

Innkeeper 831

The Innkeeper

Chapter 831: Regis

An Elf, a Minotaur and two humans followed a snacking child into a room. It had not been long, but someone had already noticed the lying corpses between the sleeping soldiers, alarming everyone in the area.

Those soldiers who had known, or had even been friends with those who had turned into demons were the most alarmed. Though each of them was supposed to be a battle hardened warrior, the unknown was always frightening. Even huddled together in the corner of the room, whispering their fears, their legs could be seen trembling.

"It's the Cursed Planet. It killed Norman in his sleep and turned him into an abomination..." whispered one.

"No, it must be the Root of Defilement! It is being fostered on this planet. As the inverse of the World Tree, it wields unholy powers over those in its domain!"

"No, no, it's the Child of Gravitz! I saw him in my dream, eating and eating and eating, as if he was devouring my very soul!"

"No it's..."

Luthor stopped paying attention to the words of the frightened soldiers and squatted down to take a closer look at one of the corpses. It was still on its makeshift bed on the ground, and had appeared to die without a struggle. Its disguise, however, was fading now and strips of its skin were peeling off, revealing the blue muscle underneath.

"It's a Nephil-drone," Luthor said, studying the corpse before moving to another one. "These demons are not as easy to form as some other breeds, such as zombies. The infection needs to start from the stem of the brain, so it hardly ever occurs by accident. Someone specifically targeted them."

"For what purpose?" the Minotaur asked as it smashed one of the corpses underneath its hoof. "If the enemy can destroy our ships, they can destroy us as well. There is no need for infiltration."

"That's not true," said Alfonso, munching on another snack that looked somewhat like a granola bar. "To penetrate the defense of our suits, the amount of force they would have to use would tear open a massive space hole on the planet. The Midnight Battalion is a thorn in their side if the enemy wants to do something secretly here."

The Minotaur glared at the child and was about to curse him out, but the elf spoke first.

"Only attacks containing spirituality threaten to rip the space in this vicinity. If they use non-spiritual attacks and simply bombard the planet with meteors from space, they will succeed in killing us without affecting the space. Or they could use some other drastic means, but they have not. That leads to two different conclusions. Either the target of the enemy is the planet itself, in which case it should hide a massive secret. Or, the target of the enemy is one of us. Or perhaps, all of us."

"Calm your men," Luthor said as he stood up. "Strengthen defenses and prepare for an attack. If the demons were activated now, then that means the enemy's next move is imminent."

Without waiting for anyone else to respond, Luthor walked out of the room and started to head deeper into their makeshift fort. They had approximately 3800 soldiers within their fort, mostly all a part of one large group or another, though of course there were a few stragglers.

They had enough food and water to support such a population for weeks even if they ignored Alfonso's ability to spawn unlimited food. The issue now was maintaining morale, at least for those not a part of the Inn.

Nobody could say for certain why it was so, but the members of the Midnight Battalion only seemed to grow stronger the greater the pressure upon them. None of them had buckled regardless of how great the threat was, and none of them wavered either. If they were not holding back their cultivation levels due to the kind of planets they were being sent to, more than half of them would already be in the Golden core realm.

Within the inner sections of, Luthor entered a specific chamber where he found a whole group of the battalion members resting. Although they were not asleep, they were meditating in place, trying to recover their spent spiritual energy.

"Jace, I want you to add multiple layers of inner fortifications. If you can, I also want you to strengthen all the walls as much as possible."

"You know I'm already preparing this fort as if we're going to be besieged," Jace said, opening his eyes, exhaustion evident in his voice. As a Foundation realm cultivator, creating such a massive fort on his own was not an easy task, despite having the ability to control the earth.

Luthor simply nodded, before turning his attention to another corner. There sat another member of the Inn, meditating like the rest, but with one stark difference. No one, not even Luthor, could see this member of the battalion!

The only reason Luthor knew that he sat in that specific corner was because of a small etching in the ground that had his name written on it.

"1000, I have a mission for you. Follow me."

Regis, who Luthor referred to as 1000, opened his eyes and looked at the man who was somehow looking directly in his eyes without even knowing where they were. With his finger he poked a small dot in the ground, indicating his acknowledgment of the order.

Like the rest, he had unlocked a new ability. Saying that he could vanish or turn invisible was not sufficient to describe his ability. Regis' ability was to completely disappear. Not only did he turn invisible, as well as turn all his gear and equipment invisible, but he could not produce any sound or vibrations either. Even the memory of his existence vanished from everyone's minds, including his name. That is why Luthor called him 1000, referring to him as the 1000th member of the battalion.

Regis had no control over his ability either, so it would remain active perpetually. The only way he could communicate was through physical touch. Fortunately, that had allowed him to write on a piece of paper and explain his situation to Luthor, otherwise he would be completely forgotten by all.

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Chapter 832: Just another Monday during war

Luthor walked out and entered a secluded area of the fort so that he could talk to 1000 properly. Although the members of the battalion were not easily demoralized, a strict control of information was still necessary.

"Are you here?" Luthor asked in the empty room.

In response, a small line was etched into the wall beside him, indicating that 1000 had followed him as instructed.

"There's no need to mention that something is amiss, but now I believe we are specifically being targeted. I need you to go outside the fort and find out who the enemy is and what they're planning."

1000 etched a tick mark into the wall before disappearing. Although he could touch the world around him, 1000 would leave no traces behind, as he would only physically affect the world if he willed it. Otherwise, he would not leave a footprint even in the sand.

Just as Luthor was considering his next actions, a space ripple passed through the fort. Luthor quickly stepped out and discovered that countless soldiers had dropped to the ground, some of them dead but most of them only injured.

"How long until the formation is up and running?" Luthor asked, turning to one of the elves near him.

"We're trying, but it's not so simple. Formations to stabilize space are not easy to begin with, and we are suffering from a severe scarcity of resources!"

"You better think of a solution quickly, or there won't be anyone left alive for your formation to protect!"

The elves had offered to set up such a formation within their fort, but putting up a formation was not something easily achieved, not to mention that it had not even been a full day yet since they began.

Before the elf could defend himself, the sound of a horn bellowed through the fort, and all the soldiers froze for a moment. The next second, their demeanor changed and all of them entered a combative state of mind. The horn was a warning. There were enemies on the horizon!

Unlike the rest, Luthor was not taken by surprise by the horn, as he had been expecting it. He leaped forward immediately and rushed to the outer wall and climbed the battlements from where he could get the best view.

Gerard and others rushed there at the same time, and they all looked towards the approaching enemies.

"Void dwellers!" the minotaur exclaimed with anger and hatred. The void dwellers were what they called the creatures that poured in from the rips in space, and were the most hated enemies for anyone on the Cursed Planet.

"We are fortunate," said the elf leader as he looked out at them. "Their corpses can be used as precious materials to draw the space stabilization formation."

"Gerard, find out if the enemies are coming from any other side," Luthor said as he drew battle plans in his mind. Due to the fact that they could not find a suitable location to build their fort, it was exposed from all sides, which meant that they had to station a portion of their army on each side to defend in case of enemies.

"The elves will not take part in battle," Luthor commanded, his gaze not diverting from the incoming creatures. "They will focus solely on building the formation. Our greatest threat right now is the space ripples. Those elves not proficient in building the formation will be in charge of protecting those who are."

Right now, they did not have the time to foster trust and cooperation between the various forces inside the fort. It would be best if the elves protected their own, which would allow them to feel at ease.

"The minotaurs will divide, and a portion will be stationed on each side of the fort. The Midnight Battalion will take the front charge against the Void Dwellers, but if any other foes attack, the minotaurs will step in. Gerard, divide up the rest and make sure they all take their stations. If anyone causes problems, then there is no need to hesitate. During war, we retain the right to administer capital punishment to deserters."

With his orders given Luthor jumped forward. The void dwellers were an unusual mix of strange creatures, each looking different from the rest. They all had different abilities, making it very difficult to fight against them in groups. Of course, that only applied to others.

With his first step, purple flames erupted from his hands. With his second step, they spread up his arms, hugging his black suit but not harming it at all. By the time he took his third step, his torso and upper body were engulfed in furious purple flames.

By his fourth step, he was a purple inferno rushing towards the Void Dwellers who had slowed down their initial charge. Some of them even tried to turn back and escape, but there was no escape.

Luthor had firmly mastered his strength, and could perfectly control his output so that it stayed on the border of stimulating space, but not actually doing so. Walking this tightrope did not seem to hamper Luthor at all as he single-handedly stopped the first charge of enemies towards his fort, and then dove deep within their ranks to make sure he was thoroughly surrounded.

Back when Z could still use his abilities, he was the only one who could accompany Luthor when he became like this, but even without backup he was a force of nature unto himself.

Back on the battlements the minotaurs' battle lust cooled down as he looked at Luthor. He was a maniac and felt no strain on his pride obeying his orders.

"Sandra, go remind Luthor to leave the corpses behind," Gerard yelled from the battlements. On this side of the fort Luthor alone was enough, but they were being attacked from all four sides according to the latest report. Gerard, however, was not concerned. They had faced worse odds than this. This was just another Monday as far as he was concerned. Speaking of which, was it really Monday? He had lost track of days.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 833: Holding back

On the battlements some of the guards soldiers watched nervously. Everyone was treating the situation as if Luthor alone could solve the entire push of Void Dwellers, but how could one man achieve such a thing? Even if he was undefeatable, and killed mercilessly, all the creatures would have to do is go around him.

He may be able to stop those creatures within his immediate reach, but how could that translate into stopping the entire push?

Yet that is exactly what was happening. The heat from Luthor's flames caused the dwellers to turn away from him even before he made contact, let alone when he ran into their midst. Those close to him tried to retreat, and those further away tried to circle around him.

They did not need intelligence, just a sense of self protection to avoid him. But what could mindless creatures do that Luthor hadn't already thought of? Once he was surrounded, Luthor channeled more energy, careful not to fuel it into strengthening his flames. Instead, he summoned more and more flames.

Purple flames, dancing as if celebrating the impending massacre, flowed out from Luthor's body and began to spread across the floor. The creatures screamed and howled, and those that could fly took to the air. Those near Luthor tried to attack him with claws and fangs and energy attacks that could cut through the toughest metals. Those that were far launched long distance attacks, or even picked up creatures near them and threw them at Luthor.

Attacks rained down as if he was standing in a storm, yet Luthor was not distracted for even a second. After all, to pierce through his suit, they would need to reach a minimum of the Nascent level, and they were all too far from that.

The carpet of flames spread till it covered the entire army and then erupted into the sky! Like a volcano that had been suppressed too long, the flames launched into the sky painting the entire landscape purple. Fierce winds turned into a gale which turned into a tornado as hot air escaped higher into the air, but the flames greedily sucked in the cold air around them!

In the fort the watching soldiers dropped their weapons as they looked up at the flames turning into a whirlwind, covering the entire horizon with their malevolent purple.

Their knees began to tremble and their mind stopped working, their gaze fixed on the calamity brought not by nature but by man. The flames, which were falsely named Phoenix Fire, burned everything they could reach, threatening to even turn against their originator. But Luthor merely stood there as he waited for the last of the Void Dwellers to die, in the very center of the storm. His figure, even from afar, looked more demonic than real demons and more devilish than real devils.

The elves and the minotaurs watched, filled with awe and reverence. Finally, for the first time, they felt hope of actually surviving. Only the members of the Midnight Battalion did not bat an eye at the spectacle.

How could they not know that when Luthor did not hold back, and used his bloodline power in addition to his flames, the resulting destruction was even greater. Despite being in the Foundation realm, only those in the upper levels of the Golden core could be his enemies.

As he was right now, he was merely rushing a bit to finish off the enemies. Maybe he was expecting more threats, or maybe he wanted to deliver a message that they were no easy prey.

Whatever the case, this level could phase the battalion any longer.

On the other side of the fort, Z was slowly walking towards the Void Dwellers attacking from this side. He did not fight alone, as Luthor had done, and was accompanied by countless minotaurs as well as a few of the random other soldiers that had joined them.

But while the rest charged towards the Void Dwellers, filled with both excitement and fear, hatred and bloodlust, Z walked slowly. He had been thinking of new techniques to use now that space techniques were no longer available.

He also did not have any speakers, so all of his moves that depended on sound were also out of the question. At the same time, he did not really want to rely on his bloodline either. That was too boring. So where did that leave him?

Using his index finger, middle finger and thumb Z held his black tie and slid his hand down the length of it. He felt the soft, flexible fabric the tie was made of. He felt the stitching, the texture, and the various abilities packed within it.

Without halting his steps, Z took off his tie and opened the knot, straightening it. He put the bottom edge of the tie between his index and middle finger, and then began to slowly wrap the tie around his knuckles. Three times he wrapped it, before letting the rest dangle down.

Even in such a situation, his tie was without a single crease, and fell perfectly straight without a single wrinkle marring its immaculate appearance.

He looked up and saw a nearby Void Dweller, unusually large at nearly 13 feet (3.9 meters). It had a humanoid appearance, and though it wore no armor, its body itself looked like armor.

Single handedly the creature was fighting against several other soldiers, and even seemed to be winning.

Suddenly it paused as it felt a faint threat, but by the time it looked up it was already too late. Z appeared in the air in front of it and, with his right hand, punched it. Despite its massive body the creature was launched through the air as if shot out of a cannon, but it barely covered any distance before an overwhelming force held it still.

Z's tie had wrapped itself around the creature's neck. The force of the sudden stop nearly ripped its head off, but the creature's durability kept that from happening - only at first. Before the creature, or anyone else for that matter, could understand what happened, the tie suddenly turned sharper than any blade and cut through its head.

By the time the corpse fell on the ground, Z had already moved on.

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Chapter 834: I made a mistake

In a dark room, a small group sat and watched a live stream through a projection. The stream was of a single planet, the majority of its surface bare and barren. What had once been a prospering planet, in the sense that the Fuegan used it to mass produce countless biological weapons, had been thoroughly devastated by the war.

It was not just the numerous fights and the ensuing destruction that brought it to this state. Instead, the space ripples played a large role in killing all normal life on it. Previously, it also had countless creatures designed to fight in unstable space, but even they were dead now. Or, to be more specific, they had been turned into demons.

A massive army consisting of every living creature on the planet was being brought, step by step, towards a single fort, which was the main target of the projection being shown. Various emotions had been stimulated as the members of that small group saw Luthor's capabilities. He was abnormally strong for a Foundation realm cultivator, and not just specifically for a human either. Even other, stronger races would have a tough time fighting Luthor as long as they were in the same realm.

But it did not matter at all. Regardless of how formidable the Midnight Battalion was, and how impervious their armor, they would eventually run out of spiritual energy. After all, the scale of the enemy they faced was too large. Even if all 1000 members were as strong as Luthor, eventually they would be worn out.

That was exactly the goal this group was working towards. Capturing the battalion would be an easy task for any of them, but if they arrived in an area with such weak space they would not be able to use their abilities properly. Unfortunately, acting in exactly such an environment was necessary because that was the only way they had discovered of preventing the battalion from teleporting back to the Inn.

Of course, chances were they still had a way to teleport back. As unfortunate as that would be, it did not matter. In that case, this would be a good learning experience. After all, when targeting an entity as strong and massive as the Midnight Inn, the more information they gathered, the better they could plan for future attempts.

One of the members watched with blood red eyes filled with fanaticism.

"Oh lord Ra, I dedicate this attempt to you. If the heretics of Midnight are successfully captured, I will spill their blood in your honor, and strengthen your reviving faith by sacrificing their souls."

Another shadowed figure watched with impatience. The slug-like creature, a Gilati, just wanted hostages. That way he could finally exchange for Jill, who was still hiding out inside the Inn.

A robot watched in silence, recording everything it saw in its hard drive so that the main intelligence hub could analyze all the information in greater detail later on. As an A.I. it did not really care about revenge. However, the Inn had shown the capability to threaten the A.I. race. They needed a way to retaliate against the Midnight Organization if there was ever a need.

A couple of figures were devils, and they sat without any disguises to mask them. Finally, among the group, there was an actual Fuegan! Like the Henali used various other races to fight their war, so too did the Fuegan. But behind the facade was a real race, and their strength could not be underestimated.

The Fuegan did not care about the Midnight Inn either way. It was merely here to develop contacts. After all, the era of the Henali was coming to a close, and soon they would have to manage the countless races of the Origin realm. It was good to get some practice while they could.

"The show is finally getting good," said one of the devils as he watched with eager eyes. Their plan was to exhaust the Midnight Battalion before capturing them. It would be best to avoid any deaths if it could be helped. But, if it couldn't be helped, then they would just deal with it. After all, this was just a single one of their plans.

The first fight did not last long, and in a short thirty minutes all four invading armies were decimated. The problem was, as if on cue, as soon as the Void Dwellers all died, another space ripple occurred, gravely injuring many and killing some.

Then four more armies appeared on the horizon, all heading their way. It was not the size of the armies that intimidated the forces within the fort, but the nature of the invasion. Although they were strong enough to fight off one wave, and perhaps a few more, eventually they would get tired. When that happened, the only outcome was death.

"All deployed forces retreat!" a calm voice boomed over the various battlefields.

Since the four latest invading armies were still far off the soldiers had enough time to retreat behind the fort walls. In the center many had already gathered, looking towards Gerard who stood atop a podium.

"There are new orders. All soldiers will be divided into a few various teams. We have four battlefields considering each side, and so each side will have three teams. One team will fight while the other two rest, and one by one they will rotate so that everyone has a chance to heal and rest."

Gerard spoke with a firm, yet relaxed voice. He treated the situation as if their victory was a matter of fact, and all they had to do was go through the motions.

"If... if we divide the armies so much, there will be more or less 300 soldiers fighting on each side at any given time. Will such few soldiers be able to hold off the invading army on each side?" asked one of the soldiers, feeling extremely worried.

"300? Really? Oh, I must have made a mistake. In that case, there will be four teams for each side, giving everyone even more time to rest. As for holding off the enemy... don't worry too much about it. The Midnight Battalion will take care of most of the fighting. The rest of you are just there to fill the numbers."

The Innkeeper

Chapter 835: Under Control

Although Gerard sounded extremely confident when he spoke to the crowd, the reality of the situation was that he was keeping morale. The elves were not participating in the fight until they completed the formation, so their numbers were extremely strained as is.

It was too early to judge, but it seemed like the enemy was using an endless wave of attacks to drain them of their energy. Even then, it was only their battalion that could treat it as an energy drain, but the rest would be faced with mortal danger every time they fought. The extreme benefits of their suits shone brightly in this situation.

The more it was like this, the more they had to plan to conserve energy and survive as long as possible. He looked up. Based on his knowledge, by now the alliance should have long noticed the abnormality with this region and sent reinforcements, or at least someone to investigate. They were ordinarily very competent like that.

The fact that they had not done so yet was concerning. The question now was what tactics was the enemy using to prevent the alliance from sending in reinforcements, and how long could they maintain it?

Given that everyone on the Cursed Planet survived long enough for the reinforcements to arrive, how would the enemy react? Would he do something drastic and kill everyone on the planet, even at the cost of ripping open space?

These were only some of the concerns plaguing Gerard. Clearly he was not treating the situation as lightly as he appeared, but he could not let morale suffer, so he kept up appearances. After all, if the soldiers could not maintain a proper state of mind, and died prematurely, then the answer to any of those questions wouldn't matter because they would not even be able to make it so far.

He began organizing the troops into separate teams and began determining their order of going out into the battlefield. Of course, a team would always be on standby in case more enemies invaded, or the team already fighting was suffering heavy losses.

The elves, fortunately, were being very proactive. The ones not working on the formation rushed up to the battlefields to clear out the Void Dweller corpses as they served as the best material for the formation that they had at the moment.

There was a makeshift hospital made where Pamela, alongside others who knew basic first aid, were treating the various wounded. They did not have the resources or the time to treat each wound thoroughly. All they could do was to prevent it from getting worse for the moment.

As everyone obeyed his orders and things within the fort started getting organized, he looked out at Luthor, who was fighting all alone. Although shouldering all the pressure by himself for now was good, since it spared the soldiers from defending an entire side, it was not sustainable. Although Luthor could use Anachronistic Ignition to ward away his fatigue, the more he used this bloodline, the more precarious his situation would become. Theoretically, he could use the bloodline infinitely, as even his bloodline exhaustion could be sent forward into the future, making sure he could use it continuously.

Practically though, if Luthor ever reached such a state that he was continuously relying on his bloodline to keep himself going, a single disruptive incident was all it would take to unravel him. A powerful enough spirit attack that would only need to freeze his actions for a mere moment would be enough of a disruption. That is why, although it appeared though that his bloodline had no weaknesses, it was far from the truth.

But it could not be helped. Until the elves finished their formation, they could not join the battle efforts. They were already working as fast as they could... unless of course, even they were a part of the enemies plan to exhaust the battalion faster by relying on them for aid, but then have them betray everyone at the key moment.

With his orders given, and all the soldiers rushing to perform their tasks, Gerard was momentarily free. He climbed up onto the wall and took a look around.

Defending like this was not a solution. They either had to establish contact with the alliance, or go and strategically strike at the enemy. But for that, they would have to first know who the enemy is, where they are, and how many of them there are. Holding on like this will ultimately put them at a disadvantage.

For a moment, he compared this place to the Midnight Inn. If he closed his eyes, the sound of the buffeting winds, the thump of thousands of distant footsteps, the mix of strangers from various backgrounds all brought together almost felt like home. But when he opened his eyes, the reality in front of him was different.

Perhaps he did not understand before, but he knew now why a refuge such as the Midnight Inn was so necessary in the universe.

Gerard let out a sigh. He was feeling a little homesick.

As if to wake him from his daydreaming, another spatial ripple wafted by. In the distance, another rip opened and more Void Dwellers began to flood out. This was bad, because the previous wave had not been dealt with as of yet.

Gerard sighed before he began giving out new orders. They could, at most, afford to hold out for one more day like this. After that, if they were not able to contact the alliance or did not come up with a solution, they would need to take more drastic measures. Idling would get them nowhere.

From the fort, the second team on each side, which was supposed to stand in reserve, marched out to join the fight. They would either finish the existing fight before the new wave arrived, or bolster the fighting forces so they could continue to fight longer. Things were still under control... for now.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 836: No updates

Far away from the fort walls, where no one could see him, Luthor crouched a bit as he caught his breath. As a Foundation realm cultivator he did not have a massive reserve of spiritual energy, but what truly allowed him to use such massive attacks was the augmentation of his suit.

The suit, which had been designed specifically for him, replenished his spiritual energy almost passively. The moment he stopped channeling energy, even for a moment, it began to replenish his reserves.

That did not, however, mean that he could use energy endlessly. He had to master the extremely precise way in which to use techniques and his energy, keeping in mind how quickly it will replenish. After so long on the battlefield, he had already mastered the art.

Now, what fatigued him was not a deficiency of spiritual energy, but physical exhaustion. He had been fighting nonstop for eight hours, and no matter how much his suit supported him, it could not replace actual nourishment. He needed rest, food and lots of water.

But that was only because so far he had refrained from using his bloodline. Once he started using it, he could push all his fatigue, hunger and exhaustion into the future, to be dealt with later.

A soft, crunching sound of a footstep on a lot of gravel alerted Luthor that someone was nearing him so he quickly fixed his posture, standing tall and strong without any indication of weakening over time.

"Gerard is calling you back," said a familiar voice, belonging to the Inn member called Sandra.

"The elves have deployed the formation. While they did not have enough time to set up a formation that can stabilize space in such a short time, they set up a kind of barrier that will prevent space ripples from coming in. Now that they are free, they will be taking over the defense of this side for the next six hours."

"I can still hold this side on my own," Luthor said firmly, as if there was no hint of doubt or hesitation in him.

"Yes, Gerard said that you would say that. But while you still can, you should not. We don't know how long we will have to tolerate this siege. You need to conserve your stamina."

Luthor frowned. Gerard was right. Not to mention, if Luthor did not return then 1000 would not be able to deliver his report. He needed to be easily accessible in case 1000 returned.

He had been fighting for eight hours, would that be enough time for 1000 to learn something important? Probably not, but he had no choice but to accept.

"Fine," he answered simply and turned away. The pattern between new waves was fairly simple, and after a few waves they had already figured it out. Basically, every thirty minutes there would be a new space ripple which would result in a new wave to Void Dwellers. If they were not able to defeat the previous wave before then, they would be faced with even more foes. However, if they wiped out the creatures then they could get some time to rest.

While the others may have struggled, Luthor's purple flames were especially potent against the Void Dwellers so he had no trouble. Well, if he was being accurate, his flames are extremely potent against anything living, but have practically no heat for nonliving things.

It was a peculiar trait of his flame that he could not explain, but he was not complaining for now. After all, it was serving his needs exceptionally well.

So by the time Luthor got back to the fort, the elves had a good fifteen minutes to go ahead and deploy themselves before the next wave arrived.

"What's the situation?" Luthor asked Gerard as he joined the old man up on the rampart. There was a supply of rations and rehabilitation elixir waiting for him beside where Gerard was, so Luthor did not hesitate to dig in. These food items were specially designed to replace normal food and water, and would keep the body satisfied for a long time afterward.

"We have had up to 349 soldiers admitted to the clinic during the various attacks. A majority of them have been treated and are able to return to battle soon enough, but 12 of them are critically injured and cannot be treated here. They will have to wait till they are rescued. There are many deaths as well, and not just because of the ripples. Effectively, we are down to 3400 soldiers as of right now."

"Has there been any updates from the other side?"

"No. We have been trying to establish communication with the alliance, but all our means are being blocked one way or another. Some techies have been trying to join a few transmitters together and

build a communication device that does not rely on local satellites, but I wouldn't hold out any hope. We don't have the kind of facilities needed to build such a device."

Luthor paused for a moment as he felt the food reach his stomach and instantly dissolve. An extremely pleasant heat spread through his body, reinvigorating him and massaging his sore muscles.

"How is the progress with the fort going?"

"The fort itself has been reinforced multiple times, and each barrier has been strengthened to be able to tolerate attacks from a Golden core cultivator. Now Jace is working on an underground network of escape tunnels. So far he has only built 3, but his plan is to create 100 independent tunnels leading to various areas should they need to escape. Of course, he is being extra careful to ensure none of the tunnels are easily discovered, lest we have invaders coming in from beneath us as well."

"Good. I want the elves who have knowledge of formations brought here instead of sent to battle. If we can build any offensive formations that will greatly relieve the pressure on our soldiers."

"I'll have them summoned."

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Chapter 837: Infiltration

With a final, exhausted groan Regis pulled himself up the side of a cliff. He was not concerned about being detected due to the noise he made since his ability directly nullified every sound he made, whether he wanted to or not. Besides, he was too exhausted to care at the moment.

Even though he was from the Midnight Inn, and had his body enhanced multiple times through star level increases, he was ultimately not a body cultivator - though admittedly he was considering entering that path now. Since Luthor had assigned him his reconnaissance mission he had been running nonstop.

Finally, about an hour ago, he found traces of creatures other than Void Dwellers atop this massive cliff, and so he began climbing. He had no idea how difficult it would be. Even fighting a life and death battle was easier than climbing a vertical mountain wall with little to no footholds.

He spent a couple of minutes catching his breath, and letting his sore muscles relax before he forced himself to stand up. He was still on a mission after all, and each minute he wasted could be critical.

The minute he turned around, however, he was stunned. He was not ready for the sight he beheld. Hundreds of thousands of demons had gathered together, and all of them seemed to be building something.

The foundation of whatever structure they were erecting was well over 30 feet (9.1 meters) deep, and was easily hundreds of feet across. They were using nearby rocks and cleaving them into square blocks and using them to build the structure. In certain areas the bodies of demons were being crushed under the rocks, their blood and guts being used to add to the structure.

The scale of this construction was massive, but the more intimidating thought was that even with such a massive army, the enemy had not thought to attack the fort with them. That meant that to them, the fort was not a serious threat, and was one they were treating as an inconvenience instead.

Suppressing his trembling heart, Regis walked forward. Although he had discovered this construction site, he did not know its purpose or the enemy's plan. He could not return without gathering more information.

He climbed one of the massive piles of rocks nearby and surveyed the area carefully. He was looking for anything that looked like a command center, or perhaps a place where supervisors may be residing.

Covering such a massive area, amidst so many creatures, it was difficult to discover anything. The sounds of heaving and screaming, of dying demons crushed under massive blocks and demons screaming orders filled the area, settling in like a thick fog. It was hard to focus with so many stimuli.

Fortunately, all the suits the Innworkers got were fitted with universal translators, so Regis eventually overheard someone talking about guests, and directly moved in that direction to investigate.

There was no proper construction anywhere, but a temporary shelter had been established in the gap between two massive boulders. When he entered, he finally saw something different. Instead of demons, two elves were huddled together, discussing the demons derisively.

"I don't see the point in this. It's wasting time. With such a massive force, we should just have the demons invade and capture the heretics directly. A blood sacrifice from his enemies will go a long way in helping the almighty lord recover his strength."

The elf who spoke seemed to be filled with a fanatic obsession, fueling his every breath.

"We just have to follow orders. I don't know the plan, but I heard that they were inspired by the recent terrorist attacks. Although we don't have a Jorlam on hand to grab the planet from within the void, the higher ups must have their reasons. After all, we can't pressure them too much. What if they have a way to return to the Inn?"

"I thought they already confirmed that the keys worked. Why are they still hesitating?"

"The keys didn't work for guests, but there's no telling whether the employees have something else to escape back to the Inn. We have to act carefully. Once we pull the planet into the void, we can do as we please. Capturing the heretics will be a lot easier."

"I can't wait for the blood sacrifice," the first one said again, his gaze filled with a warped devotion.

Regis' heart trembled at what he heard, but the two religious fanatics changed the topic of conversation so he could learn nothing else for now. What he learned was already alarming enough, but he did not want to waste an opportunity. He had to get as much critical information as possible, so he delved deeper into the construction site.

His only regret was that he did not know any sabotage techniques or he could have set up a few traps to delay the construction process considerably. He should learn that when he gets back to the Inn for future missions.

Since Regis didn't need to sneak, his infiltration was quick and without any problems. From time to time he would learn new tidbits, and each would make his heart drop.

When he found out that the alliance had not even learned of what had happened yet, since the enemy was masquerading as them, he was especially alarmed. That basically meant no backup was coming any

time soon. They would have to rely on themselves if they wanted to somehow escape their predicament.

But, just when he thought that there was no hope, he finally heard a piece of good news from a passing demon. Apparently, besides their fort, there was one other group who had been holding out against the demons. They were an extremely formidable race, and despite being all alone they had managed to hold on.

Regis took note of the location the demons said where that race was, and continued on further. The more he learnt, the greater their advantage would be. As for potentially getting help from the Marzu race, that was for Luthor to decide.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 838: The game has just begun

In the dark room where a group silently observed the Midnight Battalion, the religious zealot finally lost his patience upon seeing Luthor casually retreating from the battlefield.

"That's enough! How much time must we wait? The longer we take, the greater their chances of escape! Whoever came with this plan is an imbecile! Hand over the command, let me take over!"

In the fanatics' defense, it was truly too bitter watching the heretics battle hour after hour, but never getting so much as a scratch. With each of their victories, their morale would rise and they would grow stronger. The more formidable their enemy, the more they would rise to the occasion. It was best to simply crush them with one simple powerplay!

But his outburst had just ended when a hand appeared atop his head, making his entire body freeze.

A handsome and mischievous man stepped out from the shadow, revealing himself. He turned the fanatics head towards himself and looked down at him. He did not seem upset or angry at his earlier outburst. Instead he smiled, and took this opportunity to educate the group.

"Previously you all may have met Karen, but not many of you have met me. Allow me to introduce myself, my name is Rocketfellow. You all have surely at least heard of me."

He paused to allow the group's response, and their murmurs and change in demeanor seemed to indicate his assumption was correct.

"Allow me to educate you on our adversary in our current endeavor. This impatience and lack of foresight is exactly the kind of behavior that resulted in the deity Ra's downfall. Our opponent is a Daolord. Do you understand what a Daolord is? Do you understand the kind of power they wield? Just because the Deities of this realm have reached an artificial Daolord level does not mean that what they hold is comparable to a true Daolord.

"If you think of their name, they will know it. If you plan against them, they will know it. If you even dream about something affiliated to them, they will know about it. They are at a realm and station far beyond our comprehension and understanding. Facing them, a million attempts such as the one we are conducting now is too few, and a billion years of planning is too short.

"We need to study and understand each and every aspect of them before making a true move. We need to study their actions, their history, their habits, their morals, their philosophies, their absolutely everything, and then we need to do it again a hundred more times before we can even consider the ultimate goal. So this, right now, what we are doing is not a true attempt. No, right now, we are learning.

"We are learning what the Innkeepers' tolerance is. Will he help his soldiers, or will he abandon them? Has he provided any special means to them to return to the Inn, or is it the same as everyone else? If he helps, will he move personally or will he send someone else? How long will it take for him to send help? What are the limitations he is bound by, or is he even bound at all?

"You see, children, whatever you think you know about a Daolord, it is not enough. As soon as we made a single plan to move against his people, he already knew about it."

The expressions of the various people in the room changed, and a hint of fear and hesitation appeared on their faces.

"What's with those faces? Did you honestly think you could hide? From a Daolord? Don't make me laugh children. That's really too immature. Not only did he know about it, he even called me for a meeting and warned me."

The devil smirked, as if he was thinking back to that meeting.

"You see, when I first decided I wanted to capture the Inn's workers, I approached the Daolord and proposed a cooperation. Obviously, I could not say outright that I wanted to poach his workers, so I phrased it like a partnership. In exchange for allowing me to take some of his workers, I offered 5 trillion MP. At that time, it seemed like the Daolord agreed.

"But when we finally found an opportunity, and I finally acted on it, we had another meeting, and he gave me a subtle warning. He said he was shutting down the Inn for a while, and if I wanted to act on the opportunity, I had to do it within six months, or wait for the future. Of course, these things are never said outright, and we have to put up a pretense. But I understand enough to read between the lines. It seems I have somewhat misunderstood the Innkeeper, so he changed the rules.

"All I can say is that, whether we like it or not, we have to play within the rules that they establish. Even then, we suffer the risk of failure, and extreme loss. But the reason we are even able to make an attempt in the first place is because I went and sought permission in the very beginning. You have to remember your place when facing a Daolord."

"If Daolords are really as impressive as you claim, then how were you able to go and ask for such a thing from one? Were you not afraid he would kill you right then and there for asking to take his workers?" asked one of the shadowed figures.

"Two things. First, I have the aura of a Daolord on me, protecting me. No Daolord would easily act against me just to avoid the hassle that it would bring. Secondly, it is merely a request. He can say no if he so wishes. But even if he says yes, we have to correctly interpret his every thought, or else we could land in trouble. Even after that, we have to thoroughly study everything or else we won't have a chance.

"Do you think this idea right now is foolproof? Trapping them in an unstable region and then attacking them slowly? All they need is a simple treasure that stabilizes space, and then they can use the keys to escape. Of course, whether they have such a treasure or not is another matter. What matters is that this is merely the first attempt. Through countless attempts we will learn more about our adversary, and then when we truly act, there will be no loopholes left, and no chance of defeat. Of course, there's a possibility that we may succeed even in this attempt, so we have to treat it seriously too."

The devil finally let go of the fanatics head, and was pleased to see that he no longer lashed out. Rocketfellow smiled and looked at the projection. He had to groom his partners well. After all, they had

to reach a basic level of competence for them to even be useful as scapegoats let alone provide any real help. The game was just beginning.

The Innkeeper

Chapter 839: A day

"Gerard, pass my orders. During this next wave, all able soldiers will go out to attack and finish off the wave as quickly as possible. After that, everyone will retreat. The wave after that will be fought from the fort's walls."

"Any particular reason?" Gerard asked, though he immediately dispatched several messengers to convey the message.

"One complete day on this planet is around 30 hours, give or take. We have been fighting for 29 hours already, and I have a feeling that the wave that comes at one full day will be unordinary. We cannot afford to act half heartedly. Besides, the offensive formation that the elves are setting up should almost be complete as well. It's weak, but some support is still better than no support."

By now they only had around 2900 soldiers who could go out and battle, despite the fact that in most fights the Midnight battalion took the brunt of each wave. The battalion itself was still surviving, and had not suffered any real injuries, though spirit energy exhaustion and physical fatigue were becoming an issue.

To combat the situation, Luthor had the elves also start working on a spirit energy gathering formation. Unfortunately, that would take some time to build. They were slowly approaching a state where even if they were uninjured, they wouldn't be able to fight.

Of course for now that was still far away, but considering the fact that nothing had changed for nearly 30 hours, it was a very real possibility they had to consider. Luthor was merely waiting for 1000 to return and give his report before he made any decision. After all, making a decision without having the relevant information could end them up in a worse position. After all, no matter how bad their current state was, at least they had walls and some formations to protect them.

He watched silently as the effects of his orders took place, and more troops marched out from the fort and rushed towards the fight in the distance. The situation on each side was, more or less, the same. If

one side suffered a little more than the others then they would immediately compensate by sending in a few, highly effective combatants.

One good example was Z. Although without the ability to manipulate space or his speakers he was severely weakened, compared to the rest he was still an absolute powerhouse. With the caliber of enemies they were facing now he did not need to strike an enemy twice, for his first one would be enough to kill.

There were a few other notable characters within the battalion who could perform this task as well.

With many contingency plans prepared, Luthor watched as the battle unfolded. It was brutally bloody, and drained the soldiers more than usual, but they were able to finish the fight within 10 minutes before they quickly retreated back to the fort.

Luthor watches evenly, his expression unchanging. He did not care if his orders caused everyone to feel a little more fatigued. Who in the camp was more tired than Pamela, who had been healing everyone nonstop? If she could deal with it, so could they.

"There's no time to rest. Everyone, assume your positions on the fort walls. If we face a regular wave then we can test the durability and lethality of our walls and formations. If not then we have to use all of our strength from the very beginning to avoid the situation becoming progressively worse."

By now, no one questioned Luthor. His prestige had reached an all time high, not just because of his excellent leadership, but also because of his individual strength. The man was a walking volcano, and one that could hold a grudge at that. No one dared to get on his bad side.

Soldiers shuffled into their positions, trying to take every moment of rest they could. Normally such a hopeless situation would have drained them mentally, but no one had had the time to think for even a second. They were too preoccupied with staying alive to think, so they also hadn't had the time to wallow in despair.

Even now, as the minutes ticked by, each and every one of them used their various techniques to replenish their strength and energy. Depression and despair were luxuries they did not have time for.

Everyone was focused on their own tasks, so no one noticed when a few thin scratches appeared on the wall in front of Luthor, immediately attracting his attention. Luthor held out his hand and he felt a small weight deposited in his palm. It took a few seconds before a small crystal became visible.

This was a crystal used to record valuable information, and was often used to transmit techniques. The fact that 1000 used it now either meant that he had only just procured it in his latest outing, or that he had collected too much information and it was inconvenient to convey it through simple writing.

"Good job," Luthor murmured softly before channeling his own energy within. Immediately a stream of information flowed into his mind, startling even the steadfast battalion leader!

Anger flashed in his eyes when he finally absorbed all the information. This was not just an attack on them, but an attack on the Midnight Inn!

He immediately pulled out the Innkeepers business card, but before he could use it a spatial wave crashed into the formation around the fort. Then, there was another, and finally a third. Although the formation survived the waves, barely so, the space outside the fort did not. A massive horizontal tear spread in front of the wave, revealing a black void behind it.

Cracks formed in the air around the entire fort as the space around the entire planet became vulnerable, threatening to break due to the newly developed tear.

Z, who was standing on the fort, suddenly looked up, not at the tear but at a specific crack. He could feel something... a connection of sorts.

But the luxury of observing did not last long as a single, massive creature seemed to slither out of the Void. Its strength was far beyond and of the previous Void Dwellers, and most definitely beyond what the space here could withstand.

This was no longer a draining tactic. If the creature was not killed immediately, the Void would envelop them all, and then the survival of even the Battalion was at risk!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 840: Nothing's working!

"The taste is absolutely horrendous!" Lex bellowed as he slammed his fist down on the table.

"It's divine!" roared back a beast in the shape of a gazelle, but with brown wings folded on its back.

"This is completely unpalatable. I can't add this to the menu!"

"You WILL add it to the menu!" the gazelle said aggressively, glaring at Lex as if he had committed a crime against humanity! No, eh, a crime against gazellity? Against the gazelle nation? Against all gazelle type beasts? Whatever the case, it was definitely a crime!

"It's my restaurant, I'll do what I want!" Lex said. "This is definitely not a dish that can be served to guests." Of course, there was nothing left on the plate in front of him as he had eaten everything, so what dish he was talking about was uncertain.

"Lex, I told you that different races have different tastes," Kenta explained awkwardly from the side. "Just because you don't like it doesn't mean others will feel the same way."

"I get that!" Lex exclaimed. But then he also immediately pointed towards the beast agitating him and said, "but I don't trust him at all! He just wants us to keep feeding him free testers while we try out new dishes. If you want to test recipes, it definitely can't rely on one shady character."

"I am trying to help you, and this is how you treat me? Fine then, go get someone else to help you out!" the gazelle yelled loudly before scurrying off. He looked back at Kenta with regret, but did not stick around.

Lex was feeling great, despite this small episode. Not only was he healing incredibly quickly, his strength had already crossed his previous peak. Moreover, enough of his skin had returned where he did not need to cover himself like a mummy anymore. To top it all off, Kenta had accepted his fate of working as Lex's chef since he was incredibly broke. He needed a patron to support him while he tested the various recipes he had collected throughout his lifetime.

Of course, not all was well. Kenta, with his extremely limited knowledge of how valuable resources are and how desperate creatures can get when faced with temptation, had been randomly giving out samples of his cooking from a stall. With each of his ingredients being worth thousands of MP, the

finished product was an extremely potent elixir for anyone's cultivation. Obviously no one would say anything bad as long as they can keep eating it!

"Lex, it can't work like this. I need to test out my cuisines on other races. Not every dish is suitable for elves or humans!"

"Yes, but the way you are going about it is wrong. Next time, consult me before doing anything like this. You're not going to get a true review like this."

Kenta frowned, as if contemplating where his plan could have gone wrong. Lex was about to elaborate when a familiar sensation struck him.

A portion of his consciousness was being diverted, a feeling which occurred whenever someone used one of the Innkeeper's business cards to summon him. There were a few of them out there. One of them was hidden inside a book that had been sent to Fernanda, the holographic lady who controlled the earth for a brief period. The card had never been used and he had no idea what happened to it or Fernanda.

Another one had been left behind when he tried to participate in the meeting for Daolords. Finally, the most recent one had been given by him to Luthor in case there was an emergency.

But before his consciousness could fully be drawn, and he discovered who summoned him, he received a system notification and a stream of information.

New notification: Due to the fragile nature of the space, an Innkeeper clone cannot be summoned at the location of the business card. A temporary connection has been established to convey a message.

The information that he received was a report sent by Luthor! Although Lex had unlocked a Midnight battalion panel, only he could communicate with the battalion leader, not the other way around. The business card was supposed to be a loophole around that, but an issue had prevented its proper use.

It did, however, allow Luthor to send forth his thoughts through the card, allowing him to convey his situation.

The Midnight Battalion was trapped on a planet without support by someone who was specifically targeting them and the Midnight Inn! Moreover, they had done it in such a space that the golden keys did not work!

The information Luthor could send over was extremely limited. The last bits of information Lex received were the name of the planet they were on, BGY - 987, and the image of a large creature coming out of a tear in space.

"I have to go!" Lex exclaimed to Kenta before promptly dashing away. When he was out of sight, he quickly changed into the Host Attire and teleported to his office.

"Mary what the hell is going on? The Innkeeper's business card isn't working, and neither are the golden keys for some reason! The battalion is trapped and being targeted by someone!"

The business card was supposed to be a hidden trump card. Using the Innkeepers aura he could deter almost anyone from attacking the battalion and thus rescue them, but the card itself was not working!

The sudden news caused Lex's emotions to fluctuate, and the image of a sword appeared in his eye. It was slowly becoming more and more prominent while Lex's rage started to swell up.

Just before the sword's image fully materialized, Lex closed his eyes, shutting out his burning anger, and replaced it with a cold, calculating wrath.

He had been practicing controlling his anger due to the increased influence of the sword in his soul, so in this instance where he almost lost control, he instinctively knew how to regain his lucidity. As a result, Lex entered a new state, much like the states of Flow, Overdrive and Berserk. Yet at the same time, the state was not exactly brand new.

It was as if Lex had merged the states of Flow, where he lost all distractions and focused on the most efficient way to complete his objective, and the state of Berserk, where his strongest emotions filled his entire being, fueling and boosting his strength at the same time.

Outside, in the Midnight Inn, although snow had covered most of the area, an unnerving chill suddenly settled in that was absent before.