

Dungeon S 1211

Chapter 1211 – Endless Battlefield -Part 6

Even though the soldier standing in front of him was mute, faceless like a blank piece of paper, the remaining features of the body were reminiscent of Zeru. Sure, Jin might not have been under the intense tutelage of his master for quite some time but for the days that he was under his supervision, Jin remembered how his master's stance was more than just unique.

It was efficient.

Each step and movement were not wasted compared to some of the techniques and even the flashy strong ones. In fact, there was no need for comparison when one were to understand that his stance had incorporated the strengths of various techniques combined together. The only problem was that Jin did not have the time to learn much from his master mainly because he had to run his business to prosperity.

But as days, weeks and subsequently months passed by, he took the easier route of blasting his Maqi whenever he felt like it and relied on brute chi force to overwhelm his enemies. When it comes to techniques, Jin could only perform the few basic ones which Zeru taught him. There was a chance that the WereMouses had better in depth training than Jin considering the amount of time that Zeru had spent training those peasants that had been marginalised.

"No excuse now not to train, is that it?" Jin said to himself as the Zeru clone went at him at full force, just as Jin was about to change his axe into a sword to have a fighting chance against the clone. And as he parried, the great axe split its transformation allowing Jin to have a Boo to be the customised sheath once again while Bam was still in axe form. It allowed Jin to parry one additional blow against Zeru before Bam swapped entirely into a sword. However, in the process of switching weapons, Boo which had been used to defend had been smacked out of the Panda Cultivator's hands because of the force that Zeru had used.

Jin's clones managed to get it but Jin specifically told the clones to focus on pushing the rest of the faceless soldiers back away from them so he could concentrate on fighting Zeru. "Why does this faceless Zeru have more moves than the usual soldiers?" Jin thought to himself as he had to use a variety of defence techniques concurrently to block the onslaught of attacks from Zeru.

"You must be wondering, why is this faceless soldier giving you so much trouble as compared to the others." Suzaku spoke out as if she knew exactly what Jin was thinking. "It's because he was a friend that turned into a foe."

"A friend?!" Jin nearly got stabbed in his neck just because the information he received caused him to focus for a second. Because of Jin's experience in switching and moulding Bam into any particular weapon, the sword Bam had transformed now had the capability to switch on faster than before. This allowed Bam to grow wider in size, saving Jin within a hair's breadth.

"Oh, you managed to listen even though you are afar? Shouldn't you be concentrating?" Suzaku said nonchalantly and Jin did not have the time to reply. If the previous close shave was anything of an expensive lesson, it was not to break concentration from this particular Zeru as well even though it was a mere clone.

"This wretched bastard tricked my beloved friend into marrying him. To be his lifelong partner and forever. Sure, he was strong, stronger than anyone within the city that no one was a match against him. Even I admired him at some point." Suzaku talked about Zeru not knowing that Jin had a connection with him. She merely thought that he knew a thing or two about the infamous swordsman.

"But things changed when an assassin targeted me for the want of my feathers and my friend used her life to protect me." Suzaku's eyes wandered into the distance as she monologues.

"I tried to save her with my own powers. Feathers? They are just residue portions of my powers for I personally gave her my blood." Suzaku said as she stared at her wrist and still touched the scar which she refused to heal till this day.

"My blood has the restorative power beyond comprehension according to the fellow commoners and yet she did not live through it." Suzaku's words were getting shaky.

"That bastard said that he was some Banned Emperor assassin and they dealt with spiritual damage instead of the flesh. The wound she received could not be cured by any ordinary means, as if there was a hole in the soul and her spiritual being was leaking away into the abyss."

"And yet as the bird of resurrection, I was not able to save her. What kind of phoenix am I if I can't save even a friend of mine?" Suzaku began to tear and for some reason, it resonated with the faceless soldiers, causing them to be more rampant with their attacks.

The clones had to fight harder than before, with some of them utilising the astral powers stored within them to shoot out area magic spells in order to keep them at bay. As for Jin, the Zeru that he was fighting against had started portraying his Lotus Cultivation which Jin had witnessed them to be sure kill techniques regardless of their potency level.

"I would not let you defeat me this easily! I am not the same Jin as you fought months ago!" Jin said as his transverse eye's pupils glowed brighter even though it was obvious that he was straining them to the limits. The Maqi within Jin shot out of his body and started to glow and the Pandas above began to change shape.

From the usual cute little Pandas they were, the silhouettes began to throw away the current costume set they were wearing to don on a very familiar coat which was iconic to one particular person. "I did not expect to follow you but honestly, you are the only person whose cultivation that I know could rival against Zeru's powers." Jin said to himself as he used a Panda Swipe to create a bit of distance so that he could activate the technique.

"I have no freaking idea what kind of style you use, but I am definitely copying your technique, Kraft." He took one deep breath before shouting out the words that could potentially save his skin against the enraged fake Zeru.. "Extreme Magic! Graveyard Combo Third Stage! The Land of Scars!" As the words came out of his mouth, Jin slammed the sword on the ground to activate the technique around him.

Tombstones raised from the ground, erupting from the depths of both fresh and decomposed bodies as Jin revealed his trump card against the faceless Zeru.

But his opponent was not giving him any time to breathe, much alone to retaliate against him. The first Lotus technique was something Jin had never seen before and since none of them ever shout their techniques out, he could only use his inverse eyes to predict the possible feints and attack pattern coming to him.

Unfortunately, Jin had decided not to evade the attack because of the long casting time for the Land Of Scars extreme magic spell. If he were to break his concentration right now, the magic would backfire against him and there was nothing he was able to do to match against Zeru.

Petals of the darkest lotus flew around Jin momentarily as if they were finding their position to target him. And since he was stationary throughout the entire time, it seemed as the lotus petals found their optimal spots before it swiftly pierce into Jin's body.

Needless to say, the Astral Panda Cultivator had already erected a mana barrier in hopes to delay the inevitable attack and it was successful in preventing the flurry of petal strikes ...for a few seconds. The mana barrier broke among the onslaught of the energised petals, only to encounter another layer of barrier once more.

"I am not that dumb to put one thick barrier to block your attacks! I remember seeing a pattern that your lower grade skills consisted of layered attacks to overwhelm the enemy." Jin smiled to himself, happy that he had guessed right.

Yet that confidence was also short lived as the storm of petals revealed Zeru personally rushing to strike the barrier down. With one slash, the series of layer barriers broke simultaneously, only allowing Jin a minute of a second to stop the slash with his left arm.

With Maqi infused to channel the extreme spell, Jin used his left hand as a shield to stop the attack as he continued to unleash his Maqi into the spell activation so that the Land Of Scars could be cast. The only problem (well, one of the few problems.) was that he had no idea how much Maqi he had to put out in order for the spell to work properly.

And since he had already been delayed by Faceless Zeru's attack, Jin had no idea how the extreme spell would work. The only consolidation was that his left hand was holding firmly into the Faceless Zeru's sword, preventing the fake master from executing his entire combo of strikes.

Yet again, he did not expect the Faceless Zeru to be reactive against his rash action. Compared to the other faceless soldiers he had encountered, Faceless Zeru felt as if he was living right inside this battlefield, fighting against Jin with all his might and wit. Does that mean Suzaku had always been holding back with her other soldiers in this particular aspect or it was just that Faceless Zeru was one of her trump cards to prevent Jin from completing the challenge that he had embarked on.

Still, Suzaku did not make a sound after her self declared pity story and continued to watch the duel in the endless battlefield. And just as Zeru emerged a wakizashi from the back of his palm, Jin's heart raced and unconsciously sent a rush of Maqi into the channelling circle beneath him, causing the extreme magic to finally activate.

The tombstones that were erected throughout the endless battlefield rumbled loudly and all the rotting corpses surrounding started to vibrate and resonate with the Maqi being poured out of the tombstones.

Unknowingly, Jin had used the Land of Scars spell to form an army of faceless armed zombies against Suzaku's faceless soldiers. Some of the zombies that had woken up instantly threw themselves towards Zeru, causing him to evade and retaliate, allowing Jin to have a quick breather.

Suzaku's stoic smile turned to a moment of shock as she saw the waves of zombies turning against the faceless soldiers. And to top it off, those zombies retained their ability and techniques which they had used previously against Jin and his clones. This meant that they were no ordinary undead that were meat foddors but a meat shield that could bite back (literally).

The new development somehow angered Suzaku and her hand lit up with chi as bright as the sun but suddenly, someone grabbed her wrist, stopping her from doing what she intended to perform.

"As per contract. No interference from you yourself for this trial. I already gave some leeway to you to send your champion in for the fight. But if you were to interfere with Jin's fight with Zeru, I would not hesitate to -"

"Those zombies! Those undead! You never told me he is a necromancer too! How dare you let a necromancer defile my battlefield!" Suzaku shouted at Ming who was obviously restraining her from entering the battle. "You remember that of all the people I hated, necromancers were at the top of the list for their insolence towards life."

"You saw that it was not him that did it but the technique he copied. Those zombies were just a byproduct of the magic he imitated. If you looked carefully, they were filled with his Maqi and being animated rather than given independence of their actions. They are puppets rather than the living dead." Ming said as he used his own chi to calm Suzaku down and cast a scan spell to show her what was going on with the soldiers.

"You did not state in the contract that there could not be any puppets for the fight. It just so happened he did have the power and ability to do so on a wide scale." Ming said he slowly pushed Suzaku back to the bench and asked her to watch the end.

"And trust me, despite his show of force, I believe your champion would emerge victorious." Ming remarked as he too sat beside her to watch the chaotic battlefield unfold even further as the animated faceless soldiers clashed with the ones under Suzaku's command.

Chapter 1213 – Endless Battlefield -Part 8

"You are trolling her, aren't you?" Byakko sent a telepathic message to Ming as he too walked up right towards him and sat right beside the bench. "What you said about necromancy and the magic spell which Jin did is basically the same concept."

"She was in rage, her mind would not be able to process everything. The most important issue was that she kept calm in this current fight. Won't want her to enter the ring because of some silly past she had."

Ming placed his hand on Bakkyo and stroked his back. The fur released a tingle of electricity as his hand clawed down his fur.

"Well, that was one of the major turning points why she never trusted humans ever again." Byakko said and side eyed Ming for a moment before focusing back at the match right in front of them. "With the exception of you I guess."

"What can I say? I am quite a charmer with girls of exceptional powers." Ming tried to contain his laughter but it caused Byakko to snort immediately at the reply.

"More like if you did not have me and the rest of the gang, you probably won't be able to convince her. You have much to be thankful for."

"The one who should be thanking all of you is Jin since he would be the one that would be inheriting your help." Ming said as he saw a misstep from Jin that nearly caused his life but a 'zombie' charged forward to mitigate the blow for him.

"Hence there's a saying that is as old as time. Parents will sacrifice anything and everything for their offspring but not the other way around." Byakko said as he was surprised how Jin was actually doing a follow up combo attack with one of the cultivator zombies to stop Faceless Zeru from activating his Lotus technique. Unfortunately, he did not prevail as Faceless Zeru was not only able to kill the zombie cultivator who charged in but also initiated his Advanced Lotus Technique which sprouted a series of vines with lotus blooming throughout the room.

This time around the Faceless Zeru did not care for friend or foe as his Advanced Lotus Technique exploded throughout his vicinity, killing a majority of the zombie cultivators as well as the faceless soldiers. Jin, on the other hand, hid behind one of the tombstones for cover while transferring more of his chi into it, forcing it to change its magic from zombie raising to a fire spewing cannon.

The wave of flames emerged from the tombstone in an attempt to burn the lotus flowers and while its effect was effective at the start, Faceless Zeru already had began his counter by sending out more of the lotus vines right towards Jin's location swiftly. The high velocity that the vines were moving was able to overcome the flames the tombstone was spewing and it went straight for Jin.

"Looks like it's the end for Jin. Once those vines grabbed him, the lotus blooming on the vines would cause him to die a thousand times." Suzaku relished his death for the 'sins' of defiling her endless battlefield regardless of Ming's explanation.

"I would not bet on that if I were you." Ming continued to keep Suzaku in check as he conjured a bottle of water and quietly drank a few sips before passing to Suzaku. She unknowingly picked it up and drank the entire bottle before burning it.

"She's literally burning with rage." Byakko saw the scene as though it was a warning to act when Ming gave the heads up but to his surprise, Jin's grandfather was rather calm about the current situation. "Do you want me to get Genbu to cool her down?"

"No worries about it. Let's enjoy the fight for now." Ming said as the climax came the vines swarming towards Jin suddenly got repelled. The tombstone that was initially spewing fire suddenly changed its

element to wind. It caused an accidental tornado inferno but the most important thing of all was that the vines were not able to reach Jin before anything bad could happen.

At the same time, Faceless Zeru flew right into the scene since he was sure that Jin was still within that tornado inferno until he found out that vines of the very same nature were shot out from the tornado too.

"Have you forgotten that I can copy skills?!" Jin said as the tornado dissipated and his sword had indeed came a bunch of vines going towards him and the panda silhouettes above him portrayed themselves sleeping in a flower bed of lotus with the exception of one of the smaller pandas playing at the top of the giant panda.

"Hah! You think Zeru would lose to an inferior copy of his skills?" Suzaku exclaimed, believing the end is nigh. However, as the vines approached Zeru, the portrayal of panda silhouettes somehow changed midway as the active smaller panda dived into the flowerbed causing a change in scene to be a bed of bellflowers instead.

Suzaku was vaguely confused at that point since she did not remember sending any faceless soldier with such a technique but Ming chuckled at Jin's creativity. He vaguely recalled from the constant probing of his memories that he had an active customer with the bellflower cultivation style. "Even without seeing with his transverse, does not mean he cannot replicate based on memories now that he learnt how to imitate styles with his Astral Pandas."

The technique which Jin released was ironic as the name attached to the bellflowers. The vines had a series of bells attached when the flowers bloomed when approaching Zeru. The systematic ringing of the bells somehow incapacitated Faceless Zeru disabling his movements and hence allowing the vines to pierce through Zeru.

Or..that was what Jin thought it was able to do. The faceless Zeru somehow managed to break the stun at the very last moment, forcing Jin to change his Maqi to command two of the vines to grab hold of his legs while the third to puncture it.. The rest were cut down mercilessly by the master swordsman but to be able to injure the Faceless Zeru was already a win in Jin's eyes as he charged forward, hoping to have a better chance against his current opponent.

Chapter 1214 – Endless Battlefield – Final (unedited)

"Ah, it's over already." Ming was secretly hoping that Jin was able to do more than injure the faceless Zeru in combat but it seems like his grandson was a tad too overconfident or perhaps tired that he made the mistake of charging towards Zeru.

In less than a blink of an eye, Zeru cut Jin up with another advanced lotus technique by summoning a storm of White lotus petals. They seemed harmless to begin with and Jin once again prepared a multilayer shield to prevent the attack but he did not know that the white lotus petal storm was a feint.

The Faceless champion swordsman had once again tricked Jin by inserting a trick within the white lotus petal storm as arrows of imbued chi pierced through the shields easily and straight in Jin's heart.

The battle instantly ended with the death of Jin with the chance of retaliation. Even his regeneration ability was able to kick in since the Faceless Zeru stabbed his sword right in the middle of Jin and a flurry of lotus petals rushed into the wound, cutting him up from inside out.

It's like a bloated rotting whale exploding once it reaches the shore. Once Suzaku confirmed the death of Jin, she smirked knowing that even though he was different initially, he was the same as every other soldier she had encountered in her lifespan.

Liars. Including the faceless master swordsman.

"I have seen enough and shall take my rest. Wake me up when he has passed all your challenges..." Suzaku said as her presence gradually disappeared from the wooden bench and Ming purposely sat aside to let Jin 'resurrect' back at his usual resting spot.

"So how? What was it like to fight against your master's younger self?" Ming said as he saw Jin gasping for breath the moment he came back to life.

"What the hell was that last move?! It's disgustingly crazy but a sure kill method." Jin said as he touched his entire body as if to make sure they were still intact from that advanced technique.

"Surely, he told you that he had fought against many assassins, assailants and many other cultivators to reach where he is right now. The System did not pick some lousy candidate to be your bellator." Ming chuckled when he saw Jin panicking for a moment.

"Yeah and he did say his lotus moves were stuff he copied and modified to suit his own style." Jin replied and Ming nodded his head, citing that Jin was on his way to be the same as him.

"Your previous technique where you use the bellflowers and lotus techniques to combine them into one new move already indicated to me that you could be something like Zeru... although each of us have our own opinions." Ming slowly turned his head towards Byakko and the white tiger lazily nodded his head.

"Yeah, if you leave it to Genbu, he would grudgingly say that you are centuries behind Zeru." Byakko said as he noticed how the battlefield died down to an eerie quiet decomposing wasteland.

"I probably say a century or two if you work hard on it."

"Are you kidding me? How can I even live that long? Just because I have been empowered by the System does not mean that I am some celestial being." Jin said as he arched his back a little to stretch.

"Yea, I concur too. You do not have such a luxury in terms of time but still, it's already a miracle you can get Byakko and Genbu by yourself this quickly. I honestly thought you would take years or even decades to have them join you. But it seems my plans have derailed so much because of your unexpected potential." Ming said, surprising Jin that this was supposed to be a long ass endeavour for him to grow.

"But right now, even with your enhanced cultivation as well as potential, you are still no way near Zeru's mastery and fervent dedication to his style." Ming shook his head, wondering if he had made the right choice to expose him to Suzaku.

"Why? Are you thinking of allowing him to postpone Suzaku's trial and head for Seiryu's?" Byakko queried.

"Well, it's not exactly the best idea but it's better to skip this and come back to it later. Right now at his level, there is no way he can win this even if he were to become a Grade 20 cultivator." Ming answered and Jin was there, merely listening to their monotonous discussion on what they should do for him.

"I am guessing if I return to the battlefield, I would be facing Zeru again? Is that why you brought me here for some debrief or to have a time out?" Jin decided to make them stay on topic.

"More or less. He won't become out until you defeat a bunch of those soldiers once more. I believed Suzaku had purposely made it in such a way that you cannot pass my trial until you defeat Zeru." Ming told Jin about the dead end he would encounter. "Ideally, it is for you to learn more of Zeru's technique so that you could counter him but from what I have known... that's nearly impossible."

"Because he can swiftly change the flow of battle to his favour because of the experience he accumulated throughout the years?" Jin asked and Ming nodded his head.

"No one is ever more serious against that champion of hers. Even I had to cheat a little with the aid of the other cardinal beasts to clear the trial. Previously, I had to fight for a year continuously."

"Oh is that why I did not see you for a year and you passed me to Uncle Fred?" Jin started to connect the dots to his old past.

"Erm...hmm yeah. You could say that. I thought you were too young to remember that." Ming said with furrowed eyebrows. "In any case, you could give it a try and learn the rest of the faceless soldiers but I doubt it would be any better until you solve this high wall. Else, we would just switch the trials a little ...though having Suzaku by yourself would make things a tad easier for the rest of the trials."

"Yeah, and it's possible that you can break the grade 14 barrier into 15 much easily if you clear Suzaku's trial." Byakko remarked and it dawned upon Jin that he had forgotten about the infamous Grade 15 was considered as the starting line to be the strongest cultivators within the country.

"I will just give it a few more times before I see if I should give up.." Jin said as he stood up slowly and took a deep breath before entering the fray again.

Chapter 1215 – Data Collection

As Ming had predicted, the faceless Zeru did emerge when Jin was closer to the end of the challenge. That one week survival challenge had somewhat become a recurring nightmare as Jin faced the younger Zeru in his prime.

Even as he wondered about his connection to Suzaku, there was no denying that Zeru was not a foe he could contend with at the current moment. All the copying and imitation of skills from other faceless soldiers might have helped to mitigate the bulk of the problem but when push comes to shove, the faceless Zeru always prevail.

Thus, Jin had decided to take a timeout by forcing himself out of his subconscious and return back to the real world. He was slightly groggy from the forced re entry but nothing he could not handle. Yet, as time

went by, he started to feel that his muscles were feeling sore and it was not particularly normal for him to experience such soreness.

"System, mind doing a quick body check on me? I'm feeling under the weather for some reason." Jin requested the System, to which it replied that everything was normal.

"The System had been monitoring you since the start of your cultivation cycle and the reason you were sore was that the System had thoroughly captured each and every electrical pulse from your brain and to the rest of your body." The System answered with an almost chirpy tone to its monotonous dialogue.

"A proper short rest interval should be more than sufficient once the regeneration inscription on your body kicks in." The System added.

"So I am guessing you are able to collect, collate and compile all the nonsensical stuff that I did when I was in my dreamy state?" Jin asked as he reached out to his phone to check the app that the System had installed previously.

Previously, it was rather empty with the exception of his Astral Panda Cultivation Style as part of the collection. But when Jin opened the app, he was pleasantly surprised by the list of cultivation styles being added into the fray.

"Wow, and these are detailed ...way too much information with regards to the cultivation style. Is this even real?" He was gawking through the list as he could vaguely remember using them against his opponents. But everything changed when he selected one of the cultivation styles and the technique was broadcast with a digital panda doing those movements. At that moment, Jin knew exactly what the technique was and could even recall the feeling of that particular technique.

"Has User ever wondered how you were able to say the names of the cultivation styles if what the User said is true about his challengers were faceless?"

The System poised the question to Jin and obviously, he was oblivious to it as the System rambled on stating that Jin had previously touched on those manuals before and his inverse eyes had pulled out that information from the cobwebs of his brain 'cabinet' for Jin to dictate the names out.

"Therefore, User should be grateful for the System to push you to read or at least glance through the cultivation materials at least once." The System was touting its own capabilities to the user as if it was selling something to him.

"Yeah, yeah. How is the thing we gave Lynn to do?" Jin yawned at the System's own self praise and wanted to know how Lynn was doing with the task he gave her.

"Sub System User Lynn has proven to be rather proficient in the said task." The System continued to reply to Jin regardless of his attitude towards it.

"Oh? How so?" Jin changed the app in his phone, allowing the phone to open a holographic screen for the System to portray its information out.

"She had enlisted the help of Senior Panda Executive Kong Rong and his agency for aid and ever since they met three days ago, the duo were chasing after a few possible leads on the current predicament."

"You mean what I mentioned could be true? That the Banned Emperor might be involved in the current symposium? But if that's the case, what is their end goal?" Jin queried as the System kept flashing new information on the holographic screen.

"The national symposium for Dungeon Suppliers usually draws quite a crowd mainly because they showcased prototypes in the scenes of Dungeon Suppliers. And with regards to that, people had been very, and the System must emphasize, very curious about the hardware used for User's store." The System started without answering Jin's question and keeping him in suspense.

"So much so that the committee had decided to put you as the backup site so that they could use that as an excuse to bring the crowd to your shop."

"Wait... a minute. So, no Banned Emperor or whatsoever? It's more like an inspection and getting more details about my hardware and how I operate them?" Jin asked and the System acknowledged. User had previously given an answer to allow the store to be the backup site but the System and Lynn had already sent them a letter recommending a change in location."

"Oh...that's a bummer," Jin answered, knowing that the System did not wish to be probed by anybody and having a celestial entity controlling the shop would just be one shit show to another. "But I believed they would say no if what you said to you was true. They would be dying to check out our tech."

"Correct." Lynn entered the conversation by coming into Jin's room with a stack of papers right in her hands. "In normal circumstances, nobody would be able to overturn the Symposium committee's decision because a couple of them are high ranking people with a reasonable amount of economic power in their hands but they did not know about one particular thing."

"We are the newest emerging Royal Zodiac Clan and Kong Rong's protection scheme has come in handy in rejecting one of the biggest committees in China." Lynn smiled as she showed the papers to Jin, stating that the rejection of the backup site was approved. The Royal Zodiac's Dragon Clan's stamp was there as well along with a stamp that Jin never saw before. It had two Chinese words 'Panda' in a black and white fusion ink which felt oddly unique.

"That is the ancient stamp of the Panda Clan. To be able to use it once more brings much joy to the System." The collective entity said but Lynn's face turned bitter.

"However, there's some bad news along with this." Lynn did not mince her words as she said while having direct eye contact.. "The Symposium had requested us to be out of it."

Chapter 1216 – Fk The Committee**

"What?" Jin stared blankly at Lynn as she revealed how petty the Dungeon Supplier Symposium Committee was.

"They allowed the rejection of the backup site and in return, they requested us not to show our faces in the event." Lynn repeated once more and Jin was exasperated. Did that mean all those efforts creating the Virtual Reality Instance had been meaningless?

"I did say that it was unfair and there was nothing in the terms and conditions that made us unable to continue with the participation even after rejecting to be the secondary site of the Symposium. They obviously wanted to perform a power play against us and Kong Rong said it's either to join them up again or leave. He did recommend leaving though since he reminded me how he had gone through all those trouble coordinating and ensuring there was a way out for us." Lynn could visibly see Jin's frustration but there was nothing much she could do either.

"I get what Kong Rong's underlying recommendation meant as well. If we were to enter the Symposium, it's not just wasting his efforts to get us out but it also meant a victory for the committee for the ability to oppose the almighty Royal Zodiac Dragon Clan. To them, it was a double win and we would be at the losing end." Jin nodded his head with defeat for a moment but Lynn sat beside him and tried to cheer him up.

"Then, let's do the obvious. We create our own Symposium!" Lynn remarked and Jin stared at Lynn momentarily before stifling his laughter. "We do not have time for that! We still have to fight against the Demon Rats and there is not enough time to compete with the National Dungeon Supplier Symposium against them. Not to mention, we do not have sufficient content for a proper symposium. There's no people joining-" Jin suddenly stopped at his tracks and forgot he had a business partner. A major player in the field.

"Yeap. I can already see that your head is churning ideas. You must be thinking of Ke Loong, right?" Lynn started to grin and Jin could never notice Lynn could be cunning in her own special way too.

"I give Ke Loong a call and- What time is it right now?" Jin said as he checked his time and subsequently tried his luck in contacting Ke Loong.

"Yo, Mr Panda Boss. What's up? Oh wait before that, is the rumour true? I heard from a few of my contacts in the Symposium that you are leaving the event right before it started." Ke Loong said, which caused Jin to be surprised that news spread fast.

"Yeah. Sadly." Jin eventually laid out the story to Ke Loong and he too sighed at the bad news.

"Hmm yea. This is not the first time the committee has used its powers to force people to do their own way. I mean it could be beneficial for the smaller shops who used this particular platform to showcase their instances and gimmicks so that more people would not only patronise them but hopefully be able to join the National Dungeon Supplier Associations to get more contacts, discounts and perks. Obviously, those participating required money to join and the Association fees are getting more and more atrocious."

"Ah... so it's something like a business group, a whole bunch of companies under one umbrella, that kind of stuff?"

"Yeah, I think they are hoping to coerce you to join them so that they can get you to share your tech, which is a natural no no. Most stores and dungeon suppliers are unable to get out of that vicious erm...predatory business tactics once they attend the Symposium. You were lucky you could be out of it." Ke Loong said Jin heard that he was talking to his secretary as well.

"That is why, I am asking you if you are able to make it for my Symposium instead. Well, maybe not a full Symposium but a series of events and with a festival kind of vibes. But I understand if you have obligations to fulfil for the National Symposium-"

"I AM IN!" Ke Loong suddenly shouted and was excited for Jin's own personal expo. Even his secretary was caught aback by his reaction but Ke Loong did not care. "What are you exactly planning? I can totally pull out of the Symposium if you want me to."

"Are you serious? Sea Mesh is a major player in the Dungeon Supplier Community. If you pull out, there will be waves of questions, backlash as well as ...ohh." Jin too realised what Ke Loong was aiming for.

"Yeap, if you are thinking the same as I was. The media coverage would be rather extensive and let's just say it's fun to flip a middle finger at the National Symposium Committee." Ke Loong said as he never had such fun for a long time.

"And the media will be curious to see how the up and coming major player in Dungeon Supplier Tech supports one of Shenzhen's latest dungeon supplier players who had been in the news for some time."

"Also, I will suggest fully implementing your Panda Inc company and showcase all the stuff you have in full force to make your app go nationwide. Your food delivery services, your comprehensive dungeon related goods etc. From what I know, you have quite a few decent companies living in your 'treehouse'. It's time to make use of their connections and push Panda Inc out."

"I see... And if I can time it right, I might be able to obtain some leverage in terms of money and influence before Kong Rong's protection bubble ceases." Jin considered Ke Loong's opinions for the future of his store too.

"Yeap. And we can start popping up additional stores once we are financially stable and create a chain franchise. I can aid you with that and show those rascals that we do not need to be part of some lame association to prosper." Ke Loong said and Jin could see where the CEO was coming from.

Not to mention, it was a win win for Sea Mesh too. The sales of Virtual Reality Headsets would be coming from this and from what Jin said, there would be a subscription service and thus an extension of Sea Mesh workers would be part of this major opportunity, allowing them to grow too.

"Then what are we waiting for? Let's get together soon and start planning.." Jin smiled as he thanked Ke Loong for his impromptu advice.

Chapter 1217 – Departing From The Symposium

As soon as the conversation (well, not THAT soon.), Sea Mesh had made a public statement announcing that it would be stepping out of the National Dungeon Supplier Symposium, causing a series of media blowouts that prompted the community to find out what was happening. Some spectators and critics who were more perceptive noticed that the Sea Mesh left the Symposium at the same time when Dungeons and Pandas 'involuntarily' left the event.

Seeing how the store had been garnering attention steadily for the past few months especially with its latest dungeon instance streaming, people were anticipating there would be some hype in the latest Symposium event when it agrees to participate. Thus, sales to the National Dungeon Supplier Symposium had reached a new high. Tickets were sold at record breaking pace after Dungeons and Pandas had announced that they were joining the Symposium but sadly the Committee did not attribute the high sales because of Jin's store.

They were sitting on their high horse thinking that people had renewed interest in the dungeon instance scene. Neither did they know about the connections Jin had with Sea Mesh so when they kicked Jin out of the Symposium, they did not expect such a backlash of having the popular company that dealt with Dungeon Supplier tech walk out through the front door with Jin.

Not only that, but Ke Loong had also managed to pull a few strings and caused two minor sponsors to break their contract with the National Dungeon Supplier Symposium, provoking even more heat for the Symposium committee to be in the spotlight.

Later, it did not take long for insider info to emerge that Dungeons and Pandas had been forcibly coerced to be their backup site. And as the insiders had stated, upon knowing the true objectives of the Symposium, the said Dungeon Supplier immediately wanted out. That was when the 'great walk out' of the Symposium started but people were suspicious why Dungeons and Pandas was so secretive of their technology until more breaking news came out through the net and other media streams.

"While we were unable to reach the store owner, multiple unnamed sources had indeed confirmed that Xie Jin, Dungeon Supplier for Dungeons and Pandas is the descendent of the long lost Royal Zodiac line of the Panda Clan." The anchorman said in the mainstream media during the evening news. It was minutes after the broadcast, Jin had sent an official announcement through the Pandamonium that he was indeed the last descendent of the Royal Zodiac Panda Clan.

Instead of fear, wrath or even distrust which Jin had anticipated, the internet was bustling with a load of questions for him and some were forming conspiracy theories about how the last remaining Royal Zodiac Clan suddenly decided to show his face.

Yet one thing was for sure. With that announcement, nobody could deny that his technology was something special and hiding behind the title of a Royal Zodiac would force people to blatantly ignore it. After all, each Royal Zodiac has its own secrets which allowed them to be the powers they are now in China.

Jin, however, reiterated that leaving Symposium was the only choice left for him with all roads of compromise closed. Thus, with a heavy heart, he left the Symposium and decided to create a major event to showcase the things he intended to release during the Symposium. He also added that Sea Mesh would be joining in the event which instantly prompted a series of refunds for the Symposium.

Naturally, the Symposium support team was not able to answer the massive influx of queries as well as the demands for refunds. Shortly after Jin's announcement, the Symposium committee eventually stood their ground and stated that no refunds would be given out since the event was approaching and the money in those ticket sales had already been used to fund the event.

Obviously, they were burning the bridges between their customers even more by standing their ground but because of that, Lynn had already come out with a manipulative PR move which even Jin was amazed by. They decided to lowball the Symposium even further by stating in their upcoming event that those who had bought the National Dungeon Supplier Symposium tickets were eligible for a free entry into Jin's latest major event.

"In addition, I would like to add that you can upgrade your free entry to a high tier ticket at a cheaper price so that it would be more of a bargain because of the goodies that were prepared along with it. If you are a patron of Dungeons and Pandas, you surely understand the value of the higher tier tickets that I had always offered. Thus, for those who I had offered free entry, please do consider supporting when the tier list is officially out!" Jin wrote in a tweet in his social network system which had led to a series of praise and criticism.

However, Jin did not care too much about what the people had criticised since most of it were from hardcore supporters of the Symposium, stating that how Jin had used his departure as bait for attention for his own personal event. And for Jin's supporters, they argued that he had every right to do so since the Symposium was the one that pulled a fast one at Jin despite already knowing that he was part of the new Royal Zodiac Clan.

Initially, some were doubtful whether Jin could even survive after the public announcement of him being the newest Royal Zodiac Clan but most of those doubts were crushed when leaks came out with people posting how Jin had annihilated the Tiger Clan's subsidiaries with just a handful of people during the Chinese New Year. And those leaks even stated that Jin was not even showing out his full strength against the Royal Zodiac Tiger Clan.

With this series of announcements, more eyes were looking at Jin and while the Dungeon Supplier did not fully expect such a scenario, he was at least well equipped to handle any sort of repercussion.. Surely, from this moment on, it would be tough and the Astral Panda Cultivator would not have it any other way.

Chapter 1218 – PandaVerse

"Hey Jin, looks like you are finally out of the closet." Kong Rong said as he personally paid a visit to Jin's store. He was invited to one of the premium carriages of the Restaurant Train Instance.

"You could say you have a hand in this matter too." Ke Loong commented as he poured a glass of beer to Kong Rong.

"Hey Bro. You know I cannot drink during work time." Kong Rong said as he frowned a little towards his buddy.

"Loosen up a bit. You can always drink your beloved wife's tea back in the car. Just one with us to celebrate the occasion. Besides, you and I know this is one of your favourites. I purposely went all the way to a nearby supermarket to get it!" Ke Loong said as he pat Kong Rong's back.

"Well, that nearby supermarket is merely a few floors down. And the NPC assistants could even get it for you free of charge." Kong Rong remarked as he picked up the glass and chugged it down.

"Thanks for coming to this fairly impromptu meeting. And once again, thank you Kong Rong. If not for you, I probably might not be able to come out of the Symposium alive." Jin nodded his head and drank along with them.

"You got to thank your new pretty girlfriend. She was the one who was pulling all the strings from the back. If not for her, I probably would not be of much use." Kong Rong said as he raised his glass towards Lynn.

"Please, Kong Rong. Your team has been such a great help. If not for them, I would not be able to make heads or tails of the situation." Lynn refused the compliment as she asked her peggies to serve the meal.

"Welp, they are next door having the blast of their life eating the premium choices for an unlimited time tonight. If none of them are drunk, none of them are going home. That is more to thank for the encouragement and reward you had given to my team." Kong Rong said and Jin instantly looked at Lynn.

"You are footing the bill for pushing all the work to us." Lynn poked Jin when their eyes locked and the boyfriend nodded his head reluctantly.

"Now that the exchange of gratitudes is out of the way. Jin, your plans?" Kong Rong asked since he needed to keep a closer eye on Jin's actions especially after the entire few days' worth of media fiasco. Various clans not excluding the Royal Zodiacs were asking the Dragon Clan for more information on Jin and his Royal Zodiac roots. Some even asked if he was even the original descendant but most of the questions were taken care of swiftly with Kong Rong's grandmother making an official statement.

People can doubt the truth, half truths and fabricated truths in the media but no one can deny the reputation, prestige and most importantly the standing of the record keeper in the Royal Zodiac Dragon Clan. With her announcement stating that Jin's was indeed the last descendent of the Royal Zodiac Panda Clan, it quickly solidified his position to be the official clan leader of the 13th Royal Zodiac.

Obviously, some people in fact, a large number of people were unhappy with the emergence of a new Royal Zodiac Clan. Twelve of such clans had already taken the bulk of China's economy under their control after a long exhausting political tussle among themselves. And now with Jin's clan popping out of nowhere, they were not willing to excuse themselves to give the newcomer any space.

But with Jin's track record of beating the Royal Zodiac Rat Clan's triad boss, and even causing the sons of the Tiger Clan to be in hospital for two whole weeks, the other clans knew the Panda Clan came out in the open prepared. Still, being prepared to be in the open and lasting long enough through the years would be a different issue.

And that was what they were about to discuss today. Jin's creation of Panda Inc would be the most ideal way of standing up against the major clans and their corporations. Naturally, he would like to have everything concentrated on the Tree Mall since he could make nearly an unlimited amount of instances, housing people and companies all at the same time, and thus enabling the Tree Mall to be an ecosystem that can survive by itself without relying on any external sources.

Even though he had the Virtual Reality business all set up, he was thinking of expanding what he had in Pandapolis like the farming sector to complement it. This was because he wanted technology and entrepreneurs to grow under his wing like how Yu Xiang, the daughter of the local Chinese Medicine store recreating potions the System had bought in the black market.

Right now, with her formula and the subsequent refined versions were selling like hotcakes within Jin's dungeon store as well as in the black market. Obviously, the production had gone large scale with Pandapolis' industrial sector at hand. So, it was the same concept he wished to apply for other sectors, hoping they could create something unique or special, giving Jin the edge over his competitors.

However, Ke Loong had told Jin to stay grounded and not to be too ambitious. "Even if you have all those ideals, those things would not work without talents, manpower, resources and time."

"Technically, he has already had all of those. But what Ke Loong says is true. Timing is important, if you show all your cards in one go and at the wrong time, you won't make much."

"That's why the event that you are going to show is important. Continue to focus on your dungeon supplier job. I remember you told us about the Farming World or something like that, right? You are going to do some big invasion. Do that and in the sidelines, promote your virtual reality as a prototype. My company would then hype it up from there. By the way, any name for the event yet? If not, I would like to recommend some ideas." Ke Loong rambled on as he munched on the delicious food the moment the peggies placed it down on the table.

"I do. Sweet and easy. It's PandaVerse 1..0" Jin said and the rest looked as if they were stifling their giggles with food.

Chapter 1219 – Extra: Dangerous Small Talk

"Drop that 1.0, once we do have a second year anniversary then we might be consider PandaVerse 2.0." Kong Rong commented which Ke Loong wholeheartedly agreed to.

"Hmm, alright. It does sound premature to add a number to it and that will make people think that otherwise." Jin nodded his head while thoughts were already gushing through his mind.

"Don't you think that PandaVerse is a better name for that Virtual Reality instance you created?" Ke Loong said and Kong Rong suddenly perked up, asking about the progress of the Virtual Reality instance.

"Why? I did not expect you to be a fan of this kind of stuff." Ke Loong remarked but Kong Rong shook his head and his index finger shaking towards him.

"If what Jin did was as what he had explained to me previously, I might want to employ it as training for my agents." Kong Rong replied.

"You sure it's just training?" Jin smirked as if he knew the military application of using the Virtual Reality Instance.

"Fine. You got me there. If Jin can make a miniaturised encrypted version of the headset, I might be able to use it for secret communications. Obviously, there would be some drawbacks such as paralysing the agent to send the information. But if my agent is in a secure location and what Jin had said about the

security and responsiveness of the headset was true, it would still be a fairly reliable gadget to be used in the field."

"Welp, goes to show that whatever you create, the military and internal affairs still have a way to militarise it for their own sake. Do you still wish to continue with that portal project? I had managed to salvage all of them and none of the parts were missing or tampered. Most of them believed the previous operation that used those portal gates was a coordinated usage of portal magic." Ke Loong said as he too had dabbled in military contracts to keep Jin's portal gadgets as a secret for now.

"The System had indeed retrieved back all of the portal machines and they are currently in storage. All of them had been analysed and there was no misuse or tampering done." The System stated and Ke Loong shook his head.

"That is exactly what I said."

"The System believed its authority was superior to Senior Panda Executive Ke Loong. Thus, the repetition of the sentence carried its weight." The System replied and Jin merely told Ke Loong to shake it off and not let the matter linger.

"Anyways, yes. While the mass production of the Virtual Reality Headset has already started, we are still making some adjustments to ensure that the gadget can work in a heavy traffic setting. If you want, I can get those headsets and let your agents give it a try. After all, you brought your entire department here." Jin said with a sour tune in his words.

"Not everyone, Ryuli isn't here and it seems she was complaining on the phone about it as well." Kong Rong chuckled as if they always had such bad timing with each other.

"How so?" Jin questioned and Kong Rong only stated that there was some overseas matter in North Korea which she had to attend to.

"North Korea?" Jin and Ke Loong had their mouths wide open as they heard that the place was in eternal lockdown with no information nor people coming in or out of the area. The lockdown was mainly due to a bad mix of nuclear power and magic causing a major cataclysm that caused the entire North Korea to be some wasted Badlands. But to the observers' surprise, the country itself had somehow managed to create a next generation high tech barrier which was capable of housing that cataclysm within their own country. The only drawback was that nobody could go in nor out to the area...but that was the official report, the lies which the media had to feed the masses.

China, Russia and South Korea all had secret route access to North Korea which none of their western allies or counterparts had known. After all, creating such a barrier with no in or out would be self destructing for the country too. China itself sent aid on a regular basis to their underground city in exchange for experimenting in the cataclysmic wasteland.

"Experiments?" Jin asked and Kong Rong explained that there were monsters within North Korea's vicinity which were extremely dangerous. The radiation from the nuclear cataclysm changed their forms and build, allowing them to survive in that wasteland. Due to the drastic changes in their DNA, it allowed them to take in the constant wild magic that had been generated from the cataclysm. And that also meant a good experimental ground for the military to conduct exercises that were illegal in the eyes of the public.

"Being one of Dragon Clan's best agents, Ryuli was selecteda better word would be handpicked to be part of the experiment. After all, the Banned Emperor incident not only shook you guys but forced the government to look at alternative weapons against demons."

"Shouldn't JODE take care of this instead? I mean, they are THE Demon Exorcists." Ke Loong said and Jin also nodded in agreement.

"You already saw how the demons tore apart not only the guards, but the Royal Zodiac Horse Military Platoon into shreds. If our government does not find any other ways to defeat such threats, the other countries will get it done first and we might not have an edge should our adversaries decide to employ the very same terror method against us."

"Sounds way too complicated. You make it feel as if the Banned Emperor had been backed by military organisations from other countries." Jin said but it caused Kong Rong to stare hard and long at Jin before he decided to open his mouth.

"The world is not as simple as you think, my dear Panda Lord. Trust me, when I said you had protection. I did not mean just physical protection but external influences too. Politics is a game that everyone loses except for the one who can prepare and counter anybody in all sorts of scenarios." Kong Rong said and in confidence, the Dragon Clan Internal Affairs Agent shared a tidbit which would normally get his head chopped off if found out.

However, this was who he had pledged to and served for.. The Panda Lord deserves to know some rotten truth of the world he was living in.

Chapter 1220: PandaVerse Discussion

"Enough of that, any more of these leaks and we will really be potential targets for the internal affairs to look at us." Ke Loong said as he stopped Kong Rong from saying too much.

"Not to worry. The System is capable of washing your memories to a clean slate. If the User or Senior Executive Ke Loong requires the information, the System would provide the necessary data back for review."

"Are you really sure you want to let the System hear all your 'encrypted' information?" Jin emphasised how the System was a stalker who will always deploy extreme means to eavesdrop.

"Honestly, that would be the most ideal. If we ever lost any agents in the process, the System would definitely pick it up for us to follow up. It's a win-win situation for me if the System could also provide backup immediately to the site or even extract my agent out of the sticky problem they would be in." Kong Rong replied, stating that it was a small price to pay for the System's assistance.

"That would definitely cost a fair sum of compensation depending on the situation." The System did not seem to reject the idea, knowing that it was the best way to earn money and learning the volatile situation outside of this store.

"Ah whatever. you know the risk using the System, so it's your call. Anyways, do you want to give it a try? The Virtual Reality Instance? I believe I have a sufficient number of sets for your entire department to try it out. Just don't stay too long in the avatar customisation menu." Jin asked Kong Rong but he kindly rejected the offer.

“Nah, I’d rather keep the surprise when your PandaVerse festival arrives.” Kong Rong remarked until a hand wrapped around his shoulders.

“Bro. When was the last time you and your crew had some fun together?” Ke Loong asked and Kong Rong tried to think hard but it seems there was no answer to that question.

“Besides, don’t tell me that your entire department would have this kind of free time with all the cases that you are handling.”

“That is true. They all had always wanted to try Jin’s dungeon store and never had the chance until now.” Kong Rong nodded his head in agreement.

“Am I right? Jin, just boot it up and we will give them a tour they will never forget!” Ke Loong said which caused Jin to chuckle.

“What happened to discussing about our new Panda Inc and the upcoming PandaVerse festival preparations?” Jin queried and Ke Loong immediately brushed it off and stated that they could do all those on the Virtual Reality Instance too.

“Alright. System, you heard our executives.” Jin wanted to give the System a few strings of orders but the System interrupted and said everything had already been prepared for them.

“The System had also the Restaurant Train to run through an underground tunnel with Yun assigned at the station waiting to escort them to the said instance for them to try out the Virtual Reality instance.” The System stated that this would then allow the trio to talk more over the issue at hand and give everyone the time to finish up their food or else, Lynn would not be too pleased with leftovers. (Kong Rong even told his colleagues beforehand to clear the dishes or ask for the remaining food to be packed as takeaways.)

“Well, if the System had planned our night’s itinerary, there is no reason to reject it. Let’s finish what we began.” Kong Rong commented and he restarted the conversation asking how Jin was with the Farming World.

“Behind the scenes, we have bought sufficient equipment and also trained men for this fight. We have a fairly capable militia from the Southern Region as well as some soldiers from the Dungeon World.” Jin reported.

“Some? From what I heard from you before, the Farming World’s Northern Region was infested with thousands of rats.” Kong Rong was concerned whether Jin was indeed ready.

“We are in the process of getting more to join with the allure of money and some prestige but they have their own problems to tend to.” Jin told them how the Seven Cities were trying to get their independence from the Church of the Afterlife as well as the internal strife after the military rebelled against their local government.

When Kong Rong listened to Jin’s short summary, he immediately understood since Earth’s political history was way more brutal and harsh than what was happening in the Dungeon World.

“Qiu Yue also managed to gather a few of her friends and we are testing out a telecommunications command outpost. They would think it’s a new sort of game but they are actually commanding my minions and monsters in real time.”

“Won’t that complicate your commands even further?” Ke Loong asked and Jin could not give a straight answer.

“There are too many hideouts where the Demon Rats are hiding and I do not think the System is advanced enough to provide strategic advice to my monsters. Besides, it’s not total command and control. The minions are sentient enough to know if it is a bad strategy or not.” Jin replied while picking up his drink to quench his thirst.

“Ah, so deployment of these ‘strategic advisors’ is just to increase efficiency. If that’s the case, do you want some of my men? It will no doubt give them some experience in commanding for future operations.”

“Lol, so you want to see whether the gamer peeps would fare better than your trained officers?” Ke Loong asked which Kong Rong nodded with some excitement in his tone.

“Hahah, I could look into that and the more people, the better. We might have a basic picture of how the rats are operating but without eyes on the ground, there is no way we can compensate without a cool head and wit.” Jin liked the idea as well while they continued to discuss how to integrate the Farming World’s situation as a major event for the PandaVerse Festival.