

## **Innkeeper 631**

### The Innkeeper

#### Chapter 631: A mans romance

Since time immemorial, there has been a special romance between a man and his mode of transportation. In the old days of earth, all sorts of animals were reared for the sole purpose of making an excellent vehicle. Horses or rare breeds were sought after with more fervor than gold. Elephants were adorned with more jewelry than actual kings and queens. Rhinos were treated as special mounts, worthy of only the most fantastic generals and soldiers.

Then came a revolution of industry, and times changed. Modernization was suddenly the way of the world, and so the world adapted.

From the first cycle, to the first car to the first train, the romance grew more and more wild. Hot air balloons, blimps, and finally airplanes were welcomed into the world.

People were known in their towns and societies, not by who they were or what they did, but the kind of car they drove. A pilot was not celebrated unless he flew a jet, not a commercial plane or crop duster. A person was only considered 'cool' and 'amazing' if they rode a sufficiently excellent motorcycle.

For a long time already, a man would be recognized by his ride before anything else. It was only natural, as a lot could be told about a man based on the car he drove.

To be clear, although Lex's inner monologue kept emphasizing on the romance of a man and his car, he was not being sexist. When he said man, he was more referring to the race rather than the gender. He was quite clear that a woman too could completely elevate or reduce her status based on her ride.

So, when men and women alike were victims to the beauty of a vehicle, how could Lex be any different?

On the magazine before him, on the double page widespread, was the image of a black spaceship! It was perfectly curved, with no sharp corners or edges anywhere except the very tip. It seemed as if the tip was the very starting point of the entire ship, as if the entire ship emerged from that one, single point.

The interior of the ship was not visible, and there seemed to be no transparent glass panels to see through anywhere, yet that only added to the mystique of this sleek and slender ship. Towards the back, there appeared to be one main thruster engine, with a relatively smaller one protruding from the two wings on its side.

Appreciating Lex's stunned appearance, Powell seemed only to nod as if affirming that this was the correct reaction.

"This is the Silent Night, the latest production in the personal corvette class of ships by Havalier Industries. There's only one of them so far, and it's apparently capable of intergalactic travel in the span of mere months! This is completely a collectors ship!"

Even Powell's voice was dripping with envy, yet Lex focused on something else entirely.

"Wait, the emporium is not selling this?"

"No, no, how could we get our hands on this? Like I said, it was produced by Havalier industries, and they are the only ones who can sell it. Not to mention, everyone knows what the Greydars are like."

Lex, in fact, did not know what the Greydars were like, nor did he know who or what they were. But he did not bring attention to his ignorance for the moment, as in the recent documents he bought from the emporium probably had the relevant information. It was only a matter of time before he discovered it. Instead, his focus remained on the ship.

"You don't sell this, fine, but do you sell other ships at least?"

"Yes, of course! A private vessel is absolutely imperative if one is to traverse from one region of space to another. I'll have you know, teleportation formations are neither cheap nor common. Most trade is conducted via spaceships, and unless the distance spans many star systems, most travel is also done via ships. The Silent Night is a little different, sure. It can even traverse the space between galaxies, so traveling within a galaxy is much faster. But it's rare to find ships of such caliber in the open market. Only some very large empires use them for official government use."

"So what you're saying is... you have ships, but nothing as good as the Silent Night?"

Powell smiled awkwardly, as if he had been caught red handed.

Although Lex felt interested, he restrained himself. He already had a massive ship inside the Inn, if he would ever even need it. Moreover, if he ever wanted a smaller one, he still had better hopes in getting it from his system than elsewhere.

"Let's just get on with the trade. I'll look at ships another time."

Even as Lex said that, he gave one final glance to the Silent Night. This was probably the last time he would ever see this ship, and the possibility of running into it and the owner in the future was as close to 0 as possible. He was completely and totally not thinking all of this on purpose to set up a flag for himself to run into this ship in the future. It was just a ship, it wasn't like he had become emotionally attached to it after a single glance.

"If you'll follow me," said Powell, putting away the magazine and getting back to business. "I'll take you to the teleportation room first. Once you've completed the trade, you can return the same way. Please, rest assured, that the emporium has made adequate preparations for your travel and safety at the destination. Zuri Adisa, being an old client of the emporium, has conducted many such trades before with no history of foul play. I would escort you personally, but the emporium has a strict policy against workers leaving the premises."

Lex only nodded and followed Powell to the teleportation room. He wondered if he'd be able to link the new planet he was about to visit to the Inn now that the teleportation function was upgraded. He would soon find out.

Powell led him through unfamiliar corridors, all the while making sure he continued to keep Lex busy with small talk. Although he was not showing it up front, his recent promotion must have made him incredibly happy. Powell could not stop talking about all the new things he had learnt about.

Finally, they reached their destination, and though Powell looked a little reluctant for he was enjoying talking to Lex, he did not slow the process down. Inside the room was a small, circular platform that was hovering above the ground by only a few inches.

"This is the dedicated platform for Zuri's planet," Powell explained. "Although we can activate it from here, the teleportation will not occur unless Zuri allows it. But you are already cleared to travel, so just go stand in the center whenever you're ready and I'll activate the platform."

With a nod, Lex walked right up to the middle and waited for the process to begin. Powell did not press any buttons or activate any switch, yet the platform turned on, nonetheless.

A ring of bright light enveloped Lex, before he once again began to experience the feeling of being transported through space. Nothing could ever come close to the seamless teleportation offered by the Inn, but the process this time was much smoother than his previous times.

He felt a dull pressure on his body, keeping it completely still as it was moved through the folds of space. While previously the process left him feeling uncomfortable and disoriented, at least a little, this time Lex actually felt a little comfortable. In fact, it almost seemed like he could understand where he was going.

The Cosmic Erosion Elixir! It suddenly occurred to Lex that he had been drinking it nonstop, and that it contained laws pertaining to space. Could that have somehow developed some sort of affinity with space within him?

Before he could ponder the question further, he appeared in what surely must have been heaven.

He was standing on a platform similar to the back at the emporium, which was surrounded by white pillars similar to the ones used in Roman architecture. Above his head was a small dome, as if to provide him with shade. But that was it. There were no walls or barriers, and the entire structure seemed to be placed inside a meadow from a children's fairytale.

The air was so pure and fresh it made even the Midnight Inn seem stale, and the soft gentle breeze carried with it the scent of wild flowers.

There was wild grass growing all around the structure, with a sea of daisies all around it. In the distance, there were massive trees that reached high up into the clouds, as if creating a border to the meadow.

Tiny creatures could be seen running through the fields, and even tinier birds, flying around, drinking the dew off flower petals.

The awe Lex was feeling didn't last long, however, for he quickly realized that whether it was the birds the size of his pinky finger, the tiny creatures running through the fields, or even the flowers, waving in the wind... all of them had a cultivation realm much higher than his own!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 632: Clean yourself

Although Lex was not intimidated for he could escape to the Inn whenever he liked, the first impression was indeed quite overwhelming. In a meadow, there were perhaps thousands, tens of thousands or perhaps even hundreds of thousands of blades of grass, yet each and every one was radiating an aura that was at least at the nascent realm.

Interestingly enough, although the flora had cultivation, he could not detect any signs of sentience from them. They were ruled completely by their genetic programming which told them how to grow, how to photosynthesize and how to blend in with their environment.

He was thoroughly impressed, and wondered if this was similar to the wonder his guests experienced when they entered the Inn. Although he did not have an endless horde of powerful beings filling every inch of the ground, the Inn itself was also pretty cool, right?

Regardless, now that he was here, on this unusual planet, the first thing Lex did was inquire if he could link it to the Inn. The answer Mary gave him was yes, but to establish a connection he would still need to spend an extended time here.

Lex shook his head. As much as he wanted this place linked, he did not have the time to waste.

He looked around to see if he could find a path, for he wasn't sure what he was supposed to do next. He would have considered exploring the place if the circumstances were normal, but even he did not dare to randomly step on the grass here. Although his defense was strong, he doubted it could handle an onslaught if the grass here decided to target him!

"Follow the path," a voice whispered in his ear, and suddenly the grass parted, revealing a thin dirt road.

Lex, who remained unsurprised, simply nodded and began walking where the path led. From what he knew, Zuri Adisa was one of the strongest beings in the Origin realm. Well aware of how powerful high leveled cultivators became, nothing he saw would surprise him.

As such, Lex strolled casually through what could easily be described as the garden of Eden, and took mental notes. In many ways, the place was very ordinary. It was just that the incredibly high cultivation realm of each and every plant elevated the beauty and presence that they generated.

Lex even saw a small butterfly, and he had no doubt believing that a single flap of its wings really could cause a hurricane.

The winding path eventually led him from the meadow into the forest, where each and every tree stood tall and strong, making them seem more durable than the walls of many fortresses. They probably even were.

It was ironic then that the thing they were supposedly protecting was a million times stronger than them.

There was no special clearing, no sudden change or strange temples. One moment, he was walking through the forest, surrounded by normal trees, until he arrived at one peculiar looking tree that was shaped like a throne. Upon that throne sat a tall, petite woman, her skin light green, as if it was made from a leaf.

She had a humanoid appearance, though her height of 8 feet (2.4 meters) made her much taller than any normal human. She also had long, pointed ears, so maybe it was more appropriate to say she had an elvish appearance rather than humanoid.

"Greetings senior," Lex said, giving a simple bow. He was not exactly sure what etiquette to show when meeting such an eminent being, but he definitely was not about to be subservient. Bowing was already enough of a show of respect in his opinion.

Of course, he could not be sure that he was addressing Zuri Adisa, but the fact that she was the only being on this planet not blasting her aura told Lex that she was different from the rest.

"Greetings child," she said, her voice soft and creamy. Listening to her made Lex's heart melt, as if it was the most beautiful melody to have ever existed. But that was it. It did not influence his psyche, nor did it want to make him want to worship the woman. Anything he felt was out of pure and genuine appreciation for something beautiful, and not a result of some powerful laws affecting him.

"I am Zuri, as you can probably guess," she continued. "Your aura is so familiar, child. I wonder where I have met you before."

Lex was stumped, for he was certain that he had never encountered Zuri before, but she did not seem to be asking him. She merely closed her eyes for a moment, as if recalling.

"Ah yes, I see now. You have been near one of my clones. First on a planet called earth, and then in a place referred to as the Midnight Inn."

While Zuri spoke, back at the Midnight Inn, the tree that was being constantly taken care of by the turtle and its adopted pets trembled, ever so slightly. But nothing more happened, almost making one feel as if they had imagined it.

"Your... your clone?" Lex asked, genuinely surprised. If he ran into one of her clones on earth it would be fine if he didn't recognize her, but how could he have missed her at the Midnight Inn?

It made no sense. He made a mental note to go back and sweep the Inn again, to make sure there were no entities hidden from him.

"Yes, I have clones across the Origin realm. Don't fret. Most of my clones don't really do anything. Consider it an inclination of my plant heritage to want to spread myself as far and wide as possible."

Zuri thoroughly observed Lex while she spoke, as if inspecting him for any secrets. Or perhaps she wasn't looking for secrets, and just wanted to study him. Either way, she seemed satisfied with whatever she saw.

"If you don't mind me saying so, child, your body is a mess. You should consider cleaning yourself - there are too many external influences attached to you."

For some unusual reason, Lex suddenly thought back to the system's remarks. More than once, it had asked him to shower, or rather, clean himself. As expected, Lex only took that as the system being mean to him, but now that Zuri said something similar, perhaps there was more to it than it seemed.

"What... what external influences? I have never detected any problems."

He was, of course, worried that she might mean the system, but his gut said otherwise.

With a soft, gentle smile, Zuri leaned forward and touched his forehead with her index finger.

"There are remains of one inscription here. Although the inscription has long since deteriorated, its remains still exist, polluting your aura."

Then she touched his heart.

"There still exists a very active inscription here. According to what I can see, it is hiding your bloodline from being detected."

Then, she touched the base of his neck.

"The last one exists here. It is a silent tracker. It will stay dormant most of the time, but once activated, it will immediately reveal your location to whoever cast the inscription."

Lex was thoroughly startled! There were so many hidden inscriptions in his body! He had never realized they were even there, despite his extremely potent intuition and self awareness. The only people he could imagine having placed that... were his parents! This was extremely dangerous. He did not know how potent the tracker was, but what if it was activated while he was acting as the Innkeeper?

Although he suspected his Host Attire kept his body safe from external probing, otherwise many others would have long noticed the issues with his body. Or maybe, many had noticed it, but never mentioned them.



"The inscriptions are not a problem generally," Zuri said, "but due to the special nature of your body, the laws within them are polluting your aura. Long term, it could be bad for you."

"Thank you for pointing this out!" Lex said very sincerely! He would think of a way to resolve this issue as soon as possible!

"There is no need for such formality. I quite like your aura, so I don't mind helping you out."

Lex nodded, and did not continue to focus on the matter. Instead, he pulled out two vials of the Cosmic Erosion Elixir.

He meant to give the second one as a thanks, and a show of good faith since she helped him out, but Zuri did not bother with it, and only took a single vial. Perhaps, to her, Lex's gesture was akin to a small child giving an adult a piece of candy. It could be appreciated, but it was not really needed.

"Take this blade," she said, sending towards him a small clay pot full of soil, and a single blade of grass.

"I do not recommend you plant it anywhere. There are very few places that can provide the required nourishment to keep it alive. You are more likely to turn a thriving planet into a barren, desolate land than support this blade."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 633: A favor

"I don't plan on planting it anywhere," Lex confirmed as he took the pot. "How long will the blade be fine in this pot? Can it last for a while?"

"Not for long," Zuri confirmed. "I have prepared the soil in the pot personally, so it should be able to support it in the short term. But at most, in four or five thousand years, the blade will begin to wither."

Without the Host Attire to help him, Lex could not control himself from twitching. Four or five thousand years was 'not long'. It was a matter of perspective, probably.

"Thank you," Lex commented, relieved that he wouldn't need to immediately consume this as well. The constant... 'cultivation' using the elixir had really worn out his body. He was glad to have a break.

"Before you leave, I have a small favor to ask."

Lex was genuinely startled, for technically speaking, someone at Zuri's level did not need to ask him for a favor. Even if she had told him she wanted something done, with his identity as Lex he would have tried his best to accomplish it, if for no other reason than to establish a good relationship with her.

"How can I help you?" he asked, very seriously.

"Will you be returning to the Midnight Inn?"

"Yes. In fact, I was planning on heading there now."

"As I have mentioned, I have a clone in the Midnight Inn, but it is still far away from waking up, so I will require your assistance for a matter. You see, although my clone is asleep, I can still sense its surroundings. The clone is being taken care of by a Galactic Sovereign turtle. I would like to invite that fellow to come and live on my planet. If you could communicate this request on my behalf, I would be very grateful."

Lex was now genuinely startled! She wanted to poach his worker! As annoying as he found the fact that the turtle could somehow manipulate his system, he was also extremely impressed by its work! There was no way in hell that he would give him up!

"Uh, you may not know this but... that turtle is a worker for the Midnight Inn. The Innkeeper might not appreciate your attempts to take him. I don't know the details but... but I've heard rumors that the Innkeeper is a Daolord!"

He was attempting to dissuade Zuri by telling her that she couldn't mess with the Innkeeper, but she did not seem dissuaded at all!

"If the turtle truly wants to leave, the Innkeeper will not hold him back, nor will he have any hard feelings about it."

This... why would she say such a thing?

"I can sense your hesitation. I understand you don't want to cross the Midnight Inn for something like this, but let me share a little something with you. Have you heard of 'Sovereigns' before?"

Lex had, in fact, searched up the relevance of such a title even at the emporium when he was buying information, but did not get any significant details. All he was able to get was that the emporium gave ultimate favor to any race with the term 'Sovereign' in their name, and that preference was even above his own VIP level!

"Not really, no," Lex answered.

"There are a lot of misunderstandings about the term. Many even believe it is the name of a cultivation realm even beyond the Daolord realm! But that is not true. This is one of the secrets you can only come in touch with at a very high level, but it's not a big deal if I tell you.

"The universe is extremely vast, and full of numerous incomprehensible things. Many people like to believe that the universe, on the whole, is a fair place, but that is not the truth. Some races are born as lifeforms of a higher level of existence. The higher the level, the more favor they receive from the universe. Well, that's not really true, but at your level you may as well understand it as such. Almost everything in the universe has more or less been categorized, from valuables, to races, to cultivation realms, to realms themselves and more. Each one follows a systematic and logical progression system.

"Except for the ones that don't. In the universe there exist some things that are completely and inherently unfair. Nothing about them makes sense, and they can seemingly bend the rules of the universe to their whims. Races with the term 'Sovereign' in them are races who have such an advantage. So, regardless of cultivation level, everyone sane respects the will of the Sovereigns and stays out of their way, Daolords included.

"I once heard a rumor about a Galactic Sovereign turtle. It was tending to many planets, as they usually do. They have a great fondness for gardening. But the star system that one of the planets it was tending

was eventually destroyed, due to the fact that it was pulled into a black hole. Out of sheer anger, the turtle ate the black hole!

"Perhaps the absurdity of such an event will go over your head. You only need to understand that a blackhole is the personification of extremes in this realm, and even Daolords cannot easily interfere with it - let alone eat one!

"So you see, in this universe, cultivation is not everything. There are some things that cannot be achieved even with high cultivation realms. So, if the turtle really does decide to leave, the Innkeeper will not interfere. He may even be happy about it. After all, Sovereigns are unpredictable."

"I... I will convey your message," Lex said weakly, as he thought of ways to avoid having the turtle leave. If it really was as Zuri had said, the turtle was extremely awesome and Lex did not want to lose him. If it were a normal employee, Lex would not worry, as once someone became an official employee of the Inn, their loyalty would increase. But the turtle was clearly different.

Zuri chuckled, as if she could see the difficulty Lex was facing, but said nothing. She was confident Lex would not get in any trouble, so there was nothing to worry about to begin with.

"You may leave at your leisure. If you want to spend some time cultivating here, it will be extremely beneficial."

"Thank you for the offer, but I have to depart," Lex said.

Zuri did not stop him, and only watched from her wooden throne as he departed, one leg softly nestled over another.

Lex, however, did not worry too long about the matter with the turtle. Sure, Zuri was more powerful than him and had a planet akin to heaven, but the turtle had been at the Inn long enough to know what benefits it could bring, and what level it had the potential to rise to. Moreover, convincing people was his speciality. If he had known this before he would have entered a career in marketing instead of computer science, but none of that mattered now.

He teleported back to the emporium, and then began the second task on his agenda. He had several liters of elixir left, and its potency was quickly dropping. Originally, Lex planned on simply selling it off. Though the massive amount of liquid entering the market would reduce its price, it was better than getting nothing in exchange. Moreover, Lex had picked up the elixir for free to begin with.

But he had changed his mind after teleporting to the planet Zuri was on. Instead, when he returned to the emporium, he asked for something else instead.

"You want to look up methods to build affinity for space? You know, that is one of the rarest affinities to exist. Methods to artificially create it... are even rarer," said Powell with a troubled look.

"As rare as the elixir?" Lex asked, with a smirk?

In truth, he was not asking for this for himself. His affinity was already being taken care of by his cultivation technique. But if there were a way to do the same for his workers... that would only boost their chances of survival in the upcoming war.

"Point taken," Powell replied. "In fact, as it happens, there really does exist a way to do so that actually uses the elixir. But, for humans, it can only be used on cultivators with relatively low cultivation."

"Not a problem," Lex said, and conducted the exchange. In the end, he still decided to sell some of the elixir to the emporium. Even with the reduced potency, he managed to procure the teacup containing the law of femininity as well as get 100 million credits with the emporium.

Lex had no intention of using the tea cup for himself, but who knew when an item containing laws could end up being useful? Maybe he could even sell it later. In Lex's eyes, it was like acquiring an asset he intended on liquidating later.

He also managed to get his hand on the method to induce space affinity, and then quickly departed for the Inn. He had work to do.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 634: Locked in his heart

The moment Lex returned to the Inn, he teleported away to his room. He placed the teacup aside, somewhere where he wouldn't accidentally use it to drink something from, and began perusing the method to induce the affinity.

It was complicated, to say the least. Firstly, the method would work best on someone who was building the foundation. That made sense, since if the foundation could be influenced, then when the golden core is formed the affinity would become more evident. During the foundation realm the affinity would merely begin to show its influence.

Secondly, the process was nowhere near as seamless as it was for him. For Lex, his affinity seemed to be able to change easily, but that was a result of Regal Embrace. For anyone not cultivating a technique capable of surpassing the strength of their very universe, it was tad harder. Other than the elixir, which would play the role of the main ingredient, numerous supporting ingredients would be necessary. A lot of medicine and healing items would also be required, because during the process the body would literally start failing to function properly.

In this instance, even the Recovery pod would not be helpful. Since the premise of the pod was to rely on the body's base healing ability, and enhance it exponentially, the pod would not work at all if the body became incapable of healing. That was also the reason why it could not heal golden cores, since the body could not heal it to begin with.

Fortunately, alongside the method itself, Powell had provided him with one set of necessary ingredients for the process. That meant Lex could successfully carry it out on one person, at least. He would, in the meantime, gather the resources himself via the guild to use the process on as many workers as possible.

"Send me a list of everyone who has volunteered so far," said Lex to Mary, who sent him a list immediately. He didn't know if he should be surprised, or if he should have expected the outcome.

As of late, the Inn had a minimum of 5 to 8 million guests at any time, minimum. Based on the festival going on, there could be many more. This was excluding the refugees, who had already started moving into their new realm, which they took from him on lease. They would be paying for it for the next 50 years, at the very least.

One would think that Lex would similarly need millions of workers to keep things running smoothly, but that was not the case. Lex had a little less than 400,000 employees! The number made him sigh, as it was massive. Yet it seemed inadequate to cater to millions of guests. But the truth was, with the system automating so many things, the employees workload was drastically reduced.

Still, most of those employees were very new, from being less than a week old to at most a few months. Sure many of them were cultivating quickly, and had gained the benefits of the Inn's star upgrade, but that didn't miraculously turn them into high leveled cultivators. They still had to cultivate one step at a time.

So, as a result, most of the foundation realm cultivators he had were some of his oldest ones. Every single one of them had volunteered, so the list that Lex got was not 1000 workers who volunteered, but only the first 1000 to volunteer.

The rest were kept on a reserve list. No one wanted to miss an opportunity to contribute to the Inn. While Lex may have been thinking of them as workers and employees, to them, the Midnight Inn was their life!

In the end, all he could do was sigh - and give them unreasonably overwhelming advantages over their opponents. Besides, if there was one thing he had learnt it was that humans seemed to be disadvantaged against other races in the universe. Although all the Inn workers had the potential to awaken an amazing bloodline and grow incredibly powerful, they suffered from the inherent disadvantage of being human. He had to make up for that.

He closed his eyes and pointed at a name randomly, selecting the lucky volunteer who would be the first to go through the procedure to develop space affinity.

When he opened his eyes, he discovered that it was a very familiar name. It was none other than the big brother of the Inn, Z! Clearly, he was both extremely lucky, and extremely unlucky.

For this next part... he donned his Clark Kent glasses and teleported over to little Z, who was, for once, sitting in his little cubicle and watching an anime. When Lex teleported over, he saw Z taking notes. In the cubicle besides him, Lex could see a number of bluetooth speakers, as well as some treasures which were... also speakers. There was also a music player with various playlists with names like 'for fighting scrubs', 'hero saves the damsel', 'the power of friendship', 'screaming to release more power', and 'this isn't even my final form'.

"Hey kid," Leo said, patting Z on the shoulder. Z, who was completely focused on the anime, was startled and jumped out of his seat. When he turned and saw his boss, Leo, he cursed his luck. He would have rather faced an assassination.

"What do you want? I've already opened up all the extra stores you wanted, and now I have a special task from the Innkeeper so I can't do your work!"

Leo chuckled and said, "I know kid, that's why I'm here. The Innkeeper is quite pleased with your performance so far, so he's selected you to be the first to receive a special kind of upgrade. But I'm here to ask you if you're up for it. I must warn you, it's not a simple process, and it'll hurt a lot."

"I am not afraid of pain!" he exclaimed, putting up a brave face. "If the Innkeeper has selected me for it, you can't keep it from me."

"That's what I thought," said Leo, and put his hand over Z's shoulder. The two of them teleported away, this time to a private recovery room. Leo summoned a nurse, and began giving her instructions. Moreover, he had also summoned Luthor, who would be learning the process so he could administer it to as many workers as possible in the near future.

"Prepare yourself. Once the process starts, it can't be stopped. Moreover, you have to keep on cultivating the entire time. If you stop, the process will be interrupted, which will result in you becoming crippled or even killed."

In truth the circumstances were not so dire, or else Lex would not have elected to use it. But if a person failed once, they could not undergo a second procedure. So he used the pressure of death to motivate them.

Z simply nodded, his expression calm and collected, like a protagonist from a shounen manga. Pain could not scare him, death could not deter him. After all, he had already experienced the tribulations of customer service. What could be worse?

Leo summoned all the necessary items, and began working. Z was made to ingest various tablets, potions, powders, herbs and spices, which made his entire body turn red. The medicinal power was too strong for his body, and he was on the verge of bursting.

That's when the difficult part of the process actually began.



"Start cultivating," Leo said calmly, as he made an incision in Z's right arm and attached a drip directly to the bone. Similar drips were attached to various other bones all across Z's body, resulting in a bloody and miserable sight, yet the young lad didn't make a single sound, and only focused on his cultivation.

He had been fighting for his coworkers' honor in the arena day and night. He was no stranger to bleeding, or even grotesque injuries.

Lex kept poking and prodding the young lad's body with various injections over the next few hours, until finally the time arrived to add the elixir.

One thing had to be said about Z's luck. Since he was the first one to undergo this process, the elixir he would get would be the most potent. By the time the others were able to undergo the same process, the elixir's potency would have dropped by another few grades.

As a result, this process would be much harder for him than anyone else. But when it finished, if he managed to survive, his affinity would also be much higher than the rest.

Suppressing his emotions, Leo poured an entire cup's worth of elixir down the child's throat, and then took a step back. If all the previous steps were skipped, exposure to a single drop of elixir would have killed Z let alone a whole cup. Now... now he would live, but he would only suffer some extreme discomfort.

No one spoke as they watched Z's body undergo horrifying changes. Z finally released a sound, not because he was unable to suppress himself from grunting, but because his body was literally making noises!

They all watched, and made sure to keep giving him the required medicine to ensure his body kept healing. Leo especially burned the memory deep in his heart. He could have left, but he wanted to watch.

He did not consider it a failure, that he had to resort to the help of his workers to survive this difficult period. But he did not forget that it was his responsibility to take care of them, not the other way around. One day, he would make it up to them.

Until then, he would lock everything in his heart.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 635: Finishing his chores

It was a few agonizing hours, but eventually it was completed without incident. To look at, Z appeared an average 15 year old boy who had just had the work out of his life. His body was covered in copious amounts of sweat, but other than that he seemed completely normal.

The incredibly powerful healing agents had made it so that not only were there no remaining signs of his various drips and injections, but any cuts or deformities he suffered during the process.

He was breathing heavily and his eyes were closed. It all seemed perfectly normal. That was if you did not look at the rest of the room. The floor was red with blood and guts. There were unusual impurities which had been removed from his body, mostly in the shape of black grains but some had come out in the shape and size of pebbles.

Although that was far from what Z had suffered through, it was as much of the process that Lex was willing to recall.

He walked up to the table with Z lay, and bent down.

"The process is complete," he said softly. "You can get some sleep."

Z tried to speak a few times, but he was breathing too heavily to be able to do so. In the end, he just nodded, his eyes still closed, and finally allowed himself to relax. Despite his out of breath state, he fell asleep in just a few seconds.

"Keep an eye on him," Lex said to the nurse, while handing her a book. "When he wakes up, ask him to see if he can learn this technique. It's a very simple one, and its only real purpose is to check if his spirit energy has space affinity."

Lex then turned to Luthor.

"If he's succeeded, you can begin allowing anyone who volunteers to undergo the same process. Space affinity is an incredibly powerful tool that can help greatly during the upcoming battles."

Without waiting for Luthor to reply, Leo disappeared. Although he had read that the process was going to be difficult, it was only after watching it that he realized just how difficult it was. Yet he didn't let that deter him or change his mind. An unfortunate truth he had learnt the hard way, time and time again since he began cultivation, was that the universe was not a friendly place. One had to be ridiculously tough to survive in it, and tolerate endless ordeals.

He appeared near the greenhouse, this time without his Clark Kent glasses. He was crossing out his tasks, and as much as he wanted to avoid it, he could not ignore the favor Zuri asked of him.

He did not enter the forest, but instead only walked to the edge and started to speak, "I would like to speak to the turtle please."

Although he did not address anyone specific when he spoke, he knew that while Young McDonald had its roots all beneath the Inn, it paid extra attention around the greenhouse. Once upon a time, Young McDonalds job was to act as security for the entire Inn, but more and more, such a thing was infeasible. Young McDonald had hit a growth slump upon reaching the Golden core realm, and it was mostly just focused around the greenhouse.

Speaking of which, the quality of food had really drastically improved at the Inn. Lex didn't pay much attention to it, but it seemed the combination of the turtle growing stronger, and the Inn getting some farming focused features really boosted the Inn's food production capability.

Lex was able to spend a couple of minutes imagining the various delicacies the Inn had to offer, and what new alien food he could try out soon, before the turtle arrived.

"How can I help you, little human?" the turtle asked, as it brought its neck down to Lex's height. Did the turtle get even taller since Lex saw him last?

Unable to answer, he instead focused on more important things.

"I have been requested to ask you a question..."

Lex began explaining the situation to the turtle, all the while setting the conversation up in such a way that Lex would easily be able to convince the turtle to stay if it wanted to leave. As it turned out, he didn't really need to do any such thing.

"Oh dear, such a generous offer. But if I leave, all the children will feel lonely. I cannot leave them. At least until they grow up a little bit."

As if on cue, Little Blue flew up behind the turtle, and looked down curiously at Lex. Unable to find anything interesting, it continued to fly away. Fenrir, too, came running out of the forest. It stopped to acknowledge Lex, but then quickly continued to run. It was chasing after the whale once again.

"I understand," Lex said with a smile, suddenly feeling grateful for the turtle's knack for adoption.

With these few minor chores out of the way, Lex finally teleported out of the Inn. But he still did not return to the Crystal realm - at least not yet. Instead, after a very, very long time, he reappeared on the planet Vegus Minima.

He had incredibly fond memories of nearly fighting to the death against endless hordes of zombies on this planet. Ah, how he missed being weak and feeble. He would just have to make do without almost getting killed at every corner.

Before his thoughts would end up jinxing him, Lex diverted his attention towards how the world had changed since he was last here.

It did not look like it was the site of a centuries long war at all! Tall buildings filled the sky line, with familiar looking ships flying across the sky. In the ground, there were fewer vehicles because most of the ground level was left to accommodate a lot of flora. Trees filled the streets, with grass instead of sidewalks upon which the locals were walking.

Some kind of air trains seemed to be transporting people through the city, for those who did not want to travel by ship, or unusual looking walkways built on the sides of the buildings up a few stories high.

The town... eh, city... eh, massive metropolis that Lex was looking at was completely bustling it. The size of the crowds would make even New York City seem like a secluded city, yet everything was done beautifully and in an ecofriendly way.

It was mesmerizing to see, but the greater wonder was how all of this was built in less than a year. Sure, he expected the empire's capabilities to be far beyond that of earths, but wasn't this a little too much?

Lex strolled through the city as he took in the views, and absorbed everything he saw. He had heard that originally the people of Vegas Minima relied on gene manipulation to grow stronger instead of cultivation, and once the zombies invaded they relied on their cores for body cultivation.

Now, it seemed like they had completely adopted the orthodox way of cultivation within the empire. It was fascinating how many phases and cultures a single planet had been through.

As much as he enjoyed his return, Lex had actually come to this planet with a purpose. He made his way to a Public Services and Security office, an organization set up by the empire to assist the recovery and rehabilitation of the locals.

Once there, he merely handed over a card given to him by Alexander to the receptionist, who immediately wore a serious look.

She glanced at Lex, as if he were some big shot, but began to work furiously on her computer, as if she was afraid she would be the one responsible for wasting his time.

A short while later, a group of military personnel appeared to take Lex to a private and secure facility.

That facility, though, ended up being quite far. In fact, the journey took a few hours as he had to be escorted out of the city he was already in.

At first he thought he would be taken to some hidden base or secure location, but he was instead taken to an even larger, more impressive city. In fact, if Marlo were here, he would recognize not the city, for it had changed too much, but the cliffside near it. This was where he had fought his battles so bravely.

But the speed of his ship was too fast. Lex had no time to admire the capital of Vegus Minima. After only catching glimpses, he was already brought to an in-building parking space where the ship landed, and a number of personnel stood waiting for him.

"Your teleportation formation has been primed and is ready to be used," said one of the soldiers, speaking as if he were talking about the most grim thing in the world. "Before we proceed, however, we will need to enter your details into our system, is that alright? It's protocol."

"Sure, no problem," said Lex.

He was on his way to the planet Alexander needed his help on. He wouldn't stay there for long, but he needed to at least reach the planet so he could teleport there when Alexander needed help.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 636: Polebitvy

"Please follow us while we enter the details," the soldier said to Lex. "According to our information, you are to be deputed as an Auxiliary Combat Aid (ACA). ACA members are all officially recognized by the Jotun army, and have rankings and authority of their own, but fall outside of the command chain. This basically means that they help the army on certain tasks and missions, but they cannot be forced to accept missions or be stationed in places.

"The specifics vary based on the role and rank of an ACA member, but I'm sure you already know the circumstances of your recruitment. The point of me telling you this is that, by becoming an ACA member, you gain a certain level of perks and merits which can be availed across the empire, and you will have a clean and clear identity to use."

Lex felt that there was a lot that remained unsaid during the last part of the statement. He suddenly felt like a lot of wanted criminals became ACA members solely so that they could have clean identities to use. That could be both a good thing or a bad thing for the empire, based on how it was managed. Of course, none of that had anything to do with Lex.

He was led to a lab where he underwent a number of tests, reminding him of the time he was tested out in Blue Bird. The tests carried out by the empire were, of course, much more complex than the ones on earth.

First of all, he did not need to be pricked or electrocuted for any test. Then again, they did not do anything as controversial as ask him about his cultivation techniques. A part of him wondered if during their tests, his DNA would match for any of his relatives in the empire, as there surely were. But it was never brought up, so maybe it didn't.

What he did not know was that the inscription placed over his heart not only hid his bloodline, it also hid his identity from being traced. No DNA test he ever gave would be accurate. He could have become the perfect criminal on earth, but that was already behind him now.

Oddly enough, they asked him very few questions during the test, as if they wanted his identity to be as barebones as possible. They did, however, ask him one question that caused him to pause for a moment.

"Name?"

"Lex."

"Just 'Lex'? No Surname or affiliation?"

He hesitated, but in the end he simply said "no".

The soldier, almost as if he was expecting such an answer, only nodded, and continued to create his account. The process did not take long, and in a mere 30 minutes he had become a registered ACA member with an official empire identity!

Coincidentally, the identity token they gave him was shaped like a coin, except that it was black. The coincidence was because this once again reminded him of Blue Bird. But he was easily able to inspect this token and was certain that it had no hidden trackers or monitoring devices.

He stored it in his spatial bangle, and followed the soldier who led him to a completely empty room. It was square, with pure white walls and floor. It looked like where psychiatric patients would be held.

"Teleportation will activate soon. Please prepare yourself, both physically and mentally. Long distance teleportation, such as between planets, can be quite disorienting."

Lex merely nodded. He was not worried. In fact, he was quite looking forward to it. He wanted to find out how normal transportation between planets was carried out.

It didn't take long for him to get his wish, though technically speaking normal travel between planets, regardless of how far, was carried out on ships and not teleportation.

Lex thought that when the man said Lex would be disoriented, it was because of the discomfort he felt during teleportation. Due to his physique Lex didn't worry about that. What he did not anticipate was that the level of this teleportation formation was nowhere near that of the emporiums.

The formation activated instantly, so Lex got no warning. But even if he had, he would not have expected the whiplash his body was subjected to as it underwent what felt like being launched through the air at the speed of a fighter jet. But that was only the beginning.

This teleportation was nowhere near as instantaneous as the ones he had become accustomed to, and the entire time it went on Lex felt like his body was being jostled through the air, like a ragdoll carried by a child running at full speed. The worst part was, there was no sense of up and down, because he felt 'gravity' pulling at him from every single direction.

Then the teleportation ended just as abruptly as it started, and Lex found himself in yet another completely white room.

If Lex were a lesser man, he would have thrown up. But he wasn't, so he only cursed.

What the hell was this? He was meant to enjoy the teleportation and experience the advantages of his physique. Instead, he went on a poorly planned rollercoaster. What a rip off.

Feeling more irritated than disoriented, Lex left the white room only to find a group of surprised soldiers. But they were trained well, and so recovered quickly.



"Are you ACA Lex from Vegus Minima?" the soldier asked, reading something off of a screen.

"Yes, that's me."

"Welcome to Polebitvy, sir," the soldier said while saluting him. Apparently Lex's rank was above his. It made sense, kind of. After all, Lex was in the Golden core while the soldier was in the Foundation realm.

"Accommodation has been arranged for you, sir. The room will be reserved for you for up to one year. After that, you will have to pay for yourself if you wish to continue renting the same room. There's also an introductory packet, to get you acquainted with the planet and its culture. Currently, there are no orders waiting for you, nor any mail."

"Thanks," said Lex, grabbing the folder the soldier handed him. He then asked for directions and exited the building.

It wasn't that he didn't want to spend some time on Polebitvy, or that he wasn't curious about what his new post or position held. He was just a little impatient these days owing to the ever closer deadline of his workers going away. Not to mention, being jostled around didn't really help his mood.

He took in the city, but there was not much to see because it was night and it was raining.

"Mary, if I teleport away to the Inn from here, can I also return here in the future despite the fact that it's not linked to the Inn?"

"Everyone who comes to the Inn leaves an anchor behind, which is how the Inn traces where to send them back once they return. Everyone can have only one anchor, including you. So yes, technically you can teleport back here if you go to the Inn.

"But your situation is a little complicated, since you can also travel to any planet or area linked to the Inn. So, you can return here any time. But once you choose to go to a different planet connected to the Inn, or maybe even a different realm, your anchor moves as well."

"So basically, I cannot go to the Crystal realm without my anchor from here disappearing?"

"Nope."

Lex released an irritated sigh.

"How long till this planet is connected to the Inn?"

"Well, it will take at least one day. It could take more, but you have the advantage that you can come back whenever you want and then return to this planet whenever you want as long as you don't travel anywhere else. This is one advantage of discovering new places on your own, instead of just using golden tickets to travel to new planets."

"I guess I might as well just get on with it," he said, and started walking in the direction of his room. He reached the building without incident, and somehow even entered the room without being targeted somehow. It felt strange because something unusual would always happen to him whenever he tried to connect a planet to the Inn. He had long suspected that, whenever he used a ticket to choose a planet, he would only be given options for planets where something bad was destined to happen to him. Yes, it totally had to be on purpose.

But, with nothing happening, he decided to simply meditate in his room, until the planet was connected or he had to return to the Inn.

Unbeknownst to him, in his neighboring room were two human kids who had also visited the Inn. They had been brought there by the pro bono room, and they had experienced the star rank change which had evolved their bodies, helping them shed their birth defects!

They had been brought to this room to stay in by the angelic saint woman who had been helping them.

Life had been so good for them, they almost forgot that they had lived extremely miserable lives up until quite recently, on this planet engulfed in a decade long civil war. Almost.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 637: Machinations

An uneventful day and night passed for Lex, who spent the day cultivating. He was only waiting for time to pass so that either the Inn would connect to this planet, or that he would have to leave to attend the upcoming banquet.

In the room beside him, the two siblings spent their time feeling extremely worried. The beautiful elder sister who brought them here hadn't shown up in a long time, and was already late by a couple of days. Such an occurrence was not normal at all whatsoever, since this was not the kind of planet where one could travel around safely.

For over a decade, the planet had been the stage for a bloody civil war, much to the dismay of the common people, such as them. The star system they were in had 5 inhabited planets, all of which used to be governed by one family under the authority of the empire. But different branches of the same family had a falling out, and eventually led to a bloody conflict.

The empire had tried to broker peace, but legally speaking the star system was leased out to that family for several more centuries, so without the ability to completely replace those in power, there was little that could be done. In the end, Polebitvy, which was the inhabited planet closest to the star, was designated the battlefield to finalize the war and establish the victor. The point of this was so that the other planets would at least be spared from war. The proposal was accepted and implemented.

But the war just kept dragging on, and many secret third parties began to get involved. Silent partners and secret supporters in the background kept bringing their forces onto the ground and kept extending the war. A resolution did not appear to be in sight.

Of course none of that mattered to the kids. What they cared about was that the beautiful elder sister had not returned. It was not even a matter of self survival, as they could more or less exist in the wilderness. They just couldn't imagine a life where the elder sister was no longer around.

"What shall we do?" asked the girl, finally unable to hold it in any longer.

"The elder sister said she was a soldier. Maybe we should ask the other soldiers from the empire."

"They won't listen to us. No one will."

The brother started to pace around, much as he had been before they began talking. In the end, he made a seemingly difficult decision and reached into his pocket.

Back in his room, Lex was enjoying the feeling of cultivating without having to use the lavatory, when there was a knock on his door.

A part of him had been waiting for this. Of course it had to happen? How could he possibly link a planet to the Inn without facing incredulous peril. But strangely, his instincts gave him no warning.

Mentally prepared to face the worst, he opened the door to find someone dressed like a housekeeper, standing right in front with a trolley full of cleaning supplies.

"Would you like your room cleaned?" the man asked in a very droll voice.

"Uhh, no thanks," Lex answered. The man only nodded, and continued forward. A little disappointed by the anticlimactic result, he looked around once more in the corridor but saw no impending threat. He only saw a couple of kids walking away, probably to play.

He returned to his room and closed the door. Six hours later, with no other issue arising, the planet was successfully linked to the Inn! Had circumstances been a little different Lex might have felt like the process was incomplete, but for now he was just happy to return to the Inn.

The moment he teleported back, he got to work. At the Inn the various festivities were still ongoing. The theme for this week was 'Spaceship Spa' and so all the festivities were being held inside the ship.

That was quite convenient for Lex, as he announced that the village would temporarily be vacated of all guests for 24 hours starting tomorrow. Moreover, he also spent a ton of MP in the event panel to hire temporary staff to ensure everything continued to operate smoothly.

Since it was meant to be an employee banquet tomorrow, he obviously could not have the employees working.

He planned out the day, which was pretty easy for him at this point due to all his experience gained from planning festivals, and checked up on any impending tasks. The tailor, believe it or not, was ahead of schedule and had almost completed his order. With thousands of helpers, it only made sense. He had completely optimized the process, and all he had to do was the actual stitching. But considering that he was still just a mortal, stitching 1000 suits within just three days... was still believable because the system helped him out in many areas. The system was, ultimately, a major cheat after all.

The day passed relatively quickly for Lex, bringing forth a pretty unusual sight for the guests at the Inn the following morning. Many of the Inn's guests had been there before, or had spent some time there at least, and so had become somewhat familiar with just a few faces at least. Yet this morning, while the Inn was not bereft of workers, all of them were new faces.

Some of the popular shops, such as the barber shop and Battle Ax were closed. Members of various fan clubs, such as the Gerard fan club, noticed that the dashing gentleman could not be seen doing his usual golf cart rounds, and no one could reach out to him using their personal holographic assistants.

While the Inn continued to operate as usual, there was something just a little different about it today. It lacked a certain flavor which the usual workers, with their enthusiastic and vibrant personalities brought to the Inn.

But soon, they discovered the answer on the front page of the Midnight newsletter that was being passed out that day. The Innkeeper was holding a banquet only for his workers over at the Party village.

Excitement spread among some of the guests as they arrived outside the village, unable to proceed any further. Using their best vision techniques they tried to spy in on what was happening inside, but to no avail. But the more the matter was kept from them, the more excited they became.

Especially because it was a banquet being held by the Innkeeper himself. A majority of the guests had never actually seen the Innkeeper up close and personal, so he was veiled in an air of mystery and charm. They wanted to see him as well. But unfortunately, there seemed no way to get into the banquet. No way yet, at least.

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Karen the succubus was casually reading a comic in the lounge. The comic was, of course, based on the Innkeeper. This specific spread was delving into the backstory for the real reason the Inn was targeted by the evil Deity Ra. She had yet to read all of it, but all signs were hinting towards the fact that Ra's daughter was secretly enamored with the Innkeeper, and ran away from her home in hopes of being able to pursue her love.

The Innkeeper, being a gentleman, was of course not taking advantage of the feelings of love of a young girl, but at the same time he could not bring himself to send her back. Their adventures spanned amidst scenic valleys, beautiful rivers, enchanting star fields and more. The author of this comic, the supposed Rachel, had an extremely vivid imagination.

Just as Karen was getting to the good part, a shadow fell over her face. She looked up to see Rocketfellow standing there.

"What is it?" she asked, feeling sour. Just because he was incredibly good looking, and rich, and came from a good background, this fellow felt like he could do anything he wanted.

"There's an unusual event ongoing at the Inn right now. Shouldn't you be there, trying to seduce some answers out of someone?"

"No matter what kind of event there is, I won't be able to get any answers," she said blandly as she turned a page in her comic. "Don't you know by now? The Inn is foolproof. You can't get anything by going at it directly."

There was a pause where Rocketfellow actually didn't immediately respond, which was unlike him.

"For once, you've actually said something smart. I can't get anything from it directly, so I've used indirect methods. After some... let's say, charity work, I've been able to pull a few strings. 1000 foundation realm members of the Inn are going to be sent out to the Fuegan war."

Karen was genuinely startled, and almost dropped her comic!

Pleased by her reaction, he continued, "although I've been able to do that much, the actual location of their deployment remains a mystery to me. Gather everyone and find out. This is our chance."

## The Innkeeper

### Chapter 638: Water war

Attendance at the banquet wasn't really necessary for all the workers. It was more or less just a joint vacation for all of them. Yet Lex did not expect many to miss out on it, and indeed there was 100% attendance even just a few minutes after the day began.

The 'banquet' itself would only begin in the evening, but everyone had 24 hours of free time to enjoy themselves. In fact, there were temporary workers found even within the village, so that the workers could for once experience all the services that they were usually offering.

The experience was extremely novel, as they had never just 'hung out' with their friends in such a manner before.

If Lex were being extremely scrutinizing, he would say that having such an experience would be highly beneficial for them. After all, once they understood what the guests might be feeling as they approach the same services, they could do their duties better. But in truth his only agenda was for his workers to enjoy, and get some time off. Especially now that some of them would be sent away to face untold trials.

The sight itself was quite amusing. Sitting in his office, Lex watched as hundreds of thousands of humans slowly shuffled into the village and began spreading out, murmuring with each other in excitement. Among them, the few non-humans were also clearly visible though they were just as much a part of the crowd as everyone else.

A giant sea creature could be seen, its upper body emerging from the waterways in the village, acting very much like a child about to head to an amusement park. A few peacocks which had evolved to gain sentience and self awareness during the star rank upgrades could also be seen walking majestically down the paved streets.

Young McDonald, Zen, the Sol bird, Fenrir, Little Blue and the turtle walked as part of one procession. Although the turtle was annoyed that it had to spend time away from its garden, it eventually decided to take a look at how everything was going at the village.

A lone Draconian Apostle, Fredrich, could be seen trailing that group, feeling somewhat shy. It presented quite an adorable sight as it had rounded up a lot while cultivating near the Fire temple. As such, it looked more like a round, massive stuffed toy designed to look like a bee than an actual bee.

Of course, now all Inn workers were shy. Captain Cirk, the worker incharge of the massive spaceship, could be seen casually sitting beside Gerard as the old man drove his golf cart. The two seemed to be sharing tales of their own respective vehicles.

Luthor was standing forlornly atop a massive building, looking down at all the workers, as if he had countless troubles worrying him.

Inside a massive auditorium, Z was sitting comfortably with buckets of popcorn around him, watching his current favorite anime, Demon Player. Interestingly enough, none of the popcorn buckets were within his reach. But whenever he reached out with his hand, a few kernels would appear in his hand. The process was not smooth, or quick, but it happened nonetheless. Moreover, the more time he spent doing it, the better he became. One might even think he was training secretly. But no, he was just being a lazy teenager.

Somewhere near a cafe, Velma was excitedly conducting an interview. Although she was not supposed to be working, who could really stop her? As for the target of her interview? It was naturally Harry and Hailey, the newest couple of the Inn. Although Hailey was not a worker, she was Harry's plus one, so there was no problem with her attending.

In another corner, Geeves, the poor tailor, was found collapsed on the ground. Feeling some pity for him, some of the people who had spent the last few days with him carried him to a spa, where he received an excellent massage.

Yet, as much as he had worked, he was not the most exhausted Inn worker. No, that privilege was awarded equally to the members of the Bunny nation. As the permanent workers of the day care, all the bunnies had first hand experienced the endless energy of young children! Even after the star rank upgrade, when the bunnies evolved and grew one level stronger, they could only barely keep up with the kids.

But while the bunnies had evolved from that event, had the kids not done the same? Stronger, smarter and more ferocious than ever before, the kids played as if the very fate of the universe depended on it, and no cultivator was strong enough to face such an onslaught. The bunnies almost even missed the days where they were actually being slaughtered. At least then their suffering would end.



But no matter. They had gained a reprieve, short as it may be.

After watching for a while, Lex suddenly felt a little dissatisfied. The workers were a little tame, and were hesitating in fully enjoying themselves. They had many hours before the actual banquet, so they should be thoroughly enjoying themselves.

With an exasperated sigh, Lex stood up. It seemed like he would have to do everything himself.

He put on his Clark Kent glasses, and changed into his Leo persona, before teleporting over. For a moment, mixed in with the massive crowd, he truly felt how much the Inn had grown. From a mere two workers who only had a one month lease, to hundreds of thousands of permanent workers.

Then, he summoned his secret weapon in his hand, and locked onto a target. Doe, John's assistant, was walking listlessly. Of course he would feel like that. Unlike the rest, it was not one or two days that the Battle Ax had been shut for. John had been challenged to a battle in the Murder trial, and it was still ongoing even so many days later. With nothing to distract him, and no way of knowing how the battle was going, Doe was feeling drained.

Suddenly, Doe's senses picked up on a threat. As John's assistant, how could it be possible that he had not been taught any techniques to defend himself or improve his survivability? He looked up, only to find a pink round ball closing in on him. He tried to move, yet he was too slow and the projectile too fast!

It hit him right in the face, but instead of the hard-on collision he was expecting, he felt the pop of something plastic before a ball of water drenched his face. Before he, or anyone else could understand what happened, a loud sound could be heard yelling, "water fight!"

Tens, hundreds, thousands and then tens of thousands of water balloons suddenly appeared everywhere.

The workers were a little slow to catch on, which resulted in many of them immediately getting splashed. No one saw who made the first move, because whoever it was was moving too fast. But panic immediately set in, and everyone grabbed a water balloon. Then that panic immediately turned to excitement, as the first worker threw a water balloon, and then the second.

Chaos erupted almost immediately, as thousands of workers immediately entered into a massive water fight! Thousands more began running right and left, avoiding getting wet to little success.

The few aquatic beasts that had evolved within the Inn from simple animals, and had become Inn workers, had a natural advantage which they used readily to start launching water at everyone.

But the humans were not to be left behind either. The lifeguards of the Inn immediately began using their spiritual techniques which could manipulate water, and retaliated in full force.

In mere moments, what Lex had originally just planned out as a simple water fight to loosen everyone up and put them in a playful mood, turned into a highly competitive and extreme water war!

In its excitement, Little Blue also joined in! It had also been cultivating, and had constantly been guided by the turtle, and corrupted by Fenrir - who had been corrupted by Lex. It used its newly gained innate ability to summon some water.

Truly, it was only a small amount of water. It was not worth mentioning, really. It only accumulated into a tsunami that was over forty feet high, and appeared out of thin air.

When the shadow of the wave covered the ground, the water fight temporarily paused as everyone looked up to see what had happened.

All they saw before the wave came crashing down was the little whale, clicking and whistling in excitement.

Then, like divine judgment, the wave came crashing down.

But the workers of the Inn were not intimidated. Various techniques filled the air as they hastened to protect themselves, and prepare for retaliation. In the first ever water war, the weak would not survive. They would win, or they would get drenched trying.

The wave crashed onto the ground with a furious roar, and shook the Inn as it did. But suddenly, there was a flash of light, and the water parted, split right down the middle.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 639: His people

Like the Red Sea, the tsunami wave was parted along the center, and a couple completely untouched by a drop of water was revealed. Qawain and Anita stood side by side, Anita holding her husband's arm lovingly. Behind them, was their baby, being pushed by dozens of her undead abominations.

The baby was sleeping silently, as the sounds of fighting and chaos had finally lulled it into a peaceful sleep. One could not really blame it for not being able to distinguish between the sounds of a water fight that constituted hundreds or thousands of people, and a nice Sunday genocidal massacre.

"Please continue, we are just passing by," said Qawain as he continued to walk. One could not really blame him for not participating, as any casual throw of a water balloon by him could decimate all the Inn's workers.

The fight resumed as soon as the couple passed, with Little Blue becoming one of the main targets.

While a lot of the workers participated in the war, more still moved away from it, unwilling to get wet. Yet Lex's purpose was completed nonetheless, as even those who were not participating relaxed visibly.

They spread out across the village, and began to truly enjoy all that the Inn had to offer. Lines were formed in front of photo booths, many took boat rides in the canals alongside the roads, others still enjoyed the various transports.

They ate and they played, and though most of them really weren't tense, the ones that were visibly relaxed. Well, all except Luthor.

"Aren't you going to join in the fun?" Leo asked, as he walked up to Luthor who was standing on the roof of one of the buildings.

"It's hard to enjoy myself when I know what's about to happen," said Luthor, his face extremely grim. "Although there isn't too much detail, I've read the files Velma has on the Fuegan. It will not be an easy fight. Realistically speaking, I should not even expect those who go to come back."

"The Fuegan are strong, but the Inn workers aren't weak either. They just have to stick together and take care of one another, and they'll be fine."

Luthor didn't speak, and instead turned to look at Leo. He had spent a lot of time at the Inn getting to know the other workers. He had a busy schedule between taking care of the Innkeeper's orders, cultivating and thinking of ways to improve the Inn, but he still managed to take out the time to do so.

The one thing he noticed was the unusual patterns with which Leo appeared and disappeared at the Inn. No one else spent as much time away from the Inn as he did, at least among the workers.

Luthor suspected that Leo's role as a shop owner at the Inn was just a front, and instead he performed secret tasks for the Innkeeper. Well, Leo had all but already told Luthor as such when he gave Luthor some secret tasks by the Innkeeper, but he suspected that Leo played an even greater role for the Innkeeper than anyone realized.

He did not envy Leo for the attention he got. Instead, he understood the necessity. While Luthor was in the light, as the Innkeepers assistant, Leo was in the dark, doing things without attracting attention.

As a result... he should also be privy to more information than the rest.

"Do you know something?" Luthor asked, looking Leo in the eyes.

"Nothing too out of the ordinary," said Leo shrugging. "The Innkeeper doesn't want to pick a needless fight, so he's going along with things for now. But he's preparing an exit strategy nonetheless. I believe soon, the Inn will have its own realm."

A light flashed in Luthor's eyes, but he said nothing. After spending a few more moments atop the building, he decided to leave for now. After all, his name was on the list of volunteers too.

Technically speaking, Luthor had only been alive for a few months so it should not have been possible for him to reach Foundation realm so quickly. But contrary to expectation, he was already near the peak of the Foundation realm. He had abused his bloodline to continuously cultivate way beyond what his body should have been able to tolerate.

On the days where not much happened, he allowed himself to feel the repercussions of his accumulated fatigue and injuries, so that the burden would slowly lessen. On other days, where the utmost was needed of him, he used his bloodline even more.

For now, he decided to go sleep in a Recovery pod. He would allow the burden he had accumulated to vent as much as possible, so that during the war he had no trouble using his bloodline as much as possible.

Lex said nothing as he watched Luthor go. How could he not possibly know that Luthor had put his name on the list of volunteers first? Yet he had no intentions of stopping him. For better or for worse, Luthor's extreme personality was exactly what was needed to survive the upcoming war.

While Lex was paying attention to all his employees, he especially focused on the 1000 volunteers. Yet none of them seemed to be acting tense or anxious. It was as if all was normal. But how could it be?

He knew for a fact that other than Z, nearly 600 other workers had also undergone their physique treatment, including Luthor. It had cost Lex nearly 40 million MP to get all the necessary supplies to support the procedure, but none of the supplies were so rare that he had to go back to the emporium.

Sure, none of them had an experience nearly as bad as Z's, but none of them were easy either. Even now, there would have been a few still undergoing the process if Lex hadn't run out of the elixir.

Yet not a single one of them had complained.

Lex disappeared from the rooftop as he continued to overview the day's festivities, and make personal adjustments where he thought necessary.

Something interesting, or at least something Velma would have found interesting, was that in this new environment where they were encouraged to relax and mingle, many began showing initial signs of kindling relationships.

For now, they were too young and inexperienced in life to take that step, but Lex could already see signs. The fact that most of the ones showing such signs were about to head off to war made Lex feel just a little melancholic.

Slowly, but peacefully, the day passed and evening came. The crowds which had dispersed across the entire village began to gather once again in an open air theater. Perhaps an auditorium would have been better for this, but it was not so easy to fit a few hundred thousand beings inside one building, and still leave them room to move about.

Though it was no crystal ballroom, the floating sky lanterns illuminated the night in a soft yet warm, yellow glow which brought about a relaxed environment. Well, it was hard to go for different lighting with a baby Sol bird around.

Though it had been a full day for most, they were not tired. Instead, everyone was feeling refreshed and excited, for they were looking forward to what would come next: the Innkeeper was about to make an appearance.

Once everyone had arrived, Luthor included, the lighting dimmed, despite the baby Sol bird, and a small podium appeared. A hush fell over the crowd as they all waited for the Innkeeper.

As of late, he had been making fewer and fewer public appearances, and when he did, he usually only met the same few workers. It was something even Lex himself had not noticed, nor was he alerted by his instincts for it had no consequential repercussions. It revealed a blindspot in his instincts, and always relying on them.

Before the Innkeeper appeared, the sound of footsteps could be heard echoing through the night. The footsteps continued to echo, when suddenly everyone saw someone climbing to the podium. Instantly they realized that the Innkeeper would not suddenly appear on the podium. The Innkeeper had been among them the entire time, but he had kept himself hidden so that he would not attract attention. Excitement suddenly filled the hearts of all the workers as they thought about the fact that they could have been rubbing shoulders with the Innkeeper!

"Welcome, everyone," the Innkeeper's smooth voice washed over the crowd. "I'm glad to see that everyone has been enjoying themselves. Usually, we work around the clock to serve the Inn's guests, but it's also important to remember that we too deserve some rest and relaxation."

The Innkeeper paused, a warm and content smile on his face as he looked out over the crowd. He could hear them shuffling, he could hear their elevated heartbeats, he could hear their sped up breathing.

These were his people. He would lead them well.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 640: New suits

Many months ago, when Lex had the idea for a banquet for his guests, he had envisioned what it would be like. In fact, he even did a bit of research on his own instead of just delegating the tasks to the planning division.

The banquet would be broken down into two segments. The lead up to the banquet, where everyone enjoyed and relaxed didn't count. Once the banquet actually began, the first phase would follow some earthly customs.

As the Innkeeper, he would give a small speech to cheer everyone up, and then he thought about sharing the limelight and having some others come up and speak as well. There would be jokes and laughter, and once everyone was done speaking there would be a dance, which would then be followed by dinner.

That was the first segment. The second segment included activities Lex looked up on the Henali portal which were common occurrences in alien cultures. There would be feats of courage. There would be merrymaking. There would be duels. There would be cake similar to Saturn cake, except that it would be much stronger, and could affect those at a higher cultivation realm. Lex had even imported a special batch of fruit, which could temporarily turn anyone who ate it into a variation of their race. So, in the instance of humans, they could turn into cat people, or a Cheonsa, or something else.

The night would end with a few awards and prizes. That was the original plan, and Lex expected it would be a lot of fun. But the plan had changed since then. Now, while he still planned for the banquet to be a fun filled event, the focus would be different.

"The Inn started not too long ago, and you all joined me only shortly thereafter, but much has happened during this short time."

As the Innkeeper's gentle voice washed over all the workers, they began to imagine all that had happened. The older ones began to recall the Midnight games, while the newer ones thought back to the invasion they suffered during the Innkeepers absence.

"The Midnight Inn has maintained its pride during all this time, not only because of me, but because of all of you."

The Innkeeper paused for a moment, looking out at each and every face in the crowd.

"Whether it's keeping the guests happy, adapting to new events, or facing off miscreants who mean to cause trouble, each and everyone one of you has upheld the honor of the Inn. There is no task too big or too small, for when the Inn has a need, you all have stepped forward proudly to take care of the task."

Every single one of the workers felt their pride swell up as they heard the Innkeepers words. They held their heads just a little higher, and pumped out their chests.

"Today we are here, at this banquet, to honor all your efforts so far in service of the Inn. But I think, it is not just in service of the Inn that you all strive so hard. There is something else that drives your actions. It is pride. The pride of being a part of something as grand as the Inn.

"But how can that be all? I think... it is the feeling of home. It is the feeling of family..." the Innkeeper paused again, though this time even he didn't notice the slight hesitation. "It is the feeling of having something you want to protect."

The Innkeeper's words and emotions were infectious, and everyone, from the newest to the oldest employees, started to have deep emotions welling up inside of them.

"So today, here, we find ourselves honoring not just our actions, but each other, for it is us, each and everyone of us, who make up the Midnight Inn. But... it is not just our past actions that need honoring..."



The Innkeeper's tempo suddenly changed. His voice, full of vibrant energy suddenly turned solemn and somber.

"It is also the actions that some of us are about to take that we honor. I'm sure you all know of what I speak. The Midnight Inn finds itself facing an extraordinary and unexpected challenge. Though we are a humble establishment focused on serving our guests, we have always been steadfast in adhering to our dogmas, even in the face of extreme adversity. Yet even so, in this universe, we cannot stand completely alone.

"The Inn has been conscripted into a war that has nothing to do with us, thrusting us into an unfamiliar battlefield. But when faced with this challenge, when I asked for volunteers, I received an overwhelming response. Heroes of the Inn volunteered without hesitation or fear of adversity."

A thousand different spotlights suddenly appeared, shining on each and every selected volunteer. Moreover, a massive screen appeared behind the Innkeeper, showing the humble yet happy faces under the spotlights.

"Each and everyone of you carry the honor of the Inn with you, and that is not just limited to the grounds of the Inn. Since you are going to a battlefield, away from the Inn and into the vast universe, then you have to take that honor with you."

The Innkeeper snapped his fingers, and suddenly the attire of all 1000 workers changed. Although they all wore suits before, and still wore suits now, the difference between the two sets was night and day!

While their previous suits were smart and quite formal, the new suits were not only perfectly suited to their exact physiques, it elevated their auras to make them seem incredibly dashing yet lethal at the same time.

Each suit was three piece, with a white shirt and black tie. Gold buttons adorned not only the front, but the cuffs as well. The left side of the coat had a gold 'M.I.' written on it, and the lapel had a key-shaped pin attached.

Along with the suit were also a pair of black gloves, perfectly sized so that not an inch of skin was visible between the shirt cuff and glove. They wore oxfords, in black of course, as their choice of footwear. Above the collar, there was a black, silk scarf perfectly covering the neck, and a suave black mask

covered their faces right up until the edge of their noses. Covering their eyes was a simple mask, similar to what one would wear at a masquerade ball.

Up until then, the suits seemed to look identical, but this is where a small distinction was made in the suits to favor preference. Above the mask, each person wore a hat, but each person seemed to have had some say in the exact kind. Some wore cobbler hats, others wore fedoras, while some wore flat caps.

The Innkeeper paused, to allow everyone to take in the sight. It truly was quite magnificent, for Lex could tell how incredibly durable and powerful the suits were. Suffice to say, Lex felt like even if he delivered a punch with his maximum power to one of those volunteers while they did not defend, they still would not be absolutely fine.

He noticed that, despite the severe time constraints, the tailor had managed to personalize the suits just a bit. For example, through Z's mask, Lex could identify the distinct outline of earphone wire traveling to his ears, or Gerard whose suit was slightly more open than the rest, adding emphasis to his vest underneath.

He also noticed that, unlike the rest, Luthor also carried a black and gold cane with him. He had no idea where it came from or how he had paid for it, but it looked mighty impressive.

"Know that even as you step out on the battlefield, the Midnight Inn is always with you," the Innkeeper began speaking once again, this time only to the 1000 volunteers who had by now gathered to the center of the crowd.

"The battlefield is foreign, but that cannot waver your spirit. Together, you have faced and conquered countless obstacles, and you will conquer this one too. Because while others fight to kill, or to survive, you fight to protect! Remember, now or ever, you are not alone! You have each other, your bonds, and your indomitable will to stand tall in the face of adversity!

"While war is not our business, that is only because we do not choose it to be. The Midnight Inn does not shy from trials and tribulations, and nor do we cower from the wars of those who cannot deal with it themselves!"

The Innkeeper's voice, which had once lowered in both volume and tone, had risen once again to a mighty crescendo, shaking not just the hearts of all who listened, but the very earth and the sky!

The sheer lethal visage of 1000 geared warriors alongside the Innkeeper's inspirational voice charged the crowds until they could no longer contain themselves, and erupted into a roaring cheer, that carried across the entire village, and could be heard even outside the barrier keeping out all the guests.

The Midnight Inn had not asked for this war, but they would make the ones who forced them into it regret deeply.