responses. The auction period would last for a few hours, and the chatroom would administrate the auction itself, and automatically facilitate the transactions.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 618: Bad seed

Even if Lex sped up the meeting, he had to go through the necessary steps. He had to pick who he was trading with, and in the case of the emporium, he had to pick out exactly what he wanted to buy.

This was a rare opportunity to rack up on various resources, cultivation techniques and information that he wouldn't normally be able to get in touch with. This was one benefit of appearing as himself: he did not need to pretend to be all knowing and powerful.

Of course, the emporium could no doubt guess that Lex's background was not simple. But what did it matter if they guessed or not? Lex was still in the golden core realm. It was understandable for him to have gaps in his knowledge.

If he could supplement his knowledge with that of the emporiums, not only would he be better off, it would be a lot easier for him to maneuver in the future.

Lex could not help but sigh. Things were just too chaotic. He was already in a time crunch to discover the anomaly in the Crystal realm before his deployment information from the Henali came. Now, he also had to prioritize his own cultivation using the elixir since it would soon disappear. At the same time he had to maximize his profits from it as well.

Not to mention that Lex had numerous employees who were stronger than him. They were currently suppressed because of the subtle influence the Inn played in ensuring they work honestly, not to mention those that saw his outburst when he used the Butter knife at its full strength. But there was Zagan, a monster currently still undergoing tribulations. Lex had to figure out how to keep him in line.

On top of all that, there was now apparently a group of people who knew exactly how to locate system users. Would they be able to detect him as well? He had no idea, but he had to check up on it sooner rather than later.

Lex didn't have an issue with the problem, but the fact that too many problems were coming all at once. How was one man supposed to do everything at the same time?

Oh yes, there was also a wedding he had to plan. He should see if he could get anything from the emporium to improve the wedding.

Poor Innkeeper, he was completely swamped.

"Mary, keep an eye on them and tell me if anything significant happens. I have to deal with this first."

Although it sounded a lot like Lex was lamenting, in truth he was pretty calm. He complained that he had to do everything himself, but he knew that he had been raising some pretty loyal followers.

Previously he was really worried since all his workers seemed to have an extremely mellow and amicable temperament. How would they deal with it if a situation escalated and he wasn't there?

But now, there was finally one fellow who was a bad seed. How would he be able to take it if one of his coworkers was challenged to a deathmatch? Not too well, if Lex had to guess.

Suddenly, Lex's tense muscles relaxed. Yes, he had to remember that the Innkeeper was never alone. He had the entire Inn backing him up.

"Do you have some tea?" Lex asked Powell as he perused the list. "This may take a while."

\*\*\*\*\*

The three Rhinocentaurs that were currently trying to sell the location for the system users were not the only ones who had arrived at the Inn from their organization.

Their organization was exceedingly mysterious, and each member could only join the organization by being invited. Each member was extremely powerful, for snatching a system from a system wielder was not easy at all. Systems gave their users unfair advantages, which made them extremely difficult to kill, which is why most members operated in groups. Of course, their organization also had a loose organizational system, and there was nothing really stopping one member from attacking another to steal their system so they had to be careful who they partnered with. At least, that's what it was like as basic members of the organization, which is what these three were.

They had been recruited due to their strengths, and had formed a team because they felt that it was easier to trust one from their own race.

As basic members of the organizations they did not have many perks, but they were eligible to get a special device which could detect systems in a close proximity. There were numerous limitations on the machine, and theirs was the most basic version of the machine too, so it was extremely lucky that they were able to discover Garlin back on Nibiru.

But Garlin did not have a simple background even on Nibiru, so they hired a helper using the chatroom. Of course, since the helper was stronger than them, they also signed a contract through the chatroom

that the helper could not divulge any information about them, and could not try to harm them in any way. The contract was upheld by the chatroom, and if anyone tried to break it there was a severe punishment, so it was safe to use.

Their helper protected them from external interference while the three of them ganged up on Garlin. Once it became apparent that he was about to lose, Garlin tried to use the golden key to escape, but was ultimately killed before he could use it.

Later on, when they had retried the system and escaped pursuit, they gave all of Garlin's belongings excluding the system to their helper. It could not be helped, it was a part of his contract that all loot would be turned over to him.

When he was inspecting the key, he accidentally broke it and brought them all to the Midnight Inn. Initially they took things cautiously and made sure to understand their new environment. But when their helper discovered John was a system user, he did not hesitate to challenge him to a deathmatch.

There was no mention of systems, and John did not know his motives, but naturally he was provoked into accepting so currently a death match was underway.

It was just these three who were more cautious and did not dare to randomly pick a fight with the Innkeeper. It wasn't as if they had heard of his reputation before. It was just a part of their personalities to not provoke death.

Unfortunately, at least among the workers at the Inn, it was already common knowledge that these three had arrived with the same beast which had challenged John to a deathmatch in the Murder grounds.

The three were busy focusing on their chat interface, completely oblivious to their surroundings, when one of them suddenly felt something on his shoulders. He looked up, and was stunned to find a thin, delicate looking man standing calmly on his shoulders. He was wearing a smart three piece suit which only amplified his aura, adding an air of power to the arrogance he radiated.

The other two Rhinocentairs quickly noticed something was wrong, and looked up to find a human looking down on them.

"Welcome to the Midnight Inn," he said in an exceptionally cold voice. "I hope you find it to your liking."

The mans 'polite' words did nothing to diminish their sudden anger, and one of them yelled fiercely as he punched the man, trying to push him away. But the man very simply took a step forward, and moved from one of the rhinocenataur's shoulder to another's head.

"I heard that one of your friends challenged John to a fight to the death."

He squatted down, but such an action only brought greater attention to the fact that he was looking down on them.

"Here at the Midnight Inn, we take great pride in our hospitality. Since one of your friends is in a fight to the death, how can we bear to leave you feeling lonely? How about it? Are any of you interested in fighting with me to the death?"

Although the human did not seem powerful, his words brought the three rhinocenataur's great stress. Was the Inn making a move against them?

They immediately tried to exit the Inn, but found that they could not.

"What's the rush? Why leave so soon? I especially took my time to go to the security room and have them block you from teleporting away before I approached you. How can I allow you to leave without tasting our hospitality?"

The three rhinocenataurs' suddenly noticed that, at some point, they had been encircled by a large number of suited humans. Some of them were radiating an especially strong aura, though most of them were not so intimidating. But their numbers alone was something to worry the rhinocentaurs.

"Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Luthor, and I have recently added a new occupation to my resume. Alongside my main job, I have also become incharge of fertilizer procurement. Allow me to show you how I fulfill this role."

The Innkeeper

## Chapter 619: Blood of Covenant

Under a familiar night sky was a battlefield filled with rubble which once used to belong to some ancient ruins, which were no doubt once a glorious civilization. The battlefield seemed to stretch into forever, and perhaps if the combatants made it far enough, they would once again see some standing ruins. But sightseeing was not really on the agenda for the two combatants, locked in a fight to the death.

John's repertoire consisted of exceedingly lethal and deadly attacks, but the greatest flaw of those attacks was that they were more geared towards assassination than combat. They were designed to be swift, piercing and devastating. But for all the might that they packed, to use each one certain conditions needed to be met. Matching those conditions in the midst of active combat was difficult, to say the least.

But any assassin worth his salt would also know that in case of a failed assassination, he might have to face active combat and perhaps even a siege, so their skills were more than sufficient even in combat, if not quite as good as their assassination.

The issue John was facing, however, was that the massive centipede-like creature he was facing was ridiculously strong. Even in optimal conditions John might not be able to assassinate him, let alone now that the target was aware of his intentions.

John, who was perfectly hidden within the fold of space within a shadow, discovered that much like the Mystery trial, any assassination plan his system helped him conjure would always be perfectly countered by this enemy. It was only when he attempted his own methods that he got even a hint of a positive result, despite the systems approach being more rounded than his own.

He did not know who this fellow was, nor why he had gone crazy in provoking him, but John was not about to take things lightly. Even if direct assassination methods spawned by the system were not working, he had other methods he could use.

John's eye turned black and he once again got ready for one of their brief but deadly clashes. Strange black lines began creeping up on his skin, line tendrils of an unspeakable evil, encroaching upon his body from an unknown abyss.

While John readied his next attack, the centipede-like creature stood silent and confident in the Murder grounds. As a member of the system hunter organization, his personal strength had been judged to be enough to hunt the average system wielder even if he was alone. It would not be so easy to take him

down. Moreover, while the creature knew its opponent had a system, John did not know that his greatest secret had already been revealed to the opponent - to a small degree.

The advantage that knowledge presented could either be small or great. But the only thing that was certain, was that the outcome of this battle could not yet be determined based on the advantages any one party had over the other.

\*\*\*\*\*

The entire security team surrounded the three rhinocentaurs, watching as Luthor aggravated them. Truthfully, their actions were breaking the rules. The three 'guests' had not done anything illegal, and so it was not appropriate to punish them by blocking their exit from the Inn. Technically speaking, even their challenge to the Murder grounds had been legal.

As if blocking their exit was not bad enough, Luthor even came with the intention of attacking them. Considering all of this was against the rules, all the workers felt quite uncomfortable doing it. But Luthor's plan had personally been approved by Gerard, the head of security. Moreover, the greatest reason Luthor and everyone else were so agitated was that their memory of what had happened to their fellow workers was extremely fresh. In fact, Besides the security team, Harry himself was also present in the encirclement. Although strictly speaking he was not a combatant, and he was not one of the workers that the Inn summoned itself, his attachment to the Midnight Inn was one of the greatest.

As someone who had to rely only on his own skills and connections to live, being accepted by everyone and having a home like the Midnight Inn was beyond a dream. Even before everything was completely ruined on earth, he was a lot more likely to end up homeless and broke than anything else.

So, bound by the feelings of home, of friendship, of loyalty he stood at the forefront. Even if he was not the one who had been challenged to the deathmatch, he would not stand aside and watch as one of his own was threatened.

Recently, a silent sentiment had been spreading amongst all the workers of the Inn. Most of them had no memories before the Inn, and knew no life other than the Inn. Even after interacting with countless guests and learning about the outside world, they did not feel as if they were missing out. In fact, they felt even closer to their coworkers and the Inn.

But if there was one thing that the guests had that they often did not, which made them somewhat envious, was a surname. At some point, as a joke, a certain guest had joked that they were all a part of the Midnight family. But like an ember falling on a pile of dry leaves, the joke did not disappear. Instead, it grew into a small fire which was slowly and steadily turning into a roaring flame.

In fact, unbeknownst to Lex, after he recovered from his near fatal injuries, Harry had given up his original surname of 'Styles' and taken on the surname Midnight.

So now, facing these three conspirators, it was not Harry Styles standing ready for war. It was Harry Midnight, the proud and powerful Glamor Sorcerer of the Inn.

Beside him stood not his coworkers and neighbors, but his chosen family. After all, the blood of the covenant was thicker than the water of the womb.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 620: Houses of Midnight

Harry may have been the first to take up the name, but he was certainly not the last. When it occurred to the staff that they could take on the name Midnight, fervor and zeal spread through the masses. No longer would they only have one name. No longer would they have no origin. They would be one family.

But just as quickly as the excitement spread, so too did fear and hesitation. Unlike Harry, who was acknowledged by all, and had a special relationship with the Innkeeper, most others felt unworthy of the name.

On one hand they yearned for the name and all it entailed, but on the other hand because of the immense worship they felt for the name and its prestige, they felt unworthy to adopt it. They dare not admit to anyone the struggle they felt, yet they could not come up with an answer to their internal struggle.

Sensing the deep demoralization spreading through his brothers and sisters, Z took it upon himself to come up with a solution. After all, the more important members of the Inn were all swamped with tasks delegated by the Innkeeper. How would they have time to notice such details, especially when everyone kept them hidden so deeply in their hearts.

Only one as attentive as him would pick up on such details. Even though he looked younger than most of the Inn's workers, since most of them called him big brother, he had to act as one.

He did not make a big show of things, nor did he make an announcement. He directly called some of the others and shared the situation, as well as his plan. None of them hesitated to support him, and Luthor especially praised for his initiative.

It was thus that the houses under the banner of Midnight were formed. Only the most prominent and specially accomplished of the Inn's workers would take on the name Midnight. For the rest, they would join one of the lesser houses.

Z selected for himself a surname, and took it upon himself to be the founder of the Starcloak house. The Starcloak house would be for the masses, and would be vast like the infinite starlit night sky. It would be the place that perfectly captured the magic and wonder of Midnight, and the place where most of the Inn's workers would find themselves.

Gerard, as the head of security, founded the house of Umbragard. As the guardians and protectors of the Midnight Inn, they perfectly encapsulated the meaning of the name Umbragard. The shadow, or darkness, of umbra perfectly represented Midnight, and as the first line of defense and guardians, they themselves were the 'gard' in the name.

The entire security team joined Umbragard, bringing them closer than ever to one another, and turning their secret insecurities into pride instead.

Velma founded the house Nyxheart. Her intention was to establish a house full of the romantics in the Midnight Inn, but more and more the house was taking shape to ensure the will of the Inn - to ensure that the Innkeepers hearts desires were met. Spies, secret agents and intelligence operatives filled this house.

Finally, Luthor himself created a house called Nightshade. Its purpose was simple. To poison and kill anyone who would threaten the Inn. Unlike the Umbragard, who would protect, the Nightshade would proactively attack!

Members of all four houses encircled the three rhinocentaurs and watched in silence as Luthor, for the first time, performed the duty of his house.

"I have studied the rules of your Inn!" one of them roared, still trying his best to avoid a deteriorating situation. In fact, it only appeared that was his intention. He was delaying so that his partners could quickly sell the information inexchange for a teleportation reward, as well as some points that could be used within the chat room.

Unfortunately for them... the level of teleportation that the chatroom awarded that could forcefully work in the Midnight Inn... was far beyond anything they could afford.

"Yes, unfortunately, you have not. But don't you worry, I won't kill you - yet! After I capture you, you can be the perfect excuse to finally get permission from the Innkeeper to build the prison I've always wanted. Not to mention, how can I question you for your motives if I let you die so easily?"

Without waiting for a response, Luthor attacked. Red flames engulfed him, immediately searing the head of the rhinocentaur he was standing on. The rhinocentaur screamed in pain and convulsed, but by then Luthor was already gone.

Displaying an absolutely abnormal speed, he had dashed from the first centaurs head to the legs of another. He controlled his red flames and wrapped them around the legs of another, attempting to completely immobilize it, but how could three members of the system hunter organization have such little combat experience?

Before his flames could burn the centaurs legs, it employed a technique to increase its fire resistance as it charged towards Luthor. From the side, the third centaur coordinated with it to simultaneously attack Luthor.

They had teamwork, skill and plenty of experience working for them. They were prepared to fight against those even with the cheats of a system, let alone a single normal human. But Luthor was not at all a normal human, and who was to say the cheats a system user had were more than that granted to him by his bloodline?

The flames he used were called Hellflame, and were so strong they would harm both the user and the enemy. But the reason Luthor appeared fine was because he could use his bloodline to move the lethal damage being accumulated from the raging Hellflame constantly burning him alive. In the case where he was accumulating enough damage to kill himself every second, what was accumulating just a little more?

Completely ignoring the attacks landing on his body, Luthor reached forward and grabbed the centaurs face with his hand and brought it close to himself.

Fire resistance did not mean fire immunity, so while the centaur tried to ignore the pain of its face being burnt, and attempted to free itself from Luthor's grasp, it missed the look of pure malice in his eyes.

How dare they threaten an employee of the Inn? Luthor would ensure they lived to regret it.