

Dungeon S 121

Chapter 121 Random Arena Battle

"Random Arena Battle? Are you sure?" Yue Han was a little nervous when Bu Dong said that. "Ah, don't you worry Yue Han. I'll pay for you this time round too." Bu Dong pats his good friend on the back.

Bu Dong knew Yue Han did not like to experience the unknown as much as he did but Yue Han had always been a very good friend to him. No matter thick or thin, Yue Han would go through with Bu Dong's bravado. Seeing how Yue Han tried his best all the time for Bu Dong, Bu Dong concluded that the money he spent was nothing compared to the steadfast friendship and support he received.

Hearing that Bu Dong would pay for the random arena battle ticket, Yue Han agreed with a small sigh.

The moment they bought the tickets, a notification appeared on their pandamonium app. Jin had now added a notification feature for all the dungeons he created.

Jin did this is to help facilitate his work or else every single new customer would ask him for an explanation. While he was happy to help out and explain the workings of the dungeons to every single customer that came in, he was after all the only one person manning the store.

Explaining to someone would occupy his time, which could otherwise be used to serve other customers that were waiting for their turn.

The queue could get long at times and the turnover of dungeons was already being better managed due to the new team merging ability by the system. Hence, one of the few things that were impeding the whole waiting process was he himself.

In the short notification, there was a short thank you for purchasing the dungeon, a synopsis, the special rules (if any), as well as the potential rewards they could receive from each dungeon.

He remembered a customer saying that it would be ridiculous to try a dungeon and hope to get a reward by carving into every single monster, holding the wishful thoughts that you might potentially find something in a monster.

Hence, he decided to place a reward chest at the end of every dungeon, which now included a number of physical panda medals they would certainly earn as well as a possible item reward, which the system would determine randomly.

The real panda medal coins were a dilemma for Jin at first but he figured everyone had sufficient storage ring space to spare since it occupied the currency section of the storage ring, which was literally limitless. However, that was not the main point. At this age of information and technology, the cashless transactions made money feel like it was merely a bit. A series of ones and zeros.

That was why he felt that he wanted to make the cultivators feel as if they really earned something rewarding from the dungeons. The weight of the coins would give the customers a sense of satisfaction that outweighed the practicality of it.

Of course, the panda medal coins could be changed into digital ones if the customers wished for it. All the service instances, including the underground stores, would allow both physical medal coins and digital wallets.

Both Yue Han and Bu Dong read the information regarding the random arena battle and started to read on about the details.

The rules were simple. A cultivator would fight three stages of monsters. In each stage, the monster could differ from a badass boss monster to a measly minion. At the end of the stage, a bottle of low chi regeneration and low health recovery potion would be given to each cultivator. Whenever the cultivator passed a stage, they would win a set amount of panda medal coins. Even if they lost, they would still be able to keep the set of panda medal coins.

"This is not too bad." Yue Han commented as he read through the notification. "Dumb dumb, it's basically the same as every dungeon. It is just that they give a set of potions after each fight." Bu Dong shook his head at Yue Han.

"If only they gave such a potion for each 'stage' of the themed fights. That would be most wonderful." Yue Han sighed but Jin explained his reasoning.

"I made some slight adjustments to every dungeon so that you will now be able to find a set of basic potions for each individual at the start of every dungeon. I doubt that it will help you a lot if you do not have the skill, but if you use it wisely and in a timely manner, it would be a different story." Jin interjected his opinion into their conversation.

"Let's not waste any more time, get this arena battle done fast, and then go eat a good meal." Bu Dong laughed heartily and went to place his phone against the Station 3 interactive tablet to start the dungeon dimensional space.

Yue Han quickly followed Bu Dong, but not before he inserted his items into the storage panda miniature beside the TV at station 3.

When Yue Han arrived, he saw Bu Dong standing at the centre of a stadium...? That was what he thought at first. But then it suddenly clicked and he instinctively knew that it was the Roman Coliseum back when it was in its full glory.

However, the whole coliseum was silent and there was not a single soul in sight. Its emptiness combined with the scorching hot sun made the two kids feel a little uncomfortable. It felt like they were not fighting for any honour but instead were fighting for their own survival.

Bu Dong took out his weapon the moment he heard a clunking sound that he deduced was due to metal moving. Yue Han, with the Blind Bat style, concluded that there was only a single monster walking out from the metal gates ahead of them.

"Looks like I have some delicious boys to devour," Meomi licked her mouth as she cracked her whip against the floor. She finally had some proper close combat action to vent out the frustration she felt ever since her experience against the gunning giraffe girl.

There were rumours being spread around in the Pandamonium forum chat that two cats were acting as sniper supports for most bank heist scenarios but not many were able to find the cat snipers.

While it was 'programmed' or ordered by Jin for the cats to act as snipers, the cat snipers Meomi and Nyami were constantly switching their sniper nests and not many cultivators played enough to find all the possible sniper nests that the cat snipers could possibly be located.

However, Mr Know It All seemed to be collating the information he found about the dungeons and was posting on the forums quite regularly. In fact, most users upvoted a number of his guides to the point where the system pinned his dungeon guides for other cultivators to reference.

Mr Know It All slowly and surely became a minor celebrity in Jin's store though no one actually knew his real name. In addition, no one even saw him personally went into a dungeon either. He was simply lurking in Jin's store. Recently though, he was hanging around the Panda Caravan more since he was allowed to eat food with real cash and not Panda Credits.

"I have no clue what we are fighting against. Be on your guard." Bu Dong took the front guard while Yue Han was at his rear.

Meomi finally felt her blood rushing. This time it was not some silly hide and seek. It looked like it was going to be a straightforward battle. She caressed her whip as she inserted some spirit force, causing the whip to suddenly split in two.

The whip's material also hardened and slowly turned into a pair of swords. However, instead of her holding the pair of swords in her two hand-like paws, she used her tail to hold onto one sword while the other was in her right paw.

The stare off contest between Bu Dong and Meomi was concluded the moment Yue Han accidentally shuffled his leg a little.

CLANG

The Angry Ape Bu Dong clashed head on with Meomi and the sand surrounding their clash burst outwards, creating a temporary cloud of sand around them.

Bu Dong did not know when the sand around them would disperse so he quickly inhaled a large breath of fresh air.

Meomi though had already noticed his intent and delivered a sharp jab to Bu Dong's abdominal area. Bu Dong did not expect Meomi to be that swift in her attacks and he lost the breath he was trying to hold.

Nevertheless, Bu Dong's quick thinking allowed him to call forth his cultivation, displaying three angry apes that roared so loudly that the sand cloud that was about to settle down on them to disperse away from them. Despite this, it was not the angry apes that did the dispersion as they were just a depiction of Bu Dong's power.

It was because Bu Dong had shouted extremely loudly at the same time as the appearance of angry apes that it felt like it was the apes shouting it. The shout also gave Bu Dong some breathing space as it temporarily stunned Meomi.

That was when Yue Han made his presence known. The dust cloud gave Yue Han some time to sneak up from the back to use his dive sword jump. That mere second of paralysis had given both Yue Han and Bu Dong the striking opportunity they needed to cut the cat down.

"Sword Technique! Dive Sword of the Blind Bat." Yue Han only shouted out when he was close to Meomi in order to give her as little time as possible to react. At the same time, Bu Dong executed his sword

technique. "Intermediate Sword Art! Lacerate in the Blazing Edge of the Angry Ape!" A flame was ignited on Bu Dong's sword and as the Ape silhouettes pound its hands to its chest, the fire grew in an instant.

Just as both the sword techniques were about to connect, a wild grin appeared on Meomi's face. While it brought some concern to Bu Dong when he saw it, he struck the werecat with no hesitation.

The stab from the back by the sword dive caused Meomi to flinch while the burning intense flame from the sword of the Angry Ape user burnt Meomi's insides as it pierced through the heart of the cat.

The werecat spat out some blood at Bu Dong before she fell to the ground breathless. This was when Bu Dong felt that it was too easy. "Maybe it's the first stage?" Yue Han also commented that the werecat was too easy to defeat.

Suddenly, Yue Han noticed that the two swords that Meomi had been holding had disappeared, but when he realised it, it was too late. The werecat's swords had activated their effect.

"What!" Yue Han felt something strangling him and when he placed his hand on his neck, he felt something blocking his neck. It even made his hands bleed when Yue Han tried to touch it. Similarly, Bu Dong was suffering from the same thing.

"Is this the whip?!" Bu Dong could barely voice out his words when the whip started to tighten itself.

Meomi had activated a quick weapon skill when she sensed she had no time to react after that second of paralysis. However, she still felt upset that she had lost to the cultivators yet again.

Bu Dong desperately began to think as his brain was dying for more oxygen. "I cannot free myself in this state; I can only save Yue Han now."

Chapter 122 Yue Han's Enlightenmen

"Bro...!" Yue Han's eyes were getting blurry and his hands were becoming weak as he tried to struggle against the coiling whip around his neck. His breath was gradually becoming weaker and weaker by the second but despite all this, Yue Han still desperately tried to loosen it as much as he could.

Despite his eyesight failing him, he could still see an almighty silhouette sluggishly taking a step at a time towards Yue Han. "Haha, I am sorry Bro...I do not think I can last any longer." Yue Han thought that Bu Dong had managed to cut the bindings of the whip and was approaching to help him too.

That was not the case. Before he even knew what was taking happening, Yue Han was suddenly able to breathe once more, though he still fell to his knees as a result of the previous lack of oxygen.

Thump

With a single look, Yue Han ascertained that Bu Dong was lying motionless on the floor. He could not believe what he was seeing so he crawled towards Bu Dong and tried to remove the whip that was strangling Bu Dong.

The whip continued to tighten despite Bu Dong being stationary and it only loosened its grip on Bu Dong's neck when Yue Han cut it in two. With the basic knowledge of CPR that Yue Han had learnt from a safety rescue workshop from summer camp, he checked Bu Dong's carotid pulse as well as his chest movement in order to test for breathing. There were no signs of movement from either of the two tests, meaning, unfortunately, Bu Dong had passed away.

At this point, Yue Han just smashed his fist against the ground. "Damn it! Why did you die and leave me all alone!" He cursed at how useless he was in almost every fight. He cursed at his inferiority complex and the inability to do anything unless he was told to do so.

"Then stop cursing and start trying to get up." A deep voice echoed throughout the empty Coliseum. Yue Han looked around, searching for the voice, but instead found that a chest had suddenly appeared right in front of him. He did not know what to do until the mysterious voice echoed once more. "Come on, do not dally. Open the chest to receive your rewards and your set of potions."

Yue Han did not know whether the voice was trying to trick him or not but he did know that the rules explicitly stated that there would be a chest with rewards in it after each fight. When Yue Han turned around to take one last look at Bu Dong's body, he realised that it had already been removed. Yue Han figured that it was the dimensional instance at work so he stood up and opened the chest.

There were indeed physical panda medal coins in the chest and within that mass of bronze panda medal coins lied two sets of recovery potions. Since the boss was killed, the rewards were actually meant for Bu Dong and Yue Han, but that was before the whip trap had killed Bu Dong. Therefore, Yue Han had the opportunity to keep two sets of recovery potions. He then placed all the coins into his storage ring and noticed that there were only 50 bronze panda medal coins, half of which belonged to Bu Dong.

"Very good. now that you are somewhat ready, I can now appear." the voice suddenly boomed loudly throughout the whole coliseum and Yue Han felt tremors from underneath his feet. A large tree suddenly grew out from the depths of the Coliseum grounds.

"Name's Shu. I am your next opponent." Shu's deep voice reverberated in the entire area again. Yue Han fell backwards as he instantly acknowledged that this was an opponent he could definitely not defeat.

"Or rather, this little guy will be your next opponent." The ancient treant opened its mouth and something monstrous slowly revealed its face. Without delay, two serrated blades sprouted out of Shu's grotesque mouth and Yue Han trembled when he identified it as a giant praying mantis.

The praying mantis monster tilted its head at the cowering Yue Han to stare at him for a moment before it opened its mouth with sticky saliva drooling out of it. "If you do not want the monster to eat you, I suggest you do something about it." Shu was particularly amused by Yue Han since this was his first time seeing someone so frightened to die and yet that someone was not doing anything to save themselves.

"I should just let it kill me and end this dungeon." Yue Han mumbled to himself until he turned and saw the spot where a piece of the whip had yet to be removed. "But if I really do that...won't that mean that Bu Dong saved me for nothing?" Yue Han tried to rationalise in this deadly situation but it was not helping him a single bit.

"But this is a just a dungeon...Bu Dong will not blame me for dying so easily...right?." Yue Han's actions suddenly contradict his cowardice thoughts as he frantically reached for his sword.

How could his body or mind ever forget? How could he ever forget the times Bu Dong had saved him from gangster or bullies? How could he ever forget the times Bu Dong tried his best no matter how bleak the situation seemed at the time? How could he ever forget the times Yue Han saw Bu Dong practice his flaming sword technique, causing damage to his own body just so that he could win against Jin's dungeons?

Each and every cultivator in the world had been taught to not disrespect the dungeon instances. This was because the creation of a dungeon came from the cumulative experience of a Supplier. What you wanted to achieve when you entered a dungeon was not primarily to have fun. It was to battle against the monsters, because to battle against monsters was also to battle against oneself.

The cultivators that fought in dungeons provided by the dungeon suppliers would learn not just about the monsters he or she had fought against, but they will also learn about himself or herself along the way.

Some older cultivators said that technology in the modern suppliers had dulled that understanding of oneself and thereby the growth of oneself, but that did not mean the essence of dungeoneering and fighting monsters was lost. This was especially true for Jin's dungeons since the monsters that the cultivators were fighting were all real and authentic.

That was why despite the major failures that many cultivators faced in Jin's store, they all sooner or later realised what they had learnt during the dungeon instances far outweighed the mere fun that they would have experienced otherwise. This was the main reason why many failed dungeoneers would still return to Jin's store for the difficulty and realism of the monsters.

Yue Han picked up his sword and looked directly into the thousand eyes of Shu's pet mantis. "Even if I cannot kill it, I will not throw away the chance Bro has given me!" As Yue Han suddenly realised the importance of dungeons and the faith Bu Dong had in him, he felt a surge of energy pass through him.

Yue Han had just experienced a stage of enlightenment, which caused him to go up in grade. When he displayed his cultivation, he could see three bat silhouettes flying above him screeching in excitement. The treant laughed loudly, which started to annoy Yue Han.

"So you had the power inside you all along, it's just that you were chaining yourself down," Shu explained and he waved his tree branches as a signal for the Giant Praying Mantis to fly swiftly towards Yue Han... But Yue Han was prepared.

"Flying? Do not underestimate the capability of the Blind Bat Style!" Yue Han confidence rocketed with his new grade and he ran the other direction away from the praying mantis.

"What is he exactly doing?" Shu was baffled by the change of actions of Yue Han but he still commanded to Praying Mantis to chase after it.

"Hmph looks like, I might be able to trick it." Yue Han smiled as he dashed into the Coliseum interior. The fight for Yue Han's survival had just barely begun.

Chapter 123 Blind Bat vs Praying Mantis

The Roman Coliseum was as run down as what Yue Han thought it would be. In fact, it made him think of the medieval times. While there were no people around, the vaulted spaces in the Coliseum were converted into workspaces or housing spaces.

It was obvious when one saw the random tools lying around the vaulted spaces and the personal touches here and there that Yue Han discovered as he was running away from the Giant Praying Mantis. "What irony, the natural predator running away from the prey." Yue Han thought to himself as his steps felt much lighter than before.

With the grade promotion, Yue Han was finally able to utilise the inner chi force of the Blind Bat Style. He was able to navigate through echolocation even more accurately than before. Previously, he was learning various steps technique from the Blind Bat cultivation manual and the grade promotion allowed him to use one he had always dreamt of using.

The Webbed Wings Running Technique

It might sound weird, heck, it sounded stupid but the Blind Bat Cultivation Style was tailored for scouting with a touch of assassination. The Webbed Wings Running Technique was a basic movement technique that every Blind Bat cultivator needed to learn though its potential would only be fully unleashed when one reached Grade 3.

The Webbed Wings Running Technique enabled Yue Han's every step seem as if he was gliding on air. This made one of the diving sword techniques, The Descension Sword of the Blind Bat, even more potent than ever.

With gilded steps and gracious movements, Yue Han did not expend much chi nor stamina as he scouted the area for a good position to fight the Giant Praying Mantis. He was also hoping that the Mantis would tire itself out. Yue Han felt that the ancient Treant was controlling the Giant Praying Mantis to make things easier for him since praying mantises usually excelled in ambushes rather than chases. Or perhaps the ancient Treant was just toying with Yue Han.

In the amphitheatre of death, Yue Han crashed through a set of large doors before he reached a place where he suddenly felt a sense of tranquillity surrounding him. It felt like the grip of death had loosened and death itself did not matter anymore, even if it came right up to him and stared him in the face. Yue Han carefully looked around and found himself in a chapel with a broken symbol engraved into the top of the wall.

The Giant Praying Mantis stomped through the large doors and bared its mandibles at Yue Han. It looked like it had enough of running and wanted this useless chase to stop immediately.

"I was thinking the exact same thing, Mr Mantis." Yue Han felt that the chapel was the perfect place to end the fight against the Giant Praying Mantis. There were many obstacles such as the pews and pillars around for him to dodge and hide behind when necessary unlike the open space in the Coliseum Arena.

The Giant Praying Mantis did not waste any time and swung its blades, causing an energy ripple wave through the air. Yue Han was shocked because the simple looking insect had the ability to fire chi energy

projectiles, a high-tier move for a monster. Fortunately, there was a row of box pews right beside him and Yue Han jumped behind the pew for cover.

Yue Han was considering using the diving sword technique but since he was now equipped with the knowledge that the Mantis could fire projectile attacks, he felt it was too reckless. "That means that I have to execute an all or nothing attack." Yue Han thought to himself as he quickly glided across the box pew to another before an energy ripple wave struck his previous location, decimating the box pew.

Yue Han immediately took out the basic chi regeneration potion that he had received from killing Meomi and quickly chugged it down. He was thinking of using the same combo he had used to distract the Zombie Abomination during The Great Wall of China dungeon instance.

But instead of distracting like last time, Yue Han's eyes had a spark that displayed his intent to kill the overgrown insect. His bloodlust could also be sensed by the Giant Praying Mantis, which caused it to be on its guard as it moved towards him.

With his new movement technique, Yue Han did not waste any time. When the Mantis stopped its attack to move closer, he directed extra chi into his legs and lower back before he jumped out from behind the box pew and ran up the wall. As Yun Han tried to run out of the box pew, the Giant Praying Mantis took that opportunity to strike rapidly and tried to capture its prey with its spiked raptorial forelegs.

Unfortunately, Yue Han was not skilled enough nor fast enough to avoid the attack and the Giant Praying Mantis not only grabbed his left hand but furiously tore it away from his torso. "FUUU-!" Yue Han cursed as his left arm was torn apart easily by the herculean strength of the Mantis' forelegs. Blood was spewing all over the chapel's walls.

Yue Han eyes were blurry from his tears of pain and his legs wanted to give way so he could curl up and cry at the loss of his left hand. However, he bit his tongue and gritted his teeth, trying to muscle his way through the excruciating pain as he rebalanced himself and prepared the wall run.

Meanwhile, the mantis feasted on Yue Han's left hand but was immediately ordered by Shu to focus on murdering Yue Han. It could not disobey Shu's order despite its basic instincts being to feed.

Regardless, that small window of time when the Mantis was feeding allowed Yue Han to find the optimum angle to dive down and execute his personal combo techniques. "Sword Art! Descension Sword of the Blind Bat! Shadow Sword of the Blind Bat!" Yue Han shouted with all the might he could muster and with only one hand left, he jumped off of the wall.

The Giant Praying Mantis thought that Yue Han was being foolish. All it saw was a pile of flesh to be readily cut by its serrated forelegs. Hence, it went into the usual ambush position as it discarded the skeleton shaped hand it had been holding.

Yue Han smirked when the Praying Mantis thought that he was merely easy prey once more. The Descension Sword of the Blind Bat gave Yue Han the high velocity and composure for him to collide directly with the Mantis' agile forelegs.

The Mantis laughed when Yue Han locked 'blades' with it as it used its other serrated blade to cut Yue Han. Yet, the one who had the last laugh though, was Yue Han, as he turned semi translucent and the Mantis blade went through him partially.

At the same time, Yue Han changed the angle he was holding his sword and managed to find a ligament he could cut through. Both of their attacks hit simultaneously, which caused them both to flinch.

"Further! I have to cut further!" Yue Han had adrenaline rushing through him as his mind rid itself of all unnecessary thought. All he wanted was to make sure he killed the Mantis or at the least, he had to die trying. With his Webbed Wings Running Technique, he glided under the Giant Praying Mantis and sliced its underbelly, which caused light green haemolymph to spill out.

The Praying Mantis cried out as it tried to turn but it was futile as Yue Han slashed one of its back legs off. Despite its injuries though, it was not going to give up. The Mantis flew sideways when Yue Han was least expecting it and counterattacked with a pierce through Yue Han's abdomen.

Yue Han coughed up blood since his Shadow Sword Art skill only partially blocked attacks, meaning that if he managed to evade sufficiently and not suffer a full frontal attack, he could survive. Regrettably, the previous attack was through his stomach.

Despite that last frontal attack by the Mantis, Yue Han summoned his remaining strength and threw his sword with all the chi he could invoke as a last ditch attempt to kill the Mantis. The sword somehow landed right in the centre of the Giant Praying Mantis' ocellus.

Both prey and predator stared each other in its eyes before falling to the ground, gasping for air. In his last moments before he lost his consciousness, Yue Han saw a chest appearing before him.

"Hahaha, looks like I won the second round by the skin of my teeth...too bad I can't get the rewards..." Yue Han thought to himself when a root suddenly grabbed the treasure chest and opened it forcibly. The root shook the contents out right in front of Yue Han and he barely absorbed all of it into his storage ring before fainting.

"As long as you don't give up on yourself, the world won't give up on you," Shu spoke with wisdom before the third round officially started. "But right now, looks like its lights out for you. Try again next time. I look forward to meeting you again, young bat." Shu chuckled as he used the same root that opened the chest to slam Yue Han body into pancakes.

Chapter 124 Revealing the Bellators...?

"Yo, guess it's the reverse now. Hahaha" Bu Dong passed a can of Bamboo Juice to the recently awoken Yue Han in the recovery bay instance.

"Ah..." Yue Han stared at Bu Dong before he laid his head heavily back down on the comfortable pillow. "Gosh...this bed is so much better than the one in my bedroom." Yue Han took the Bamboo Juice that Bu Dong had opened for him and sipped slowly... at least until he was reminded of the sweet refreshing taste of Boss Jin's juice.

"Ah! Patient Yue Han! You should not be too hasty! Drink slowly!" A nearby Nurse Panda became flustered as she saw Yue Han gulping down the can of Bamboo Juice.

"He should be fine! He's tougher than he looks." Bu Dong tried to reassure the Nurse Panda but the Nurse Panda insisted on checking Yue Han's condition.

"Let the nurse do her job." The beautiful and elegant Yun popped by and both the boys just nodded their head in unison. Yun smiled back at them and walked towards Yue Han's bed to check his vitals.

"You did well, Yue Han. Not many cultivators would have continued fighting if they had lost an arm in the middle of the battle. Truly commendable!" Yun commented as she scrolled through the digital tablet that contained the information on his vitals.

"Yeah Bro, that was awesome. I was checking out the video stream on my phone and Dayum! You performed way better than I expected!" Bu Dong did not hold back his praises for Yue Han, which made him flush red in embarrassment.

"Your compliment means a lot to me." Yue Han smiled as he closed his eyes and tried to remember the last time he ever received a praise. Regardless, it felt tremendously wonderful.

"Alright, rest up a little more and then get going. Do not hog my beds." Yun's commanding tone made her even sexier, so much so that the patients surrounding them envied at the two boys because of the attention they were receiving from their goddess.

"So... How many panda medal coins did we get in total?" Bu Dong could not help but ask for his rightful rewards.

"Hahaha, do not worry, even if I wanted to keep your share, the coins seem to be digitally marked under your name. Maybe that is why Boss Jin emphasised on having a personal account for Pandamonium." Yue Han finished his Bamboo Juice and Bu Dong offered to dispose of it for him.

"I got a total of 75 bronze medal coins, your share from the first round was 25 medal coins. Hey, nurse, not sure if you know the answer but can I use the Panda Medal Coins to buy food too?"

"At the moment, you can only use Panda Credits but I can suggest that to Boss Jin and he might consider changing it." The Nurse Panda replied.

"In any case, I should treat you to some Tonkatsu Curry Rice. You did great." Bu Dong laughed but Yue Han refused. "No, let me." Yue Han smiled as he closed his eyes to rest for a while. Bu Dong could not help but admire the newfound bravery and boldness his best friend was displaying.

The day passed by in the blink of an eye and it was nearly night. Jin yawned and felt extremely tired. The gruelling events that he had gone through throughout the day felt like a bad nightmare and a passing dream combined.

"Boss Jin, I will be taking my leave soon." Zhen Qing thanked Jin as she saw him packing up the area. He had asked her to close her store forty five minutes earlier than him so she had the time to pack up and clean the kitchen caravan. It was true that the system would probably be able to do the cleaning for her and probably do it better too, so Jin wanted her to rest early and said he could do the cleaning for her.

However, Zhen Qing refused. Her teacher had a saying and it went like such: "A dirty kitchen will not produce good food." Zhen Qing repeated it to Jin and he found no way to refute her in any way. Her hardworking attitude, the guilt of the previous him not working to be what he truly wanted continued to pluck the strings of Jin's heart.

"I will change for the better. For her. For me. For my monsters and bellators." Jin thought to himself as he continued to pack up the store.

Zhen Qing was finally done with her cleaning just before 11 pm so she hurriedly returned home on her motorbike. It was then that Xiong Da rolled down the stairs from overexertion. He looked at Jin with pitiful eyes that clearly expressed his desire for food. Zeru also walked down the stairs with pride that was akin to an esteemed master.

"Did I say that you are allowed to eat?" Zeru spoke with a straight yet harsh tone. Upon hearing those words, Xiong Da immediately went to his knees and faced Zeru. "Nooo, Instructor!" Xiong Da shouted extremely loudly, so loudly, in fact, that if Jin had not pulled his shutters down previously, the surrounding neighbourhood might had complained.

"Is it okay to show yourself that readily outside of the dungeon instance?" Jin sent a voice transmission to Zeru and he grinned. "Xiong Da has more or less already figured out that I am real. Besides, the AI instructor thing does not suit my role." Zeru replied to Jin's voice transmission as he stared at Xiong Da.

"It's fine, Zeru. Let him rest for now." Jin prepared a plate of Xiong Da's favourite Tonkatsu Curry Rice and asked him to stand up. Despite this, Xiong Da did not dare to move even though he had received permission from Jin. "Get up and rest for the day. Boss, give me a plate of Tonkatsu Curry Rice too." Zeru also gestured for a bowl with his finger and Jin readily agreed. Xiong Da immediately got up with renewed vigour and began to gobble down his curry rice.

"Boss Jin, I cannot believe you. You have such talented people working for you yet you call them AI instructors." Xiong Da commented as he asked for a jug of spring water to quench his thirst.

"This is because these are the few people I have found that are not only talented enough to just teach but also willing to work with me in certain 'experiments'. Remember how Instructor Milk was able to spread herself through multiple dungeons? It's a trade secret that I can't disclose yet but what I can say is that I'm currently utilising a prototype technology that allows her consciousness to be spread through multiple instances." Jin tried to lie and reason with Xiong Da.

"I wanted to pose them as AI instructors to test that initiative. While it has achieved its desired effect, not many people like the idea of using AI instructors. So perhaps you are right! I'll think about properly employing them as actual instructors." Jin discussed with Xiong Da on the possibility of his bellators being around the shop in person.

"But still, it is quite unprecedented to use these 'talents' to instruct people. Not many dungeon suppliers have instructors and that is mainly because of the unfounded theory that it would show that the Supplier's dungeons were not optimised or that the Supplier could not provide a proper dungeon and required instructors to guide people. Besides, they are all acquaintances of mine that I have known for some time. Therefore, I can confidently tell you that those who instruct here, such as Milk, all work whenever they have free time and that they are not working full time here. The dungeons are

traditionally meant to train your own body and soul so I believe that you cannot force someone to do things in them." Jin explained to Xiong Da his own personal rationale.

"That is quite true. Then how about this way? Maybe something like mercenaries for hire?" Xiong Da would like a powerhouse like Zeru with him.

"It will defeat the purpose of dungeoneering." Zeru knocked Xiong Da's head with the back of his spoon.

"Speaking of Instructor Zeru, he looked really similar to the famous historical figure, Samurai Z." Xiong Da asked for another plate of curry rice, which Jin willingly gave to his top customer.

"I just so happened to be quite a passionate fan of him. But trust me, the scar is 100% real." Zeru smirked and that was when Milk appeared out of nowhere too. "Xiong Da! How's your training?"

Xiong Da nearly spits out all the rice in his mouth when Milk accidentally grabbed him a little too tightly. "Ah Big Sister Milk! Instructor Zeru was extremely strict and I abhorred his training. However, I do admit that he really pushed me to my limits, all for my own good." Xiong Da had already deduced that both Milk and Zeru were real. He also realised that Jin was making them act as AI instructors to protect their identity.

Jin smiled as Milk and perhaps even Peppers (if she could control the urge to fry everyone with her explosions) could eventually interact with the customers...and maybe, just maybe, they might be the hands that he would need in the future since they were capable of defending themselves and also knew the system well enough.

"Yes, you can command them however you like, I was starting to wonder whether you would ever let them out into the open." Yun relayed her thoughts to him.

"If they are able to wear normal clothes, I think they would be able to blend into the store's atmosphere quite nicely." Jin never had never thought about that until now. He always assumed that they were just there to help him fight. Jin had nearly forgotten that they were real and all those interactions he had with them were just the interactions between a master and his servant, and not between friends.

If not for Ke Mi opening his mind and helping him out of his unknowing compliance to the system, he would never have realised that each and every monster and bellator were his companions in his journey to becoming the number one dungeon supplier.

"I am really ashamed of myself." Jin thought to himself as Xiong Da was laughing merrily with Milk and Zeru. "I will think of a way to let them work and enjoy themselves instead of just being locked up in my phone or some alternate dimension all the time," Jin promised that he would add this onto his to do list.

Talking about his to do list, he remembered he had yet to create a training plan for his beloved Hungry Hippo customer. "Xiong Da, I finally know what kind of training will boost your spirit force tremendously. Not only that, I am also sure that you will love this plan."

"What is it?" Xiong Da suddenly turned around and a serious expression appeared on his face.

"Your love for good food." Jin hinted this to Xiong Da regarding the upcoming plan and he immediately displayed his puppy eyes to Jin. "Boss, if you can really pull this off, I, Xiong Da, promise that if you need any legal help, I will be there to help you."

Jin chuckled and said, "Give me a day or two. Right now, follow Zeru's training and build your strength and stamina up." Xiong Da acknowledged Jin's orders before he returned to a nearby hotel for some rest.

Chapter 125 Hot Springs Cultivation

Instead of closing the store and sleeping back at his own house, Jin decided to do something a little unconventional.

Jin went to the second floor and entered the Emerald Mountain Hot Springs Instance. The penguins who had all initially been lying around lazily throughout the hot spring mountain suddenly felt a presence entering and began to panic.

"Calm down guys, I am coming here to rest and cultivate." Jin tried to alleviate their anxiety and they immediately relaxed a little upon hearing his voice.

Mr Patsu, the penguin representative, came forward and greeted Jin. "Boss Jin, to what do we owe the honour of you coming in personally?"

"Whenever I cultivate, it seems a large amount of sludge will appear. Seeing how you all have experience in dealing with sludge courtesy of Mr Muddles, I figured this would be a good place to cultivate and rest." Jin explained his reasoning as he started to take his clothes off for a bath.

"Indeed, the penguins here are extremely professional and they can remove any stains. While it is not recommended for most cultivators under Grade 3 to stay long in the hot springs pool, I think it should be fine for Boss to cultivate within the pool since your current cultivation is at Grade 4. We will also add additional potent herbs to aid with your cultivation." Mr Patsu started to command the penguins to prepare the herbal solution for their Boss. He figured they would be restless if they could not do anything to serve the Boss of the store.

"What kind of herbal solution is it? Does it cost Dungeon Dollars to acquire them?" Jin was concerned that he needed to spend money on these herbs.

"It is a mix of the ingredients for the Elixir of Life. Jade Leaf, Cinnamon Branch and Flower of Gold are a few examples. The system stated that you would be given a free trial of the herbs. After which, each herbal solution will cost about 20 Dungeon Dollars. Boss, I can assure you that your cultivation will soar and you would be able to have a better rest than ever before." Mr Patsu bowed his head to show that he was sincere.

"Those herbs sound like...they are metals and not herbs." Jin expressed his suspicion.

"Indeed, there is a slight element of metal within all of those herbs, and they are primarily the reason why the last Qing Dynasty Emperor died from metal poisoning. Though that was because the herbal solution he took contained true metals rather than herbal metals." Mr Patsu gladly explained all of this to Jin.

"Will I faint in the pool if I cultivate for too long? My body might not be able to discern the time dilation here, especially when I have not been cultivating diligently recently." Jin expressed his concerns. He initially wanted to just cultivate near the pool beside the wondrous Maple Tree.

"Do not worry, we will wake you up when your body is close to reaching its limit. We cannot possibly let our boss faint in our pool." Mr Patsu assured Jin and clapped his hands. The penguins immediately rushed out while holding the herbal solution and started to diffuse it into the hot spring waters.

Jin slowly entered the hot spring pool and instantly felt the effects of the hot spring taking effect. The pores all over his body opened up to absorb the spiritual energy of the herbal solution and the hot spring water.

Gradually, Jin sat in his usual cultivation pose of the Nineteen Lazy Astral Pandas style and began to doze off.

As Jin was cultivating in his personal Emerald Mountain Hot Spring instance, Yun was actually in the Dungeon Maker. "How would you describe him at this current moment?" Yun asked the interface as she was fiddling with some stuff.

"Slow. Lazy. Inefficient. Hypocrite." The system replied.

"But within a day, it really seems that he has changed, or at least tried really hard to." Yun replied back.

"Not commendable but still a subject of interest. For now. Been a long time since the system's methods were defied. Will support solely for the sake of research." The system coldly acknowledged Yun and unlocked a certain screen on the Dungeon maker for her.

"Hahaha, I believe Jin should be very happy with this new upgrade." Yun smiled as she tinkered with the Dungeon Maker interface for a little while longer.

Jin sluggishly opened his eyes as he yawned a little. He tried to stretch his arms but he felt that they were extremely heavy, as if he was being pinned down when he tried to move around.

Only then did Jin realised that he was in a pool of deep, dark, black sludge. He could hear the penguins pacing furiously to try and solve or at least reduce the severity of the situation by throwing in hundreds of bars of soap into the hot springs pool.

"Ah, Boss, you are awake." Mr Patsu was panting and his fur was filled with patches of sludge. It was obvious that Mr Patsu had participated in the cleaning process too.

"How long was I out for?" Jin suddenly felt something furry grabbing his torso and he was being pulled out of the sludge. "Roughly 16 hours." The Panda Massage Therapist said as he gave Jin a towel to cover himself up.

"I caused this?" Jin was really curious. He knew that cultivating would cause waste to be expelled out of the body but this was ridiculous. The amount he expelled was definitely more than the amount of water he had in his entire body.

"When you started to cultivate, you absorbed almost the entire pool of hot spring water and the herbal solution along with it. It was not long after that a yellowish black substance began oozing out of your body, filling up the pool." The Panda Massage Therapist spoke.

"Not only that, we also invite Mr Muddles, our friendly dirt collector, to ingest the sludge but he was also overwhelmed by the amount you had expelled and needed to move down the mountain to digest what he had eaten." Mr Patsu sighed.

"Why did this happen?" Jin could not figure this part out at all but in that split second, he noticed a trace of bloodlust in the air and parried an incoming sword strike.

"Excellent use of the Perfectly Normal Slash." Zeru disengaged himself and stood before Jin. "If this was a day ago, you would not have been able to dodge that." Zeru hinted that the removal of waste substances had something to do with his improved agility.

"Display your cultivation and you will understand." Jin obeyed Zeru's command and called out his panda silhouettes. Previously, there was a simple silhouette of a panda along with three highly defined panda silhouettes to indicate that Jin had just reached Grade 4. However, right now, he saw four highly defined panda silhouettes.

"It's only been 16 hours and I have already attained Grade 4 Peak?" Jin was in awe but it still did not make sense to him. He had been cultivating for nearly a month and the amount of time he needed to cultivate to get from the start Grade 3 to Grade 3 Peak was roughly three weeks or so.

"A culmination of factors I believed. The hot spring waters, the herbal solution, and your abrupt change in attitude can all be said to have contributed to the sudden increase. Not to mention, it seems your body's chi is very attuned to the Nineteen Lazy Astral Pandas style. However, it's also probably because it's the first dose of herbal solution you have ever received. which is why your body was very receptive to it. I doubt it will ever happen again." Zeru explained.

"Sorry, Mr Patsu and Penguins for the extra work." Jin apologised but the penguins and even the Panda Massage Therapist refused his apology.

"To see our Boss gain this much power means that we have helped a lot. Besides, the system will aid to clean the instance once you take your leave. It is just that we could not let you drown in your own sludge. Hahahaha!" Mr Patsu said out loud.

"Alright, if that's the case, I will be leaving this instance and return tonight for some more!" Jin returned back to the store from the service instance after he took a thorough bath and made his way to the 1st floor. It was then that Yun told him that Zhen Qing had used the caravan's enter the kitchen instance and had already started prepping her items for the morning.

"Then, it's about time we head to the zoo to complete the baby panda mission," Jin called for a taxi as he took out a few onigiris to serve as his breakfast. Jin felt that at Grade 4 Peak, he should be able to stay relatively safe in the zoo... it was just a zoo, right?

Well, it was a zoo...

The Shenzhen Provincial Zoo of the Cultivation Arts.

Chapter 126 Hunt or Fish?

It was roughly 6.30am in the morning when the taxi came and the ride to the zoo was a fairly long one. This gave Jin some time to expand on some previous ideas he had thought of.

He was giving thought on how he should deal with the Xiong Da's training plan. He already had a basic idea of what he would want to do.

He wanted to make Xiong Da eat... That was all there was to it! He wanted to make him eat. Since eating monster would allow for a spike in cultivation courtesy of the Hungry Hippo style, Jin thought that the best way for Xiong Da to improve over a short period of time was to stuff him with delicacies and monsters.

An eating competition would be interesting because he would get to see how Xiong Da would fare against his monsters but that would also mean that Xiong Da would realise that his monsters were sentient enough to listen to and comprehend human speech.

He even thought of capturing monsters that were similar to animals, like Mr Oink, and cut them up for a BBQ. However, Jin did not know how that would work out. The dungeon dimensional instances were supposed to act as a fake reality as compared to the service instances, which were meant to be fake to serve their intended purposes.

If Jin carried out the hunting part, did that mean that his monsters would be repeatedly killed and dissected? The accumulated experience of the monsters' several deaths might eventually break the minds of those sentient creatures of his.

"So I have to find something dumb enough to kill again and again but still smart enough to learn repeatedly so that my customers won't just pay for grinding." Jin thought to himself.

"To be honest, there are quite a number of creatures that fit your... criteria." Yun relayed her answer to Jin's mind.

"Example?" Jin asked in his thoughts and Yun said that most of his creatures were sentient so they had the potential to grow further.

"You could catch those wild monsters that do not think much, but if you managed to catch a variant creature that has reached the peak intelligence of their species, it would be perfect since they generally contain better spirit force in their meat. In fact, most creatures know that the world follows the simple law of eat or be eaten. The same applies to you when you step into their world." Yun explained to Jin.

"So Mr Oink is actually a variant creature of an already deviant variant of its natural species. That is why it seems as if it has a decent level of intelligence."

"Alrighty then, what worlds would you say fit my criteria?" Jin questioned

"If you want good food? I would say you should plant the crystal seeds you obtained in the Farm World and harvest them when they are ripe" Yun replied.

"You know I don't have time for that." Jin shook his head but at least he was facing his phone. So the taxi driver did not think anything was out of the ordinary.

"Then I guess the Hunting World or Fishing World would be the next best alternative," Yun suggested.

"What are the pros and cons of each world?" Jin later received an electronic information pamphlet on his phone from Yun and it showed the description of the two worlds.

"Oh...so I might have to hunt for days without rest to get a good catch in the hunting world." Jin analysed the two worlds. The Hunting World consisted of many different monsters with varying spirit force. But to catch them, you needed to find their tracks, and when you found them you needed to ambush them or fight them head on. Jin figured they might be good monsters for the dungeons or perhaps just decent ingredients for a tasty meal.

"The fishing world is probably what I will go for. Xiong Da needs quantity instead of quality, as per Zeru's recommendation. The fishing world has an abundance of fish that grow at a rapid rate so it will be easier to get a large quantity of fish with high spiritual powers." Jin deduced that the fishing world would be the best choice.

"But you need a ship or at least a boat to go into the deeper parts of the endless oceans," Yun told him as she automatically opened a section of the information pamphlet to show Jin that she was not playing around with him.

"A ship to haul and store the fishes as well as to protect ourselves from the vicious weather? It can even fly so you can perform sky fishing?" Jin was dumbfounded by it. "So you mean I have to buy a ship?"

"Actually, you do not have to at this particular point in time but if you do want to catch fish with large spiritual forces, you will need a ship. Besides, I am already thinking in advance to the time when you would need to create a new service instance." Jin could hear that Yun's voice was a little condescending when he thought of something innovative.

Yes, upon seeing the potential of the fishing world, Jin wished to create a Fishing Service Instance on the third floor. With the dimensional space's power of time dilation, he hoped it would attract some fishing enthusiasts as well as some of the older population to spend money in his store.

"But you should really do something to advertise the third floor. The Panda Muscles is such an extensive gym facility and yet practically no one is using it." Yun presented Jin with her feedback.

"Perhaps I should package it with the dungeons... Wait! Speaking of dungeons, I forgot to ask you, but what is the status of the Qixi Festival Dungeon? You initially said that the tickets were for future use, but at this rate, people might start to think that it was a scam from the Loot Box Machine." Jin continued to ask Yun.

"The Qixi Festival Dungeon is a system made themed dungeon, do you wish to change it in any way? Or else, I can just give you the rights to the dungeon and you can publish it immediately." Yun gave a nonchalant answer.

"That's it?" Jin was a little taken aback by Yun's response.

"Yes, that's it. The next themed dungeon by the system will be the Halloween one." Yun sent him the details of when the Halloween dungeon would appear as a reward in the loot box machine.

"Okay, I am now curious. Why is the system giving out these dungeons for free? How about the monsters in them?" Jin looked at the details of the Qixi Dungeon that was sent to his mailbox.

"You have to take care of the monsters' well being, so technically, it isn't free in that sense. But if you really want to know the reason, there really isn't any. The most likely reason is that the system wants to celebrate these events. Besides, you are too slow with your capturing of monsters." Yun digressed a little.

"I realised that the cost of housing all the monsters have inevitably increased with the new Qixi Festival dungeon." Jin rested his head on the back seat of the taxi and sighed as he looked out through the window. It looked like he would be reaching the zoo soon.

"Then consider the gift from the system both a boon and a blight." Yun did not care much about Jin's whining.

"In any case, I should take a look at the Qixi festival dungeon when I am back in the store." Jin looked out of the window to appreciate the scenery for a while.

"Just remember to look around the zoo for any cultivation that might be suitable for Zhen Qing too if you want her to work longer and more efficiently." Yun gave her last piece of advice before she became silent.

The taxi was reaching the zoo's entrance and Jin thought of bringing his bellators with him around the zoo since this could be one of the only few times they were out of the shopping district. Maybe Zeru had seen it before, but hey, it could have been many years since he last entered the zoo.

"Mister, we have arrived. Payment via Mechat?" The taxi driver asked and Jin paid with his phone before stepping out of the taxi.

"Yeap, I am definitely bringing those rascals out for a walk." Jin laughed bitterly as he noticed a number of cultivators amassing this early in the morning just to visit the zoo.

Chapter 127 Casual Clothes

Jin wanted to summon them out as soon as possible but he suddenly remembered the Morning Couch Club. Both Milk and Peppers were not early birds and he could not imagine what would happen if they appeared in their sleeping gowns in front of this many cultivators

"I can fix that for you. Give me to a fairly secluded location...." Yun said as she appeared so smoothly that no one really exactly saw her appearing from thin air.

"...Like that place right behind that toilet?" Jin really could not find any place secluded in this already crowded location. Yun, who was wearing a tight singlet and leggings, gave Jin an annoyed look.

"Okay, okay, how about that bus park right over there? The busses don't seem to be operating at the moment and it looks like the CCTVs are not pointed directly at the back of the buses either." Jin offered another solution and Yun agreed to that.

"Give us a few minutes, we will be right back." Yun took Jin's phone as Jin went ahead to queue for the tickets. He wanted to pay via his phone but since Yun had taken it, he took a look at his wallet to see if he had sufficient money in it.

Meanwhile, behind the busses, Yun firstly magically redirected the CCTVs angles slightly and cast an anti-vision and noise barrier around the bus they were hiding behind. She later summoned and knocked the senses out of the two sleepy heads. Zeru also appeared at the request of Yun. "Master Zeru, please let me put some makeup on the scar for you. I do not want you to attract too much attention and make Jin worry about you too."

"Hahaha, Lady Yun, you are too kind to your 'son' even though you are just an embodiment of her soul." Zeru accepted the makeup from Yun and his scar was covered up nicely.

"There you go, although it would be really good if you could cut your hair too, though that would be asking too much. I believe you value your style too." Yun hoped Zeru could change his appearance so perceptive people like Xiong Da would not question his identity too much.

"Oh no, that's a really simple request to accede. I am happy to cut it. It's just that it was always my previous master that ordered me to do that instead of me taking the initiative to do so so I just let it grow long. Perhaps, that's how I chase for my master's affection." Zeru took his wooden sword out and swung it backwards.

As he held his long ponytail tightly, Zeru aimed his wooden sword fairly close to his hairband and cut his ponytail with a single stroke.

"May I...keep it?" Yun blushed a bit as she raised her hand towards Zeru after he cut his ponytail off... Zeru had a weird expression on his face due to her odd request but did not mind. Maybe Yun and the system had some use for his hair or DNA or whatever they wanted to do with it. He then tied his hair again since there was still a sufficient amount for him to tie it into a small ponytail.

"Uwahhh! I do not want to wake up~!" Peppers yawned with her mouth wide open while Milk grabbed onto Peppers like how she would do with her pillow. Milk even rubbed her face against Pepper's head. "Mmmm, so fluffy... I want to sleep mor- Ow!!"

Yun knocked both of their heads again. "Wake up and change into some casual clothes. Jin is bringing you guys to the Zoo. Master Zeru, please change into this too. I will put up an anti visual barrier if you want to change here."

"Haha, Lady Yun, you are too considerate as always. Please do." Zeru picked up the clothes and changed immediately with the anti visual barrier in place in order to not offend little Peppers. Meanwhile, Milk felt that she wanted to see the whole scene of Zeru changing but Yun pulled her ear and told her to get changed too.

Jin managed to buy the tickets but he was left with only 50 Yuan in his wallet. "Ahh.. maybe I should bring some extra cash out in the future just in case..." The zoo tickets were 40 Yuan per person and he figured he should buy one for Yun too.

"Speak of the devil..." Jin was later stupefied by the sudden change in appearance of his bellators and Yun. Milk was wearing a sleeveless swing top with a pair of black jeans while Zeru wore a casual white shirt with his sleeves folded up along with a pair of long blue pants. For Peppers...Jin could not help but laugh as she really looked like a little kid with a sleeveless crop top that had polo neck and a denim overall dress.

"What?!" Peppers was controlling her urge to shoot a fireball explosion at Jin but she was also ashamed to do so in front of so many people.

"Nothing, you look rather cute." When Jin said it, Peppers suddenly opened her eyes widely and stepped on his feet. "Hmmp, I am always cute." Peppers agreed heartedly, which made the entire group amused and they laughed as a group.

Milk, on the other hand, teared up a little but managed to wipe it off before anyone else noticed. It had been a long time since she had this kind of familial feeling. "Let's get going then! Or else Jin will not make it back to his store in time." Milk turned around quickly and headed towards the zoo entrance.

"Jin, I shall show you the prowess of knowledge of I, the Demonic Sage Queen!" Peppers stood near to him.

"You know about this zoo's cultivation styles and masters?" Jin thought Peppers was just trying to boast in front of him.

"She knows of not just the zoo but also everything related to it...because I made her read everything about it when the mission was created for you," Yun spoke out but Peppers was trying to cover Yun's mouth.

"Did you know? Peppers is actually really diligent when she studies. I remember seeing her trying to memorise everything as quickly as possible. She thought that you would be going to the Zoo the day after you received the mission. Little did she know that you put it off until now." Milk interjected and this time Peppers ran to Milk to cover her mouth.

"Ahhh, no wonder she is always so angry with Jin. She just wanted to show to her master how dedicated she was." This time it was Zeru who spoke up and Peppers just gave up and sighed. It was at this moment that Jin went up to Peppers and patted her on the head.

Peppers looked up and Jin smiled at her. "Thank you for all the hard work that you have done. I really appreciate it, now let's see. How about you tell me more about this place." That smile made Peppers brighten up a little. Her nose grew even longer when Yun squat down to give her a light squeeze. "You little brat, working so hard right behind our backs."

"Haha! Now listen up carefully!" Peppers started to flaunt her knowledge to Jin and Yun as they walked side by side while Milk and Zeru were behind them smiling at this lively scene between the three of them in the middle of the noisy crowd.

Chapter 128 Royal Zodiacs

From what Jin knew about the Zoo of the Cultivation Arts, what Peppers had told him was all correct. In fact, she really did know more about the Zoo more than him. Every province had a Zoo of the Cultivation Arts as most cultivators' techniques and styles were based on animals.

All monsters and even animals had power levels that corresponded to the grades for humans. But unlike humans, they were unable to choose what kind of powers they would have as they were born with them.

Although the humans in this world were not born with an ability, they all had the potential to adopt a cultivation style that they liked and were attuned to. It was the best advantage humans had over monsters and animals and was also why they were able to rule the world.

It was true that observing the cultivation of wild animals would provide a better insight into a particular style for a person with the same cultivation style, but those animals were not exactly the easiest to find. Also, people would have to travel far and wide to locate them and it might even disrupt the native ecosystem in the long run.

Hence, zoos were renovated in order to allow cultivators to observe the animals, learn from them, and maybe even teach fellow cultivators of the same style as well. Therefore, there were many recruitments near the various animal enclosures and that was how guilds or sects were created these days. By coming to the Zoo of Cultivation Arts.

The Shenzhen Provincial Zoo of Cultivation Arts might not necessarily be the largest, the biggest, or even the most modern, but it boasted the most extensive range of animals in enclosures.

When Jin's group entered the zoo, they were immediately bombarded by various recruiters of different animal sects. If they had had the time, it would have been a good place to learn more about prominent sects and guilds. Perhaps it was also possible that joining one would improve the store's standings in the future as Jin might have the backing of a sect if there any problems arose.

However, Jin was not planning on joining one at the moment. Firstly, he was here only for the Baby Panda Mission. He just wanted to take a selfie with it, or maybe with the whole group too and then immediately return to the store. Time was money, and those were the two things he could not afford to waste at the moment.

"Would you like to join the Furious Monkey Sect? We even have members in the Royal Zodiac Monkey Sect!"

"Do not listen to him! The Raging Tiger Sect is your best choice, one of our founders comes directly from the Royal Zodiac Tiger Sect!"

"Dear fellow cultivators, how about joining the Towering Tortoise Sect? Our roots came from the ancient spirit monster, the Black Turtle of the North!"

"Towering Tortoise? Is that not what Kong Xian, that Kendo highschool kid, used?" Jin thought to himself but eventually ignored all the recruitments and shouldered his way out of the main square and into the animal viewing enclosures.

"Wow, they were crazy about trying to get people to join them. Why are they so desperate?" Milk was a little annoyed since she knew there were times in the main square where she could have been groped due to the massive amount of people present. Despite this, Zeru had been protecting her from possible fidgety hands and Milk could only give a genuine wide smile in return for Zeru's honourable protection.

"More people means more tribute to their Sect and that, in turn, means that their higher-ups would have more money," Jin said and that was also one of the reasons why he refused to join the sects. They might accept people with different cultivation styles at first but eventually, they would want them to learn their main style.

"If that's the case, won't there be many different sects with different prefixes and animals associated to them?" Milk continued to ask questions as the group followed the map towards the Panda Enclosure.

"Not really. There are grand sects like the Royal Zodiac ones, which control nearly half of China's current economy. Under those grand sects, there are large sects that control the smaller sects and that's where cultivators who have various cultivation belong." Zeru tried to explain and Jin agreed with him. Seeing Jin agree, Zeru could not help but sigh since it looked like even if it was in the future, the power chain did not change a single bit.

"So, it's like many organisations within one parent organisation?" Milk asked and Zeru nodded his head.

"Compared to the past, these small sects do not matter much now and it's more like a meeting place for cultivators so that the cultivators can have a sense of belonging. The ones that really have the fighting power and perhaps the power to protect the country would definitely be the Royal Zodiacs." Jin commented.

"Ah! I read about the Royal Zodiacs! They are the 12 Chinese animal cultivators that the Jade Emperor eventually assigned as protectors after calling for a meeting that required the animal cultivators to cross the magical river to meet up with him. Eventually, they were selected for the years on the Chinese calendar too!" Peppers proudly mentioned.

"Hahaha! But do you want to hear something different and perhaps the true story of how the Royal Zodiacs came to be?" Zeru smirked when he proposed that idea. Everyone immediately had their attention on Zeru.

"There was no Jade Emperor in the first place. The one in reign was the Banned Emperor and his name brought fear and oppression to all. Needless to say, the common folk were not happy and even the nobles were struggling under his rule. Therefore, the original cultivators of the 12 Royal Zodiac animals, who were initially nobodies, were the ones that brought him down in a grand fight at the River of Death." Zeru continued his story when he realised everyone was already intrigued by his story.

"They fought for 12 days and 12 nights with each cultivator taking turns to wear the Banned Emperor down. At the end, when the fight was almost lost and all hope was nearly gone, the Banned Emperor saw his most trustworthy brother, the Jade Prince came. He thought that the Jade Prince had brought reinforcement. However, to his surprise, the Jade Prince betrayed him by delivering the deathblow and

before he died, the Banned Emperor even found out that it was the Jade Prince that tricked him by calling for the meeting at the River of Death."

"Hence, in order to keep this assassination a secret, the Jade Prince continued the lie that the Banned Emperor was sick and eventually died. He later succeeded as the new Emperor who honoured the 12 founders who had battled the Banned Emperor and painstakingly changed the course of history and the books were written with their help too." Zeru concluded as they were reaching the panda enclosure.

"How did you even know about this?" Jin asked with immense curiosity.

"Trade Secret." Zeru smiled and the entire group laughed at Zeru using Jin's catchphrase. However, deep in his heart, he mourned for his old master.

"It's because my previous Master was the last descendant of the hidden and forgotten 13th Royal Sect. The Royal Zodiac Panda Sect." Zeru thought to himself as he noticed how Jin and his previous master had some things in common.

Chapter 129 Three Eyed Tiger

The Panda Enclosure was allocated with one of the biggest plots of land by the Shenzhen Provincial Zoo of Cultivation Arts since it housed one of the national treasures of the country. Yet the amount of viewing space was still not sufficient for the sea of cultivators and tourists that just wanted to take a look at the cute... fat and lazy pandas.

Although the name stated that this was the Panda Enclosure, the physical barriers were only there for decoration as the enclosure was protected by a series of high grade barrier defence inscriptions and there was even a Grade 10 guard protecting the Pandas. This guard was the highest grade cultivator out of all the guards stationed in this Zoo since the rest of the enclosures were monitored by Grade 3 to Grade 5 Zoo Guards depending on the value of the animals.

"Argh, I can not see anything!" Peppers wanted to blow the entire place up just so that she could have a good view of the pandas. Jin tried to dissolve her explosive thoughts by picking her up and placed her on his shoulders.

"Ah!" Peppers grabbed on to Jin's head tightly and it nearly made him fall. Zeru and Milk immediately supported Jin while Yun secretly took a few photos with her brand new phone, which she happened to create when they were at the main entrance. She needed to use Jin's phone as a base to allow the system to duplicate all the functions and abilities of the phone since Jin's phone was uniquely coded just for him.

"Wow! The scenery is really beautiful!" Peppers managed to balance herself and took in the view. As the physical barrier did not extend that high up and the defence barrier inscriptions were hidden, Peppers was able to have a good view of the entire area.

There was a miniature hill in the enclosure and on it, there was a small patch of bamboo. Right at the base of the hill was a playground for the younger pandas to have fun.

"Oh look! Is that Jie Jie and Lee Lee?" Peppers squinted her eyes a little to try and get a better look and they saw two pandas taking care of their little baby panda.

"Ah, it seems too far away to take a proper selfie with the baby panda." Jin felt troubled. In his mind, he thought of taking a picture of just the pandas and then using technology to crop and fuse his face into the picture.

"Erm no Jin, that will not work." Yun placed her hand on Jin's shoulder and shook her head. She did not know that Jin was that desperate.

"Hear Ye Hear Ye! It's the last week of the event to take photos with the baby panda!!" A crier rang his bell as he shouted with a large signage on his chest. Jin walked towards the man shouting with Peppers on his shoulders.

"You're saying that I can take photos with the baby panda?" Jin questioned.

"Yes, mister! It's the last week of the photo taking with the baby panda! Join the fight arena down at the amphitheatre, which will start in half an hour. All participants who can last at least five minutes against our cultivation masters will have the right to take a photo with the baby panda as well as a photo of their cultivation animal as a memento." The annoyingly loud man showed the signage he was holding to Jin.

"Where do I sign up?" Jin asked and the loud man just asked Jin to register via his phone with the QR code provided at the bottom of the signage. Jin put Peppers down and took his phone out to scan the QR code.

"Heh! Uncle, you should just quit now and not waste our time waiting for the fight arena." A group of young brats surrounded Jin and Peppers as they lifted their heads in arrogance.

"None of your business!" Peppers retorted at the brats and one of them stared fiercely at Peppers. "Do you not know who we are?!"

"I am sorry we are in your way. Peppers let's go." Jin immediately held Peppers back and walked in the other direction away from them. Jin knew that there were always these kinds of irritating cultivators that wanted to flaunt their strength onto others. That was also the reason why he did not wish to go to the Zoo earlier.

Fortunately, he decided to come today. If not, he would have failed the baby panda mission or perhaps he would have had to take a harder route just to complete the mission.

"Hey Hey Hey! Who said that you are allowed to go just because you apologised. Bow down to us now! And say that you are sorry for bumping into the members of the Three Eyed Tiger!" A few of the Three Eyed tiger members ran quickly to surround Jin and Peppers as their leader spoke loudly.

"Poor soul, to encounter the Three Eyed Tiger." Some of the onlookers were whispering what bad luck the man must have to meet that group.

"Yea, he should just kowtow and get away from them." Another onlooker gave his views.

"What's the Three Eyed Tiger?" Milk asked one of the onlookers.

"Oh, foreigner? Anyways, they are a well known notorious Triad group in Shenzhen. Offend them and like the Third Eye in their name, they will never forget their hostility towards you. " The onlooker spoke.

"Is it that normal for this triad group and their members to make a ruckus here?" Milk continued to ask.

"If they are outside the zoo? No, the police will stop them at all cost. However, the Zoo's rules make it a playground for these triads to play punk at times. Of course, if it gets too outrageous, the Zoo Guards will stop them" Another onlooker commented.

"If they are notorious, why would they even allow them to lurk around?" Milk could not understand. Shouldn't the guards do something about it?

"Dirty Politics and Money, my dear." An old lady smirked as she gave her comments to Milk and smiled at Yun.

"Grandma Yuan?" Yun realised that the district guardian just so happened to be in the same zoo as Jin. "How bad can Jin's luck get?" Yun could only sigh at his double whammy.

Meanwhile, the Grade 10 Zoo Guard rolled his eyes. "Just my luck that a duel happens near my enclosure." He reported the situation to his higher ups and continued to monitor the situation. "Understood, Panda-10, we will send a guard and medic over to clean up after them." The Zoo Headquarters replied as if it was a normal occurrence.

Yes, it was indeed a normal occurrence in the Zoo of Cultivation Arts since cultivators were allowed to duel anytime in the Zoo. While it technically also a public area, there were sufficient guards and CCTVs around to oversee any duels from afar. The Zoo even had a field hospital to treat any immediate injuries if required until the ambulance from the main hospital arrived.

"So what will it be Uncle? Are you going to bow down to me, Zhen Kao Peng" The leader of these goons, Kao Peng sneered.

"No." Jin yawned a little as he scratched his head. Peppers sniggered when she saw Jin yawn as she took out her staff and pointed it at them. "Nope, you guys are going to be the ones doing the kowtowing instead."

Chapter 130 Overkill

Kao Peng sneered at the little girl who whipped a staff out from out of nowhere. He looked at the older guy and felt no threat from him at all. "Guess I can get those storage rings and maybe the staff too once they prostrate in front of me. Time to teach them a lesson." Kao Peng thought to himself and felt proud that he found the right target this time.

He then sent a voice transmission to his underlings to move forward even more and if possible grab that expensive looking staff away from the little girl. Suddenly, he felt an eerie silence behind him and he turned around, only to find that a defensive barrier had been created behind him.

"What in the worl- BOOOOOOOOM" A gigantic blast of fire immediately incinerated the area and caused almost everything in its way to be burnt to a crisp. The onlookers panicked and screamed at the sudden change of events and even the Grade 10 Zoo Guard instantly raised a high level barrier up when he saw the fire blast.

However, he was not as fast as Milk who created the defensive barrier first. "Ooo, Foreigner you seem very capable." Grandma Yuan complimented Milk's powers and she smiled back. "That was nothing, I know for a fact that Jin and Peppers would have been strong enough to prepare in advance."

"You know the victims?" Grandma Yuan tried to probe further.

"You mean the victors? Yes, I do know them, Tiangong District Guardian Yuan." Milk said unhesitantly and Grandma Yuan laughed.

"Hahaha, looks like Jin does have some talented friends after all." Grandma Yuan continued to watch the one sided battle.

"Hmmm! It's really been a long time since I was allowed to release so much firepower." Peppers stretched her arms while holding on to her staff. The Three Eyed Tiger's gang members that were in front of Jin were trembling when they saw what Peppers did to their gang leader.

"Witch!!!" The gang members shouted in unison but before they knew what had taken place, a shadowy stick hit their faces and they dropped to the ground like flies. "How rude." Jin swung his Bamboo Bo after hitting the gang members.

When the smoke cleared, Kao Peng was barely standing, with third degree burns located on his entire body. Apparently, his underlings had unintentionally managed to protect Kao Peng by standing right in front of him, hence the bulk of the blast was taken by his underlings.

Kao Peng's legs were shaking as he pulled out a relic from his storage ring. Kao Peng initially did not have the intention to use this precious relic. He was told to hold onto the relic of life as a secondary backup for his senior in case his senior ever got into trouble. This was the amount of trust his senior had placed on him.

However, at this moment, he valued his pathetic life more than anything else. "Sorry Senior Wai, I did not expect things to be this way." Kao Peng used the remainder of his chi to activate the relic of life.

A bright light shone from the relic and enveloped him in some mystical eastern magic that allowed him to heal quicker than Jin's top quality recovery potions. "I will take my revenge for my comrades!" Kao Peng's vigour renewed and his body seemed stronger than before.

"You want another dose? I will gladly give it to you." Peppers readied her staff but suddenly Jin stopped her. "It's okay Peppers, I will deal with him. Besides, your firepower made the onlookers too scared."

'Too scared?' Peppers immediately stiffened up as some bad memories started to appear, causing her to all of a sudden start screaming. "What's wrong?" Jin diverted his attention for a moment and Kao Peng took that opportunity to strike with his sword.

"Shit!" Jin held onto Peppers and barely dodged the first attack, but Kao Peng was relentless and Jin received a long straight cut along his arm. Kao Peng was delighted that he managed to deal damage to Jin and hungered for more.

However, Jin did not give him the chance to launch his third attack. With a deep breath, Jin released a powerful chi beam, which caused Kao Peng's main sword arm to dissipate into nothingness. This time round Kao Peng was filled with terror and dread. He did not expect both the girl and her guardian to be this powerful. "You watch out!" Kao Peng shouted as he retreated to safety.

Meanwhile, the onlookers had mixed reactions. Some rejoiced that the Three Eyed Tigers were taught a lesson but others were quite fearful of the spells of the little girl and the mysterious skills displayed by her guardian.

"Are you okay?" Milk rushed over and checked on Jin's wound. Without delay, Milk cast a simple healing spell. "Milk, do you have any calming spells?" Jin saw how scared Peppers was all a sudden and was concerned.

"Give me a moment." Milk used her fingers to draw some mystical symbols in the air, which intrigued Grandma Yuan. In a few moments, Milk cast a mix of the Courage spell and Mind Calm Spell on Peppers and it allowed her to act normally once again.

"Sorry... Jin." Peppers wanted to cry so badly but it looked like she was holding her tears back because of the crowd.

"No worries Peppers. Tell us when you are ready." Jin consoled Peppers and soon people who were watching the scene slowly dispersed to mind their own business.

"So Jin, I see that you have a few foreign friends in your company." Grandma Yuan spoke and Jin stiffened a little.

"Ah, Grandma Yuan." Jin bowed towards her and Grandma Yuan suddenly felt that something had changed about this Jin that was standing before her. Was she overthinking it? She was not sure. Jin also wanted to ask why was she here but decided to keep quiet for the moment.

"Hurry to the amphitheatre, I can handle the report," Yun said to Jin as the Grade 10 Zoo Guard came towards them and clarified the current situation with her. There were a few dead bodies around with the solid Dantians and since this was a duel that had many witnesses, the Zoo Guard confirmed that Peppers could not be charged for their deaths. However, on the behalf of Jin, Yun had to write a report regarding the entire incident, which the Zoo Guard would later use as evidence.

"Milk, are you able to handle Peppers for now?" Jin was still worried about Peppers' sudden mental breakdown.

"Do not worry, Peppers is stronger than you think. Go to the fight arena first, we will be there in no time," Milk assured Jin and Zeru decided to tag along with Jin.

"Zeru, don't. Keep an eye on the girls in case a similar case happens again." Jin told Zeru but Zeru refused. "The same might happen to you too since you did not finish that guy off." Zeru warned him. Although Zeru had the same sentimental feelings as Jin, his main priority was still Jin since he was the master.

"At worse, I will call you guys." Jin pointed at his phone and Zeru got his drift.

"Understood, stay frosty." Zeru nodded his head and Jin ran as fast as he could to the amphitheatre. Little did Jin know, Kao Peng was prepping his possible demise.

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