

Innkeeper 896

The Innkeeper

Chapter 896: Bonding

Lex could not see the Lotus with his eyes, but sensing it with his spirit sense was almost the same. In fact, to a degree, it allowed him to see the Lotus a lot better, and detect minor details he would have missed if he relied on ordinary eyesight.

Usually, in his interactions with the Lotus, he was the one in need of help. At times like that, the Lotus presented itself very maturely and competently, making Lex forget that it was a newborn. Actually, technically, it wasn't even born yet. It was the human equivalent of being in the womb.

Now that the issue regarded the Lotus itself, it was filled with hesitation and doubt. The previous confidence it was equipped with seemed gone, and in its place there was uncertainty and hesitation.

"What are your concerns?" Lex asked, softly. "Let's talk through it."

"It is my purpose!" the Lotus exclaimed, as if that itself was enough to explain things to Lex. "My purpose is to prepare as best as possible to give birth to the best world possible. If I evolve and grow, all the better. Since I am taking your help in fulfilling my purpose, then it is only natural that I reward you as well. Plus it is an honor to serve the needs of the Midnight Inn!"

The Lotus, like every other entity naturally born in the Inn, was an Inn employee by default. Only if guests gave birth, or left behind certain items that would give birth, would the newborn not automatically be an Inn employee. That explained its compulsion to help Lex, to a degree.

But Lex was quickly understanding its mindset. It was unfortunate that for something that had accompanied him so long, he understood it so little. He did not even ask for a name and simply stuck to calling it Lotus, but it felt odd to call it anything else now. Either way, it couldn't be helped since the Lotus spent most of its time asleep. They didn't really get much of an opportunity to talk.

"But once my job is complete, if I remain alive, I will be left without a purpose. Alive for nearly an eternity, all without a purpose... I... I..." the Lotus could not complete its sentence, as the mere thought was giving it a panic attack.

Lex could sense the inherent desire to live within the Lotus, but it was firmly accompanied by its sense of duty that led it to fulfill its task that would ultimately lead to its death in normal situations. Such a mindset was probably needed or else Lotus' of this race would always avoid maturing since that would set them up for death.

But this was easy enough to fix. Of all it needed was a purpose, Lex could provide it with one. But providing a purpose sincerely, and one that wouldn't just take advantage of it needed him to think a bit. Although the Lotus was supremely helpful, Lex thought of it as a close friend, and didn't want to take advantage of it. At the same time, he didn't want the Lotus to die.

He had already thought of a loophole he could use to return to the Inn before the new realm was born. If Lex had to guess, there was a 50% chance of it being successful. In that case, the special energy of a newborn realm would no doubt help the Lotus a lot, as well as his other employees and whichever guests remained.

"Growing into a planet is your base function. It is what you are designed to do from birth. But do you know, the things I was designed to do from birth are not even 1% of what I can do now. I have grown beyond myself, beyond imagination even, by cultivating.

"Sometimes, I wonder if this is the same life I'm living. If my memories are even real. How is it that in the same life, there was once a time where I used to wake up at 7 am to start getting ready, and go to college and study? That I used to spend hours of my life worrying about homework and tests and exams? How is this the same life where I used to work bad jobs for hours so I could afford to eat at one of my favorite restaurants on the weekend and be lavish and carefree for just a couple of hours?"

Lex paused, as if he got lost in his memories. Although they sounded harsh and depressing, he still looked back at them fondly. Even in the simplicity of it, he had lived a good life. Now, though, it was just more... well, it was just more.

"Cultivation has allowed me to transcend what I could even conceive. Your purpose is to give birth to a world, but why limit yourself to that? Why not cultivate as well? Why not give birth to an entire star system? What about a galaxy? What about a realm? What about... what about an entire universe?"

"If you can manipulate energy to create a world, why can you not do more? That's one purpose, I think. To test the limits of what you can achieve, and set a new standard for your species. Besides, if you stay alive, you can accompany me longer. It might sound selfish, but I wouldn't mind having a friend with me

wherever I go. I have a whole universe to explore, and I don't think there are enough lifetimes to explore all of it. Isn't it exciting to imagine what could be out there?"

The lotus, which had been panicking so far, suddenly paused. It contemplated Lex's idea, testing them out in its mind as one would taste an unfamiliar dish, trying to determine if you liked it or not.

"Is... is hanging out with a friend... even a good purpose for life?" the Lotus asked, curiously.

"Of course it is!" Lex answered firmly. "It's the best purpose, in my opinion at least. In fact, not only is it the best purpose, but spending time and enjoying it with your friend is perhaps the greatest celebration of life there is! It is both a purpose for life and a celebration of it!"

Lex felt that his words were swaying the lotus' mind, which was good because he meant it. Besides, after spending so much time with the lotus, he felt attached. He would be sad if it died one day.

There was a silence between them that seemed to continue on for an indiscernible amount of time. It could have been mere seconds, but with the weight of all of existence crushing Lex, it felt like an eternity.

But the silence was eventually broken by the Lotus.

"I just checked," Lotus said. "I cannot alter myself to form anything other than a world."

"But does that stop you from growing once you've already become a world?"

"I... I don't know. I don't think it's ever been tried before."

"Then why don't you try it? Even if you don't like my previous suggestions, carving out a new and better path for your entire race, and allowing them to reach new peaks, is an extremely noble purpose as well."

Lotus trembled, as if Lex's words were resonating with something deep inside of it. The idea of helping its race sounded noble, at the very least. It gave him just enough of a reason to get over his ingrained belief that he was supposed to die, at which point Lex's previous suggestion also began to affect it.

Lotus had helped Lex numerous times, and had felt the excitement that came when Lex helped him evolve. In a way, they really were friends, and Lotus did not want to abandon its friend. Although it believed that Lex would always have been fine without it, it liked being there to lend help. The thought of Lex alone, facing the dangers of the universe...

Suddenly, the idea of creating a bond seemed extraordinarily appealing.

"Let's form a bond!" Lotus said with extreme conviction.

Baby Lex's cheeks had grown out a bit, seeming almost chubby. This had only happened after he absorbed some of the liquid he was surrounded in, so it was a new development. As a result, when Lex heard Lotus' words and smiled, he actually looked cute!

"Yes, let's..." he murmured, and began using the technique given to him by Mateo.

Outside, Mateo watched and was pleased to see the progress begin. He began planning for how to increase the benefits from this bond as much as possible, completely unaware of Lex's plans of helping Lotus grow into a world within a single year.

"He has a long time till the evolution occurs and he gets his second round of feedback. In a few hundred thousand years his cultivation should have progressed a lot, so there's no harm in boosting the lotus as well. Hmm, in that case, we can use the deities corpse, and the curse will do nicely as well..."