

## **Innkeeper 801**

The Innkeeper

Chapter 801: Nine years

Lex was not even remotely tempted by Bacterius' offer. As if the man himself was not suspicious enough, he was refusing to properly explain what the invitation was or who it was from. He also did not explain its purpose properly, and seemed more focused on teasing Lex.

Perhaps inviting Lex was just an excuse, and in reality he hoped that Lex would not attend. Something like this could be a shady way of ensuring the success of someone who would consider Lex a threat.

Of course, this was just a random guess Lex had, and was one of endless possibilities.

"I don't need to test my pride, nor validate my worth. Thank you for the invitation, but if that is all, I am not interested."

Maybe if Bacterius had gone about it a different way Lex would at least be curious about the tournament. After all, Bacterius himself had proved himself to be quite powerful, and yet he was only in charge of extending invitations. Clearly this matter was far from simple.

Moreover, if the tournament really encompassed everyone across the Origin realm, then Lex could make a few guesses of his own over who the tournament was being held by. But in his current mood, he was not the least bit interested.

Bacterius, who had been grinning in confidence earlier, froze upon hearing Lex's refusal. He had been sure that would work. He even watched a few marketing videos that said he had to bait his clients into developing curiosity before he could get them. He planned this out thoroughly, but it was not going well.

His smile faded a bit as he quickly thought of his next plan of action. Among all his peers, he had the lowest number of accepted invitations. If that did not change, he would be humiliated.

"If you are not interested, that's fine," Bacterius said, feigning disinterest. He remembered the marketing video said he had to appear as if he did not need the clients business, but rather that his business was bringing benefits to the client.

"However, it won't hurt to know a little about the tournament either way. Afterwards, if you still remain uninterested, that is up to you. No one is forced to attend."

Bacterius felt that his shift in strategy was extremely flawless, and that Lex would not notice at all. But Lex, who spent countless hours dealing with guests and talking with people of all ilk, immediately picked up when Bacterius changed his body language and actual language as well.

He immediately made a judgment that Bacterius was someone with an incredibly high level of cultivation who had lived for a very long time, and thus was not used to speaking to people. He was more used to others sucking up to him and hanging on his every word, so that he never needed to make any effort at all.

"Some things you are genuinely not qualified to know, and are even better off remaining unaware of. But no doubt, you have heard of a few things. Have you ever heard of the war with the Fuegan? You've surely heard of the Henali Conventions. You probably feel like these things are too far away from you, and while that may be the case now, as long your cultivation keeps rising that won't always be the case.

"Well, this tournament is an opportunity to get a head start on these things, and secure the future of your cultivation by getting in contact with the peak of the Origin realm. The purpose of the tournament is to uncover the best of the best, and provide them with the support they need to properly flourish.

"You probably know how difficult it is to cultivate. For now, you can get by on the resources you accumulate on your own. But as your level grows, the resources you need will grow ever scarce. To accumulate them you will need the power of an entire organization or sect. When you enter the immortal realm, growing will be even harder. Entire galaxies are unable to give birth to a single Heavenly immortal all too often. That's not because those galaxies lack the necessary resources, but that they are too scattered and well hidden. It is almost impossible to regularly come across all your required resources on your own, let alone get your hands on incredible techniques and special items that can help you maintain the overwhelming strength you have in your current realm. After all, although you can surpass your realm now, there is no guarantee that in higher realms you won't become average.

"But through this tournament, if you can prove yourself, you will be given the best opportunities across the entire realm, let alone galaxy. Maybe someone of your skill has already been invited to Ventura.

That is one path cultivators can take, but it is not the only path. Moreover, joining Ventura comes with its own restrictions, and is not suitable for everyone.

"This tournament, however, is an opportunity that comes with no strings attached. Of course, if you get selected, and become eligible for the next stages, then you can choose whether you want to continue or not. After all, at that point there will be a few conditions. But that comes later. Here, I'm leaving the entry token with you. The tournament will begin in nine years. You can decide what to do by then."

Without waiting for Lex to reject again, Becterus disappeared, leaving behind what looked like a convention coupon. Lex... did not know how to respond. It seemed teleporting away to end a conversation was not just a habit he had.

He looked at the coupon and scanned it with his spirit sense, but discovered nothing extraordinary about it except that it had his name on it.

After considering it briefly, he decided to put it in his spatial bangle. He would leave it at the Inn for now. Nine years was a long time, who knew what the situation would be then.

He closed his eyes and began meditating. He had to wait for the confirmation from Hix, and for this planet to connect to the Inn.

He decided not to leave his room until everything was done, and he could leave this planet. There was already so much trouble, he did not want to attract more.

Slowly the day turned to night, and nothing worth mentioning happened - to Lex at least. On the border of the town, a pale elf was running as if his life depended on it. A few miles behind him, cloaked figures seemed to be searching for his tracks.

## The Innkeeper

### Chapter 802: Boring when nothing happens

Lex spent the next few hours peacefully cultivating in his room, but discovered that it was much harder for him to lose his sense of time like before. Previously, Lex would get lost in the feeling of cultivating, especially since he could feel himself grow stronger.

But now that he had tasted how it felt to cultivate atop a dragon, normal cultivation no longer enticed him as much. This was especially because his gains were measurably greater whilst atop the dragon.

Eventually, his thoughts could not help but veer towards his family. His parents were a lot more formidable than he assumed. They did not just have the backing of a powerful family like the Williams family, but also had tremendous individual strength. If that was the case, he really could not imagine what reason there could be for them to keep him out of the loop.

He sighed, then stopped thinking about such matters. To be entirely honest, he no longer even cared what their reasons were. He had completely moved on from it.

There was, however, a single thought that occurred to him, one that he did not contemplate for long since there was no way of verifying it. On the entire planet Earth, it seemed that he was one of the most unique beings, if one did not count Bastet or Falak. His connection to the Origin realm and the cultivation world was much more complicated than even he ever realized. Given that, and the fact that there were about 8 billion humans, and countless billion other animals, the chances that \*he\* specifically would get the system by accident were too low. It was almost as if it were by design. After all, unless his family continued to ignore him until he died, it was destined that his life would be extremely eventful.

Whatever the case, whether it was concerning the system or his family, he put it aside. These were matters he would consider in greater detail when he was stronger. As for his family...

So he had family problems, what was the big deal? As a millennial, that came standard for him. He let his thoughts wander on other things for a while.

Lex could easily deduce that the tournament he had been invited to was some watered down, basic version of the upcoming Champions tourney. As the Innkeeper he already had an invitation, but knowing that he as Lex had one as well felt nice.

He suddenly had the urge to compete between his two identities. As the Innkeeper he had many advantages, but as Lex he had very few connections or affiliations. He was more or less developing his Innkeeper identity regardless of whether he wanted to or not, but his own identity was really lagging behind.

Originally he didn't care about it, for he did not have a complex about his identities. Whether he was called the Innkeeper, Leo or Lex, all of them were him. Sure he behaved differently when exhibiting each identity, but even that different behavior was a part of him. But the idea of competing seemed... interesting.

If that was the case, how should he compete? As far as fame went, both Lex and the Innkeeper identities had various levels of fame across the Origin realm. Then it came to connections and influence. As the Innkeeper, he had all of the Midnight Inn at his disposal, and had connections to various Dao Lords.

As Lex, he had that connection to a mysterious man who was much stronger than anyone he had ever met, but that was not a connection he could really leverage. In that case, the best of his connections were a few Earth Immortals down in the Crystal realm.

The main difference was that as the Innkeeper he would not need to do anything, and everyone would come and find him. As Lex, if he wanted to develop his connections and influence, he would need to be more proactive.

Was this really something he should waste his time on? It wasn't as if he had only a few things on his plate.

After considering it for a moment, he decided that he would not go out of his way to do anything, as he had his priorities set, but since he had the time and energy, he might as well make the most of it right now.

He stood up, no longer content to cultivate without his 'Dragon Cultivation Mat'. It seemed he had been in the wrong for blaming his fate for always getting him into trouble. Now that no trouble had come his way, he was a little bored.

He stepped out of his room and began to stroll the streets with his hands in his pockets. Although there were no streetlights, many of the plants around him gave off a gentle, bluish-green light that not only illuminated his path but gave the entire town an entirely different vibe from during the day.

The streets were not empty, and seemed just as busy as they were during the day. The only difference was that everyone made sure not to make too much noise, staying as hushed as possible.

Feeling like he had entered a storybook, Lex walked the streets and took in inspiration from all that he saw around him. At night, the Inn was usually illuminated by the sea of floating lanterns in the sky, but it wasn't a bad idea to incorporate bioluminescent plants here and there. Of course he could not add them randomly, as he used to do back in his early days in the Inn.

Instead, he would find suitable locations where the lanterns don't shine. That way, at night, different areas of the Inn would take on different shades.

Lex smiled as he walked among the crowds. It seemed that he was most comfortable when he was around large crowds of people. Getting a system focused around having lots of guests really suited him.

His casual, simple stroll slowly led him to the heart of the town, and then through it towards the outer boundary of the town on the other side. This entire time, he had been following the path outlined by his instincts. Something interesting was waiting for him this way.

A few minutes later, once Lex had left the proper path and ventured into the grassy wilderness, he discovered an elf laying flat on the ground, panting and heaving as if he had run the longest marathon of his life.

The moment the elf saw Lex, surprise and fear flashed in his eyes and he froze. He seemed to have given up on life, and was waiting for an inevitable horror to descend onto him.

"I guess I shouldn't be asking if you're alright," said Lex as he squatted down and summoned a bottle of recovery pills from his spatial bangle. The pills not only sped up the recovery of spiritual energy within the body, they also helped eliminate some physical fatigue. They were very generic pills, although he had them in the best possible quality available, and were some of the many items he took with him on his excursions now.

He had come a long way from only carrying a few gold coins and a couple of weapons whenever he visited a new planet.

"These will help you regain some of your stamina," Lex said as he held out the bottle. "I'm not sure who you're hiding from, but I assure you, I have nothing to do with them."

"Wait you... you don't recognize me?" asked the elf, his voice filled with equal amounts of incredulity and a sense of being offended.

"Should I recognize you? If you're someone famous on this planet, I only arrived a short while ago so I haven't really had the time to get acquainted with the local culture."

As Lex spoke, he looked out towards the horizon for any sign of the elf's pursuers, but there was no indication of them for now.

"Is someone trying to harm you? I was under the impression that this was a very safe planet," he commented. Powell had told him that there was a formation covering the entire planet and that the Tilaiyans took security very strongly.

"Harm me? That's the understatement of the century!" said the elf despondently as he swallowed one of the pills and handed Lex the bottle back. "That old geezer is trying to get me married! A single interplanetary incident with the princess of Astoria, and now I have to 'take responsibility'. What 'take responsibility'? All I did was flirt with her a little bit and use her authority to enter the Field of Sacred Grains."

The elf was grumbling, but then suddenly realized that all his energy was entirely recovered! A moment ago he had been completely spent, yet now he was as fit as a fiddle.

"What kind of pills did you give me? Even I've never had something like that."

"So you're someone famous on this planet, and you're getting married," Lex mused, ignoring his question. He had too many of such pills he had taken from the emporium so he never really considered them too valuable.

"Based on my luck, I'm guessing... you must be the heir of this place, right?"

The Innkeeper

Chapter 803: Tragic life of an heir

"Yes, yes, how did you know?" asked the pale elf?

He stood up and took a good look at Lex, but with his entire body covered, there naturally wasn't much to see. To hide his current situation, he had his entire body covered from head to toe.

"Oh, you're from one of those races! My apologies, I didn't mean to stare," the elf quickly said as he looked away from Lex.

"One of what races? I think you may be misunderstanding something. As for how I could tell you were the heir, it was simple enough. There's no need to consider you talking about princesses or anything else. Just based on my luck, I wouldn't encounter an ordinary situation."

"You're quite confident in your luck," the elf replied, not realizing what Lex had meant.

"Quite. Speaking of my luck, do you want to leave this area? If you're being pursued, then your pursuers might stumble right onto us if we don't leave."

"Yes, yes, that's a great idea. And I know just where to go!" the elf said before beginning to hastily march towards town. "Will you be coming as well? I'd like to repay you for the pill."

"Why not?" Lex said as he joined the elf. "I'd like to hear the story of the heir being forced into a marriage. So far, I've only encountered happy couples, so this will be somewhat of a change. By the way, how did you get out of the princess situation? I thought Tilaiya was supposed to be a neutral entity."

"It is!" the elf said with a look of regret on his face. "The old geezer in charge directly told the princesses' family that he would accept any punishment I receive without any interference since I started the situation to begin with. He likes looking high and mighty, but I know he was just getting back at me. The old geezer has kept me on neutral territory my whole life, so he wasn't exactly pleased that I left to begin with."

"What was your punishment? Is that princess your bride to be?"

"No, nothing like that. I had to give up all my gains from the Field of Sacred Harvest, and pay a little more on top. It's quite sad, I have to say. The field is, predictably, filled with the absolute best harvest in the galaxy. A single crop or fruit from there just... tastes absolutely divine! I mean, yes it's good for you

and packed with all kinds of medical benefits, but let's be real here. It's the absolute divine taste that has everyone hooked."

Lex did not comment, and simply silently wondered if the prince was someone 'special'. Was that why he had been locked on his own territory his whole life?

"But once I got back, the geezer decided I was too wild and irresponsible. In his words, I was not taking my role as heir seriously at all, and that I needed a wife to 'tame' me."

The heir scoffed at that, and looked absolutely disgusted.

"It seems to me that you're not quite happy with your position as heir, so why don't you give it up? That way you'll be able to do whatever you want."

Lex was only speaking randomly, but little did he expect that the heir resonated with his words tremendously!

"Exactly! I think so too! Since I've been young I've tried to get out of it. Sure it brings with it a lot of power and authority, but neither of those things are edible. They also come with a lot of baggage. Frankly, I'm not interested."

Although their conversation seemed casual, the two of them were moving quite quickly now that the heir had recovered somewhat. Instead of continuing deeper into the wilderness, where no one may notice him, they actually went directly into town. A few passerbyers already noticed the heir, and were struck with confusion since they couldn't believe what they were seeing.

Lex did not comment on the situation, and just followed the heir, as he seemed to know exactly where he was going.

"But the way we do things here is a little different. Are you familiar with Darmin?" he asked.

Darmin was the name of the neutral organization which ran Tilaiya.

"Besides the fact that they run Tilaiya, not at all. I only came to this planet because I was interested in the potential for trade it presented."

"I guessed as much. It's quite simple. Darmin owns 4 star systems, and we have about 21 habitable planets within that space. The territory is quite small, but we are able to maintain our neutral stance even so. In fact, we even accept dealing with pirates and all kinds of outlaws, and do so quite openly.

"Such actions not only begin retaliation from the forces in which those outlaws are wanted, but often we are targeted by those very same outlaws as well. All in all, there's a lot of pressure. We would not be able to cope with it, and maintain our situation if we were weak. But at the same time, being strong also presents a conundrum, for why would the strong limit their own expansion? After all, everyone knows that the stronger one is, the more resources they require."

Now, thoroughly within the center of the town, the heir led Lex to a very inconspicuous little restaurant. There were only four, small tables and a counter where guests could sit, and at this hour the entire place was deserted. The restaurant remained open nonetheless, and their heir sat down on the counter, ignoring the state of the place.

"Three bowls of the Spicy bowl please!" the heir yelled in the back, prompting the sound of dishes falling down somewhere in the kitchen. Clearly his yell had startled someone, but the heir simply continued his story.

"The reason why we are strong, yet choose to remain neutral and not expand, is because we already have everything we need to grow incredibly strong, and more!"

The Innkeeper

Chapter 804: Old Geezer

The heir sighed, as if lamenting the abundant availability of endless resources, practically paving the cultivation path for himself. What a burden it must be to be rich!

"You'll excuse me if I don't go into the details," the heir said casually, as if it was already understood. "But the point is that, ultimately, what Darmin values is a specific kind of talent. Unfortunately, I have talent pouring out of my every pore, so from the day I was born, I was destined to be heir. Did you know, I'm not even related to any of the previous rulers?"

"My parents ran a small clinic in the capital. When I was born, and my talents detected, the royal family adopted me outright. My parents received 13 billion supreme spirit stones, as well as noble titles, property, as well as the ownership of one of Tilaiya's 13 moons. Suffice to say, after that, my parents became extremely busy trying to give me as many siblings as possible. Unfortunately, none of them have even a spec of talent compared to mine."

The heir sounded both proud and mad at that statement.

"So who are you supposed to be marrying then, if not the princess? My name is Lex, by the way."

Since he was building connections, there was no point in hiding his identity, though he seriously doubted anyone would connect him in his current state to Lex William, dragon tamer!

"Oh, yes, introductions. Nice to meet you Lex, my name is Kenta Haru. Sorry, I'm not used to introducing myself, I forgot it was something one has to do. As for my fiancée, I am not sure of her identity yet. She has been selected for me. No doubt, she will also be tremendously talented, though not as much as me, or she would be the heir. Moreover, she will no doubt have a steady and stable personality, to keep me in check in the future."

Kenta sounded absolutely disgusted at his own words.

From behind the counter, the kitchen door opened and another elf walked out, holding a tray carrying three steaming bowls. Lex was already mentally prepared to face some extremely unusual alien food, but was genuinely surprised to find that he had been served ramen! It seemed that it was not so unusual that the elves also cooked ramen. After all, in their long lives, they had probably experimented with various kinds of foods!

The elf tapped the wooden counter twice, and three pairs of chopsticks grew right out of the wood!

Treating it as completely normal, the heir grabbed the chopsticks and began eating.

"So what's your plan? Do you think you can actually run away from the wedding?"

"Oh absolutely not," Kenta replied casually. "The entirety of Tilaiya is being monitored, not to mention the fact that all teleportation formations have been disabled to prevent me from escaping. No, I'll probably be ignored until I'm needed. But you know, as a man, I must at least show some form of protest! How can I just accept without expressing my dissatisfaction? I need to run away at least a couple more times during the wedding itself!"

"If... if you don't expect to actually escape, why did you run till you actually collapsed?" Lex asked, looking at their heir strangely.

"Well, even though the royal family knows I cannot actually escape, they also have to go through the motions and try and prevent me. To get away, I actually had to erase a formation that had been conjured right on my very skin! I had to actually excrete all the spiritual energy within my body to cause the formation to fail. I bet they never saw that one coming."

"So this is all just a game? How anticlimactic. And here I thought that I was going to help you escape from a wedding."

"Hahaha, no, to actually do that is impossible! This guy won't let me."

Kenta pointed at the empty seat beside him, and Lex looked there but saw no one. The seat was empty. He was just about to say so when he noticed that the third bowl, which had been placed in front of the seat, was empty!

His pupils constricted and he looked back at the seat, and this time saw a rather aged looking elf who winked at Lex. The elf had long, braided gray hair that reached the floor, and a short but well groomed gray beard.

"Please, go ahead. I'm quite curious to see how you can help my adopted son here escape his wedding."

The man had no aura at all whatsoever, and appeared entirely forgettable, despite the fact that it wasn't common for elves to have beards.

"Were you with us the entire time?" Lex asked, having quickly recovered from the surprise earlier. At this point, he was all too used to very strong cultivators acting mysteriously. He was even looking forward to the day he could do the same.

"Not really, but there's no place on this planet, or even this entire star system where my spirit sense cannot reach."

"Lex, meet my adopted father, or as I like to call him old geezer. Don't mention his age. Don't ask his age. When I was young and did something bad, he would punish me by making me count all the way to his age without skipping a single number. I've spent a few good years doing nothing except counting if you add up all the time I've spent, so I don't like to think about it."

"It's a pleasure to meet you," said Lex as he began to eat his ramen as well. Both Kenta and his father were surprised by how quickly Lex adapted to the situation, but did not comment on it.

"By the way, you shouldn't challenge me. I really can help him escape his wedding, even if you watch the entire process with your spirit sense."

At this point, both Kenta and his father looked at Lex with curiosity.

"Are you sure Lex? Don't let the geezer fool you, he's a genuine Celestial Immortal."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 805: A bet

Lex took in Kenta's words easily, as by now he was all too used to bumping into extremely strong cultivators. But while he was not surprised to hear the knowledge, encountering powerful cultivators outside the Inn was very dangerous. Not only did he have to maintain proper decorum to ensure he did not offend the other in any way, but he had to utilize this opportunity to the best of his abilities, and expand his network!

The greatest advantage he had in the current situation was that as someone from a neutral organization, the chances of being killed or harmed were extremely low. The categorization of a neutral organization was extremely difficult to attain, as this was one given through the Henali portal and not

assumed by oneself. As long as Lex did not break any laws, he did not have to fear randomly being targeted.

But at the same time, he had to act as if his meeting with Hix had been exposed. Theoretically, there was no reason for a Celestial Immortal to be spying on him at that time. That was most likely even true. However, there was no guarantee that he could not detect clues on or around Lex.

Essentially, besides the system, Lex had to assume that all of his secrets were laid bare in front of the immortal. After all, the gap between them was too big. Lex could not even begin to imagine the power the elf in front of him wielded.

Fortunately, the reason Powell had sent him here to begin with was that even if Lex were to be discovered contacting Hix, there should be no issue. After all, as a planet of a true neutral organization, Tilaiya was often the ground for such clandestine meetings.

"My apologies for not acknowledging you sooner, senior," Lex said, though it was clear from his voice that he lacked the usual reverence and fear that was associated with meeting a powerful cultivator.

"Not at all. In fact, I would be surprised if you had acknowledged me earlier. I admit, I am curious, however, about how you can help this brat escape from under my nose."

"It is not difficult, because it's not my power that I would be using to do it," Lex said, before slowly lowering his mask. He had removed half of it to reveal his mouth so that he could eat, but that had revealed the gruesome state of his body. Now that he was done eating, he naturally would not continue to put himself on display, especially with a Celestial Immortal nearby.

"But, even though I can do it, that does not mean I actually will. Interfering in local political matters is no doubt illegal, and I still have work here that needs to be done. I don't want to be arrested. Besides, what would you even do if you managed to escape? Do you even know how to live life without the status of an heir?"

"Pft, if it were some noble pursuit I would at least be impressed. But no, what this no good son of mine wants to do is open up a small restaurant somewhere and create new cuisines. Truly a waste."

"What do you know about noble pursuits? I am a common elf with humble roots. Doing mundane tasks is in my blood! Creating delicious food is my divine duty, and even the status of heir will not prevent me from following this path. I-"

"Alright, alright," said Kenta's father, muting him with a wave of his finger. It seemed like he had heard this speech too many times. This elf... truly did not exude the usual dignity and arrogance of a peak cultivator. Or perhaps, because of his strength, he did not need to pretend to be anything other than himself.

"You're quite interesting, Lex. I sense quite a few auras on you. Let's see, there's that human, Jotun."

The elf said his name with derision, as if he did not like Jotun at all. But while there was derision, Lex could not sense disdain of him being weak. That either meant that Jotun was not exactly weak, or that Lex was reading too much into the situation.

"There's also some inscriptions in your body. Hmm, that's interesting, the inscriptions are using your body as talisman paper. Quite ingenious, but not good for you in the long run. Let's see, there's also... senior Zuri Adisa!"

Instinctively, the elf straightened his back as he said the name, as if even mentioning her required the appropriate decorum.

"You also have the aura of a dragon on you, the aura of a primordial seed, the aura of... my goodness, look at me. I could not control myself at all! I did not mean to pry, I was just wondering whose strength you could possibly use to take the brat away. But even with everything I've seen, I cannot find an answer. Now, I truly am curious.

"I'll leave you with an invitation to the brats wedding. There will be a lot of ceremonies, but in essence, the main wedding ceremony will be in five days. If you can take this brat away before that happens, not only will I not charge you with any crime, but I will help you remove one of the inscriptions in your body. Whoever placed them there was very skilled, but clearly they did not account for your cultivation technique. It's interfering with your growth. You should really find a way to get rid of them all before you become an immortal."

Kenta, who had been muted this entire time, was extremely surprised when he heard his old man speak. He tried to comment in the middle, but his words wouldn't come out.

Lex was also surprised, not by anything else, but from the fact that the immortal offered to help him voluntarily. That was not something he expected from someone who was supposed to be neutral. If he had to guess, it may be a way of him apologizing for investigating Lex.

Whatever the case, if he could get rid of the inscriptions, it was truly worth it.

"Are you sure it won't cause any problems? Isn't the heir important to you?"

"Ho ho, look at that confidence. You are quite certain that you'll be able to take him away from me. In that case, do not worry. Even if he is gone, Darmin will not suffer."

"In that case, I'll see you in five days."

The immortal smiled, before he and the heir disappeared from their seats, slowly fading away.

"Old geezer, that's not like you," said Kenta, who reappeared with his father inside a large mansion.

"I made a mistake. I thought he was a junior, but how was I supposed to know that he would have such a deep background? Since I saw that which I should not have seen, I need to repay him lest I become infected by his karma. Giving him this opportunity is my repayment."

"What did you see?" Kenta asked curiously.

The heirs' father did not answer, but an image flashed in his mind. The last aura he sensed, before he awoke from his stupor and stopped, was the aura of the accursed Cthulhu clan. He had flashbacks of the damned war they fought, and how devastating their powers were. He thought that clan had perished, so why was there someone who wore their aura still around?

He did not know, nor did he want to find out. The Origin realm was really not peaceful these days, it was best to stay away from trouble.

"You should prepare. Your first public appearance is in a few hours."

Kenta grumbled, but walked away anyway. There was no point in arguing. He did not really expect to be rescued by Lex, so he needed to maintain the best possible relationship with the old geeze. Moreover, even if he really escaped, could he really stay away indefinitely?

He turned back and looked at his adopted father. No, it was absolutely impossible. When he had to choose between freedom, and possibly becoming a Celestial immortal, he would choose the latter every time.

Back at the restaurant, Lex looked at the angry waiter with confusion.

"What's wrong?" he asked, concerned.

"What do you mean what's wrong? This is a restaurant, not a charity. If you eat, you have to pay. Three spicy bowls, so that's three Tilaiyan credits! If you can't pay, I'm reporting you to the police!"

Did the... did the heir as well as the literal immortal just... dine and dash? Damn, they could at least have warned him so he could have dashed as well.

On second thought, he could not break any of the laws here, apparently the whole planet was being monitored.

"No, it's just a misunderstanding. I'll pay right away," said Lex weakly as he transferred the credits. Now that he had stirred up a little trouble, his heart was finally at peace and he could rest. Maybe he'd even go back and take a nap - he couldn't remember the last time he did that.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 806: Another cultivation session

Lex thought that he would barely nap for half an hour, or that if he entered deep sleep he'd be out for a couple of hours at most. He couldn't be blamed for thinking as such because lately he would sleep very less unless he was injured and using his recovery techniques.

Even though, right now, he was technically injured, he did not plan on using any recovery techniques, so he planned on only passing a few hours at most. Unfortunately, due to the fact that none of his pain receptors were working, and his incredible physique allowed him to function normally, he underestimated how injured he really was.

That was not to mention that any time he was injured, his spirit was injured as well, which really affected his decision making skills. It was the most significant flaw of his cultivation technique. Though to be fair, Regal Embrace was on the path to ensure that he never got hurt in the first place. Now though, the end result would be up to his own efforts.

He fell asleep the moment he hit the bed, and entered a deep dreamless sleep. He did not move or flinch, or even let out a single sound besides his soft breathing, until he was roused from sleep by the sound of a system notification.

Lex woke up a little disoriented, wondering who he was and what was going on. A couple of moments later he remembered everything, and realized that he may have overslept.

"Mary, how long was I sleeping?" he asked as he stifled a yawn, and pushed himself up. The bones in his back gave out a satisfying crack as he stretched.

"A little over thirty hours," she said, sounding distracted.

"Thirty hours?" he repeated, startled.

He checked to see what notification he had received and saw that the planet had already been connected to the Inn, and he could head back at any time that he wanted.

But, fortunately, not too much time had passed and the notification had come very timely. If he missed the wedding ceremony, he would not suffer any harm but he would lose an opportunity that was not

easy to come by. So far, only Celestial immortals had been able to sense the inscriptions in his body, and it was not easy to meet them, let alone get their help.

Speaking of which, he had guessed earlier that Jotun was also a Celestial Immortal, and that fact had more or less been confirmed by the heir's father. Jotun having such a cultivation was something Lex could understand and accept, since he was the Emperor of a massive empire and worked for the Henali directly.

But this small neutral organization, Darmin, which barely had a few star systems, was also led by a Celestial immortal? Did that mean that, in essence, Darmin was just as powerful as the empire? At least in terms of the power of their upper echelon. But one spanned galaxies, and the other did not even cover 1% of a single galaxy. How was that possible?

Ultimately he could not come up with an answer, and chalked it up to the personal preference of the Celestial immortals. But whatever opportunity that Kenta had been talking about that required his special talent must be extraordinary if it was enough to keep a Celestial satisfied.

The outline of a plan formed in Lex's mind as he checked the card that the Hix assassin had left him. A small, gray circle had formed on it, indicating that the task had been accepted by Hix. Fortunately he did not oversleep, or he would miss the deadline to pay the assassin organization.

He channeled his spirit energy inside and received the details of the required payment. Since Barley's cultivation level was low, the task was originally not expensive. However, since his location was unknown, to the extent that not even the star system could be determined, the price shot up drastically.

It was sufficient to say that the price of this commission was completely not worth it for an ordinary person. However Lex was not ordinary, and the price meant nothing to him. Not only was his museum of wealth filled with countless treasures, and spirit stones, but soon he would receive the first payment from those refugees from Earth who had leased out a Minor realm. Their payments would be in terms of resources mined and collected from that realm instead of MP, so at this point it could even be said that the cost to hunt down someone through an entire galaxy... cost but a paltry sum for him.

He channeled more spirit energy into the card, causing it to turn to ash once again and form the 'Reality Filter' once again painting a portion of his room black and white. He placed a small spatial ring filled with 1 billion spirit stones, 130 vials of spirit liquid and 10 tons of a version of gold called Red vein Gold.

All of these came from his loot from the dragon hoard, and didn't even cover 1% of what he looted, let alone what was in the hoard itself.

At that thought, Lex could not help but lick his lips. Robbing dragons was a very lucrative business.

"Hey Pel, you don't happen to remember any old or dying dragons, do you?" he asked.

"I know many old dragons, but none who are dying," the wooden ring answered dutifully.

Lex shook his head. He hadn't asked the question seriously. He was not crazy enough to go face a living dragon right now. Maybe when he reached the peak of the Nascent realm he could consider it.

The filter vanished, alongside the payment, and the card reformed. Satisfied, Lex put the card in his spatial bangle and disappeared back to the Inn.

He spent a couple of hours handling various tasks at the Inn. Recently, the population of the aquatic beasts inside the Inn was booming and he needed to expand his rivers and lakes to ensure there was enough space for them. In fact, he decided to make a super massive lake far away from the main attractions where they could live for now.

Once all urgent tasks were taken care of, Lex grabbed a device connected to the Henali portal, and teleported back to his restroom. By now, unfortunately, Lex had learned to tolerate the unique cultivation conditions absorbing items with laws required. He planned on using his next 'cultivation session' to do some research on Kenta's wedding and come up with a proper plan.

Even though all it would take was to hand him a key to the Inn and crush it, Lex did not know how easy or hard the Celestial was going to make it for him. He planned on treating it like an infiltration mission, allowing him to once again act like a spy.

Not delaying the matter further, Lex bit the blade of grass given to him by Zuri, and began his cultivation session. A couple of hours later, once Lex had gotten used to it, he began perusing the Henali portal.

He looked up royal weddings in Tilaiya, and what customs they usually entailed. He looked into what Kenta's wedding would entail, and discovered something unusual. No one knew who the bride was yet! There was endless speculation on why the identity of the bride was hidden, but the most popular conspiracy seemed to be that she had a troublesome identity, which matched the habits of the similarly frivolous heir.

Lex did not believe it, nor did he care so much about it. What truly caught his attention was that there was no real mention or detailed explanation of the inner workings of Darmin, just a brief mention that each star system was controlled by a different family. At the same time, it was mentioned that Kenta was only the heir to Tilaiya, not Darmin. Moreover, his adopted father was only in charge of the star system with Tilaiya in it.

How was it possible that a Celestial was not in charge of the entire organization, but just a single star system? The only way that made sense was if there were more Celestials in other star systems. But, how was that even possible? Celestials did not grow on trees, they were not so easy to come across.

Lex raised his guard somewhat as the ambiguity of the situation concerned him somewhat. It also strengthened his motivation to build a connection with Kenta, and be in Darmin's good books. He did not expect any significant help from a neutral organization, but sometimes having a relationship was help enough.

Twelve hours later, a weak Lex crawled out of the bathroom. He began to seriously doubt the prophecy he had received. Maybe what Leslie had foreseen was not regret that could only be avoided using a blade. Maybe what she saw was him regretting the decision to use it.

When he remembered that he had 90% more of the blade still left, Lex lost the strength in his arms to hold himself up and collapsed.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 807: Infiltration

A few days later, Lex found himself sitting in the fastest, non-teleportation public transport on Tilaiya. For all intents and purposes, it could be considered a train, except for the fact that it did not require a track and could travel at supersonic speeds.

As the train hurtled forward, its soft vibrations providing a steady backdrop, Lex sat by the window, fixated on the approaching city skyline. Tall towers pierced the sky, glinting in the sunlight, each building a testament to wealth and glory of the capital city of Tilaiya.

The past few days had been spent in painful preparation for today, as he thoroughly investigated not only the layout of the city, the itinerary of the weddings, the necessary proceedings, but also thought out several plans with the help of Pel.

He needed some insight into what to expect from a Celestial, and what Pel told him pretty much solidified his ideas. Basically, he had no hope of hiding anything from the Celestial. Even as he sat in this train, in his stealth suit, he could be assured that the heirs father already knew he was coming, and saw each and everyone one on his moves.

The only possible way for Lex to succeed in his mission is if the Celestial never interfered. If he did anything, even so much as creating an indirect obstruction, then Lex could not hope to win.

But since the 'bet' was not anything too significant, Lex could assume that the Celestial would watch, but not interfere. Of course, this was on the premise that Kenta was not too valuable to Darmin, or that his father was confident that even after escaping he would come back. All in all, there was no point in raising the bet to begin with if he intended to interfere, or at least that is the approach Lex planned on taking with his current objective.

With each heartbeat, a surge of confidence coursed through him, reassured by the thought that he was prepared well enough. After all, under the guidance of his wooden ring, Lex finally got to checking out the dragons library in the last few days.

Most of the books were beyond him, and required some prerequisite knowledge that he lacked, making it so that he could not understand them despite being able to understand the individual words. Of course, there were a few books that even he could gain from.

But none of that mattered. What was truly important was that Pel had guided him to a single book that he could not only comprehend, but contained knowledge that he could put to practical use, right from this very mission. All he needed to do was master the written technique.

If his system was a little different, and showed him the amount of progress he made in cultivating his techniques to proficiency, then currently it would clearly show that he had, with his newfound analytic skills and powerful mind, comprehended 0.1% of the technique!

While that percentage may sound abysmal and pathetic, it was only so if there was no context. The technique he was learning was not a spiritual, soul or body technique. Instead, it was one specifically to be used by Dragons Might! As his Domination grew stronger by absorbing Dragons Might, it could also use the same technique!

But even though he could only understand such a small amount, that was already enough at his level. He could subtly influence Domination, and change the effect it had on people. It no longer necessarily had to suppress or pressure them, but could instead make them feel various different emotions or sensations.

Of course Lex had not mastered that yet, he barely understood enough to reduce his sense of presence further. This made it so that even if people saw him, they would subconsciously ignore him.

The effect was very weak right now, but when augmenting his stealth suit, the overall result was commendable.

He planned on further augmenting his stealth capabilities by bringing Fenrir, but discovered that the pup had fallen into a deep sleep upon its return from Frigra. Why did this pup sleep so much?

He had only asked the question rhetorically, but Pel had provided him with a sincere answer. Lex had used a very potent and powerful binding talisman on Fenrir to bind the two together, keeping himself as the master always. He had procured the talisman from the Emporium, and other than binding the pet with the master, it had the effect of linking their cultivations.

If one of them was stronger than the other, through their bond, they would influence the other as well, raising the speed at which they cultivated.

If Lex had a greater cultivation level, that was great for Fenrir. But if the pup tried to gain a higher level, and thereby support Lex's cultivation, it would hit a roadblock. This was due to the fact that Lex's cultivation techniques had historically been as far outside of normal as possible. It was like tying the pup to a mountain and asking it to drag the mountain along.

It just wasn't possible.

So, when it encountered a situation where its cultivation was rising, the bond forcibly stopped that rise. If there was a single redeeming factor in all of this, it was the fact that all the extra energy in his body would only strengthen him further within his existing realm, and not harm him. So ultimately, Lex was helping him in the long run.

As the train steadily closed the gap between him and the city, Lex's anticipation grew. The distant buildings were now distinct shapes, each one signifying a step closer to the moment of action. Unlike the town where he originally arrived, the capital felt more manufactured and less a part of nature, but that was only comparatively.

Lex gathered up his thoughts, no longer musing randomly, and prepared to disembark. Planning and preparing was all good, but ultimately it was his performance that would determine everything.

As soon as the train stopped, Lex got off and seemingly vanished into the crowds. The city was jam packed, as countless beings from a multitude of races had all gathered to take part in the festivities. It was a way for them to enjoy Darmin's generosity, as well as strengthen their connections with this neutral organization.

A stronger bond would not mean they expected any help with their own matters, but that they could enjoy more benefits within Darmin's territories.

All in all, between the tourists, locals, security personnel and foreign dignitaries, the city was jam packed. Even for cultivators and races that could fly there was immense traffic in the air. Anticipating this situation was one of the reasons why Lex arrived in the city hours before the ceremony happened.

Silently, and without attracting any attention, Lex slowly approached the center of the city, where a grand palace stood out even when surrounded by so many majestic buildings. Getting inside the function was not difficult for Lex since he had an invitation, just time consuming. Reaching Kenta once he was inside, however, would be the true obstacle.

All guests would have designated spots where they could freely watch the ceremony, or even roam around. But the area where the ceremony was taking place could only be accessed by a select few who were important guests, relatives or played some role in the ceremony.

The ideal situation was to reach Kenta inside the palace right before he was brought to the main ceremonial altar.

Slowly and steadily, as if he was not in any rush at all, Lex approached the palace without attracting any attention. He also kept his senses peeled, listening in for any latest news regarding the wedding. Even rumors might end up being useful, so he did not dismiss anything.

Yet even with his slow speed, in a couple of hours, Lex had navigated his way through the massive city and approached the palace. Six white bridges connected the city and the palace, which was built on a floating island that had been chained to the ground.

Although Lex could have slipped by easily, he got in line and passed through the queue normally. When he reached the gates, he intentionally coughed loudly to attract the nearby guards attention, before showing him his invitation.

Upon gaining entry he silently followed the guests who walked across the bridge, taking in all its majestic glory. Although Lex did not originally plan on sightseeing, he made an exception because he felt there was something usual about the bridges and the castle. His instincts seemed to have picked up on something, but it was too vague to give him a clear feeling.

Nonetheless, once he reached the end, and finally approached the palace doors, Lex finally veered away from the other guests. He had no interest in going to his specified space, he only needed to find out where Kenta was.

His infiltration mission was finally beginning.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 808: Casanova Lex

At the palace doors, Lex took in a deep breath as he reviewed all the information he had gathered, as well as his plan. The most ideal situation would be if the guard and staff in this castle were mostly

around his level, with a few notable exceptions who would be counted as bosses. If this were a video game, that is how things would proceed.

Unfortunately, real life did not operate like a video game. As Lex had personally experienced, time and time again, there were countless strong cultivators everywhere, all living their own lives. Just because you were low leveled did not mean you would not run into them. In fact, if you went to specific areas, your chances of encountering strong cultivators would increase exponentially.

As it happened, the palace where the royal family of Tilaiya resided, which included the Celestial immortal, was one such place. It was too much to expect every guard in this place to be an immortal, but surely there would be no shortage of such guards here. Moreover, no doubt there would be countless guests who were immortal as well. In fact, he would not be surprised if there were a few other Celestials here as well. After all, the adopted son of a Celestial was getting married.

So, relying on his stealth capabilities would not get him far. He could also then rely on his wit and conversational skill to get him where he needed to go, which in fact he planned on doing to a degree, but even that would not yield adequate results. No, to complete this mission, Lex would have to rely on the most powerful tool in his utility belt, so to speak: money!

"Let's see, in the third floor botanical garden..." Lex murmured as he relied on his memory to guide his steps.

From the Infinity Emporium Lex had bought a blueprint of the palace, or at least what was publicly available, as well as a tentative guest list for the wedding. Getting a layout of where the guards would be stationed would be impossible.

Once he had that list, he gave Velma access to the Henali portal and told her to get him all the information she could on the entire guest list within 24 hours. Her success... left him a little worried, actually. She was more of a Sherlock than any tv show character he had ever seen, as long as it concerned digging up dirt on someone.

With that information at hand, he thought of the simplest and most direct way to get access to Kenta using this information. The more complicated and convoluted his plan, the greater the chances of messing up, considering the lack of time to prepare.

As he walked the well lit halls, rooms and corridors, Lex tried to remain as inconspicuous as possible. When possible, he would merge into other small groups of guests who were heading in the same direction.

A few times, he ran into certain checkpoints. If you crossed that point, and the invitation you had did not belong to the area you were entering, a guard would be notified. There were no drastic alarms and no serious actions that would be taken, at first, as the role of such points was to make sure that all the guests stayed in their respective places.

After all, as a neutral organization, it was expected that some of their guests would actually be each other's enemies. By allocating different sections of the palace, Darmin ensured that they would not encounter one another and cause a scene. They had too much experience in avoiding such things.

For Lex, this was the first hurdle that he solved with money. After all, using money, he had actually bought 108 different invitations to this event! So as to not arouse suspicion, he would keep most of them in his bangle, and only take out the one corresponding to the area he was entering to be checked. The only unfortunate thing was that all the invitations he managed to purchase were from the periphery of the palace, otherwise he would have directly bought one that allowed him to get in contact with Kenta.

Like this, in only twenty minutes, he had found his way to the botanical garden on the third floor of the palace. Standing in a corner, Lex surveyed the room and looked for his target. It was not certain that she was here now, but this was most definitely the area she had a ticket to.

He could wait up to an hour for her to arrive, but if by then she had not arrived, he would have to give up and rely on his Plan B.

After surveying the room a few times, he was unable to find her, but that much was more or less expected. After all, Lex had arrived hours early, and not everyone was inclined to wait so long. They would only arrive once the main event was about to begin.

While he waited, he took note of all the guests in the botanical garden. Not every area in the palace had a view of the main ceremony, but that was fine as not all guests wanted to see it either. Some guests were instead more interested in the unique way that Tilaiya manipulated plants.

They could seemingly create new variants on a whim, and control how each of their traits were developed according to their needs. The botanical garden was where some of their more exclusive plants were nurtured.

Those who came here were either biologists, pharmacists, alchemists or belonged to some profession that would take advantage of the traits of plants. The average cultivation level of the guests here seemed to be the Nascent realm, while others...

Lex suddenly paused. Across the room he saw a particular guest and, based on his information already gathered, identified the guest as a dwarf called Nonoman Hellson. His information had recorded that he had great achievements, but Lex had not paid attention to him since he could not use him.

But now he realized that this dwarf, who was also in the Golden core realm, seemed to give off a dangerous aura. This had never happened to him before! He had never felt danger from someone in the same realm!

His curiosity was piqued, but he did not focus on him too long lest his gaze was noticed. Meeting a formidable peer was... an unusual experience for him.

A short while later, just as Lex was getting ready to move to plan B, his target finally arrived. Aoi Haruki, a Garden Nymph, entered the room surrounded by a few elves. She adopted an elven appearance, which was quite common here, but her soft green skin and hair that looked like small vines easily marked her as a Nymph.

According to her background information, she had strong relations with various Elven organizations and was held in high regard due to her extremely formidable affinity with trees, even surpassing the standards of her own race.

More importantly, she was a close personal friend of the princess who Kenta had flirted with before.

Lex took in a deep breath, readying himself, before he walked directly to her. He stopped using Domination, so that his sense of invisibility reduced, though most would still not notice him unless they saw him directly.

"Pardon my intrusion," said Lex as he approached Aoi, his voice gentle and warm. Since he could not rely on his appearance to help him make a good impression, he focused heavily on his choice of words and tonality. "I could not help but approach once I recognized you. Are you really Aoi Haruki, the famous Botanical Breeder who saved the endangered Blood Rose from extinction?"

His voice was filled with seemingly genuine excitement, anticipation and passion as he asked that question. It seemed that he admired her greatly, not for any other reason than the fact that she had achieved something exceptional. It was, in fact, a remarkable achievement on Aoi's part, but not one that was widely recognized as that particular species had only limited pharmaceutical uses, and even those could often be replaced by other plants.

Aoi, who was originally surprised at being interrupted, was unexpectedly delighted to hear the question!

Her achievement in altering the plant so that it could grow in a different environment, without losing any of its innate qualities and gaining any negative ones, was actually widely acclaimed - but mostly only academically. Her achievement was seen as a practical example of many theoretical rules that were difficult to implement. Yet no one actually cared about the rose itself.

Yet from the man's question, and the subtle passion she could feel from his words, she almost suspected he was different from the rest.

"Ye- yes, that's me," she said, though she did not know why she stuttered. That was unlike her.

Lex placed a hand on his heart and gave her a deep bow!

"Miss Aoi, you have my deepest admiration. Although not many care about it, I believe that what you have saved is more than just a single flower. It is an emotion - nay, an experience that can only be felt when that flower blooms, and can only be expressed through poetry. Miss Aoi, I have carried this with me for many years in hopes of finding a way to save it, but have failed. If you would, I would like to give this to you, so that you may try where I have failed."

Without giving her the chance to respond, Lex summoned a glass orb from his spatial bangle, and handed it to Aoi. Within it, frozen, was a beautiful white lotus the likes of which had never been seen before!

## The Innkeeper

### Chapter 809: A poem

Aoi and her cohorts all paused as their gaze was fixed on the mesmerizing visage of the white lotus. The petals were longer than a regular lotus', spreading farther apart, and looked more beautiful. But at the same time, the cost of that beauty was an almost palpable beauty.

Just looking at it alone was enough to determine that the Lotus was on the verge of falling apart, and only by being sealed in that orb was it surviving.

The peculiarities of the lotus went further than just that. Its texture, the thickness, or rather thinness, of each petal, the lithe stamen, were all different from what was usually seen. There was a very simple reason for that. Lex had specifically requested the Sovereign Turtle to create a new special of Lotus for him, one that was both exceptional, beautiful, yet incredibly frail. The turtle had delivered admirably, as this was too simple for him.

But, for once, the turtle had requested a payment from one - a single drop of dragon's blood. As Lex had appeared in front of the turtle as Leo, he could not tell how or why the turtle could tell he had dragon's blood on him, but he obliged. Of course, Lex was not capable of piercing the dragon's skin to extract blood. Instead, he used the blood he had collected from the pool where Fenrir had swum.

Later, he learnt that the drop of blood had been used to nurture Little Blue. Apparently, it was awakening as a Beast and progressing nicely on its path.

Regardless, this lotus was just one more item that Lex had prepared to ensure his success in this task.

Aoi Haruki was slightly confused by Lex's statement about her saving an emotion that could only be captured by poetry, but she could sense the general positive emotion he tried to convey which was enough for her. Before she could dwell on it, he handed her a species of a flower she had never seen before, catching her off guard.

With the extent of her knowledge, it was very difficult to encounter a plant she was totally unfamiliar with.

Moreover, it was also extremely beautiful, which captivated her on a level that only plants could.

"Where did you get this lotus from? What is it called?" she asked, not lifting her eyes from the flower.

Sounding pleased by her genuine curiosity, Lex answered, "I was traveling through the wilderness when I experienced an earthquake. The quake destroyed some of the terrain, and that is where I discovered a small, hidden environment filled with such lotuses. But, exposed to fresh air, they were quickly dying. I was only able to save this one. I thought it would be a shame if such a plant died without ever being admired."

While Aoi looked at the plant, Lex had his gaze fixed on Aoi. Anyone watching him would think that Lex somewhat admired her, and was possibly even pursuing her. That is exactly what Lex wanted it to look like, but in truth, his target was never Aoi from the very beginning!

Right beside Aoi was a seemingly ordinary looking Elven girl. Of course, even an ordinary Elven girl was still earth-shatteringly beautiful by human standards.

She was looking at the lotus, like everyone else, but she seemed a little distracted.

"What kind of poem can be used to capture a Blood Rose?" she murmured, not really intending to receive an answer. But Lex, who had been specifically waiting for this moment, could not really let it slip by.

After all, from the start, everything he had done was to get this girl's attention. He didn't like acting like this, but they did say the best way to attract a girl's attention was to target her best friend.

As a forever-bachelor, Lex would never use such tactics to actually pursue someone, but in this instance, he felt it was okay. After all, he was not really harming anyone.

The Blood Rose was a peculiar and ominous flower that many actively avoided using, even if it could provide some meager medicinal benefits. This was because this rose only grew on battlefields, once the fighting had subsided. Moreover, it did not grow in the soil, but in corpses. It would stay hidden in the body until it reached a sufficient size, whereupon it burst from the skin, emerging from the victim's heart! What was peculiar was that the rose itself was actually white, but that could only ever be discovered if it was washed. Otherwise, it would take on the color of the blood of the corpse it grew from.

Without ever really looking at the elf who asked about the poem, Lex began to recite what he had prepared.

"A glance turned to a gaze between two eyes,

An acquaintance became a friend, but not a lover,

A destiny divided two souls forever.

A duty brought me to arms and to a far off battle,

A blow brought me to my knees without a morrow,

A life I could not give to you, but will death suffice, I wonder?

A rose from the heart, for the lover who could never become a lover."

His voice was low, unlike when he had talked to Aoi, and he recited the lines as if reading something that had been burned into his memory. It was only after he recited the poem that he seemed to awake from his reverie, and turned to look at the elf who had asked the question.

It was supposed to be only a glance, but like the poem, he caught her eye, and the glance turned into a gaze shared by the two.

Lex gulped. He was only supposed to be acting - why did things get so intense?

"Please excuse my crass poetry, I am not very good," said Lex feeling genuine embarrassment. The poem had actually been written by himself, and while it seemed to regale a story of a dying soldier, its true purpose was to evoke a certain reaction from his target. His own awkwardness and embarrassment aside, it seemed to work.

## The Innkeeper

### Chapter 810: Bet

As Lex looked at the 'ordinary' looking elf, countless thoughts ran through his head. If he did not have overwhelming faith in Velma's deductive work, he would really doubt that this simple elf was actually the very princess Kenta had flirted with!

This was not the first time the princess had snuck out using an alternate identity, and putting all the clues together upon researching all the invited guests, Velma was willing to bet her own life that she was the princess. If Velma had such confidence in herself, then Lex should too.

"It's... it's not crass. It's lovely, in its own way," the elf said, seeming distracted. She was most probably going over the lines in her head again, trying to feel the emotions in each line. The same poem read by someone who cared little for literature would be an experience that lasted a couple of seconds at most.

But an enthusiast would look deeper into the meaning of each line, fulfilling the dream of every highschool english teacher. They would look for the meaning behind each word, then each line, and then each stanza and so on. On the surface the poem seemed to be about two lovers who were denied their relationship due to a difference in their destinies. They became friends, but could never affirm their relationship. In his last moments, before death, the writer of the poem seemed to think of her again.

"I was inspired when I heard Kenta talking the other day," Lex said very casually. "You may not know this, but he actually tried to get out of the wedding."

What Lex said was not necessarily news for everyone there, as they would likely have enough resources to hear such rumors, regardless of how they were hidden.

"He kept referring to this marriage as if it was the end of his life, and then kept alluding to someone else he had recently met. He never said anything specific, but I let my imagination run wild a little. After all, as an heir to a neutral organization, how can he get mixed with someone else? His destiny is already laid out in front of him, and only in his final moments before his 'demise' can he think back to that one acquaintance who could only become a friend and not a lover."

Lex seemed to be speaking casually, but the elf's breathing seemed to be getting harder and her eyes seemed to be losing focus. He felt a little guilty, but at the same time, he also thought that he should not feel any guilt for creating problems for Kenta, who used the princess just to get his hands on some ingredients.

"Can I- can I really have this?" Aoi, who had not been listening and was instead only focused on the lotus, asked.

"Yes, of course. If anyone has any hope of preserving this flower, it's you..."

Before he could complete his sentence, the 'ordinary' elven girl grabbed him by the collar and pulled him close.

"You... when did you talk to Kenta? When did he say all this?" the elf demanded, taking the group by surprise.

"Uhh... about four or five days ago, right before the wedding ceremonies began," Lex answered ambiguously, as if it was not something he would specifically recall.

The elf struggled for a moment, as if she was undergoing some internal struggle.

"Is everything alright?" asked Aoi, who finally noticed the situation.

Instead of answering, the elvish girl simply said, "follow me," and turned around, bolting through the doors.

Lex did not need to stop himself from smiling since his face was hidden by a mask. There was one important point to take note of in his plan. If Velma could detect the princess' identity, then surely others could as well. That meant the only one the princess was really fooling was herself.

The Tilaiyans would surely know who she really was, and not cause too much trouble for her. Or at least, that was what Lex was counting on as he followed her as she ran through the corridors. Beside him, Aoi seemed to be running after the elf as well, though the lotus remained firmly gripped in her hand.

Lex had contingencies in case this plan failed, but he was really hoping that it didn't, because from here on out, it would become increasingly difficult to go anywhere without attracting attention.

In fact, they had already attracted attention. The only thing that prevented the guards from stopping them was their hesitation when they saw the princess. There were quite a few rumors already that the heir had some kind of illicit relationship with the princess. That... was drama even the guards wanted to stay away from.

Every step of the way, Lex was thoroughly prepared for his plan to fail, and was even somewhat expecting it. But, somehow, it didn't. Unbelievably, no one stopped them.

What he didn't realize was that this was by design.

"What do you think he has planned?" a woman asked Kenta's father, who was seated comfortably in a private room.

"Who knows? The kid put some effort into his plan, but if this is all he has, he's bound to fail," the Celestial replied.

"That's exactly what makes this bet exciting. I'll put 3 years of revenue from a crystal mine on the kid," said another elven man who was in the room.

"I'll bet a bottle of Holy tree sap," said another.

Like this, the small crowd in this room began to bet on or against Lex. The game would officially begin when he finally met Kenta.

Lex had expected that a few of the guests might be Celestials, but he had sorely underestimated the number. In this room alone, there were five of them, and they were all elves. Moreover... they were all a part of Darmin!

"If he really succeeds, what will you do?" asked one of the Celestials.

"What else? I'll let Kenta run around outside for a few years. We were all young once, you know how it is. Besides, what's the point of being strong if you have to constrain yourself?"