

Innkeeper 81

The Innkeeper

Chapter 81: Silly humans

Lex stood patiently as he awaited the arriving guests. This was by far the busiest day his Inn had ever seen, and he had to be ready to face any kind of hurdle. He would create more rooms, rent more A.I. assistants or do whatever else was needed to make sure everything went smoothly.

A bright light flashed and Lex saw a few familiar faces. Brother Chen and Blane appeared, followed by a lady who bore a sharp resemblance to Chen.

"Innkeeper," the two soldiers acknowledged together as soon as they saw Lex. The girl looked at him with curiosity.

"Welcome back," said Lex with a smile. "I did not expect to see you so soon. Were you able to find your caravan?" Lex had heard enough of their conversations with Falak to know a bit about them and what they were going through.

"Yes, fortunately they were all safe and we were able to locate them. This is my sister, I brought her here because I wanted her to become familiar with the Inn."

"I hope you find it to your liking," he said, looking at the girl.

Name: Lily

Age: 24

Sex: Female

Cultivation Details: Qi Training 7th realm

Species: Human

Midnight Inn Prestige Level: 1

"Would you like me to show you around?"

Brother Chen and Blane looked each other in the eye and instantly knew what the other was thinking.

"Eh, no thank you. You must be busy, we can show her around."

"Very well. Give me a call if you need me."

The three walked towards the manor leaving Lex behind. When they had walked some distance Lily whispered, "I've never seen you behave like that. Is that guy so scary?"

"You have no idea," her brother replied gravely. "Last time we were here we met another guest who was so powerful that we cannot even guess his realm, and even that guy was polite to the Innkeeper. He can open portals all over the universe to retrieve his guests from whichever planet they're on. I dare not even think how powerful he is."

Lily gulped, as if understanding what her brother meant.

"But even so," said Blane, "he is running this Inn and takes care of all his guests very well. I cannot guess what is going on in the mind of someone that powerful, but as long as we don't get on his bad side we'll be fine."

Lex, who was completely not eavesdropping on their conversation, accidentally overheard what they were saying and chuckled to himself. 'Ah it's nice to be respected. Or is it feared?'

With all his guests taking care of themselves, Lex turned his attention to the napping turtle. A part of him wanted to let the turtle sleep, but God only knew how long a 2000 year old baby's nap would be.

"Wake up," Lex said gently, but with his voice infused with the power of his suit.

The turtle that had no name lazily opened its eyes, but as soon as it saw its new location it jolted awake. It looked around confused, and kept sniffing the air.

"Welcome to the Midnight Inn. I did not want to disturb your sleep, but I thought you might find it more restful in a room."

The turtle wore an alarmed look on its face, and hearing Lex its worry did not lessen but increased.

"Oh dear oh dear oh dear. You silly humans really give me a lot of trouble," the turtle said, before it started walking hurriedly towards the forest.

"Do you know all the animals here are hungry, and are forcefully feeding on spirit energy to survive," the turtle lectured Lex as it paced forward. How the turtle knew this was a mystery, but it was confident that it was right. "There are no insects around, no worms, no seeds. What are they supposed to feed on? Oh you silly humans, don't you know you're supposed to feed someone when they're hungry?"

Upon hearing the turtle Lex was embarrassed and alarmed. He had gotten the animals from the system so he naturally assumed the system would feed them as well. He never considered the lack of their natural food in the environment. Suddenly it occurred to him that the reason Helen might be so popular with the animals was because she was probably feeding them.

He purchased various kinds of animal food and mentally commanded Velma to feed the animals every day. No wait, Velma was usually busy with guests and other duties, maybe he should get another assistant to help with the animals and maybe even the environment...

As Lex was thinking of a solution, he did not realize he had followed the turtle into the forest, nor had he realized that wherever the turtle would step wild grass would grow. Mushrooms, small shrubs and different wild plants all started appearing in a trail behind the turtle, and before long small animals could be seen eating them.

Lex was woken from his thoughts, however, when he realized that the turtle had walked directly in a straight line RIGHT TO THE GREENHOUSE! The array seemed to have no effect on it. Before he could say anything though, he heard a worried voice.

"Oh dear oh dear oh dear, you silly silly human. You are drowning the plants, they don't need so much water, and the soil is all wrong. Too much fertilizer can be poisonous, not all plants need the same things," the turtle told the gardener, and started using its ability to rearrange the plants.

"Get away you fat lizard," the gardener said angrily, "you're ruining my arrangements! When the plants grow, their arrangement will form words that will form poetry! You're ruining my poetry!"

"No, no silly human, these plants cannot be so close together or their roots will harm each other."

The gardener and the turtle started arguing with each other, both trying to determine how the garden should be managed, leaving Lex standing there with his mouth hanging open.

"Close your mouth or a fly will go in," said Mary who appeared wearing an amused look.

"There are no flies in the Inn," Lex retorted, but he closed his mouth. This was the first time he was seeing an A.I. showing some personality, he did not know they could do that. He was under the impression they were like those A.I. assistants he saw in TV shows that only do the task they're told.

"You should hire the turtle to maintain the greenhouse. It has a strong affinity to nature, and could speed up the plants growth."

Lex's eye's lit up at the idea, but before he could make the offer he heard the turtle say, "Oh dear oh dear. Such a wonderful garden, I can't let a silly human ruin it. I better look after it."

System Notification:

The Galactic Sovereign turtle has hired itself as an employee! All permanent employees must have a residence. Automatically purchasing employee residence. -1500MP. Residence purchased, please allocate residence entrance!

Lex's mouth dropped open once again at the sudden events. What the hell was happening?

Mary burst out laughing at Lex's impression, but when she received his glare she stopped laughing to explain. Well, more like she eventually stopped laughing to explain.

"You're probably wondering why all the steps for hiring were skipped, like giving it the platinum key and going through the test."

"Exactly."

"The platinum key is for people you want to employ out in the various worlds. If whoever you want to employ is already at the Inn then you can make an offer to them for the job directly. Normally that would then proceed to the test, but a Galactic Sovereign turtle, even an infant one, is too overqualified for such a simple position. Since the turtle directly expressed its intention to work, and you expressed your interest in hiring it, the process was skipped."

Lex kept glaring at her. The explanation she gave made sense, kind of, but he had a strong feeling she was just making an excuse and the system acted on its own because it didn't trust him enough to hire the turtle.

He walked up to the turtle and said, "Since you are interested in joining my Inn I would like to welcome you. I have prepared a residence for you and connected the entrance to the greenhouse." He pointed in a corner where a giant double door had appeared connected to a massive tree. Lex had spent a little MP to make the entrance look like it was inside of a tree since he thought the turtle might like it. He was not sure exactly what kind of habitat turtles, especially galactic ones, liked.

The Galactic Sovereign turtle nodded in understanding. Of course the system hadn't forcefully hired it, and the turtle had received its contract directly in its mind. It didn't bother with the contract though and directly accepted. It didn't have complex desires or needs - all it saw was that this place had the potential for a good garden, and the turtle wanted to tend to it.

"Nooooooooooooooooooooo Innkeeper," the gardener let out a sorrowful roar, "you must not let it touch the greenhouse. It has no style, no sense of aesthetic. It will ruin everything."

The gardener looked like a child complaining to his parent. Well, he was only a few days old so technically both the gardener and the turtle were babies by their own standards.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 82: Outer beauty and inner peace

While the various new guests were roaming around the Inn, Helen was exploring the place herself as well. At first she was hesitant to move around the Inn lest she run into someone who recognizes her, but now with her glasses she moved around without worry. She noticed every few days some changes would be made to the Inn's environment or new buildings would be added, and she liked exploring them. Everything was improving all the time, and the already pleasant environment was getting even better. Previously she felt that some places of the Inn would be too quiet which would make it eerie. However one day randomly more birds and small animals appeared, so if nothing else you would always hear the flapping or singing of birds. A few moments ago she had even seen a massive turtle hurrying across the grounds next to the Innkeeper. She supposed that was one of the animals from a different planet because she had never seen a turtle that big on Earth.

Currently she was heading towards a new building she saw appear opposite to the Training room. While on her way she noticed that today seemed to be relatively busy for the Inn. She saw William Bentham again, leading a group of followers towards the Recovery room. She saw two intimidating men walking besides a woman like her bodyguards. Most interestingly, she saw what appeared to be a mother chasing her daughter with a bedroom slipper in her hand, with Gerard following the pair in a golf cart. The daughter kept screaming "I'm going to date an Oolin! I'm going to date an Oolin, I've already seen it!". Every time she yelled she would antagonize her mother even more, which would cause the daughter to laugh. Although the daughter was the one laughing, Gerard who was driving behind the pair seemed to be the one enjoying the most.

Helen chuckled as she thought about it, and continued on her journey. She was quite noticeable as she was followed by an ostentation of Peacocks wherever she went. She received a few glances from the new guests, but the glasses gave her the confidence to ignore them. When she finally arrived near the training room, she was surprised to find that the new building was a barbershop. She didn't even need to guess, the spinning barbers pole outside was very distinctive and telling.

This surprised her, as she was expecting something more exciting. Everything at the Inn so far seemed targeted towards cultivation. The Meditation room, Training room, Recovery room and Mystery trial were all good examples of this. Compared to their utilitarian purposes, this seemed almost mundane. But she didn't underestimate it just because it seemed normal.

She went inside to see a young man, probably around her age, excitedly looking through all the cupboards. When she entered the shop a bell hung above the door rang, alerting the young man of her presence. He was startled at the noise, but quickly his excitement returned as he looked at Helen.

"Welcome!" he said jovially as he pulled her in. "Welcome to Harry's! Or wait, Harry's Barbershop! No wait..." he became distracted and started mumbling to himself about the name.

"Is this your shop?" Helen asked, analyzing the young man.

"Yes! Yes, of course it is! Have a seat, what would you like? Since you're my first customer, there's no charge!"

"No I don't want to have anything done," Helen clarified, "I was just curious about the new building and wanted to see what it was."

"Oh," said Harry, his excitement dimming noticeably. "Are you sure you don't want to try anything? Trust me I'm very good. And I won't charge, promise!"

"Eh," Helen suddenly felt awkward. It was clear to her that Harry really wanted her to have something done, and was looking at her with longing eyes. She didn't want to offend anyone at the Inn so she reluctantly said, "Fine, why don't you give me a little trim. Not too much, mind you!"

Helen's hair was already short, barely reaching her shoulders, and she didn't want to cut it much shorter, but she thought there wouldn't be much harm in trying out the shop. Something at the Midnight Inn clearly couldn't be normal.

She took a seat and Harry stood behind her excitedly as he stared at her face in the mirror. He was deciding what sort of look would suit her most, but he did not realize that his eyes started emitting a purple glow as he did. Under his glare Helen didn't feel uncomfortable, and instead seemed to enter a trance. She started hearing her own previous thoughts in her head, as if they were being replayed.

At some point Harry decided what he wanted to do and grabbed a spray bottle and sprayed her hair. No one noticed that the spray bottle seemed to just appear in Harry's hand, or that as the water touched her hair it seemed to wash away some of the thoughts full of self doubt that she was hearing in her

head. A floating comb appeared and started brushing her hair. As if by magic or some sorcery, not only did the brush untangle all her hair in a single stroke without having to pull or tug, it rearranged her thoughts so that they became more organized. Lately her thoughts would bounce from Alexander to her family to the assassination attempt to her unknown future. Everything was full of uncertainty and she had trouble thinking straight, but now the randomness of her thoughts started disappearing.

Harry himself did not notice that as he worked he started mumbling incantations or that two pairs of scissors appeared in the air around him. Both the scissors started cutting rapidly, yet very little hair was actually being cut. If someone could peer into Helen's mind and visualize it as a garden, then they would notice that anxiety was growing in that garden like weed. Yet each time the scissors snipped some of that anxiety was cut away.

Slowly and steadily, Helen's appearance started to change and if this were a video game instead of real life '+1 charm' would be seen floating above her head every few minutes. Yet the biggest change was in her mind. Mortals called it mental health and cultivators called it inner demons, but regardless of whatever one called it, Helen's state was improving. Slowly and steadily, she was receiving a makeover that would change her entire life. She was achieving both outer beauty and inner peace.

Lex was chuckling to himself as he walked out of the forest. He had gotten the gardener and turtle to agree to working with each other, but even as he left the greenhouse he could hear them bickering. It reminded him of his youth, when he was a kid and used to fight with his elder sister, Belle. Despite her feminine name, she was a real tomboy and the two used to fight a lot.

He had also given the turtle a name, which the turtle completely ignored and did not acknowledge at all. No, he did not name the turtle Leonardo or Michelangelo. He was not about to follow that cliché. He was determined to follow in the footsteps of all the main characters of all the cultivation and system novels he had read before, and named the turtle 'Little Black'. The turtle was neither little nor black, but those main characters never seemed to care and neither would Lex. He was slightly annoyed when the system didn't reflect that name in the turtle's status, but he would call it by that name regardless.

Lex was in an unusually good mood, and suddenly he felt even better when he found out even more guests were about to enter the Inn. He teleported to the entrance just in time to see Alexander appearing with two men and a woman behind him. The entire group looked quite young, he guessed they were his friends or classfellows. At least until he read their statuses.

Name: Rorick Morrison

Age: 48

Sex: Male

Cultivation Details: Golden Core Mid

Species: Human

Midnight Inn Prestige Level: 1

Remarks: This fellow seems to have accidentally tucked his shirt into his undergarments

Name: Brandon Morrison

Age: 104

Sex: Male

Cultivation Details:

Spirit Cultivation: Insufficient Authority

Body Cultivation: Golden Core Peak

Species: Human

Midnight Inn Prestige Level: 1

Remarks: The real OG!

Name: Audrey Morrison

Age: 101

Sex: female

Cultivation Details:

Spirit Cultivation: Golden Core Peak

Body Cultivation: Golden Core Peak

Species: Human

Midnight Inn Prestige Level: 1

Remarks: Extremely, extremely dangerous! Host must maintain distance at all times! The system will not associate with the host if he falls in love with someone four times his age!

Lex felt his lips about to twitch but he controlled himself. He could no longer let the system's remarks affect him! Yet as he was ruminating over the system's remarks and the difference between their looks and their actual age, the three Morrisons who had entered the Inn for barely a second froze. Then they looked at each other with disbelief and excitement in their eyes, as if to confirm what they were feeling wasn't just an illusion.

Alexander noticed his family's strange behavior and asked, "what is it?"

"I can break through to the Nascent realm here!" replied Rorick.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 83: A light heart

"Are you sure?" Alexander asked excitedly. "You can break through to the Nascent realm here?"

"Yes," answered Brandon with gleaming eyes. "The environment here is like inside the Fusion chamber except without all the danger and instability. I can feel the bottleneck for my body cultivation loosening. In fact, even my spiritual cultivation is already improving. This place is definitely not in our solar system."

The Morrison's all shared a knowing look, as they tried to process the ramifications of what they had just learnt. An environment which would allow cultivators to breakthrough above the Golden Core was absent on Earth. Even the Minor realms that opened up on Earth had a similar environment, and did not allow for such growth. The reason for why exactly no one could breakthrough was unknown, but it was generally agreed that Earth was lacking something. It was important to note, only humans suffered this blockage and Beasts were often able to ascend to the higher realm. As for why the Beasts never took over Earth since they had an advantage, that was a secret few knew...

A secret almost no one knew was that on Earth currently there were five Nascent realm cultivators. Each of the five had ascended through unique chances or coincidences that could not be replicated. Brandon had made the breakthrough in a specially designed chamber called the Fusion chamber. The reason for that name was because the chamber was bombarded with concentrated spiritual energy and radiation from several Nuclear Reactors. The theory was that the radiation could be treated using spirit arrays and technology to convert it into extremely concentrated spiritual energy which would create the necessary prerequisite to breakthrough. The idea was inspired by Nuclear power plants.

Yet while Brandon had succeeded in breaking through, everyone else who had tried so far died instead, which is why it was not an idea that was being widely used. The Morrison family was conducting various types of research on how to stabilize the energy in the chamber, or to increase the efficiency of the conversion of energy.

Yet that was all redundant now. The Inn gave them a convenient place to make their breakthroughs! All their current expansion plans, as well as their plans to snub out the little rebellion that was being planned on Earth had to be put on hold.

"I'm glad you're enjoying yourselves," said the Innkeeper, who had been standing there for a while now. "If you want to cultivate or breakthrough a realm, I recommend you try out our Meditation room. Its environment is very conducive to cultivation."

"Hello Innkeeper," said Alexander, who remembered just realized that they had been ignoring their host in their excitement. "This is my father, Rorick. These are my grandparents, Brandon and Audery." The family politely greeted the Innkeeper.

"Welcome," replied the Innkeeper. "I hope you find my little establishment to your liking. If you need anything, do not hesitate to ask."

"How is Helen doing? Is she feeling alright?" Alexander asked, concerned about his friend.

Lex mentally swept the Inn for her and found her at the barbershop.

"She is currently receiving a makeover at our barbershop. Would you like me to take you over?"

"That would be great, thank you."

Lex started leading the family towards the barbershop at a gentle pace. They looked around where they walked, but with the power of the suit he could feel them using their spiritual sense to observe the place.

"Alexander tells me that you receive guests from all over the universe and not just Earth. Is that true?" asked Rorick.

"Yes of course. The Midnight Inn can be accessed from anywhere in the universe. Even right now we have guests from multiple planets in our grounds. Everyone comes with their own purposes, and we try to fulfill all their needs."

He was monitoring all his guests with his powers right now, as there were a lot of them and he would need to manage any situation that came up. Will had led his group to the Recovery Room so he quickly told Velma to go there mentally in case they needed to use any of the rooms. He was shorthanded and

thought of just hiring another A.I. for the Recovery room, but he only had 2126MP on hand at the moment and didn't want to spend the last of it on another big expense. He had to leave himself some buffer space, especially considering Marlo was consuming MP everyday!

"Our Recovery room is usually a big hit amongst guests. Even Alexander found use for it with Helen being poisoned. We have Meditation rooms for anyone who wants to cultivate, and Training rooms for anyone who wants to hone their combat skills. We have a Mystery trial as well, that tests the guests greatest skill whatever it may be. Anyone who can complete the trial can receive an award, though that may be harder than it seems. It is completely safe though, so there is no need to worry. Other than that we, of course, have our Inn where guests can stay to rest and recuperate. Soon we will have even more attractions, so keep visiting if you want to keep up with the excitement."

"Would it be possible for us to meet some of the guests from other planets? We've never met someone from the rest of the universe before, it would be an enlightening experience."

Lex looked back at Brandon who had made the request. His request made sense, who wouldn't be curious in this situation. Yet Lex was slightly concerned, he did not want anyone to get into a fight over anything since Lex had the lowest cultivation here and wouldn't be able to stop anyone!

"I can naturally introduce you to some of our guests. If they are so inclined, you can chat with them as much as you want about the rest of the universe. But if they are not up to it, I hope you respect their wishes. Disturbing other guests and causing issues can get you banned from the Inn."

This family wanted to cultivate at the Inn, so naturally a ban was the greatest threat to them.

"I will make sure my parents behave," said Rorick very seriously. The look on his face was grave, as if he was embarking on a suicide mission.

By this time they reached the barbershop and entered to find Harry working very seriously on Helen's hair. A floating towel would dab Harry's forehead from time to time to wipe off his sweat, because while all the actual work was being done by the floating utensils Harry was exhausting himself by simply reciting his incantations.

The family looked at Helen curiously, but Audery was the one who immediately noticed something unusual. She had seen this girl, or at least pictures of this girl, before. Although it could be said that she

was a pretty lass, she would not stand out in a crowd. Right now, however, she was radiating charm and charisma that would catch anyone's eye. The strange thing was, she didn't look any different. Her skin wasn't any clearer or fairer, she was wearing no makeup, her hair style was fairly ordinary. The source of the change was her expression. It was as if she was free and happy, from the bottom of her heart. It was such a simple thing, but the soft smile of her lips was pure enough to touch people's hearts.

Finally Harry finished, and threw himself on the sofas behind himself. He was completely out of breath, as if he had run a marathon and could barely stand on his own.

"Get some rest Harry, I think you've done enough for the day."

Harry smiled weakly at the Innkeeper and said, "yes, that was more exhausting than I imagined. But at least let me see the result of my hard work first."

With that the two looked towards Helen, who finally woke up from her trance. She felt a strange sense of lightness. For a moment, she felt like a child again, pure and happy with no worry or care in the world. She looked at herself in the mirror to find that instead of her hair getting shorter, it had somehow gotten longer. It fell halfway down her back, but with a natural flow that looked elegant. She smiled, completely unaware that she captivated everyone in the room.

"Helen, how are you feeling?" asked Alexander.

She hadn't noticed the extra people in the room, but the young man's voice alerted her to their presence. When she looked at Alexander she found that curiously, she didn't feel anything. Previously, whenever she looked at him she would feel love and longing, along with the bitter pain of knowing that they were never meant to be, as well as a little hope, deep inside her heart that maybe someday, somehow they could be together. Yet now, looking at him she felt the same way she did when looking at just another friend.

Who could have blamed her for falling in love with him? Or maybe it was infatuation instead. He was a handsome and brilliant young man, polite yet assertive, strong yet sensible. He had achievements people could only dream of and a destiny that eclipsed anyone around her. Naturally she, along with most of the girls in her class, gravitated towards Alexander. But now suddenly she no longer felt that longing. She simply felt that even if he was the best person in the whole universe, if he was not the one for her then it did not matter. She would only give her heart to someone who appreciated and loved her.

This did not mean that she disliked Alexander, or liked him less. It simply meant she could finally simply be friends with him, without other thoughts.

"I'm great, Alexander. I'm great," the girl replied.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 84: The bold and the broke

Alexander was relieved to hear that Helen was doing well.

"I had the Sigmund family investigated while I was away. Things are not as straightforward as they appear to be. I'll share the report with you once we return to Mars."

"Okay," she responded simply. She was curious to know the details of what actually happened, and if her parents were involved in the decision to use her in the assassination.

Alexander and Helen were catching up and his seniors were watching from a distance, his grandpa smirking. Lex went to help Harry up, as he could not even stand on his own.

"That really took a lot out of you. In the future don't use your new heritage without training yourself first. If you are not careful, you could hurt yourself."

Harry's eyes were filled with excitement even if his body was trembling from weakness. What he had done with Helen was only the tip of the iceberg of all the new knowledge he had received. He knew his weakness was a result of him not training his body and soul enough, but the heritage also let him know how exactly he should be training. In the future what he could do would be even more. He especially couldn't wait to go and try out his new found powers on Earth, right up until the Innkeeper said, "for now don't use your heritage on Earth. Your planet is more complicated than it appears. I will have someone compile some things you should familiarize yourself with first, lest you accidentally get into trouble."

Harry nodded repeatedly as the Innkeeper helped him to the entrance of his own residence. He stumbled in and collapsed on the mattress, asleep as soon as he shut his eyes.

When Lex returned to the Morrison family he saw the two soldiers and the girl from Vegus Minima outside the shop window and thought it the perfect time to introduce the two groups.

"I see some of our guests from a different planet just outside, would you like me to introduce you?"

"Please," replied Rorick.

As Lex led the group out, he spent 100MP on a one-day universal language translator that applied to the whole Inn. Cultivators with a higher level could communicate through their spiritual sense but not everyone could. To facilitate communication between guests from different planets Lex would have to buy this translator. A permanent translator instead of a one day one would cost 100,000MP! Lex could definitely put off buying it.

"Ah Blane, Chen, Lily, it's good that I ran into you. There's someone I want to introduce you to." The Morrison family stood behind him and observed their counterparts silently, while the three from Vegus Minima also looked at the family as they immediately understood that they were the ones they were being introduced to.

"These are some of my guests from a different planet than yours. This is their first opportunity to meet someone from outside their own solar system, so I thought I would introduce them to you. I think both of you will find an exchange very beneficial."

Blane and Chen exchanged a look. They paid great detail to whatever the Innkeeper said, and him mentioning that meeting these people could be 'beneficial' seemed like him hinting at something. They nodded to one another, as if they were both accepting a mission.

Just as the soldiers were about to introduce themselves Lex felt another guest about to enter the Inn. It was unfortunate, he wanted to be present when these groups from different worlds met and see what they talked about, but a new guest would take priority.

"Please excuse me while I go tend to another matter. If you need any help, just call out."

With that Lex disappeared. Helen and the soldiers were already used to the Innkeeper appearing and disappearing as he wished, but the Morrison family was caught by surprise. But that worked to their advantage as the soldiers relaxed when they saw that this other group was intimidated by the Innkeeper as well.

"My name is Blane, this is Brother Chen and Lily. It's a pleasure to meet you."

Lex appeared at the entrance once again, ready to greet his guest, but before the guest, Mary appeared before him.

"Lex, you need to listen to me very carefully. When this next guest appears, you will receive a quest. It's very, VERY important that you receive at least an S rank on that quest."

Lex was taken aback by Mary's sudden serious demeanor.

"Why? Is something the matter?"

"Just trust me," is all she said before disappearing again.

A giant golden door appeared and from it entered a middle aged man. When he crossed the door he felt as if time froze and in his mind he received a prompt 'Would you like to hide your identity?'. Intrigued, he selected yet. A pair of aviator sunglasses appeared in front of him and somehow he knew that if he wore those his entire appearance and aura would be hidden. After he put those on and exited, his attire had changed from a prison garb to skinny jeans, a black T-shirt and a leather jacket - of course he was wearing aviators as well. The

many chains that hung from his body changed their appearance from bindings to jewellery.

As soon as the man appeared, true to what Mary said, a new Quest appeared.

New Quest: 20 guests have appeared together at the Inn for the first time. Instead of waiting for them to come to you with their needs, it's time you do something for them proactively! Prepare an event for your guests to participate in!

Quest time: Start the event in 2 weeks!

Quest Reward: Subject to change based on guests response

Quest failure punishment: -5000MP

Remarks: Why have you stopped offering your guests drinks when they enter the Inn? Go back to college and take a few hospitality courses!

Lex raised an eyebrow. This quest was interesting, and it gave him some time to prepare as well. He would have to plan this carefully - especially with Mary's reminder of stating its importance as well. But for now he should take care of his guest first. He checked the man's status.

Name: *&%error%&*

Age: *&%error%&*

Sex: *&%error%&*

Cultivation Details: *&%error%&* (sealed)

Species: *&%error%&*

Midnight Inn Prestige Level: 1

Remarks: This man is very suspicious. Charge him extra MP!

Even with the Host Attire helping him to maintain his expression Lex could not keep himself from raising an eyebrow. He had never come across a situation where the Inn could not read someone's status. Even with Bastet and Falak, the Inn only told him that his authority was insufficient to view their information instead of reporting an error message.

Of course, to the man walking the gesture of an eyebrow being raised represented something else. He suspected the man had seen through his details, and he was not surprised. The man standing there as if waiting for him gave off an aura that even he had never felt before.

"Welcome guest, to the Midnight Inn. You may call me Innkeeper," Lex said warmly as he readied the Self Defense Butter knife should anything go wrong. Even the system thought he was suspicious so Lex had to be careful. "Whenever you feel tired, wherever you are in the universe, the Midnight Inn will be your best refuge."

"Thank you. You may call me John. May I ask, did you open the portal to lead me here?"

Lex shook his head. "The Midnight Inn finds weary travelers on its own, so that they can come rest and recuperate before they may return on their journey. Of course, we have many other services than just offering a place to stay. It is up to our guests what services they wish to avail."

The middle aged man smiled and took a deep breath. It had been a long time since he breathed in fresh air. He glanced at the scenery around him before turning his attention to the Innkeeper. The Innkeeper was the most imminent threat to the man, and in his current condition he could not defend himself at all. He had to stabilize his situation before anything else as he did not want the Innkeeper to send him back to the ship he came from.

"This is an embarrassing question, but I assume you charge your guests to stay at your Inn."

"Naturally. Our services are the best in the universe, and so are our rates." Lex, while still wary of the man, was also amused. Who knew that the first bargainer he would come across would be such an enigmatic figure.

"Well there's a bit of an issue. You see, I was robbed of all my possessions and don't currently have any money on me. Is there any other way I can pay to stay here?"

Lex frowned as he looked at the man. He was not expecting him to have no money at all.

"Don't dismiss him directly," said Mary who reappeared. "While there is no official way to temporarily hire people, can't you just pay for his stay with your own MP? Ask him what services he can provide. Maybe he'll have some useful abilities or skills."

Lex put on the face of an intimidating landlord and said, "What can you do for me? If you have any skills that I find useful, I don't mind giving you a part time job."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 85: Slap you with money

John stood silently as he thought of which of his skills he could offer up. Someone with his life experiences was not lacking in personal skill or ability, but he had to pick the right one. Lex waited patiently for him as the man ruminated. Even if Mary hadn't told him to give John a chance, he would have. He wanted to learn more about this person that even the System couldn't identify. He was more than sure that 'John' was just an alias and was not this man's real name.

Finally the man decided and said, "I have extensive knowledge about various cultivation techniques and styles. I can custom create spirit techniques for your guests based on their cultivation. It will be a technique that suits them the most."

Lex raised an eyebrow at John's offer. It was tempting, and was something he would not have thought of on his own. As a service it would be a great attraction, but how could he test it out? The System would only conduct a test for permanent employees, and did not have a concept for temporary ones.

Just as he was considering his options, Gerard pulled up in the golf cart and Vera hopped out. She presented herself to the Innkeeper with a smile and said "I'm ready."

"Huh? Ready for what?"

"I don't know," she said with a shrug. "But I got the feeling that I would receive some kind of reward if I came to you, so here I am. Even my mom agreed this time, see." Lex turned to see Kristine who was still sitting in the golf cart. She nodded when the Innkeeper looked at her, as if to indicate her consent. Her

daughter was an oracle, a very talented one at that, and most of the time that got their family in a lot of trouble. But one thing they had to acknowledge was that Vera had a keen nose for benefits, and never had they suffered a loss when she said they would make a profit. In fact, the first sentence Vera ever said as a child was 'Buy Bitcoin!'. So when it came to matters like this, Kristine reluctantly let her daughter do as she pleased.

Lex immediately understood what was happening. Although he did not know the specifics, he could determine from the title of oracle that Vera could predict things, and right now she predicted she would gain something good by coming to him at this exact moment. This made John's case promising.

"Very well then, in that case John you have your first opportunity. Design a technique for our guest here, and if you complete your task satisfactorily then I will hire you."

John came to Vera and told her to start running her cultivation technique for him to observe, and started asking her what kind of technique she would like. Vera was very cooperative in this regard, and Lex watched silently. After a moment he turned his attention from John to the Morrisons. Since Vera said something good was coming her way he was fairly confident that John would succeed, so he wanted to know how the conversation between the groups from those two worlds was going.

They were sitting inside the restaurant in the manor, and the Morrisons had just finished talking about Earth. Alexander and Helen were missing, but Lex didn't think it was strange - they had a lot to catch up on surely. Although they were brief and did not give specific information about a lot of things, everything the family told already sounded like paradise to Chen, Blane and Lily.

"Our planet's technology seems to be more advanced than yours," Lily said. "Or at least, it used to be before the invasion."

Although she was the youngest, Lily was actually the previous leader of her settlement. This was not because she was stronger than others, but because she was good at strategizing and managing logistics. Her many years of experience as a leader also made her better at dealing with people compared to the two brutes besides her, so they unanimously decided to let her do the talking with these otherworlders.

"A few hundred years ago, demons infiltrated our planets and opened up spawning portals on all the planets of our solar system and started using the resources of our planets as well as our people to cultivate stronger demons. Recently, our solar system was discovered by the Jotun Empire and they took back control of the planets, though the spawning portals still haven't been destroyed. Our entire lives, we've been surviving. Now finally, we've gone from surviving to fighting a war."

This was new information Lily learnt at the reclamation camp. She had voluntarily joined the Jotun army when she thought her brother was dead. She wanted revenge as she had nothing left to live for and didn't bother to learn much about the actual war. She just wanted to fight. When she found out her brother was alive, he brought her directly here so she hadn't had time yet to learn more.

As their conversation progressed, it changed from the circumstances of each other's planets to the kinds of resources they had access to. The Morrison family was very intrigued when they learnt that the Zombie cores they took such a liking to in the gift shop could be readily found on Vegus Minima, if one was strong enough to retrieve them of course.

Eventually, Rorick said, "Lily, I wonder if you're interested in conducting a trade."

Blane and Chen shared a look and nodded, as if affirming the 'benefits' the Innkeeper spoke of were about to be revealed.

"What do you have in mind? And more importantly, what can you offer?" Lily asked casually. She was not at all intimidated by her counterparts' higher cultivation. They were at the Midnight Inn, which assured their security.

"We can offer you spirit stones, but I think such a trade would be very mundane. We have various industries backing us up, so we can offer you large quantities of weapons and ammunition. If you find our weapons unsuitable, we can also directly trade in precious ores and minerals. We can also provide you with protective gear and armors, in large quantities. Of course, I'm sure that the empire you belong to also has those things, or even better items, but how easy would it be for you to get access to higher level items at your cultivation? We can provide you with whatever you need directly."

Rorick was speaking from the viewpoint of a very successful businessman with a massive corporate empire at his disposal, which is why he valued resources more than something simple like money, or in this case 'spirit stones'. To Lily and the others, however, spirit stones indeed were the best option. That way they could purchase whatever they needed directly from the Jotun Empire. It was true, they could sell whatever resources they took back to the Jotun Empire but they would have no explanation for how they came to obtain those resources, which could lead to trouble.

"And what do you want in exchange?"

"Your planet has many resources that ours lacks. Firstly, we'll take all the Zombie cores you can provide, whatever level they may be at. Secondly, you are right in saying your planet seems to be more technologically advanced which is why we're also interested in blueprints. Blueprints of any technology you can get your hands on, whether it be for militaristic use or civil we're interested. Naturally, we're interested in any technology you can bring as well. We'll buy those too. If you have books, guides, research papers on any advanced scientific topics we're willing to purchase those as well. Basically anything you can provide that your planet has that we lack, we'll buy.

"Don't be shy, use your own imagination. If you come across anything you think is useful, you can sell it to us, but the first priority is always cultivation resources. Of course, if there is something you specifically need you can mention it and we will do our best to meet your needs. We can even provide cultivation techniques or resources from our planet if you need."

The two soldiers and Lily exchanged looks. They all had a lot on their mind, and would need to discuss the details of exactly what they were going to do, but it was evident that this was an opportunity they could not miss. For now this trade route between planets could be monopolized by them, however once more people became aware of the Inn they would lose their advantage. They had to make a decision fast.

"I think this deal is acceptable to us, but we'll need some time to gather up supplies. How about we meet up after one week to conduct our first trade? For now, we'll directly take spirit stones."

Rorick shook Lily's hand and confirmed the deal. Just as they were about to discuss further details, Alexander and Helen walked in holding a massive pile of cards.

"10,000 Tier 1 Zombie cores, 1000 Tier 2 Zombie cores, 94 Tier 3 Zombie cores and 9 Tier 4 zombie cores all here," Alexander said as he placed the cards in front of his grandparents. "Those are all the cores the Gift shop had available."

Blane, Chen and Lily were horrified as they knew the prices for those items, but it was Lex who was spying on this meeting who completely lost his computer and screamed internally in excitement. 'WHAT!!!!'

Fortunately, the Host Attire helped him control himself otherwise the mother daughter duo and John would have witnessed the mysterious Innkeeper completely embarrass himself. The Morrison family did

not have the resources of one rich family or a single country backing them up, but the entire wealth of the planet Mars. The expense of maintaining a single city for a single day was already beyond what the family had spent at the gift shop, let alone a whole planet. Alexander was a true rich third generation, and smacking people with his wealth was a maneuver he had mastered from an early age.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 86: Party planner

Externally Lex looked as calm as still water, as immovable as a mountain. Internally he was screaming like a diehard fan of a sports team that had their first win in years! Alexander had literally bought EVERY Zombie core they had in the shop! He thought it would take months for him to sell all of them, and his income would be spread out. Who knew that happiness came like a tidal wave and swept him off his feet!

Each Tier 1 Zombie core was for 200MP, Tier 2 Zombie core for 500MP, Tier 3 Zombie core for 1500MP and Tier 4 Zombie core for 5000MP! When Alexander bought them all, he spent a total of 2,686,000MP! That's two million six hundred and eighty thousand Midnight Points! That, combined with the puny 2026MP Lex already had, he now had a total of 2,688,026MP!

The euphoria he was feeling was similar to when he first sold his video game and suddenly became rich. Only this time, it was much greater!

He was struggling to contain himself. He needed to spend some MP to relieve some of his excitement, but this stupid John person was taking too long in designing his technique! Lex cursed him a hundred times in his head, then started looking through the Midnight Market for things to buy. Later, when he calmed down, he would spend his newly earned MP more strategically, but for now he must taste the lifestyle of a nouveau riche!

The first thing he ended up doing was buy an A.I. dedicated to the Recovery room. The name of the new staff member was Nurse Jubilation. Lex completely did not name her that because it was the first synonym that came up based on the name of another very famous and beloved nurse (if you know, you know). What else should he buy?

After a moment of contemplation, he decided to upgrade the Recovery room again for a whopping 20,000MP. This was because he was sick of keeping Marlo here while having to pay his medical fees, and wanted him to recover already. He had quite conveniently forgotten that Marlo was the one who procured those Zombie Cores for him.

After a couple big expenditures Lex felt much better, but he needed to vent some more. He directly bought the permanent universal translator for 100,000MP! But that was not enough, just a little more careless shopping before he should rein himself in. But what should he buy? He looked at Gerard, who was standing dutifully on the side, and an idea occurred to him. He used to treat his A.I. staff like robots, but it seemed to him that they were very lifelike and had personalities. In that case, he hadn't been really treating them well and had them working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. He should do something about that. With a cost of 1500MP per room, he bought 4 employee residences for his A.I. staff. There was no physical manifestation this time, they were wholly in a separate space but their residences had windows that allowed them to see the Inn as if from inside the manor. The A.I. would be able to directly teleport there when they wished.

With that Lex breathed a sigh of relief as he felt much better. After this he would continue to spend MP, but in a planned manner to systematically improve the Inn. He turned his attention back to John who still seemed to be working, but it was only fair. He couldn't expect him to rush such a thing.

He started planning his expansion in his mind as he stood there silently, not paying attention at all to what was happening right in front of him. Around an hour later, John finally completed his task. He quickly explained the technique to Vera, who implemented it directly. It was not an attack or something visually impressive. Instead, Lex suddenly felt Vera's sense of existence diminish. In fact, if he didn't have the Host Attire to tune him into everything and everyone at the Inn, he would directly ignore the girl standing right in front of her. Even her mother, who had been paying close attention to her, started looking elsewhere as if she completely forgot about her daughter at all. Only John and Lex managed to keep looking at her directly.

"It's wonderful," she exclaimed as she stopped using her technique. Although she had a bombastic personality, she was not ignorant. She knew how to hide herself, and even when she secretly roamed the Earth and played pranks on various cultivators, she made sure to hide her identity. She knew better than anyone else the kind of trouble her family had gotten in because of her identity, so she wanted to make sure that no one would be able to discover her secrets again. It was also due to that desire that she asked for a technique to help her side, but instead of a technique that would aid her in evasion or erasing her trace, John created a technique to hide her sense of existence.

"Very well then John, you passed the test. Come with me, I will show you where you will be working. Vera, Kristine, I would like to thank you for your participation. Do stick around for a while, I'm preparing a little something that I think you would be interested in."

The mother and daughter assured the Innkeeper that they would not leave before they saw what the Innkeeper had to show them.

He led John to the street with the Training room and barbershop, and directly spent 5000MP to create a building that had a ground plus one floor, similar to the barber shop. The front of the building was undecorated for now, but the interior was very straight forward. The entrance was a small waiting room with a reception and door that led to the back. The room at the back consisted of a few different chairs and sofas, including a reclining sofa he imagined psychologists had in their offices. This was for the customers to sit and relax while they communicated the technique they wanted and then waited for John to finish. There was also another door that led to a staircase that went to the first floor which would serve as John's residence. This was not like employee residences that were in separate spaces, but was an actual room.

"This will be your shop while you work here," Lex said, completely ignoring everyone's wonder at him manifesting a building with a wave of your hand. "You can live on the top floor. You can charge customers according to their cultivation levels as I'm sure it's tougher to create a technique for higher cultivations. This is Doe," Lex said, purchasing another A.I. he named Doe. "He will carry out the transactions with your customers as well as pay you your share of the fee, so you don't need to worry about any of that. Think of a name for your shop and let Doe know. I've given him authority to create your banner directly in front."

With that said, the impatient Lex directly disappeared leaving John and Doe to get acquainted with one another. Lex couldn't wait to get started on his expansion plan, but first he was going to prepare his event. He wanted to let all his guests know of its details before anyone left so he could get maximum participation. But he didn't really have a place to host events and it didn't feel right to create an auditorium or something. The location for his event had to be a little grander than that.

He went into the event manager panel and started exploring his options. Other than the venue he also wanted to see what kind of events he could host. He tried asking Mary for advice on this, but she told him directly that he needed to complete this quest on his own. Eventually, he decided on everything and appeared behind the manor. Visualizing what he wanted, he summoned a giant building with a wave of his hand. Well, to be more accurate he summoned a coliseum. He was renting this building from the event management panel as buying such a massive building would cost him a lot of MP that he didn't want to spend right now. But he would not be embarrassed if he held events in such a venue, and it directly suited his taste.

A few guests immediately noticed the giant addition to the Inn - a building that dwarfed the manor in front of it was hard to miss. Lex made sure one more time if everything was in order, confirmed his plan of action one more time, then made an announcement directly in the mind of all of his guests.

"Dear guests, please make your way to the coliseum in one hours time. The Midnight Inn is preparing a special event, and I'd like all of you to be the first to know the details."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 87: A talent show for the universe?

Lex's announcement reached everyone who was at the Inn, even the recovering Marlo. It immediately attracted their attention, and they all started concluding their businesses. Letting them conclude or pause whatever they were doing was also primarily the reason Lex timed the invitation to an hour later.

In the Recovery room, three of the guests who had accompanied Will were being healed in the Recovery Pod(RP), but they would be done soon due to the upgrade the Recovery Room received. Even Marlo's recovery had sped up, but the root of his issue was not an existing energy but the unstable nature of his blood. That was something he would have to solve himself, but what the RP was doing was healing his vitality. It would not take long for that to completely recover, at which point Marlo would be able to leave.

John, who was resting for the first time in years in his new office, opened his eyes and forced himself to stay awake. This mysterious Inn had given him plenty of surprises, and he couldn't wait to see what else it had instored for him. Hera, who was still overwhelmed by the new world she had just encountered, was freaked out when she heard a voice in her head. That is, until she learnt that everyone heard it. The Morrisons, who had concluded their initial deal with the natives of Vegus Minima and were having a discussion of their own about how to proceed, immediately stopped their discussion and moved towards the Coliseum. The mother daughter pair had already seen it earlier and were making their way towards it when the announcement happened. Harry, who had dozed off, was woken up and tried to pick himself up but collapsed and fell back asleep.

Only the Galactic Sovereign turtle did not care about the announcement and continued to drag a tree through the ground using vines, the previously annoyed gardener now excitedly leading him somewhere. If anyone were to see it, they would see a sight similar to one dragging a stick through the mud. Somehow, the tree did not break as it was being dragged and the ground remained undisturbed once it left.

Lex, who was waiting for everyone, continued to look through the event management panel. Something interesting he learnt was that if something significant enough was happening on one of the planets connected to the Inn, he could incorporate it into his own events.

For example, he learnt from the panel that apparently there were a few forbidden zones that no cultivators could enter on Earth, and currently a large expedition was underway to explore the one on Mount Everest. To the mortals it seemed like a few daredevils were attempting to climb the highest mountain in the world for personal satisfaction or something, but only cultivators knew that there was a legend of a Holy land somewhere in those mountains that they were trying to discover. Lex could incorporate that expedition into his event and send guests to join in.

He also learnt that he could set certain rules or protocols that would be activated if something happened during the event. This could both be to combat emergency situations or award prizes - that was up to Lex. The only things that limited him were his imagination and his wallet!

Slowly and steadily, his guests started arriving. The first to arrive were naturally Kristine and Vera. They were closely followed by the Morrison family and Helen. When Vera saw Alexander she whispered something to her mother who looked over and then whispered something back. Brandon, seeing that they were the only ones there, went up to introduce himself to the duo to try and learn where they were from. Unbeknownst to him, the mother and daughter had an intricate and imaginative yet false backstory ready on hand, though they refused to mention which planet they were from.

Shortly after, Will, his six followers along with Hera and Hugo entered the coliseum. Since neither the Morrises nor anyone from Will's party were wearing the disguise glasses, they came face to face in their original appearance. Helen quickly whispered to Alexander Will's identity on Earth, along with a few of his followers she recognized. Alexander naturally passed the information along to his father who looked at the party with interest.

Will on the other hand immediately recognized all of them, and froze in horror and fear! The entire purpose of the Rose Society was to steal control of resources from the cultivation giants of the world, and yet he was now in the presence of one of the greatest of those giants. Naturally others would not know the purpose of his society, but even still someone at his level would completely be expected to fear the Morrison family.

"You seem to recognize us, friend," said Rorick with a sly smile. "Could you be a fellow guest from Earth?"

"Yes my lord," Will replied immediately, and then gave a bow. Everyone in his party bowed as well - other than Hera, who eventually copied everyone when she realized something was amiss.

"Please, no need for such formalities. Here, we are all comrades from Earth. Treat me as you would anyone else," Rorick spoke casually, as if he was used to such behavior. Although his family did not claim to be royalty or demand such gestures, everyone else did not dare to treat them any less.

"How dare I, my lord? How dare I? My name is William Bentham, of Bentham Corp. My father had the privilege of working for your family once, he told me to his dying day that it was his greatest honor. This is my adopted daughter, my lord, Hera, and these are my friends." Will had not really adopted Hera, but he long told her that he treated her as his own daughter, so it was not a stretch to tell others as such.

"It's a pleasure to meet you all. Come, sit, be comfortable. It's rare to meet someone from home so far away. Tell me, what brought you here?" Rorick was interested in how others from Earth arrived here, how long they had been coming and how common it was for people from Earth to come to the Inn. Will's party was much larger than their own, so there may be a chance that some of them were frequent guests of the Inn.

As the various groups mingled, John finally arrived as well. His...unique appearance drew a lot of attention, but before anyone could approach him he chose to sit far away from the crowd. Naturally Vera and Kristine introduced the man as an employee of the Inn who designed techniques for guests, which attracted even more attention.

Blane, Chen and Lily arrived at and also chose to sit on their own, as they whispered amongst themselves. Even the free A.I. staff made their way to the coliseum and sat together in a group. They didn't understand the concept of chatting, at least they didn't understand it yet, so they sat in silence and looked at their boss on stage.

As the hour closed and it seemed no one else would arrive, a lean, grinning man strutted in.

"What a nap!" he roared with satisfaction. "Innkeeper, you've really got a nice place here." Lex resisted the urge to yell at the no-longer-giant maniac, but suddenly he saw Marlo's eyes light up when he saw Brandon.

"Take my punch old man! You still haven't paid me the tuition for teaching your grandson!" True to his words, Marlo hurled towards Brandon and punched him. Brandon casually caught the punch, and though he was not pushed back by the force his eyes widened in shock as he muttered, "this strength!"

Yet before the two could continue their exchange, a loud, clear voice interrupted them. "If you break anything, Marlo, you'll have to pay in Zombie cores!" It was the Innkeeper who was looking at him with an amused smile, as if daring him to continue his antics.

"Excuse me Innkeeper, I just saw an old debtor and could not control myself," said Marlo before he burst into laughter, as if calling the Morrisons debtors was hilarious.

"Well, since it looks like everyone with the intention to come is already here, why don't we begin." Lex looked at his guests as he mentally prepared himself to introduce his event. He hated public speaking, thank the Inn that the Host Attire hid his nervousness.

"I called you all here to let you know of an event that the Midnight Inn is organizing in two weeks time. The Midnight Inn is a place for guests from all over the universe to rest and vacation, to let go of their burdens and look ahead in life. We provide our guests with the best hospitality and services, but we also like to go above and beyond.

"Earth, Vegus Minima and Nibiru are the newest planets to be connected to the Inn, and in celebration of that we are preparing a culture sharing event so that you all may expand your horizons and get to know the customs of the universe!"

The Innkeeper

Chapter 88: Event Management? More like anger management

The guests promptly memorized the names of the other planets mentioned. Although no one seemed to have met any guests from Nibiru, it was irrelevant. If the Innkeeper said the world was connected then that's all that mattered. Their attention then turned towards the 'culture sharing' aspect of the event he talked about. Somehow, a lot of them thought of world culture day in schools. Were they supposed to bring food and items from their world?

While everyone was staring at him and wondering what exactly the event would entail, Lex was also observing them for their reactions. When Lex was deciding on his event, the first decision he had to make was what kind of event he wanted and who his target demographic were. So far, he had mostly dealt with cultivators. In a sense, they could be called the elite members of society. Should he continue to focus on cultivators, or should he focus on mortals as well?

Lex didn't need to think too much, the more people that came the better his income would be. That meant he needed to plan an event with maximum participation from all worlds, as well as an incentive for everyone to participate. For that he needed to prepare some sort of prize, but if the prize was for an individual no one would make an effort to bring more people from their own planets. That meant the prize had to be for all participants from a specific planet, not a specific individual. It was fortunate then that the event management panel also had a specific tab for prizes. The only catch was, the prizes were pricey.

"Any guest from any of the three planets may participate in the event. Of course, any kind of festivity is incomplete unless there is a grand prize so whichever planet puts on the best show will..."

Lex's speech was interrupted by the appearance of the floating golden door right in front of him. Some of the audience recognized the golden door, some of them didn't, but Lex knew a new guest was arriving. The timing was slightly inconvenient, but another guest couldn't hurt...

A zombie walked out of the door, its body emitting a putrid rotting smell. It had dried blood all over its face and its naked body was covered in mud and dirt. The zombie was at Mid Foundation level and as soon as it appeared Lex summoned the Self Defense Butter Knife in his hand, but waited for it to attack before he made a move. The guests froze as no one was expecting such a scene. Marlo and the guests from Vegus recognized the latest 'guest' and readied themselves for any potential trouble but the rest looked on with interest.

The Zombie took a few moments to look around its new surroundings, but when it saw Lex it let out an aggressive roar and prepared to attack. Yet before it had taken so much as a single step, Lex threw the Butter Knife straight through its forehead, killing it. His actions were swift and decisive, which led to an anticlimactic end to the sudden intrusion.

"It's a tragedy when certain guests just can't abide by the rules of the Inn," Lex said as he appeared indifferent. He mentally instructed Gerard to dispose of the zombie's body but recover its core. "Please excuse me for exposing you to such vulgarity," he said looking at his awaiting guests. Only Hera looked bothered by what just happened, and Will was consoling her, which was fortunate.

"Will the event include sharing some of my 'culture' with the zombie?" Marlo asked, smirking. "I don't mind paying them a visit again. It was quite enjoyable."

"No," Lex said chuckling - of course the barbarian wannabe would only think of fighting. "Various planets have different circumstances and different combat standards, having a combat portion in the event

would make it unfair to certain planets..." Lex was interrupted once again by another Zombie, but this time the status of the zombie read Mid Golden Core!

For a moment Lex froze in fear, but quickly recovered and his thoughts started racing.

'The zombie is too close to me, if it attacks I'll be the first victim. I can teleport away, but that'll expose my weakness in front of everyone. What can I do? The Butter Knife can only deal with Foundation realm enemies...No wait, I have MP I can pay for an upgrade! How do I upgrade?'

Just as these various thoughts were going through his head and he was about to upgrade the Butter Knife through the Midnight market, the Zombie identified Lex as its prey! This zombie's eyes were more animated than the previous ones, and Lex could see excitement in them.

Yet before the zombie could make any actual moves, vines grew out of the ground and wrapped themselves around it. The zombie tried to resist, but new vines kept growing and wrapping it similar to the bindings around a mummy. Once the zombie was completely wrapped, it fell over to the ground. One could still clearly see the zombie struggling within its wrappings, but it bore no results. The grass around where the zombie fell grew and lifted it up, and started moving the zombie away from the coliseum as if the zombie were a celebrity crowd-surfing and the grass were all of its fans carrying it.

"I told the turtle you brought it some fertilizer," Mary whispered in his ear, as if explaining what happened, but didn't appear in front of him. She didn't want to distract Lex, he was supposed to be presenting in front of his guests and had already been disturbed enough.

Once the zombie left the stadium Lex turned his attention to the golden door, which stayed in the air for a few more moments before disappearing - as if detecting Lex's displeasure. When the vines surrounded the zombie and took care of it, the first thing Lex felt in his heart was relief - instant, immense relief. Yet right after that, he started feeling angry. This was supposed to be his Inn, yet he had no control over it because his authority for everything was too low! He was in the middle of presenting, but he kept getting interrupted with intruders and embarrassed in front of his guests. As Lex's internal monologue continued, he did not notice that he had clenched his fists tightly or that even his Host Attire could not stop him from frowning. He was not controlling the weather directly, but as if affected by his mood the clear sky started filling with clouds and his anger started exerting pressure on everyone similar to what one felt when they reached the bottom of the deep end of a pool.

"Lex you're getting angry again, control your emotions!" Mary said, appearing in front of him this time. Lex immediately snapped out of his thoughts, and realized what he was doing. With a single thought he

returned the sky to what it was and eliminated the pressure, as if it was all a dream. Yet none of the guests thought it was a dream, they had all clearly felt what had just happened. The soldiers and Lily seemed the least affected by what they just witnessed - in their minds the Innkeeper was already an extremely dangerous figure.

"You know what Marlo, I changed my mind." Lex looked towards his guests. "Two weeks from now the event will be divided into a combat portion and a cultural portion. The combat portion will be limited to the Foundation and Golden Core level for fairness, but everyone can participate in the cultural one. There will be no age or race restrictions. Specific details about both events and how to participate will be released in ten days, so don't forget to check back in. And remember, the winning planet will get an attractive prize so do your best."

With that Lex disappeared, leaving his guests to absorb everything he had just said and all that had happened. The staff were the first to leave, followed closely by John.

"Looks like our host has a bit of a temper," Marlo said with a grin, then looked towards Alexander. "Little brat, you shouldn't bring your family with you when you're out on a date."

Despite having gotten over her feelings, Helen blushed but made no comment.

"Old geezer, it seems to me like you're getting weaker. Now you even need to come to the Inn to recover after getting beaten up."

"Oh, am I getting weaker? Maybe you should ask your grandfather." Marlo waited for Brandon to comment on his increased strength, but it was Rorick who said "Can we focus on the matter at hand. Does anyone know what that thing was that kept interrupting the Innkeeper? And what do we think about this cultural and combat event?"

"That was a zombie," informed Marlo. "And what do you mean, what do we think about it? Didn't you hear the man say there is a prize? We're of course going to go after it." At this point Marlo's jolly demeanor changed, and he looked very seriously at Rorick, "But as someone who's seen the Zombie battlefield let me tell you this. If we even want a chance at winning, we're going to need the combined strength of the entire solar system. Or, at least, the strength of all five ruling families."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 89: Insert title here

When Lex disappeared, he teleported directly to his room. He told Mary to let him know if something required his attention, for example if all the rooms were booked and he needed to create more rooms, but otherwise he should not be disturbed. He realized that he was having severe mood swings, and needed to calm down. He sat down cross legged on his bed and started trying to meditate. It was not a skill he had mastered yet, and it usually took him some time before he could enter a state of meditation. Yet whenever he was able to meditate it helped his mental state tremendously.

Back at the coliseum the guests had split up. Will and his party retreated to Hugo's room, although not before Rorick took down their names and contact information. The mother and daughter left the Inn entirely despite Vera's best efforts to stay a little longer. Blane, Chen and Lily also left the Inn as they had a lot of things they needed to take care of. The Morrison's, along with Marlo, left to the room Alexander had rented earlier on.

"What are we going to do?" asked one of the members of the Rose Society. This one trip, which was originally just supposed to be about catching up with Will, had turned out to be beyond anything they had ever expected. All the members of the society were very old according to mortal standards, but as cultivators they were only middle aged at best. It was not unusual for a Foundation realm expert to live up to two hundred years old, especially when even mortals occasionally lived past a hundred these days. So with their long life ahead, they did not want to court death by messing with the Morrison family, even if it was for the purpose of the Rose Society. Their passion to challenge the world had been worn out with age and experience.

"We can completely forget about the battle portion of the event," said Will. "But we can make preparations for the cultural aspect of it. For now we don't know what the details will be, so just organize your forces. Pick out people with various talents and prepare a cultural exhibition. But do not underestimate the impact of this event, or the Midnight Inn. If we play our cards right, the Midnight Inn can become a great source for all the resources we need. We can trade directly with the guests here, or the Inn itself, and distribute the resources on Earth. We just need to be careful about how we do it."

"We can form a new company," added Hera. She had little to no knowledge about cultivation, but she had been a business major and had recently entered the workforce, which made her realize that she had a skill for these kinds of things. "The company will be the front but we can distribute the work amongst ourselves. We'll pool our resources and develop distribution channels all over the world. We would need a list of resources available at the Inn, and what kinds of resources we can trade with guests. It will take time in the beginning, but if we can establish a stable source for multiple unique resources, we can use them to establish our brand recognition..." The meeting continued for a few hours while they all discussed their ideas on how to expand the influence of the Rose Society. Only Hugo stood in the corner in silence, watching the cabal. He did not care about these things, but if the influence of the Rose

Society grew his chances for learning who harmed his family would increase. His fist tightened and his nails dug into his hand, but he did not feel that pain. His entire focus was on revenge.

"Why I know these things, or how I was involved, I cannot tell you," Marlo said up front. Even though he had rejected the job offer from the Inn, he had a feeling that he should keep those things a secret. The Innkeeper already told him that he would not be persecuted for his choice, but it would not be good to antagonize the man. "What I can tell you is that I have witnessed a battlefield on another planet against these zombies, and they number in the millions. They have thousands of Golden Core zombies and hundreds of Nascent ones as well. In an up front fight, Earth would completely be decimated with no chance at survival. Which is why I don't think the fighting will be directly putting us in the battlefield, nor can I imagine a tournament style one on one with the zombies. Whatever it may be, I think collecting the zombie cores will be an important aspect of the event."

"Once we return I'll head directly to Earth and call for a meeting," said Brandon as he played with Audrey's hair. "We will need to organize most of our forces, but we also can't leave Earth and Mars completely unprotected. We'll have to figure out those details. But even so, based on what Marlo said and what we learnt from those kids on Vegus Minima, the chances of us winning the combat portion of the event are slim. Our focus should be on the culture aspect of it. Earth has been relatively peaceful for the past few decades and has developed well in that regard. I think that's where our advantage lies."

"Are you going to bring the other 4 families here?" asked Alexander. Right now, as far as he knew, his family was the only one who knew about the Inn and had an advantage over the rest. Even if they lost the events, he thought it was worth it to maintain the advantage of keeping the Inn a secret so that they could develop their own family. He expected that the others would eventually also learn about the Inn, since even Marlo had come here somehow, but until then he wanted to maintain whatever advantage he could keep.

"Yes, there's no point in keeping it a secret," said Rorick. "I've told you this before, but all 5 of the families do not have a competitive relationship. We all have the same goal of maintaining the peace of Earth, and working together on this will be beneficial for all of us. Do not be short sighted."

Alexander sighed. The relationship between the five families that secretly controlled the Earth was unusually cooperative. Not that Alexander had a problem with that, but in such a cutthroat environment it simply didn't make sense. But he was not privy to the details of their relationship, in fact even his father was not in the know. Only his grandparents knew the exact details of why the families cooperated.

The discussion continued for a few more hours before the Morrisons left, leaving Helen and Marlo behind. Helen could not leave yet as she would return to Egypt and would be exposed, so until Alexander returned to Earth and secured her exit she would have to stay. Marlo stayed behind because while his old injuries had been healed, his problem with his blood made him vulnerable and he did not want to leave until that was taken care of. He winked at the young girl once with a grin, then exited the room.

He found Gerard and asked the old man, "I need to cultivate a bit. What would be the best place for that? Should I rent a room?"

"No, we have a better place especially suited for cultivation. Please follow me," he said cheerily and hopped into the Golf cart and drove to the Meditation room. As soon as the former behemoth entered the Meditation room he felt its effects and smiled in satisfaction. Wasting no time he sat in a meditation pose and started focusing on tempering his blood. He had a strong feeling that when he succeeded, the results would be staggering.

After a few hours of hubbub, the Inn returned to its usual calm. John took this time to explore the ground of the Inn, with Doe following closely behind. Doe was equipped with all the knowledge the regular staff of the Inn automatically received and so served as an adequate tour guide for John. Most of the things John saw did not surprise him, as it was no big deal for someone of the Innkeeper's status to be able to provide such services. The array in the forest drew a bit of his curiosity, as although he could recognize the array he could not break through it. The thing that attracted him the most, however, was the Mystery Trial.

Even though John's cultivation was sealed, his intuition was sharp and well honed, and he immediately felt attracted to the Trial. Once Doe told him the first attempt was free, he did not hesitate and walked in.

As soon as he stepped through the ancient door, he felt his surroundings change. He was not standing or walking, but crouching in the shadow behind a rock. The peculiar thing was that the rock was at the far end of a white, rectangular room that was extremely well lit. There was no furniture in the room, no windows, nothing to distract the eye at all except the rock at one end, and a man standing at the other end looking directly at the rock. The only other shadow in the room, besides the one John was taking a refuge in, was at the feet of the man who was looking at the rock.

John smiled as he learnt the condition to pass the trial. He had to kill the man while remaining undetected. It would have been difficult for anyone else, but as his cultivation had somehow been restored in this trial, he found it to be extremely simple.

"System, activate perimeter scan and check for traps," John said mentally.

"Instruction received. Activating scan," replied a robotic voice in his head.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 90: Starting expansion

"Scan complete, no anomaly detected," replied the system.

John let out a satisfied smile when he heard that familiar, monotone voice. He asked the system to scan instead of using his spiritual senses because the system was a lot more covert.

"Scan the target and formulate a detailed plan of action for eliminating the target."

"Scanning the target. Formulating plan of action based on gathered data. Presenting the data now..."

John looked over the plan and played it out in his head multiple times. Once he was sure he was ready, he took a step back and entered a void. The void existed in parallel to the existing universe and he could traverse it easily using the system's abilities, entering and exiting wherever he wished. He exited in the air above and behind the target, but when he exited he was surprised to see the man looking directly at him. Before John could respond he felt a sharp, painful rip in his neck. The next thing he knew, he was back behind the boulder, as if nothing had happened. In his mind, a countdown started. He had 59 minutes left to successfully kill the target without being detected.

Lex found it hard to start meditating, but once he did he stayed in the state for several hours. When he was done, contrary to what one might expect, he felt mentally exhausted. Stabilizing his overactive spirit drained him, but he felt satisfied as he could feel himself making progress. It was slow, but it existed. He made a resolution to meditate for a few hours everyday. But for now, he needed sleep.

Sweeping the Inn with his mind once he made sure there was nothing that needed his attention, then went to sleep. He woke up the next day feeling refreshed and despite wanting to stay in bed for a bit longer, he jumped out and headed towards the shower while he ordered Gerard to deliver a hearty breakfast to his room.

Once he showered and dressed himself in his Host Attire, he sat down to a breakfast of eggs, bacon, hash browns, sausages, buttered bread, tea, cereal, poptarts, cold pizza (he had to tell Gerard specifically he wanted the pizza to be cold, as if just taken out of the fridge) croissants, bagels, donuts, cottage cheese, crackers, hummus, grapes and several other dishes that would make one wonder if the Innkeeper had gone insane.

No, the Innkeeper had not gone insane. It was just that his appetite had exploded with his increased cultivation and while previously he could eat endlessly without gaining weight, now he felt like if he did not eat enough he would faint. This was actually an extreme case of what most cultivators went through before they started drawing spiritual energy into their body. The energy requirement of their body would increase, and since his only source of energy was food he would need to drastically increase his intake. Later, once his body developed the capability for absorbing spiritual energy, he would be able to reduce his dependence on eating ridiculous amounts of food. Not that he was complaining, it was a different kind of pleasure being able to eat so much.

While he ate, he opened up the System and took a look at what he could do. Currently he had 2,551,526 MP and there were many things he could do. He directly set aside one million MP for the event - he was actually expecting to spend around 500,000MP but he thought he would leave himself a buffer.

While looking at the system he was surprised to see that the rooms booked by Bastet and Falak were both free now. It had already been a month. Lex took a moment to reminisce about all the things that had happened the last month then got to work.

Lex was expecting a lot more guests at his Inn as a result of the upcoming event, so he needed to increase his capacity. Currently he had 7 regular rooms, so he purchased 13 more for an expense of 6500MP. He also hired 3 more A.I. whose sole job would be to take care of the guests in the manor. They would clean, take care of room service, act as a concierge or whatever else would be required of them within the manor. He naturally also purchased residences for them, for a combined expense of 10,500MP. He made Velma in charge of the new staff. Originally he was going to give Gerard the responsibility, but if he was restricted to the manor then the old man would be deprived of the joy of driving around the gold cart so decided to give the old man a different job. That job, as one can expect, was head chauffeur. He bought 3 more golf carts, and hired three new A.I. staff to be chauffeurs. Of

course, it goes without saying, he bought them employee residences as well. His total expense for this was 11,100MP (each golf cart was 200MP).

Before he turned his attention away from the manor and towards the rest of the Inn, he also hired a final A.I. to be the chef at the restaurant and named him Ramsey. With that done, and no new required alterations to the manor that Lex could think of, he turned his attention to the rest of the Inn. The only two new rooms he could build at the moment were the Patisserie and the Guild room. For the Patisserie Lex had something special in mind so he didn't build it for now.

Lex bought the Guild room for the cheap price of 1000MP and placed it beside the barbershop, and then paused because of how insignificant the amount seemed right now yet how much it had intimidated him earlier. Yet he didn't dwell on it for long as the Guild room required more of his attention. It required another full time employee so Lex hired yet another A.I. and at this point it should be automatically understood that along with each A.I. came its own room.

The Guild room, contrary to its name, did not allow guests to set up guilds. Instead, it allowed guests to more easily interact with other guests. They could submit tasks or requests in the Guild room along with a reward for completion of the task, which other guests could accept. Both, the guests who submitted and accepted the task could do so with their identity hidden or shown, whichever they preferred. On the surface this looked like a simple place where one could hire mercenaries or adventurers to perform tasks, but it could also serve as an excellent trading platform. For example, if one guest had a surplus of a certain resource, such as Zombie cores, they could put them in as a reward for a task that is asking someone to submit a corresponding number of spirit stones. Anyone who was in need of the cores could pay or 'submit' the spirit stones and receive the cores.

This eliminated the need for guests who wanted to trade with one another to coordinate timings and arrive at the Inn at the same time to conduct the trade. The guests also did not need to be at the Inn to receive payments as they would directly be sent to the relevant guest wherever they were in the universe.

Lex really wanted to open up armories so he could sell weapons, which he could in theory but then he would need to supply the weapons as the System had not unlocked the building yet. He also wanted to build a Library to store cultivation techniques, but did not have enough of those yet either. He had an idea to open up a movie theater, but it would be suspicious if he only had Earth's media on it so he had to delay that plan till he had movies from other places.

Then, while he was browsing the Midnight market he saw a tab he had never seen before called 'Employee Benefits'. Intrigued, he opened it and was immediately filled with excitement! Apparently the

tab was unlocked when he hired Harry, but since he had given all of his A.I. staff employee residences, they also became eligible to receive these benefits. So why was Lex excited about the prospect of his employee getting benefits? It was because the first option under benefits was cultivation. All of his A.I. staff were absolutely loyal to Lex, as assured by the System, so he had no qualms about funding their cultivation. He opened the cultivation tab which presented him with a list of all his employees and which cultivation techniques were suitable for them. Without hesitation Lex spent 20,000MP and bought all the A.I. staff the most suitable cultivation techniques and told them all to start practicing in their free time.

He also told them to write them down and submit a copy of each to him. After all, he had to start his collection for his library from somewhere.