

Innkeeper 761

The Innkeeper

Chapter 761: Dragons' Hoard

The dwarf had somewhat regained some spirit energy in his body after absorbing it from the spirit stone, although that only made him more sensitive to the horrible condition his body was in. Silently, he cursed the stupid dragon, then audibly he cursed again, "filthy stupid stinking dragon!"

Since the dwarf no longer dared to cross Lex, he could only change the target of all his hatred and anguish to the dragon itself.

"The dragon's obsession is much stronger than anything we expected. Even with all our protection and preparation, we still lost ourselves to the spirit pull!"

"Speaking of the dragon, aren't you at all worried about aggravating the dragon? Or are you so sure that the dragon is actually dead? Were you the ones who spread that news?"

"No, no we weren't the ones who spread the news, but they are working with us," the dwarf said and he suppressed the urge to moan. The little vitality Lex had provided him was far from enough to heal anything at all, but there was not much he could really do about it.

"I don't know how or why... only Barley, the leader of our group, knows the details, but the dragon is for sure dead. Otherwise, we would never agree to go and steal from a living dragons' hoard. Even if we cannot get our hands on the treasure that has been tainted with the dragon's obsession, any random item will be worth the risk. A dragon's hoard... to be honest, I cannot even estimate how much it would be worth. All I can say is that it should be worth a lot."

"Why did you spread the news of the dragon's death? Wouldn't you end up getting more competition if the knowledge is spread? In contrast, if you keep the knowledge hidden, you have a greater chance to take all the loot for yourself."

"No, no we can't face the strength of the royal family on our own. Spreading the news is dangerous, as it could attract other races as well, but it also presented us with an opportunity to infiltrate the palace. The various noble families attacked the royal family with the desire to get their hands on dragon blood.

With that, they can change their own fate, and replace the royal family. Maybe they could even cause a mutation and transform into a real dragon, since they are dragon descendants at the end of the day. Such a conversion is still possible.

"Only when the royal family is busy fighting the other nobles, and the defenses of the castle are focused on the outside would we get the chance to sneak inside. We didn't count on a simultaneous invasion by the icy abomination at the same time, which only helped our chances even more. But we still don't have much time, as we have reports that Elven ships are already on their way here. We absolutely cannot risk staying too long, and are supposed to escape the planet today."

"What are these abominations? I've heard them mentioned multiple times already."

"Again, I don't know too many details. What I can say is that their existence is very unusual, and that they did not exist on this planet even just a year ago. All I know is that they seem to be made of ice and that they naturally hate everything to do with heat. Frigals, as descendants of a dragon, have extremely hot blood and so are frequently targeted by them. But my original impression was that these... monsters have no intelligence, yet the act of laying siege to a castle does not fall in line with that belief. There may be something more going on."

Lex pondered for a moment about what to do. All the signs pointed to the fact that the treasure he was looking for was right here, and was most likely the one infected with the dragon's obsession. But he was not immune to its spirit pull ability, and had constantly fallen prey to distractions.

While such a thing was not inherently dangerous, it did pose some risks. Somehow, the dragon had mysteriously died, but that did not reduce the danger in Lex's eyes. If anything, the danger had only increased, for he could not imagine what could so silently and secretly kill a dragon. Moreover, there were some mysterious enemies targeting the Frigals, and possibly the dragon as well, not to mention the elves on their way to this planet.

After some consideration, he concluded that while there was danger, it was not enough to deter him. Having made up his mind, he threw a golden key towards Terrol.

"If things get desperate and you really need medical attention, crush that key. You'll be fine," he said, already walking away. He wondered what awaited him behind the massive door. Was that the entrance to the dragon's treasures? That would be too easy, right? As it turned out, behind the doors what awaited Lex really was the dragon's treasure hoard - or the very beginning of it.

Mountains of gold were piled randomly on the floor, though there seemed to be a walkway between the endless coins, nuggets, raw ore and massive bricks, leading somewhere deeper.

Curious, Lex picked up some of the gold and discovered this was far different from the gold he was used to seeing on earth. A quick scan from his Fancy monocle revealed over 216 different types of gold!

In the universe, gold was valuable as well, though not because it could be used to make jewelry. No, the value of gold came from the fact that it was a phenomenal conductor for spirit energy, and each different type of gold before him had a few different traits or uses.

Lex looked at the mountain of gold on his right, then at the one on his left, then he scratched his head.

"Mary, how can I teleport things directly to the Inn?" he asked, knowing that the system would never give him an easy time. If he had to put everything in his bangle and then teleport to the Inn to drop it off every time... he would be here for a while.

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Chapter 762: Spirit pull

"Well, you can send workers from the Inn to the connected planets now. You can send some over and hope they teleport somewhere nearby, after which you can have them come here and collect it," Mary replied sheepishly, knowing that that wasn't the answer Lex was looking for.

Lex thought of various answers on his own. The most ideal citation would be if he could connect to the Inn like he connects to his spatial treasure. That he could teleport anything he wanted directly to the Inn. But that wasn't possible, whether because it was actually impossible or because the system did not want to cooperate with Lex.

The next best option was to get the most massive spatial treasure possible. This was actually quite hard, as he already had some of the largest spatial treasures available, whether it was his bangle or the container for Silent Wanderer.

He could place an order at the emporium for an even larger one, but that would surely take a lot of time, not to mention be very expensive on its own as well. Ironically, the liquidity he would need to pay

for such a treasure seemed to be right in front of him, but it was out of reach because Lex lacked exactly such a treasure.

He shook his head and made a decision. Although he was a greedy capitalist who would never say no to money, especially free money, he was not blind to what was actually precious.

Once, just to sate his aching heart, he filled his bangle with gold, teleported to the Inn, deposited it and then returned, but then he did not continue to do so. He had barely taken a drop from the hoard, and transporting all of it would surely take ages. Chances were that the treasures he would encounter deeper in were much more valuable than these mountains of gold right at the start.

With one last wistful glance to satisfy himself, Lex walked forward on the winding path through the mountains of gold all around him. After the first couple of mountains, Lex encountered glowing gems buried within the gold, illuminating the hoard.

Eventually, Lex started to jog as it was taking too long to navigate around the mountains. He was also concerned about the fact that although the dwarves had entered only a few minutes before him, he could not find any trace of them at all.

Every now and then, Lex would once again get lost in thoughts, but with Mary checking up on him constantly, he kept waking up.

Finally the trail reached a descending staircase and so Lex entered the 2nd layer of the treasure hoard.

Contrary to what Lex was expecting, the next layer actually consisted of a large garden. There were hundreds of thousands of fairies flying around, tending to countless flowers and plants. Instantly, Lex was able to tell that these were both very valuable, and also very toxic.

Holding his breath, Lex rushed through this room as well, completely undisturbed by the fairies. In fact, they seemed to not even sense his existence as they carried on with their tasks in unusual silence - though admittedly, a reason they might not have detected him was his suit as well.

The garden was well lit, showing a new pattern of illuminated chambers contrary to the rest of the planet which was completely dark. The plants also did not seem to mind the increasing heat, which by

now was causing Lex to sweat visibly. He was very grateful that his suit would not suffer from any sweat stains!

After finding another staircase, Lex descended to the third level. This level looked more like a museum than a hoard or collection. There were countless stages or pedestals built on both sides of the path with each containing items or treasures.

Although Lex wanted to ignore these as well, since he could not identify most of them even with his lenses, he was forced to stop by an overwhelming attraction his body felt towards a particular vial containing a dark purple liquid. Lex almost lost control of his own body, so strong was the attraction.

But, ultimately, he managed to control himself. He only placed the vial in his spatial ring and didn't immediately drink it like he wanted.

The strangest thing was how each of these treasures were so easily accessible, with no formation or protective glass even. To try it out, he randomly picked up a sword and a shield that was also placed nearby and encountered no obstruction at all.

Speaking of which, he wondered what that sword and shield were made of. To be a part of a dragon's collection they must be valuable. Were they incredibly strong, or did they perhaps only have collectors' value? Did dragons care about such things? What if...

"Lex, it's been a couple of minutes, you alright?" Mary asked, suddenly waking him from his stupor.

"Yeah, thanks, I'm fine..." he had only begun to say when he realized that he did not recognize his surroundings at all. Although he was still in the hoard, as he could tell by the countless spirit stones and fountain of spirit water, he had long passed the stages and podiums.

"Lex! LEX! Wake up!" Mary's voice suddenly woke Lex from yet another stupor, and he immediately realized his surroundings were different once again. Fear gripped his heart as he suddenly realized he was losing track of time. Maybe he should return to the Inn.

Speaking of the Inn, Lex had had a dragon there as well. Would it have had the same effect if the system hadn't been suppressing the harmful effects of its aura?

Despite his best efforts, Lex completely lost himself to the influence of the spirit pull, and walked through the massive dragon's hoard like a zombie. Mary, who had noticed his strangeness, had been yelling at him for hours, but it stopped working long ago.

He did not even notice when he crossed the corpses of a couple of dwarves, nor did he notice when he started walking over a puddle of freshly spilled blood.

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Chapter 763: Assaulted by a pervert

The hoard of a dragon was much vaster than anything Lex had imagined, and he would have been extremely surprised by how deep he descended into the planet were his mind not occupied by random thoughts. Besides the usual gold, jewels, treasures, herbs and spirit stones, there was also art, music, sculptures and other entities that Lex lacked the senses to even observe.

This particular dragon's favorite part of its hoard, however, was at the lowest level, and Lex was about to approach it. Currently, the chamber he was walking through was the second to last, and was the part of the hoard where the dragon collected members of various races!

Throughout the universe there were countless unique or mystical races who had unparalleled power or unbelievable abilities that made them extremely special as well as valuable. They too were a part of the dragons collection!

Various prisons lined the walls that Lex walked by, most of them made of glass so that the prisoner, or rather the 'specimen' was visible. Some, however, for extremely unique or unusual races required special prisons that were made from other more protective materials.

Though they were all extremely different, currently many of them shared one thing in common: they were extremely weak!

They were deprived of spirit energy inside their prison cell, and since the dragon had died many months ago, no one had fed them either. A few of the prisoners had even died. But, one prison cell made out of an unusual gray material even the Fancy contact lenses could not identify, had a broken wall.

Lex, however, did not notice any of that as he continued to walk. Lex had been extremely confident in his cultivation technique and even himself, which is why he opted to continue the exploration. He was not wrong to be confident, for his defense and self protection abilities were truly phenomenal. But, ultimately, there was a limit to what they could protect him from.

The spirit pull ability, technically, did not harm Lex in any way which is why his spirit's self defense failed, although the matter was more complex than just that. In the beginning, his strong mentality allowed him to retain lucidity, but the closer he got to the dragon, the worse it became.

Although Lex had numerous times even survived an attack from an Earth Immortal, if he were lucid now, he would be able to feel that the aura being radiated from the final chamber was much stronger and deeper than any Earth Immortal he had ever met. In fact, it was even greater than Ragnar's, and he was a Heaven Immortal!

So then, how could he, a Golden Core cultivator, stand a chance?

But, since spirit pull was just a passive ability brought about by the strength of the dragon's obsession, and was not purposefully focused on attracting everyone, there was a chance to break free. For example, the various dwarf corpses that Lex had crossed. In their final moments, right before they died, the threat of death had woken them up. But by then, it was much too late.

As Lex crossed the final dwarf corpse which belonged to the leader of the dwarves, he attracted the attention of a massive creature. It had eight legs, with four on each side of its body, much like a scorpion, but that is where the similarity ended. It had a long protruding neck covered in purple scales, a maw filled with rows of teeth dripping with blood and twelve reptilian eyes, each one suddenly focused on Lex.

The creature did not have arms or claws, but it did have unusually shaped wings protruding from its back, and the joints in the wings could readjust at a whim, making them dangerous weapons as well. It also had a long, thick tail that it could exert perfect control over.

The creature was extremely skinny at the moment, as if it had been starved near to the point of death, and feasting on dwarves did not seem to have done much for it.

But Lex's body... his body radiated an aura so attractive that the creature dropped the body it was currently feasting on, and slowly approached him. Unlike the rest, the creature was immune to the effects of spirit pull. In fact, were it near full strength, it would not have wasted even a glance on such pathetic prey. But the dragon had starved this particular creature for years, and so it was at its weakest.

It would not die so easily, but at the same time it could not exert all its strength either. Otherwise it would not have hid from the King every time he crossed, and would have preyed on him instead. But it did not matter. Slowly and steadily, the creature would regain its strength.

After studying Lex thoroughly, and concluding that he was only in the Golden core realm, the creature pounced. Like the dwarves, it expected the threat of death to wake him from the effects of spirit pull in the last moment, but oddly enough, that did not happen.

The creature did not ponder over what that was and furiously bit at his neck, its teeth digging in... something odd happened. There was no gush of delicious blood in its mouth, or the taste of flesh.

The confusion had barely registered when it felt an otherworldly grip around its neck, nearly causing a fracture in its current frail bones. Its face was forcefully pulled back, and what awaited it was a gaze filled with raging fury.

"Were you licking my neck, you creep?" Lex asked between gritted teeth as he struggled to understand what happened. He felt like was just assaulted by a pervert, and the sticky sensation of the creature's saliva on his neck grossed him out so much he finally woke from the effects of the spirit pull!

Before the creature could respond, or more likely retaliate, Lex could no longer hold on to his revolution! Still holding onto the creature from its neck, he picked it up and slammed it onto the ground!

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Chapter 764: Beatdown

So strong was the disgust that Lex felt that there was no indication of spirit pull affecting him at all. Lex was completely focused on completely killing the perverted creature that had... that had...

Just thinking about it pissed Lex off even more! He summoned the sword he had recently taken from the dragon's hoard and swung it without hesitation at the creature's necks. Unexpectedly, the sword completely shattered and an unusual aura latched onto Lex before disappearing. Lex was momentarily disappointed, but he did not want to waste too much time on useless things.

Much in the way he had quickly improved in hand to hand combat, new and inventive ideas came to Lex for how he could possibly kill the perverted creature. Yet before he attacked, Lex quickly changed out of his stealth suit and into his defensive suit. If he had been wearing this from the start, the creature would never have had the opportunity to lick his neck.

The creature also recovered from the shock it had received and had retreated from Lex. Fortunately for it, when Lex tried to slash its neck he had to let go, otherwise the creature would forever be stuck in Lex's vice grip. Lex's physical strength was abnormal from the very start, let alone now that his cultivation technique had changed.

Yet oddly enough, he had not been able to crush that creature's neck with only one hand. Maybe using two hands would get the job done, but just surviving even one hand was a testament to how strong it was.

The creature had barely recovered its strength after devouring the blood and soul of a few dwarves, so instead of attacking Lex directly, it used its innate ability and targeted his spirit. It hissed threateningly while it extended its wings, releasing a sonic attack that would disorient Lex - or that's what it had thought.

With the weapon failing him, Lex relied on nothing but his good old fist and smashed it into the creature's face. Unexpectedly, the creature didn't lose any teeth in that clash!

Lex was surprised by the sturdiness of the creature's body, while the creature was surprised by how ridiculous Lex's strength was. The creature's body was easily multiple times bigger than Lex, yet it was being thrown around like a plaything.

A similar scene repeated itself a few more times while the creature tried to retaliate and Lex tried to pummel it. Neither made much progress, though admittedly Lex was venting a little by beating the creature up.

Finally, the creature became fed up and used one more of its racial traits, though the cost of this was quite heavy. The creature, who had gained a momentary respite from Lex's beatings began to turn illusory, as if it was fading from existence. Lex did not want to give it the opportunity to escape so he attacked again, but his fists went right through the creature, as if it were just a mirage.

Despite the situation, the creature could not resist showing Lex a smug look, though of course Lex could not decipher its facial features. The creature had an unusual affinity for spirituality, and so could convert its physical form into one akin to spirituality! In simple words, it could literally turn itself into a thought.

But the smug look on its face froze when Lex tried to grab onto it, and this time succeeded. The effects of Impervious Hands were truly manyfold, and beyond what Lex even knew. He had no idea that he was physically holding onto an idea at the moment, nor did he care. He just wished to slap the creature, so he did!

"No, wait, stop!" the creature, still with fresh blood tainting its teeth, began to cry. "We're not enemies! That earlier was just a misunderstanding!" The creature tried to plead with Lex, but he adhered to a strict no association with perverts rule, so he was not interested in talking to it, and smashed his knee into its face.

But no matter how Lex beat it up, the creature did not even bleed. The creature could also similarly not even get past the defense of his clothes, let alone once again try to bite his flesh. The fight, thus, seemed to be going nowhere.

"I, I can help you!" the creature pleaded! "I know the dragon's secrets! I know where it hides its treasures!"

"We're inside its treasure hoard, idiot!" Lex finally spoke, and kicked it again. No matter what, he did not let go of the creature for he had a strong feeling that if it disappeared, he would not get his hands on it again.

If physical attacks didn't work, he would try soul attacks...

"No, that's not... I, I know how the dragon died! I have its secrets! Please, just stop!"

Although Lex was not hurting it, his attacks still caused its current weak body pain. Moreover, as he got ready to use Evisceration, a subtle premonition of danger filled the creature's mind, making it even more desperate.

Luckily for it, it finally said something Lex was interested in.

"How would you know how the dragon died? If you were nearby, how did you survive when the dragon did not?"

"I... I have a very special ability! I can tap into the energy released by others' thoughts around me! Although I was trapped in the prison cell, I could still read some of the dragon's passive thoughts from time to time. It was the only entertainment I had, so I always did my best!"

Lex narrowed his eyes as he wondered whether to give the creature a chance. It was most likely lying, but on the off chance that it wasn't...

"How did the dragon die? You better tell me everything, or trust me, I will make you join the dragon!"

"It... it all started a few months ago! A strange golden light filled the entire planet, even inside my cell. Later, I learned from the dragon that the same light seemed to have appeared around the entire realm, and that it was filled with mysterious laws it had never felt before. Unfortunately for it, that light was a lot more mysterious than even the dragon realized..."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 765: Screaming

Although Lex had been preoccupied by his own cultivation at the time, he had long since learned of the phenomena that had taken place during his breakthrough to the Golden core realm. He was informed of the Golden hue within the Inn by Mary, and later on he had heard various guests talk about the hue in their respective planets as well. It was also the subject of many conspiracy theories on the Henali portal, which is why Lex found it hard to forget the golden hue caused by his breakthrough.

He could not fathom why his breakthrough had caused the hue, nor why its effects were so grand and widespread. The hue had even caused countless new religions to sprout across the entire realm, as races with limited scope of knowledge or understanding took it to be a sign from a deity.

That had somehow sped up the collection of divine energy for his 'Wish' by the system, but it was still below 10% filled to grant him his wish, so Lex never thought of it.

Now, once again, he was brought face to face with yet another repercussion of the phenomena of his breakthrough.

"Studying the strange light allowed the dragon to have a few breakthroughs, so it went into closed door cultivation. For immortals, the chance for a breakthrough may come only once a million years, so once it comes they can forsake everything to pursue it.

"But what it didn't know was that the golden hue allowed him to see hope for a breakthrough, but it also... it also woke up a primordial being who had been asleep."

The creature trembled as it recalled the being it had seen. As it was able to read some of the thoughts of any being close to it, the creature had glimpsed into the mind of that... of that thing.

"I'm not too clear on the specifics, but I was able to read some of the beings thoughts while it was waking up. It had been trapped inside a crystal that the dragon had in its treasure. Outwardly, the crystal looked no different from any other spirit crystal, but contained within was an entity perhaps as old as this realm itself.

"It took a few months for the entity to wake up, but once it did..." the creature trembled once again. "I don't know what happened exactly, but the creature did something to the dragon, and I felt its thoughts completely die, yet for some reason the body is still alive. Then the creature disappeared, and I haven't felt its thoughts since. It probably left a long time ago. With the dragon dead, I could finally try to escape. I... I have no other intentions. I just want to recover enough energy to escape this planet!"

The creature was clearly lying about its purpose, but as far as Lex could tell using his sixth sense, it seemed to be telling the truth about the dragon and the thing that killed it. Of course, there was no way of knowing for sure.

While Lex was still lucid, he looked around and saw the various corpses on the ground. The creature had not eaten their bodies. It had merely bit into their flesh before eating something else. Lex had a strong feeling that the creature had fed on their spirituality.

Just as Lex was evaluating what the creature had told it, he felt something strange and the creature disappeared, even from within his grip! Lex was genuinely surprised, for this was the first time something had managed to escape the grip of his Impervious hands, but it did not seem to have gone away.

This was because a feeling of extreme danger surrounded Lex, even causing the hair on his body to stand on end.

He immediately extended his spirit and soul sense, but to no avail.

"Ahhh!" Lex could not help but scream as he fell to the ground on his knees as a mind rending pain filled his head. He felt like something had attacked his very consciousness, as if it was a physical entity to be touched.

Normally, that would just be a metaphor, but in Lex's case, due to his strange physique, that was an actual fact!

Gritting his teeth, Lex entered the Berserk state and pushed this unusual ability to the limit of what he could endure. In essence, the Berserk state was a state that drove his emotions to extremes beyond normal while simultaneously strengthening Lex's physical strength. It did this by feeding on the extreme emotions.

Normally, this was an excellent ability to wreak havoc when a lot of brute force was required and little brainpower, for the extreme emotions made it difficult to think too deeply. At the moment, however, Lex was using it to strengthen his body, and thereby his spirituality, while at the same time making his mind chaotic with extreme emotions.

A shrill scream filled the hall they were in, and the creature fell to the ground appearing in front of Lex, as if it had emerged from his body.

"I knew you were a pervert!" Lex roared, and lost all notion of holding back and gathering any information. This creature was too strange, not to mention dangerous.

Swinging his fist like a divine hammer, Lex smashed the creature with all his strength, giving it little time to respond. At the same time, Lex launched Evisceration, tearing into the creature's soul.

The creature screamed, and disappeared again. The reason Lex had not held onto this time was because he had clearly learned that the creature had entered his mind somehow because he was in contact with it. If they weren't touching maybe it would be harder for it to enter his mind, but that did not seem to be the case.

Lex suffered another rip in his thoughts, although the pain seemed to only elevate his extreme emotions. Since this creature was sensitive to his thoughts, he wondered if it would be affected by them too?

Immediately he thought of the deep aura he had felt when he tried to sit in on a meeting of Dao Lords. As the memory flashed through his mind, Lex suddenly became dizzy and weak. The creature, however, screamed much louder than before.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 766: Mindmeld

The creature's scream reverberated across just as it fell out of Lex's body once again. But this time, that was not all. The creature started writing on the ground like a poisoned insect. It used its own wings to beat its own body while its eight legs curled up and dug into its own flesh.

Lex was not able to take advantage of the situation immediately, as he himself was recovering from his sudden weakness and fatigue. Fortunately, he had only recalled that meeting for a moment instead of dwelling on it, or he might have once again succumbed to just the memory of it.

When he came to, he saw that the creature he had been unable to harm at all lay on the ground covered in its own blood, though it wasn't dead yet.

Lex had been forcibly brought out of his Berserk state by the mere memory of that meeting, which is why he retained the sense to not rush over and attack immediately. But that did not mean he gave up.

Physical attacks weren't working, and though Evisceration hurt the creature, it wasn't doing significant damage. It was at this moment he was really regretting not having a strong attack that used his spirit

sense, for he had a feeling that such attacks would be most effective. But instead of lamenting what he lacked, Lex focused on what he had.

Lex entered his Flow state, and focused on his spatial affinity. Although he was not a master of it yet, he had teleported enough to learn tidbits about his affinity since he got it. Moreover, his increased analytical skills made it so that Lex could learn new skills much faster than before.

The easiest thing to do would be to manipulate space to somehow cut the creature into pieces, and that's exactly what Lex tried to do. Unfortunately, creating a 'blade' out of morphed space was not exactly easy, let alone anything else.

Lex did, however, manage to warp space a little exactly where the creature was, causing it to suffer immense pain, waking it from its stupor finally. All of its eyes focused on Lex with a newfound viscousness, as the creature tried to disappear once again. But that was easier said than done.

Lex kept manipulating space within the creature's body, trying to tear space open, or use space to tear the creature open. Either one would do, though all he effectively managed to do was torture it.

"Wait, I'm sorry! I know the dragon's secrets! I can tell you!" the creature pleaded, but Lex was no longer going to fall for such basic tricks. Although he longed for the satisfaction of beating the creature up with his own hands, he had to rely on spatial affinity. He could also come up with arrays to harm the creature, but somehow he felt like he couldn't make arrays strong enough to do that.

Theoretically, arrays could achieve the strongest power level the universe could support, since the universe itself powered arrays. Practically speaking, Lex had hit a bottleneck when it came to his arrays. Maybe his way of making them was obsolete or faulty, or maybe he didn't know enough significantly strong characters. Either way, his arrays seemed to be limited to the Nascent level in terms of power for the moment.

"Lex Williams, don't push me too far!" the creature roared as it tried to get up. But its efforts were in vain as its legs were too weak at the moment. The creature had clearly read through some of Lex's memories, which chilled Lex's heart!

He absolutely could not afford to let the creature live now. Since keeping a distance clearly didn't help, Lex leaped forward and immediately put its head in a lock and placed his right hand on the creature's forehead. His intention was to scramble the things brain!

As if sensing Lex's intention, the creature roared angrily and resisted Lex, but in terms of physical strength, it was clearly below Lex. At the same time, it tried to use its ability to disappear once again, but clearly it was too hurt to do so. It seemed the memory of that meeting had hurt it a lot more than Lex expected.

They struggled for a few dozen minutes before Lex suddenly succeeded in causing a tiny tear in space, within the creature's skull! The creature died instantly, and Lex actually tripped because it had stopped resisting his strength so suddenly.

Lex groaned, feeling exhausted, but did not delay at all. He immediately stored the creature's body within his spatial ring and began teleporting back to the Inn. He could not risk becoming a victim to spirit pull again.

Yet the next moment, the sound of a notification distracted him.

New Notification: System feature 'Murderer' activated.

Immediately he felt the change, as he was reminded of the feature he had unlocked so long ago, yet for some reason never triggered.

Murderer: Every time the host kills someone stronger than them outside of system grounds, the host can learn one of the victim's abilities/techniques!

The ability had finally been triggered, and Lex could tell that the system was transferring some information directly into his brain. He had not suddenly 'unlocked' a new ability, but the method to replicate the effects of the creature's ability using spiritual energy was fed into Lex's memories.

The ability was one of the most bizarre abilities Lex had ever encountered. It allowed Lex to turn his body into a 'thought' and enter someone's spirituality. What did that entail, and what he could do once he achieved those details he was not given, but clearly this was far from a simple technique.

The next moment, Lex teleported to the Inn, finally leaving the hoard. The effects of the spirit pull on him disappeared, but Lex had not given up on the hoard yet. Since the dwarves had a way to protect themselves from it, the emporium surely did as well.

He put aside thoughts of his newly gained ability, which he aptly named 'Mindmeld' and teleported over to X-14. He had some shopping to do.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 767: Secrets

"William, if this lead is real, we won't need to worry about accumulating credit to help you heal at all. We can directly ask the Henali to help you recover to your peak state and still have some credit leftover."

"To be honest, even I am surprised by this outcome. Back then, I acted out on a whim, but who knew it would pay off," said William with a clear look of disbelief on his face.

Their three brothers, Batu, Henry and Nisar, also accompanied them. For them all to gather like this, outside of the Midnight Inn, where they could all teleport to, was a rare occasion and showed how significant this event was. If all went well, they could also gain a few benefits this time. But, more importantly, they had important matters to handle afterwards.

The Jotun empire had decided to move out of the Pental galaxy for various reasons, and as the heads of the empire, they had to ensure that the most important and sensitive secrets of the empire were either removed or erased before their departure.

"It's about time one of our descendants did something worthwhile," said Batu. He was the head of the Togoldor noble family who managed the empire's military. Although he and the others had many descendants, and many of them were very powerful and had made many contributions, it was clear that Batu was not satisfied with the results. Their gains and victories were small scale, relatively speaking, and hardly ever influenced the entire empire. Although such a request might be too much to put on a few descendants, weren't the five of them handling the entire empire? They were human too, and in fact had much worse conditions when they were starting out. Yet none of their descendants were qualified to be their equals yet.

"If being great was so easy, everybody would do it," Nisar said softly. As the head of the Butt family, and in charge of the empire's finances, one would expect him to be more mild tempered than his brother. In fact, that was far from the truth. Although he looked of mild and tepid nature, Nisar had more blood on his hands than any of the other brothers. He could not be blamed either - after all, wealth begets greed, and he had the wealth of several galaxies under his control.

Before their conversation could continue, they finally reached their destination, and entered a room covered in isolation formations. Inside, a beast seemed to be waiting for them. Upon their arrival, the beast confirmed their identities before crushing a small trinket and disappearing.

None of the brothers found this odd, and waited patiently. A few moments later, another person teleported into the room.

Belle looked extremely pale and weak, in spite of the fact that she had been getting treatment for the past few weeks. Her eyes, however, burned with the same ever present ferocity that she normally exuded.

She looked at the five men in the room and recognized them all. Her direct ancestor, William, was the one she was supposed to meet, but she did not mind that he had brought along a few extra people. After all, they were the big shots of the empire!

She looked at William, already used to the fact that he looked identical to her brother. She had never commented on it nor mentioned it, because it was completely irrelevant. Looking like your ancestors was quite a common occurrence actually, especially among cultivators who could live long enough to actually meet their prior generations.

"Hiding in Ventura to erase all your traces, a remarkable plan," William said, feeling extremely pleased with Belle. "I only hope your efforts were worth it. As soon as we can confirm the veracity of your information, we can hand it over to the relevant people. You don't need to worry, your reward won't go to anyone else besides you."

"You can confirm it however you like," she said without any hint of deference. "Nor am I worried about anyone stealing my rewards. After all, without me, no one will be able to follow the lead. I had to use my bloodline ability to mark Jeffery's ship before it escaped into a wormhole. Only after the effects of my bloodline overdraft disappear, and I can use it again, will I be able to trace it."

William was already used to Belle's attitude, and the others didn't care too much either.

"Let me speed up your recovery," Jotun said as he reached out to her, but the moment he placed a hand on her shoulder he frowned, and withdrew his hand. His brothers all turned to look, and saw a single drop of blood escape his index finger before the pinprick on his finger disappeared.

Surprise and shock filled their eyes as a storm brewed in their hearts. Jotun was the strongest human in the realm, and in the highest realm that the Origin realm would normally allow: the Celestial realm!

It was not an exaggeration to state that a million galaxies would not be able to produce a single expert on the same level as Jotun, so powerful was he. Yet now, he had actually bled!

"There are... unusual inscriptions in your body," Jotun said, his voice filled with confusion.

"Yeah, my old man placed them there," Belle responded evenly.

"Your father? How is that possible? The sword intent used to carve those inscriptions even harmed me!"

This time, the most shocked was not Jotun but William! His descendant was so powerful, so why had he never heard of him?

"My old man has too many secrets. My mother... she has even more. Last I saw my father, he was merely in the Nascent realm, but even I dared not mess with him. His sword intent... no, his Sword Dao is too powerful. He's a bona fide freak."

She took a deep breath, and before anyone could ask anything, spoke again.

"Don't bother asking any questions. The answer will most likely be that I don't know, and besides, I'm not here to talk about my family. Contact whoever you need to contact, and let's get this show on the road. I've already wasted too much time recovering from my overdraft."

"NO NEED," spoke a deafening voice in all their minds, and a figure appeared in the room alongside them. "HIDING IN VENTURA TO ERASE YOUR TRACES WAS SMART, BUT THE MOMENT YOU RETURNED, SO DID YOUR KARMA. ANY DAO LORD STILL LOOKING FOR TRACES OF THE TERRORISTS WOULD EASILY FIND YOU."

Before Jotun, or anyone else, could do anything, the figure disappeared alongside Belle. Jotun paled, and immediately contacted the Henali. He could only hope that the figure that appeared was working for them or else they might not only have lost the lead to Jeffery, the mystery surrounding the mysterious swordsman would also remain unsolved.

While he did that, William once again retrieved the files in his family related to Belle and her immediate family. Perhaps it was time to pay closer attention to this group.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 768: Tax refund

On a remote planet, devoid of all life, a swordsman was sitting cross legged with a normal looking double sided sword on his lap. The area where the man sat was completely black, as if the surface of the planet had been charred by a strong flame, yet the char did not rub off on his clothes.

The sound of thunder rumbled in the sky above him, causing the cultivator to open up his eyes and look up. His lightning tribulation was finally coming, though that did not seem to elicit any emotion from the man.

"All the oracles, fortune tellers and prophets in the market seem to have disappeared," said a woman reading from a file. Though she was quite a distance away from him, her voice carried as if she was right beside him.

"I told you, we should stop relying on them," the man calmly replied as he stood up.

"Well excuse me for trying. One of my daughters, and my son have disappeared and I have no other way to look for them. What do you want me to do?"

"Put your shoes on, it's almost time," the man said looking up.

The woman grumbled, but she listened to the man and quickly put on her shoes that she had taken off while she rested. The man seemed cavalier and uninterested in the fate of his children, but it was only because he could sense that they were still all alive.

While the two were chatting, the man's lightning tribulation began, yet the lightning did not have time to fall. As soon as it formed, a sword slash filled with incredibly sharp sword intent cut the skies open, revealing an unknown space.

The man and the woman quickly jumped through the opening, leaving the planet for some unknown destination.

Silence filled the room as Lex and Powell stood face to face. They were staring each other in the eyes, neither willing to back off. A silent tension began to build as the seconds passed by as neither said anything, though they both knew the value of each second surpassed that of an entire spirit stone mine.

Tick. One spirit stone mine. Tock. Another spirit stone mine. Tick-tock. Two more mines, and each second that passed by like this, they were losing out on mines like this!

Finally, Powell could no longer contain himself and opened his mouth, but the door behind him swung open and another Powell walked out! For some reason, Lex knew that he was once again face to face with the original Powell.

"Are you serious? You have unlimited access to a dragon's hoard?"

"Yes, but I cannot say for how long. You can decide whether you want to suffer a loss by wasting time negotiating, or you want to minimize your losses and just give me what I want."

"Are you willing to sign a soul contract? The only stipulation will be that inside the hoard you will look for a very specific treasure for me and do your best to get it without having to suffer mortal danger. If there's too much danger, you can stop, or if you don't find it then it's my loss. But if you do find it, you have to hand it over. In exchange, I'll give you the best protection we have against spirit pull, and the largest spatial treasure we have available. Both will be free, as long as you sign the soul contract!"

Lex raised an eyebrow, but did not give his emotions away in any other way.

"Let me see the contract. You should also tell me what the treasure is and where it might be. Every second I waste, someone else could be closing in."

"It's called Peronian Jade. I'll give you a compass that looks for it, and a special container for it as well. The jade has no harmful qualities so you don't need to worry about anything, but you have to give every bit of it you find. It'll be a part of the contract."

He pondered for a moment, but had no recollection of the item. Although it was no doubt going to be extremely valuable, Lex would be getting sufficient gains in exchange. He examined the soul contract but found no tampering, or any other conditions besides the one Powell stated.

He didn't like having to sign a soul contract, but considering he would be getting two extremely valuable treasures in exchange, Lex suppressed his discomfort.

"Fine, I'll sign it," he said. "But first, I want to see what you'll be giving me."

Powell nodded, and brought out two items. One was a large drum that could be worn on one's back. It was not exactly inconspicuous, but it contained 1 mile square of area inside it. Unfortunately, that was still too small compared to the dragon hoard, but it was big enough for now. The second item was a crown that looked quite flimsy. In fact, Lex was slightly concerned he might break it by just picking it up, but Powell assured him that that was the best tool they had to protect him from spirit pull.

Not wanting to waste any time, Lex signed the contract using his finger as the pen and spirit energy as the ink. As soon as he signed it he felt an uncomfortable sensation in his body. It was something he could ignore, but at the same time it was mildly suffocating, as if he wore a tie too tightly.

Powell also handed him a thin, black piece of jade, which was the compass that would point him towards Peronian Jade.

With everything in order, Lex promptly left the shop, and then teleported to the Inn, then back to the hoard. Barely a couple of minutes had passed, but Lex's situation was completely different, hopefully.

He put on the flimsy crown and tested to see if his thoughts still drifted. Nearly 30 seconds later, Lex finally concluded that he was safe, as he was able to retain his lucidity throughout.

The capitalist in Lex was finally set free, and he grinned like a madman as he descended to the bottom most floor of the hoard. Getting free money and treasure felt even better than collecting tax refunds!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 769: Disbelief

Before rushing down to the last floor, where he strongly suspected he would be faced with the dragon, or what remained of it, Lex took out the black jade piece that Powell had given him. If the Peronian Jade existed, the compass would find it.

In all honesty, Lex did not mind doing the man this favor. He only wished that he could have kept a small piece of jade so as to study what was so special about it. There was a strong possibility that the jade was just an item he needed to sell to another client, but regardless, the overwhelmingly favorable deal that Lex had gotten made him curious.

As soon as he summoned the jade, it vibrated and an arrow appeared pointing down. There indeed was Peronian Jade, and it was at the lowest level of the hoard! Lex subtly nodded, as if such a thing only made sense.

He put the jade away, but before he could depart, his ever present, ever reliable holographic assistant spoke up.

"Hey Lex, do you think you could do me a favor?" she asked, her voice tinged with shyness and awkwardness. It was apparent that she was feeling very uncomfortable about the request she wanted to make.

"How can I help?" Lex asked, though he suspected he knew what was coming.

"Would it be possible for you to find me a very special item present in the hoard? It... it can help me make a body."

"A body?" Lex repeated, genuinely surprised although he anticipated a request might be coming his way. "For you to get a body, wouldn't it have to be given to you by the system?"

"Yes, technically that is the proper way of doing things. But you are well aware of loopholes in the system rules, and this is one of them. If I make my own body, instead of getting one from the system, I'll have much fewer restrictions on me than usual. I'll be able to answer all your questions that your insufficient authority prevents me from informing you."

"What do you need?"

"In case the dragon down below has a child, or is about to have a child, he may have prepared a special blood altar in its private chamber to nourish the egg. If that's the case, there will be a scale inside the altar. I need that scale."

"I'll keep an eye out," Lex said, before continuing down. He did not question Mary at the moment about why she knew what a dragon might do to nurture its child, or about her desire to get a body. He felt like he wouldn't get a proper answer, and even if he did, he was currently on a time crunch so now was not the time.

He had taken a look at the floor he was in for anything valuable he might find, but this floor seemed to have nothing besides prisons holding various races and the dwarves' corpses. Neither interested Lex at the moment so he decisively left.

A few minutes after Lex left, one of the dwarf corpses moved and picked itself up. The leader, Barley. Seemed to be recovering from death itself, though he did not seem concerned with that. Instead he gaze seemed fixed on the staircase leading down below.

"Lex William?" he murmured to himself as his strength slowly recovered. He seemed to have heard the name when the creature had yelled it out earlier.

Lex, who was descending the stairs, paused for a moment and turned around. His senses were extremely sharp and detected some kind of sound, although he was not sure what it was. A sense of urgency filled his heart.

The first dwarf that Lex had seen, Terrol, had mentioned that elves were on their way for news of the dragon's demise had already spread. Others could also be arriving even as he waited descended.

No longer holding back, Lex began to rush to the bottom of the stairs, though he did not drop his guard. If there was one strange creature here, there could be more. Moreover, the King was supposed to be here somewhere, though the fact that the sounds of Lex's fight had not attracted him was unusual.

Lex wiped sweat off his brow one more time as he neared the entrance to the final chamber. By now, not only were the effects of Dragons Might causing Lex minor problems, but the heat was also causing him to sweat nonstop. If he failed to wipe his brow, whether by hand or spirit sense, the sweat would get into his eyes, making it hard for him to see.

When he finally reached the last step, he had already entered the final chamber. There was no door or barrier, and the entrance appeared instantly even if it could not be seen earlier.

The moment Lex entered, his knees buckled and he crashed into the ground with full force, causing the ground to tremble. He had not been dropped just to his knees, but his chest had also been pushed down to the ground, his face smacking the floor.

He had not been attacked by anyone. Instead, the moment he entered the chamber, he was hit by the full force of the Dragons Might. Irrespective of his unwavering pride, and the immense strength packed within his body, when he finally came face to face with a dragon outside of the Inn, Lex had been forced into nearly a prostrating state.

"What... the hell..." he said with gritted teeth as he slowly brought his arms beside himself and pushed himself up. When he was finally able to lift his face off the floor he looked forward, and suddenly went blank. The sight of the dragon before him was like a clap of thunder in his mind, making him blank and causing him to fall onto the ground once more.

When he finally recovered, Lex was struck by endless disbelief. He... he could not even look at the dragon without suffering, since its aura was completely unrestrained. It was only now that he was beginning to understand how massive a role the Inn played in neutralizing the effects of cultivators natural aura. If it were any other Golden core cultivator instead of him, they may have already been seriously injured or even died!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 770: In his bones

A small pool of sweat formed on the ground around Lex, though it did not last long as it began boiling shortly after. The scorching heat of the stone floor did not bother Lex nearly as much as the shock of what he was suffering.

He knew there was a difference, there had to be one. But for him, who cultivated the most mysterious and powerful technique in the universe, to not be able to even stand in the presence of a dead dragon was astounding.

Well, to be fair, Lex was merely in the Golden core realm, while the dragon was definitely stronger than the Earth Immortal realm. That meant that it was at least a Heaven Immortal, if not a Celestial Immortal. That was a difference of at least 3 or 4 major realms.

Lex closed his eyes and took a few deep breaths, calming himself down. He had to collect himself and figure out a way to resist the Dragons Might. He somewhat understood why he was taken by surprise by the sudden increase in the power of the Might. The deepest chamber must have special barriers to prevent the aura from going out, or else Lex expected the entire planet might suffer due to it.

But none of that mattered right now. He had to overcome this, and not just because all his looting depended on it. Lex's ego, or more accurately, his new sense of self would not allow him to just let things go the way they were.

He firmly believed that while he had much of his success because of the system and his technique, he considered himself and his persistence and skill the defining factor for his success. He did not mind the fact that he was pushed down, although that wasn't pleasant either. But he absolutely could not allow himself to remain groveling on the ground.

When Lex reopened his eyes a fire seemed to be lit within them, and once again he picked himself up. This time, he kept his gaze focused on the ground as he lifted himself, feeling each muscle and nerve aching as he pushed himself to the limit.

Neither Harden nor Impervious Hand or any other technique seemed to help at this moment, as the force pushing him down could not be so simply blocked. It was a result of the natural hierarchy of

beings. It was the appropriate reaction shown by a being at the bottom of the Cosmic Ascendance Spectrum towards a being at the top.

Lex circulated his spiritual energy as fast as he could, fueling his aching body, but that did not lessen the trembling in his hands. Suddenly, Lex understood what it must have felt like for the dwarf when its bones broke under the weight of the Dragons Might, his because he could hear the bones in his hands cracking.

But nothing, not the immeasurable weight pushing him down, not the failure of his techniques to help, not the pain that seemed to transcend his physical body and pierce his very soul, and not the voice screaming inside his heart to just give up and teleport back to the Inn could stop Lex.

After an excruciatingly long time, Lex managed to pick himself up... into a crawling position. On his hands and knees, Lex gasped for air as if he had done the most intense exercise of his life. There were aches in his body in places he didn't even know existed, or could hurt.

Compared to the mighty beings of the universe, he was truly naught but a pitiful ant, if that. As countless negative thoughts assaulted his mind, making his confidence waver and weakening his resolve, he could not help but remember one of his earlier musings. He wondered what aura was, and where it came from.

Lex believed his own state of mind affected it, but so did his actions. He had developed a powerful aura without even realizing it, influenced by his time as the Innkeeper. He wondered if, now that almost every advantage his system and his technique had given him seemed to be stripped away, he continued to perform incredible feats, how that would affect his aura.

After all, previously he only believed he would have been incredible even without his advantages. Now he had the opportunity to prove it.

Gritting his teeth and strengthening his resolve, Lex lifted his neck and looked forward.

There, dominating his vision, was a massive golden-brown beast that seemed larger than life. All measurements seemed to fail as in his eyes, the dragon seemed the largest thing he had ever seen. No mountain, no planet, no star could compare to the enormity that was this beast before him.

The dragon was resting on all four of its legs, its wings neatly folded over its back. Its tail seemed to coil neatly on the floor beside it, as if it was resting. If one paid attention, they could see its chest rise and fall, indicating that it was breathing softly as if asleep. Yet contradictory to that very observation, the dragon's massive yellow eyes seemed to be open, and for some reason, seemed to be focusing solely on Lex.

He could not use his spirit or soul sense, and his instincts seemed to be failing right now as well. Still, somehow, he knew that the dragon's body was alive, but its soul was already dead. What sat in front of him was a living corpse, in a way.

Thunder rumbled in Lex's might and his consciousness itself seemed under attack, for the sight itself of the dragon was too noble for him - let alone the fact that they were making eye contact. Tears of blood began to leak out of Lex's nose, giving the world a red tinge, yet Lex did not blink. Instead, he focused on a soft, elevated groove on the dragon's forehead. There seemed to be something there, though Lex could not see it properly from this distance.

But he didn't care exactly what it was. He saw that spot and something deep inside of him seemed to wake up. An urge to resist, to rebel, to bite and claw against whatever crap list told him his place was below the dragon seemed to swell in his heart.

At first, that voice was small and barely audible against the cacophony of voices in his heart telling him to retreat to the Inn and take it easy. But the longer he stared at the dragon, the stronger the voice grew.

His tears of blood dripped off his face and mixed with the pool of boiling sweat below him, only to sizzle as well and fill the air with an acrid smell. But that unpleasant smell seemed to reinvigorate Lex. It was the smell of pain, of fighting, of resistance.

The voice in his heart, the smell in the air, the ache in his bones, the unwillingness in his soul all joined together to form an unstoppable force that slowly filled every fiber of Lex's being. His gaze still locked on the dragon's forehead, Lex continued his effort to stand up straight. His stupid back had bent down, but he would not leave it like that.