

Innkeeper 811

The Innkeeper

Chapter 811: Too harsh

The trio of Lex, Aoi and the princess ran for quite a while before they finally approached the heirs quarters. Before closing in, the princess stopped and fixed her clothes and appearance and turned to glance at Aoi. That's when she noticed that Lex was there as well.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, startled at the sight of him.

"Didn't you ask me to follow you before you started running?" Lex responded innocently. At the same time, he looked around. He had prepared a few items which could create decoys of himself for when the princess would eventually be stopped, and he would have had to make a quick getaway. But that never happened.

"No I, uh, actually never mind," she said, turning to look at Aoi. The Nymph only nodded towards the elf, as if supporting her decision, though she was still not quite clear on how they went from saving a lotus to running all the way here. She looked around, now that she finally had a chance, and wondered where they were, exactly.

"Do you find it strange that none of the guards stopped us?" Lex couldn't help but ask. In his mind, he had already concluded that the Celestial no doubt made it easier for them. Perhaps he was interested in how Lex would actually get Kenta away from here, and wanted to skip the tedious part where Lex navigated through the palace to actually reach him.

Little did he know, his assumption was extremely close to the truth, with one alteration. It was not the heir's father who was impatient, but one of his companions who wanted to see how the drama between the princess and the heir would unfold. This was better than any reality TV show!

To be clear, they were not concerned about any of the so-called 'saving face', as that kind of mentality was mainly adopted by the central Elven alliance which was made up of a majority of the elves. But it was also specifically to avoid such a mentality that too many forces and organizations distanced themselves from the alliance as well.

"That... let's not find out," the princess said, realizing that it really should not have been so easy for them to approach. Could it have been Kenta? Could he have been hoping that she would come in his last moments to see him?

Her emotions welled up but she forced herself to remain calm, and slowly began to approach the closed door. Unlike Lex, who had trained himself to remain calm even in a life and death situation let alone this, and Aoi who still had no idea where they were, the princess was extremely nervous. With each step she took, her heart started to beat faster. In her head she struggled to come up with what she wanted to say to Kenta.

Over and over again she thought of her words, and then changed her mind. She also wondered what Kenta was going through. Was he in anguish? Was he sad? Was he in denial?

The hallway was not endless, so she could not complete her thoughts before she finally approached the door to his room. There was not a lot of time, so she did not hesitate and knocked on the door. Behind her, Lex was keeping an eye out for any guards. Once he reached Kenta, this was basically a done deal. He would probably also take Aoi and the princess along as well, to apologize to them for using them in such a way.

A few moments went by, but the door did not open and they could not hear any movement on the other side. Of course, there was also a possibility that all sound was insulated, so they kept waiting.

Finally, just as even Lex was getting impatient, the door finally opened to reveal a disheveled looking Kenta. His hair was a mess and he looked like he had just woken up from a coma. Although he had cleaned it, Lex could tell that the hair had been drooping as well.

Was it really alright for one to be in such a state only a couple of hours before their own wedding? Lex had made up the poem, so why did it actually look like he was suffering from love sickness?

Before the hair could take in who had come to visit him, and before anyone had a chance to speak, the princess slapped him hard across the face.

"How dare you be thinking of other women before your own wedding? Have you no shame?" she questioned him, her voice extremely harsh.

Aoi, Kenta and Lex were all stunned by what just happened. The Celestials who were also watching became even more invested, as none of them had predicted this outcome.

Internally, the princess chided herself.

'That was a little too harsh. Let's try again, a little gentler this time,' she thought.

"I... I mean Kenta, you are about to begin a very important phase of your life. You should not put a stain on a new relationship by starting it this way," she said, her voice suddenly going from extremely harsh to extremely delicate and vulnerable. From her voice, it seemed as if she was experiencing heartbreak even as she said those words.

"Please excuse my manners but... do I know you?" Kenta asked, as the princess' slap helped him sober up somewhat.

Lex, who had originally planned on immediately teleporting everyone away, decided to wait a bit, and allow the princess to vent her emotions somewhat. He had no qualms about letting the heir take all the slaps on his behalf for stirring up trouble.

Alright, a part of him was secretly pissed that the heir had made him pay for the food. It was not about the money, but the embarrassment he faced when the shopkeeper thought he was dining and dashing.

The princess finally remembered that she was still in her ingenious and infallible disguise. She looked at him once apologetically, as if she knew revealing herself before him would no doubt give him feelings of hope and delight. But since it could not be, these emotions had to be quashed right now.

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Chapter 812: Exit

Only Kenta, the princess, Aoi and Lex were present in the hallway. There had been a few guards standing there awkwardly, but once the heir got slapped they vanished as if their life depended on it.

Lex was more than happy to let the princess vent on Kenta, while Aoi was shocked and had her mouth covered with her hand. She was wondering since when had the princess become so violent? But at the

same time, she felt that this was so different and exciting for her normal life of study and research. A fire was lit up deep inside the Nymph's heart, unbeknownst to herself and anyone else.

Not dragging the matter further, the princess revealed her true appearance. It took Kenta a moment to recognize her, which immediately startled him.

'What is she doing here?' he questioned in his heart as he suddenly began to panic. This was not good. He wasn't even married yet, but if his to-be wife heard rumors of him meeting another woman literally hours before their marriage, he would be doomed!

"What are you doing here?" he could not stop himself from asking. He had intended to be more tactful in his wording, but his anxiety got the better of him.

His tumultuous emotions did not go unnoticed by the princess, who took it as an affirmation of all her thoughts.

"Kenta we... we're elves from two different worlds. We cannot be together. I... I'll forgive you for your actions back then, but you must put this matter behind us."

"How can I put this behind us when you're here?" he asked, a headache starting to develop. He had already forgotten about her, but she came knocking on his door asking to let bygones be bygones, which was the most ridiculous thing ever. He would be more than happy to let this matter rest, but she would have to not randomly show up at his door first!

"Kenta I... I didn't want it to come to this but... I don't feel the same way as you. This cannot work."

"You... you don't feel the same?" he repeated, feeling devastated. Was his flirting so powerful? Had he gotten her to fall in love with him after a single meeting? Could she no longer ignore him?

"But... but princess... you're at my wedding!" he exclaimed, trying to convey to her that he simply couldn't be with her. He was already in over his head with one wife who he was being forced to have, if he had to deal with a scorned lover on the side his life would become complete chaos.

"Exactly!" the princess exclaimed, trying to explain to this dumb lovestruck fool that she couldn't be with him. "It's YOUR wedding! You have to get married, just not to the elf you want. Trust me, ultimately, things will turn out for the best this way!"

Aoi was teetering with excitement as she tried to figure out what was happening. She was filling in the blanks herself, and coming up with a love story for the ages. Lex, on the other hand, was trying his best to suppress his laughter.

It was a good thing his expressions couldn't be seen under his mask, or else it would become evident how hard it was for him to keep a straight expression.

"No, no, no, this can't be happening!" the heir said as he turned away from them and walked back into his room, his thoughts swirling. He had to think of a solution, and fast. How had things gotten so out of control? He was only trying to get his hands on some ingredients!

The princess, who was trying out the soft approach, was losing her patience now. What the hell was wrong with this guy? Why was he so adamant? Sure, she was beautiful. But that was no reason to harass her with his undying, poem inspiring love... suddenly her thoughts paused.

'Wait a minute... if the part about him being married was removed, and it was true that his love was really so great, he wasn't a bad candidate. No, ew, what the hell am I thinking?'

Having recovered from her momentary lapse in judgment, the princess became irritated and followed the heir into his room.

Lex could feel that the situation was escalating, so he decided to end it soon and take them all to the Inn before something unexpected happened.

"Let's follow them in," he said to Aoi, before walking behind the princess.

"Listen pal, this is happening whether you like it or not. Forget about your own problems for a second and think about how I feel? Why do I have to get dragged into this mess?"

Kenta, who was panicking, suddenly paused.

Yes, the poor princess. If he was having such a tough time, how did the princess who had fallen in love with him feel?

Before Kenta had an opportunity to respond, Lex cleared his throat.

"If I may interrupt, I believe I have the solution to all your problems," said Lex as he walked closer to the two, making sure Aoi was close by as well.

"Lex?" Kenta asked, suddenly recognizing the voice. By his completely covered appearance it was difficult to identify him, especially since there were a few races who preferred to stay completely covered. It was only when he spoke that Kenta realized who he was, and a crazy thought came to his mind. Was he actually trying to help him escape the wedding? Seriously?

"I'm glad you recognize me," Lex said, his voice warm. "That will make things easier."

He summoned an envelope from his spatial ring and placed it on a table nearby, and took out three golden keys and handed one to each of them.

"What's this going to do?" asked the princess who was irritated now. Having ordinary elves fall in love with her was not enough, now that she had to deal with one who had massive power and influence, she really wanted to resolve the situation lest it become something that bothered her throughout her life.

"I'll explain in a moment," said Lex as he initiated his own return to the Inn. Since it took a few moments he waited patiently in silence, and just as the time was about to be up, he used his spirit sense to crush the keys in their hands.

All four of them vanished at the same time.

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Chapter 813: Happily Kidnapped

Within a millionth of a second after the four disappeared, five Celestials appeared in the room. There was a look of intrigue in their eyes as they scanned the room but could not detect any lingering traces from their teleportation, which was extremely unusual.

It had to be known that even if they themselves teleported somewhere, they would leave behind some traces that could be sensed or detected. Of course, if they planned far in advance and prepared meticulously, they could teleport somewhere without leaving any residual traces from the laws of space, but even that was conditional. Moreover, they were in the official peak realm of the Origin realm. How could someone in the Golden core compare to them?

The answer was simple. They couldn't. That left only one explanation for what had just occurred. The golden keys that Lex had handed out had been supreme treasures, the likes of which could not be easily procured.

The heirs' father picked up the envelope left behind by Lex and opened it. Within lay a small letter explaining that Lex had taken Kenta to a place called Midnight Inn which was, as was evident from the name, an Inn. Lex had also left behind a couple of golden keys in the envelope as well, in case the father wanted to investigate.

Although he had been brief, he had given somewhat of an overview of the Inn, as well as the fact that it was an entity recognized by the Henali, so there was no cause for concern. He could come and check it out himself if he so wished.

"It seems we are behind the times," said one of the Celestials as he read the letter.

"Are you going to go?" asked another, though it was clear that he could not have cared less. He was, instead, enjoying the fact that he had won his bet.

"I will go, yes. But first, I need to confirm with the Henali if what is written in this letter is true. It would be tragic if this all was an elaborate ploy to trap me, and I went in without any preparations."

"Suit yourself," said another Celestial before disappearing away.

None of them were really concerned about the wedding. Even if Kenta did not appear, they could just use their abilities to create a projection of Kenta as a stand in. Regardless of whether the heir was here or not, he would be getting married today.

The three holding the keys did not feel the teleportation at all, as it was very different from normal teleportations which would have various negative effects. For them, one moment they were in Kenta's room, and another they were in an entirely new place.

The entrance of the Inn, where all new guests would teleport to, was elaborately decorated without being overdone. There was greenery, there was man made architecture, there was a massive flowing river nearby in case any of the guests were aquatic, and there were many more features that made the place look like paradise.

Lex's own visit to Zuri Adisa's planet had given him a unique perspective of what guests must feel like when they entered the Midnight Inn, and he used that to improve the landing zone, to improve all guests' first impressions.

A natural, exquisite fragrance from nearby flowers specially grown by the turtle elevated everyone's mood and heightened their senses. The pure, unpolluted spiritual energy of the Inn was extraordinarily appealing to nature loving races like elves and nymphs, even more so than others.

It was for that reason that the three, instead of being alarmed or frightened by the sudden change in their location, became mesmerized. They forgot that they were caught up in a heated argument, and forgot their impending responsibilities. They were too preoccupied enjoying the purity of the environment.

Lex also did not disturb them, as he wanted them to temper their anger as much as possible. After all, Kenta aside, he would have to apologize to two possibly furious ladies he had somewhat manipulated.

At the same time, he was also feeling extremely satisfied at a successful mission. He would soon be free from one of the inscriptions on his body.

Eventually, Kenta recovered, and turned to look at Lex. He was the first to understand the whole situation, and guessed that Lex had a hand in the princess' arrival at his doorstep at such a time, though he did not know if her feelings for him were genuine. Being charming was such a burden, he could not really blame her for falling for him.

Seeing that Kenta had recovered, Lex decided to delay things no further. He cleared his throat, attracting the attention of the princess and Aoi, before saying, "welcome to the Midnight Inn, the best Inn in all the universe. I believe I have some explaining to do, though, how about we relocate to a more private location first."

Neither Aoi nor the princess voiced any complaints. Although they should have been concerned, for they had just possibly been kidnapped, but their intuition said that this was a safe place. Moreover, there were countless others arriving and leaving here beside them, and they could see various guests being welcomed with a similar greeting, claiming the Inn to be the best in the universe.

Nodding his head, Lex led them towards one of the public transport facilities nearby, and procured them all peacocks to ride.

By now, having lived in the Inn for so long, the peacocks had all grown tremendously strong bodies, and a few of them had evolved into Beasts as well, albeit only in the Qi training realm. They had grown larger, more beautiful and better capable of carrying guests of all shapes and sizes.

They even had saddles, though none of them opted for a saddle. Each of them got on the peacock as if they had been riding them since birth, though their fascination with the birds clearly stated otherwise.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 814: Tour

Lex led the way, guiding his peacock to follow the flowing river. Over the past few months, the planning division had slowly and steadily been providing him with plans and blueprints to develop the various 'empty' areas of the Inn.

A majority of the Inn was occupied by wilderness. That had not changed, but by organizing it somewhat, and doing some basic landscaping, the outlook changed drastically. Lex could not help but think back to when he originally got the Inn.

At that time, Lex was doing things randomly and halfheartedly, without really considering how things would work out. He recalled how, when he initially brought in various birds, he had not considered their feed at all. If it weren't for one of his guests, Helen, who began feeding them, many of them may have died. Speaking of whom, Lex hadn't seen her in a while. He hoped she was alright.

All in all, things had changed a lot in the last year and a half. But at the same time, these changes also made him excited for the future. It was a pleasant change from the days where he would wallow in his own depression.

"I would like to begin by apologizing to you both," Lex said as he addressed Aoi and the princess. "Truth be told, I needed to reach Kenta, and well... I had a feeling I could reach him through you."

Lex tried to give them an apologetic look before he recalled that he was wearing a mask.

"Does that mean that he doesn't... that he isn't obsessed with me?" the princess asked, her voice hopeful.

"Ah, no, he isn't," Lex admitted honestly, though a small part of him had wished the misunderstanding would have continued. It was quite entertaining to watch.

Instead of being angry at Lex, the princess only breathed out a sigh of relief. Kenta, who was listening to everything from the side, felt slightly offended at how relieved the princess was. Then he recalled that he too had been fretting about her being obsessed with him, and now that he knew it wasn't true he too... no actually, he didn't feel relieved, just disappointed.

Seeing that no verbal abuse was being flung his way, Lex felt relieved, and continued speaking.

"To make it up to you, I'll introduce you to the Midnight Inn. Moreover, I'll cover your stay here. Feel free to stay as long as you like and enjoy yourself. Whenever you wish to leave, you need only think about it, and you'll be teleported back to where we entered from. Moreover, you'll get a copy of the golden key, so you can come here again whenever you wish."

"Is anyone welcome here?" Aoi asked as she held out her hands and let them gently caress the leaves from the small bushes they passed. It looked like she was just appreciating them, but Lex could sense that she was actually communicating with the plants! Moreover, they were responding!

Even Lex had not talked to the plants at the Inn. In fact, he didn't even know that was possible. Maybe this was a unique trait of Nymphs.

"Was this your plan from the beginning?" Kenta asked, as he finally realized where Lex's confidence came from. "Are you a part of the Midnight Inn?"

"Haha, no I'm not from the Inn, just a normal guest. But yes, my confidence in taking you away came from being able to teleport to the Inn from anywhere. You may not know this but, here, inside the Inn, even a Celestial Immortal is not a big deal," said Lex, though the reality was far from the truth.

"There have been a few times people tried to attack the Inn, but each time the Innkeeper killed everyone of them. So, over here, I'm not really worried about anything. Now that you're here, you can finally run away from your wedding. If you raise your privilege level high enough, you can teleport away to another planet without needing to return to Tilaiya. You are officially free to do as you please."

Kenta smiled wryly. He was free, but at the same time, was he really? Could he give up the temptation of reaching an unbelievably high cultivation realm just so he could pursue some fantasy called 'freedom'? Moreover, was such freedom even a good thing to begin with?

Kenta shook his head without answering. Both he and his adopted father knew that he would return to Tilaiya, eventually. However... there was nothing preventing him from enjoying himself in the meantime. His grin widened.

"Lex, I have a fantastic idea. If anyone can teleport here from anywhere, then... then... isn't this the best place in the universe to get ingredients? I can get the best ingredients from across the universe and open up the best restaurant!"

Excitement filled his eyes, and he started to pant as more and more ideas flooded into his mind. If it was really possible... if he could really do this...

"Hmm, joining the Inn is not exactly easy. You have to take a test and completely join the Inn. That means if you would ever hope to return to Darmin, it might be an issue, since it's completely neutral and cannot be affiliated with any other organization. But who knows, maybe you can just rent out a place from the Inn and open your restaurant. You'd still have to prove yourself first, though."

Instead of responding to Lex, Kenta looked towards the princess with heated eyes.

"What do you say, Asami? With your divine produce, and my cooking skills, we could-"

Kenta was too distracted to dodge the shoe the princess threw at him.

She had suffered enough thanks to this idiotic heir, and wanted nothing more to do with him.

"Lex, how about a tour of this place?" she asked instead, her gaze turning towards their mysterious tour guide. "By the way, did you really write that poem yourself or was that made up as well?"

"No, that was really me," Lex admitted. "If you want a tour, I have a few ideas. If you want to see anywhere specific, I can take you there. But if you want to see the entire Inn, then the train is the best option."

Lex began to introduce the various features of the Inn, not at all noticing the unusual glint in the princesses eyes. Meanwhile, Kenta rubbed his nose as he began to rethink his plan. Apparently relying on his charm to procure the best ingredients was not feasible.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 815: Awkward

Lex spent the next few hours accompanying the princess, Asami, as well as Aoi and Kenta. He had introduced various aspects of the Inn to them, while at the same time learned a lot about them and their backgrounds as well. It also expanded his understanding of Suera.

A galaxy, any galaxy at all, was usually occupied by millions of different races. Most galaxies were not owned, over controlled, by any one race. In fact, most galaxies barely had any civilization capable of proper interstellar travel.

Suera happened to be one of the galaxies which had seen the advance of two different races, so much so that over the course of time, they occupied a majority of it. That was not to say other races were exterminated, but that most races that would try to fight against the expansion of those two races had been eliminated.

Those two races were elves and dwarves. All other races that existed and prospered within the galaxy were linked to those two races in one way another, similar to how Aoi usually worked with elves.

The elves and dwarves used to be at war but only recently called for a cease fire and, surprising everyone, even became allies.

Since he was mostly with elves, he learnt a lot about their culture and learnt that the elves... well, a nice way of putting it was that they were quite conservative. And racist. And traditionalists.

The main body of elves consisted of various clans and organizations who joined together to form the Central Elven Alliance. The elves in that alliance were quite conservative in the sense that for millions of years they had adhered to the norms and traditions of their ancestors, did not like change, and shunned anyone who tried to bring change. But if one adhered to those few principles, they were quite friendly.

But when the race spread so far and wide, there were naturally outliers. Many elves did not want to spend their lives worshiping trees, being vegetarian and adhering to rules that did not make sense to them. The existence of this group nearly caused a civil war. How exactly that dispute was resolved was unknown, even to the younger generation of elves such as Asami and Kenta.

What truly mattered was that these outliers eventually split from the main, and formed their own organizations and their own traditions. Both Asami and Kenta belonged to such factions. Aoi was, naturally, a subordinate of Asami technically speaking, though due to their friendship they did not treat it as such.

Unlike Kenta, whose background made it so that he was limited in what he could do, Asami did not come from a neutral organization. In fact, her background was quite polarized because they had a monopoly on what was called the Sacred Harvest.

The elves weren't too keen on elaborating what the Sacred Harvest was, just that it was very helpful for elves' growth.

To be honest, taking the group around the Inn was originally to get rid of his guilt for using them and wait for the Celestials arrival, but as time went by, he was glad he was doing this. Although he did not mind continuing to cultivate rigorously as he had been, it was beginning to build up a pressure that he had not noticed.

It was only now, that he was casually strolling around with a few acquaintances, that he realized how long it had been since he just relaxed with a few friends. But all good things must eventually come to an end.

"Lex, Kenta's father has arrived at the Inn," informed Mary.

"Send someone to guide him to us," replied Lex, and turned to look at Kenta. "It looks like your old man is about to arrive."

Indeed, just as he finished his sentence, the heirs father arrived as if teleporting over. The only thing was... he wasn't alone. Beside him was another elf... in a wedding dress made of flowers and leaves.

"Congratulations my boy, you're married," the heirs father said, a sly grin on his face.

"Congratulations," Asami said immediately as well, as if mocking him.

"Congratulations," Lex followed along as well, a wide grin on his face though no one could see it. By this point, he was just being petty about the whole payment thing.

Kenta froze, unable to process what was happening, until eventually he turned to look at his 'wife'.

"It's nice to meet you," he said, somewhat awkwardly.

"It would have been nice if you attended your own wedding," his wife responded, clearly not happy with him.

"Ah... I was kidnapped," Kenta quickly defended himself.

She turned to look at Lex, as if she knew he was responsible for what happened.

"Your father-in-law and I had a bet over whether I could do it or not. I'm quite competitive, and got carried away. My apologies, it won't happen again," said Lex proactively.

She only shook her head and turned and looked back at Kenta.

"My name is Sohee Haru, now that I have taken on your last name."

"Wait, Sohee, does that mean..."

"Yes, before you, I was the heir of Tilaiya."

Kenta froze again, and this time, so did everyone else. Did Kenta just get married to the person... he replaced? How awkward was that? It seemed that no matter how petty Lex was, he could not match up to the standard of Kenta's own parents.

Looking away from them, Lex turned his attention to the Celestial Immortal.

"Senior, I was giving everyone a tour of the Midnight Inn. Would you like a tour as well?"

"Little brat, I have over a hundred thousand guests waiting for me back at the palace. I have no time for a tour. I'll be leaving my worthless son here for a while, but come by after two days. I will do as I promised and help you remove your inscription. As for the tour... it will have to wait for a while."

With that, the heirs' father left the Inn, leaving them in silence. Everyone turned to look at Kenta and Sohee once again, who were just staring at one another in silence.

Suddenly, Lex felt glad that he was single.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 816: Gamer dragon

After spending some time together, Lex felt like he had developed a bit of friendship with the group of three. But with the addition of Sohee, Kenta's new wife, the group became extremely awkward and silent.

Any time Kenta would try to talk to Sohee, or even talk at all, she would say something that would shut him up. She would say things like, 'if I had to be replaced by someone, I at least hoped it was someone competent,' or 'I'm glad to see that even after getting married you can be such good friends with the princess you were caught flirting with'. Honestly, Lex had no idea how he could remedy the situation.

Although he tried a few times to smooth things over, it seemed like Sohee was just in a very bad mood right now - not that Lex could blame her.

Ultimately, Lex could not take the awkward silence anymore. He told the group that their stay was sponsored by him, to make up for the fact that... he had kidnapped them all. He also let Kenta know that he would help him talk to someone from the Inn, and if he could impress them then maybe he had a chance of opening a restaurant there.

Then he informed them that he had some work to do, and he disappeared as quickly as possible!

"Mary, inform Velma about the 'unique' situation with Kenta, Asami and his wife. I'm sure she will be extremely intrigued. At the same time, have her judge if Kenta is a good cook. If he really can cook well, there's no harm in having him as a cook. It's always better to find people who have a passion for such things."

He had two days before he needed to return to Tilaiya. He did not expect Hix to find Barley any time soon, but checking in once in a while was not a bad idea. In the meantime, he would continue his cultivation sessions.

The more of the blade of grass he ate, the more he built an affinity for it. That meant he could eat more of the grass while having to endure less pain afterwards. Moreover, although for now the change was very subtle, he could tell he was healing much faster than before.

The best part was, Lex no longer needed to blindly guess why this was happening. With Pel around, he could ask him questions and receive adequate answers. Although the ring had a majority of its memories still sealed, what it recalled was enough for Lex for now.

"How come I'm healing quicker after gaining an affinity for the healing law? Am I developing some kind of new bloodline? Or am I mutating into another species?" Lex asked Pel during his next cultivation session.

"Neither, although becoming a new species is somewhat closer to the answer than your other guesses. In cultivation, up until the Nascent realm, with each new realm your strength grows a definite amount. That means, irrespective of your own personal skills or attributes, the new realm itself gives you new and greater strength. However, that changes once you step into the immortal realms.

"From the immortal realms onwards, a majority of a cultivator's powers comes from their tenets or laws, and tenets basically rely on laws anyway so they don't really count. That's an oversimplification of the situation, but you can take it as such. Anyway, in that realm cultivators actively use those laws to bring about various effects. Your body, by gaining an affinity for those laws, is not biologically becoming better able to heal. Instead, it uses those laws passively, to a very minute extent, and somewhat allows you to touch upon those laws before you actually reach a sufficient realm to do so.

"In simple terms, you have a cheat. For example, you look at things in the form of a video game. Imagine you are at level one, but gain a weapon that's level 10. You can't really use it, because you're too weak, but sometimes just holding it is enough to gain benefits from its passive effects."

Upon hearing all that, Lex became stunned.

"Don't tell me that in your previous life you were a gamer?" he exclaimed. Why was a former dragon turned spirit realm giving him examples from video games?

"In my previous life I lived for millions of years. In my previous life I had indulged in pretty much every kind of entertainment and time pass that was ever invented."

Lex was stunned, but upon consideration, figured that it only made sense. Moreover, with that much time on his hands, he bet Pel grinded all games until he got 100% achievements. Suddenly, Lex gained massive respect for the dragon.

He was still going to use its living corpse as a cultivation mat, but that did not change the fact that he now felt massive respect for it.

Like that, he spent the next two days either cultivating atop the dragon to raise his cultivation, or raising his affinity with the laws of regrowth by eating the blade.

Once enough time had passed, and he was about to return to Tilaiya, Lex paused to see how his recovery was going. It was difficult to tell, but he swore he could see a faint layer of skin forming below the scab that had covered his entire body.

But, once that was done, Lex could no longer ignore the one painful thing he had been trying to avoid. He finally checked in on Kenta, his wife and the rest, and was immediately stumped. Why was the situation so different?

Velma, Sohee and Asami were riding a rollercoaster and laughing as they giggled to one another, while Kenta was buying groceries at the Guild room. Aoi was in the greenhouse talking to Zen, the small patch of grass that had gained sentience and become an immortal all at once, despite having an extremely frail body.

Aoi and Kenta were acting within his expectations, but since when had Sohee, Velma and Asami become such good friends?

The Innkeeper

Chapter 817: Ended before it began

"Mary, has anything strange happened with the group while I was cultivating?" Lex asked. It was not that he had a bias against Sohee, but that their first meeting was genuinely too awkward. He did not

blame her, for she had probably been forced to marry the very elf who replaced her as the heir to such a powerful force. It was only normal for there to be some bitterness and resentment.

Mary, who appeared above Lex, this time dressed as cupid, opened her mouth to speak, but paused. After some hesitation, she simply said, "Velma is very extroverted, as you know. Plus all things related to romance excite her to no end. As a result, she is very good at dealing with such things. She cleared up all the misunderstandings between the group, and now Asami and Sohee at least are good friends. Kenta and Sohee have also decided to work on their relationship, for it won't really benefit anyone if they stay at odds."

She gave Lex an odd look, but then disappeared before he noticed anything. It may not seem like it, but Lex was extremely perceptive, especially when it came to things related to himself. At least that's how he was with the system and all things related to cultivation. Other, simpler things seemed to go over his head.

With Mary's reassurance Lex relaxed, and decided to teleport over and ask them if any of them planned on returning with him. As much as he liked hanging out with the group, this was probably the last time he was going to have an opportunity. After all, he had to use his time wisely and cultivate as much as possible.

When he teleported over to Kenta, the elf boldly declared that he did not plan on returning to Tilaiya for the next few years while he fulfilled his passion for opening up a restaurant. Anyway, he was already married now, so his adopted father could be relieved that there was someone to watch over him and keep him out of trouble. He was not really needed for anything special for a while.

Aoi, likewise, claimed that she wanted to spend some more time here. She was trying to get the turtle to acknowledge her as a student, but the turtle itself was a baby. How could it focus on teaching? All its attention was focused on playing around. Well, that's what Lex thought but he did not say that aloud.

When he approached the three girls, however, he had an odd interaction. Sohee stared at him intently, as if studying him, while Velma giggled a little. Asami, the princess, accepted his offer to return with him. After all, she had disappeared without warning. Although she was enjoying the Inn, she needed to go report to her family and continue with her duties.

After saying farewell to Asami, Sohee glared at Lex once, before turning away. There was definitely something wrong with her.

"How did you get over the awkwardness?" Lex asked, unable to contain himself.

"It was a delicate matter. I could not outright say that I disliked Kenta to her, as that would be insulting her husband in front of her. Yet I had to assure her that I had no interest in him either. Velma made the process easier, and once all the misunderstandings were cleared, we became good friends. Honestly, Sohee is quite nice. She's just slightly cautious because she's lost her position before, and so doesn't easily feel safe with her new circumstances. Once she opens up, however, she's a nice person.

"You should also take the chance to get to know her. Perhaps you could read her some of the poetry you wrote. That might make her more amenable to you. Though, I don't recommend the one about the Blood Rose."

"Haha, I don't really have much experience writing poetry," Lex confessed. "That was the first time I actually did so. I don't really see myself writing any more any time soon either."

"That's a shame," Asami said simply, and looked at Lex from the side of her eyes. In her mind she could not help but think how apt his poem was. The two could become friends, but not lovers. Their station and destinies lay elsewhere, thoroughly dividing them. He said he only wrote it casually, so then why could she feel the emotions in that poem so deeply herself?

For the briefest of moments, Asami felt weak. But the moment passed, and she collected herself.

"Shall we go?" she asked.

Lex nodded and said, "You only need to think of returning. You will immediately be teleported back."

The two, an elf and a human, a princess and a universal entrepreneur, disappeared at the same time, and reappeared in Kenta's room. Though they journeyed together for this brief period, their paths were ultimately diverging. It was unknown if they would even have the opportunity to meet again.

"I have to report to my family," said Asami, her voice oddly gentle. "Let us part here."

"In that case, farewell. If you come to the Midnight Inn again, you can try looking for me. Although I'm usually busy, I also spend a lot of time there."

The princess simply nodded and walked away.

Lex stood there for a moment and watched her leave. He was not completely oblivious to what was happening, and considering the newfound friendship between Asami, Sohee, and Velma, he could somewhat understand why Sohee was glaring at him. But somehow, the relationship between him and this princess ended before it even began.

Honestly speaking, Asami was indeed very beautiful, and they did seem to hit it off during the short time they spent together. But just because she was beautiful, or just because they got along, did not mean that he would become desperate to be with her.

Lex scratched his head, but then turned his attention elsewhere. He did not have the luxury to think about romance with danger looming over his immediate future.

The princess, who was walking away, contacted her family and filled them in on what had happened the last couple of days. Before she ended the call, she requested a patch of Blood Roses to be grown in her personal garden - the ones Aoi had altered so that they could grow anywhere. The princess had become fond of them.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 818: Inscriptions

With the princess departing on her way, Lex could now proceed towards the heir's father. He did not need to go looking for him, for an attendant already stood there waiting for Lex's arrival.

"Mr. Lex? I have been instructed to bring you to the guests' library when you're ready."

"Lead the way," Lex said, allowing the attendant to lead him through the palace. While he crossed the unnecessarily complicated pathway, Lex could not help but think that he had been to quite a few places, labyrinths and ancient lairs. The grandeur of the place no longer seemed to affect him.

Yes, everything was rich and fancy and giving off extremely pure spiritual energy and tinged with a lovely aroma. So, the basic standard then. That was not to say that the palace wasn't spectacular. It just didn't grab Lex's attention the way these things used to.

He passed the indoor garden, behind the waterfall of spirit water, through the corridor that seemed to contain miniaturized stars as lights, above the...

Wait, what?

Lex stopped and looked up, finding it hard to believe what his senses were telling him. No, those were not fairy lights on the ceiling, they were actual stars that had been shrunk and placed there! Alongside a dim, gentle light, the stars seemed to be giving off extremely pure yet mild spirit energy.

Alright, he admitted it, that was a new one.

When he finally reached the library, he discovered that he was not the only one waiting there. Beside him, there was the dwarf Lex had seen previously, the one he felt a threat from. As if that was not enough, accompanying the dwarf was someone from a race Lex did not recognize who also gave off a threatening aura!

Besides those two, there were a few others, but Lex did not pay attention to them. He felt a strong urge to go and challenge the dwarf immediately to a fight. His body started heating up and his heart started beating faster, but just before the urge overwhelmed him, Lex looked away.

In his right eye, a faint image of a sword had appeared, though it was diminishing now. Lex had realized that his reaction wasn't normal, and immediately picked out that he was being influenced by the sword again. A worthy challenger seemed to stimulate the sword, but not enough to make Lex lose himself.

He went and sat down in a corner, closed his eyes, and began to meditate. He didn't like the fact that there was something that could affect his mind, but since there was nothing he could do about it for the moment, he would treat it as training his mind.

One by one, the people in the library were called, and each of them were escorted to different rooms. It seemed like this was the waiting area for anyone who had an appointment, although Lex doubted that all of them were going to meet the Celestial immortal.

Whatever the case, it had nothing to do with him. He was focused on maintaining a steady mind, right up until an attendant arrived and escorted him further. When he left the room, the dwarf finally looked towards where Lex had gone. He was sure that Lex was about to challenge him, as the dwarf had felt a very fierce aura targeting him, before it withdrew on its own. Not that he was afraid.

When Lex was finally brought to the heir's father, he was surprised to see that the immortal was sitting cross-legged inside a formation, with a smaller formation placed in front of him, seemingly prepared for Lex.

Not only did the formations look extremely complicated, and expensive, but he could tell that there were a number of spirit items active in the room as well, though he could not determine their use.

"Sit," the Celestial immortal said without opening his eyes, only raising a hand to indicate that Lex should sit within the prepared formation. "I have a few questions for you before we begin. I hope you understand that I am not prying, but that this is necessary information."

"Please, ask," said Lex as he sat down. It seemed like... these inscriptions were an even bigger deal than he assumed. He thought that it would be a simple task for someone so strong to remove the inscriptions from him. It seemed he was wrong.

"First, are you aware of who put these inscriptions on your body?"

"I cannot say for certain," confessed Lex. "Although if I had to guess, I would say one of my parents."

"Do you know the cultivation realm of your parents?" he asked, but then realized something and didn't give Lex a chance to answer. "Wait, you are a human. If you suspect that your parents did this, is Jotun your father?"

"Eh, no, he's not, although I'm most likely related to him. His brother is my family's ancestor. As for my parents' cultivation realm, I am not sure. We have a... complicated relationship."

The immortal could not help and open his eyes as he looked at Lex, countless unknown thoughts running through his head.

"It seems the human race is prospering more than I was aware. Based on your answer, I take it you do not know any details of the ones who put this inscription on you, yes?"

"That is correct. I did not even know about these inscriptions until senior Zuri informed me of them."

The immortal pondered for a moment before he spoke again.

"The reason I am asking all these questions is that the more I know, the easier the process shall be. What language these inscriptions are in, what is the logic behind them, and how they were placed are all secrets even from me. They are most ingenious, as they have been placed in such a way that they have become a part of your body itself, just as much as your heart and brain are a part of you. Removing them... without harming you will not be a simple task."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 819: Thanks for the meal

Lex's mood dropped as he considered the ramification of the immortal words. The inscriptions had become a part of his body, and at the moment were not really harming him in any way. It was only if he tried to become an immortal that they would pollute his body, according to what the Celestial had informed him previously.

Yet at the same time, even for a Celestial, it was not simple to remove them. No wonder the system had never picked up on them. Even his tumor, although a part of his body, was actively harming him.

"But worry not," the immortal continued. "Although it is not simple, all it requires is a little preparation. I can still do it. Actually, if I wasn't concerned about not harming you, it would be easy to remove the inscriptions. They are not that strong. It's just maintaining your health that is the complicated part."

"Well I'm glad you are concerned about my health," Lex said wryly. It would be quite problematic otherwise.

"Remove all your clothing, as well as all items and jewelry and set them aside. I will begin momentarily."

Lex froze for a moment, but then he had no choice but to comply. He took off his clothes without any hesitation, as if he was not feeling extremely awkward and embarrassed. Though he could not decide if it was being naked which was embarrassing him, or the fact that he was skinless!

He folded everything and put it neatly on a table, before taking his place inside the formation once again.

"Brace yourself, this is going to hurt."

Before Lex had an opportunity to respond, the formation was activated and Lex felt an unquestionably massive force gripping his body, preventing him from moving. Then, the force entered his body.

"HOLY-" Lex was not able to complete what he was saying for he fell unconscious, a defense mechanism of his body.

The Celestial activated another formation the job of which was to act as life support, but then realized that Lex's body was actually quite tenacious, and despite the immense pressure it was under, showed no signs of collapsing or shutting down.

"The mystery deepens," the immortal mused, before turning his attention to the inscriptions.

Based on what he could tell, all the inscriptions were a form of protection for Lex. He could not determine what the one on his forehead did, for it had deteriorated on its own, but the one in his heart seemed to be hiding an innate feature of his body. The one on his neck seemed to be a tracker.

He could not decide which one to remove, for all three of them were in extremely delicate places where even the slightest deviation of energy could kill Lex. Whoever placed these there in the first place was extremely skilled.

The immortal spent some time trying to decide which one to remove, and ultimately decided on the tracker. Of the three, the one in Lex's heart was the most difficult to remove, while the one on the skull had already deteriorated on its own. In a few years, it may even vanish entirely. That only left the one on his neck.

Once decided, the immortal did not hesitate. Although Lex's body did not require the life support formation, he activated it nonetheless, and began the process.

Slowly, ever so slowly, his own energy seeped into Lex's body, traveled through his meridians, and reached his neck. His energy simply wafted the inscription, before moving on.

He was supposed to channel the energy out of Lex's body as it was not contaminated, but something unusual happened. Before he could take it out, the energy was absorbed directly by Lex's body!

Just as the immortal was alarmed, and even considered stopping the operation lest something unexpected happens, a spirit sense connected to his mind and transmitted a message.

"Thank you for the meal, senior!" said the Lotus, who had been roused from his slumber due to the delectable energy coursing through Lex's body.

The Celestial trembled.

"Who the hell are you?" he could not help but utter, before he quickly shut his mouth. His stupid curiosity was what got him in this situation, so it was best to keep it suppressed lest he land himself in more trouble.

The unusual auras he had felt on Lex's body earlier had let him know that Lex's background was absolutely not simple. When he learned of the Midnight Inn, he more or less confirmed that Lex had some connection to that entity.

But even being a janitor counted as being a part of the organization, which would allow Lex to come in contact with those various auras. But, regardless, he did not want to leave any chance for someone to create any trouble for him, so he offered to remove the inscription on his own.

But now it seemed like Lex's connection to the Midnight Inn was not as simple as a normal member. Or else, why would there be a hidden guardian inside Lex's body?

Due to his unfamiliarity with the Lotus on Lex's back, simply due to how incredibly rare it was, the Celestial had misunderstood the situation. He thought the simple thanks from the Lotus was a subtle warning for him not to try anything, not that he had any intention to do so from the beginning.

The immortal became extremely serious, and decided to complete the removal as quickly as possible without endangering Lex. The Lotus, who was suddenly being fed even more energy, became even more ecstatic. This was a rare delicacy.

Of course, the Lotus also knew how to share, so he used some of that energy to begin healing Lex's body as well, slowly regrowing his skin.

The procedure, despite its complexity, did not last long. A few hours later, once he was done, the heirs' father teleported away, no longer willing to be involved with Lex. Maintaining his neutrality was becoming a real hassle these days.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 820: What next?

Before he felt anything else, Lex heard himself groan. Slowly, sensation returned to him and he felt that his entire body was incredibly stiff. At the same time, he felt incredibly bloated, as if he had been eating nonstop for days.

He groaned again as he slowly brought his hands to wipe the sand from his eyes.

"What the hell happened?" he managed to mumble as he opened his eyes, and discovered that his vision was blurry. He was disoriented, nauseous, and his neck was killing him. It felt like he was back in college.

Unfortunately, he got no reply to his question, so he could only hold on while his body recovered.

Fortunately, his debilitated state did not last long. In a few minutes his vision cleared up and all his ailments seemed to fade.

He slapped his hand onto the floor to pick himself up, and to his great surprise, he noticed a very pale and extremely see-through layer of skin covering it.

"Mary, how long have I been out of it?" he asked, his gaze fixed on his hand. Normally, it would take him weeks to recover so much.

"A few hours at most," she responded, to his delight.

He looked around and saw that he was still inside the formation, though the immortal was gone. All his clothes and items were on the side, neatly folded and untouched.

He picked himself up and put on his clothes, flexing his arms and legs as he did. The more he moved, the quicker he recovered, though the unusual bloated feeling was not disappearing.

"Thank you senior," Lex said out loud, and bowed. Although the immortal was not there, Lex was sure that all his actions were under the immortal's supervision. If he wanted to meet Lex he would have. Since he had not come, then that was a form of farewell.

After waiting a moment to make sure that the immortal was not responding, Lex turned around and left. Outside, an attendant was waiting for him to guide him outside the palace. Although it was quite thoughtful, the attendants' eager attitude to lead Lex outside almost made him suspect that they wanted him gone. But how was that possible? They had quite a good relationship! Lex actually counted the Celestial immortal amongst the list of his personal contacts, though admittedly he did not know his name yet.

Whatever the case, Lex had his own tasks to complete, so he did not delay either. Once he left the palace, Lex made his way into the capital city and rented a room in a hotel for a day. Once inside, he finally checked the card that was given to him by Hix. Unfortunately, there was no indication of any progress in searching for Barley.

Lex frowned and considered if he should consult one of the oracles inside the Inn. After all, he only had a few weeks left till the Inn was sealed. Afterwards, even he would be trapped outside if he remained out, so he had to conclude all his business by then.

But the problem with that was the Destiny level protection around the Inn. It would prevent divination for anyone inside the Inn. Based on that logic, it should also prevent anyone inside the Inn from divining anything outside, right? According to the scale he knew, if someone wanted to break through the Divine level formation, then their divination would have to be of the Death level, which was the level after Destiny. Lex did not understand what this scale was based on, but he at least knew the names of the levels.

Shaking his head, Lex teleported back to the Inn. He had no way of knowing if his inscription was really removed or not, but he trusted that it had been done.

Once back at the Inn, the first thing Lex did was check his own status to see why he was feeling bloated.

Condition: Due to extremely high level spiritual energy passing through them, your meridians are swollen. They will recover on their own within 24 hours.

Remarks: You're so used to being pitiful, good things make you sick.

Extremely pure energy... considering his physical condition, Lex decided not to cultivate for the next few days to let his body recover. Although the system said he'd be fine in a day, he didn't want to risk it. Besides, Vera's event was coming up. He could spend the next few days watching over that. He could also try out Kenta's cooking as Leo.

More and more ideas kept coming to him for how he could prolong his rest from his cultivation sessions. This was the kind of creativity that usually only hits someone when they're trying to study for exams, but their brain keeps thinking of various fun tasks to do.

Teleporting to his office, Lex pulled up all the information about the upcoming event. To be entirely honest, even though Lex wanted to do a lot with it, it was Vera's event, so he could only do what she asked.

The event would last five days and was not too exciting. Basically, Vera had booked a venue, and all attendees would enter the venue at the beginning of the event, after which it would be sealed. The venue would only open five days later.

The only actual responsibility Lex had was sealing the venue and doing the advertising once the event was actually over. Of course, there was nothing sinister planned, as all attendees would be informed beforehand that the venue would be sealed. To enter or not was entirely up to them.

That was it. So technically, Lex should not have paid such an event any attention at all whatsoever. The problem was, the number of expected participants was massive in the millions. Moreover, all of them were either oracles or diviners, or basically had some profession that dealt with predicting the future. He would feel like he would be missing out on a massive opportunity if he did nothing. The only question was, what could he do?