

## Dungeon S 181

### Chapter 181 Dungeon Core

The remaining Minotaurs stopped fighting against Jin's monsters and both sides respected the ceasefire and an understanding was reached after a fortress wide announcement was given. The losses were quite insignificant on Jin's side as compared to Moloch's but it was still eating up a fairly substantial amount of Jin's wallet.

The system calculated that it would roughly need 2000 dungeon dollars for the loss of zombies and the werejackals. There were also some injuries incurred by a number of other monsters, including all of Mr Derpy's wounds. All those were included in the recovery costs calculated by the system.

Jin once asked Yun why Milk couldn't just heal them such that they would incur fewer recovery expenses and the system stated that even if Milk was able to heal them, she would need to use quality catalysts as healing materials and they cost money. Unfortunately, Milk had to agree with the system on this one and acknowledge that healing monsters were slightly different from healing humans since her healing magic was catered for humans.

"Heh, but humans are monsters in the eyes of other species." Jin rolled his eyes at the ridiculous reasoning the system gave and guessed it all came down to more money that the system could leech from Jin.

Meanwhile, Moloch and Jin gathered all the monsters around the throne room and they explained the current situation to the remaining Minotaurs, whom immediately assured their lord that they would still lay down their life for Moloch even if he were to be captured by Jin.

"Wow, they are surprisingly loyal to you even after what you put them through." Jin casually said and Moloch scoffed at him.

"What do you mean?! The costumes were of SUPERIOR quality! Look at how poor I am, what do you think caused this?!" Moloch's man puppet posed angrily with his arms folded.

"Erm...technically, you forced your own ideas upon them. Now it makes me wonder if you would really be a good fortress lord." Jin suddenly had his reservations and Moloch panicked a little. However, his underlings suddenly came forward to Jin and helped their lord out.

"Our Lord might be eccentric regarding the costumes part but he really did go to great lengths to help us!" One of the remaining Fanatic Minotaurs shouted.

"I too have to admit that Lord Moloch did whatever he could to aid us. Minotaurs in the Dungeon World are considered as mere muscle heads with no magic abilities. We can't breathe flames like dragons and we cannot grow any larger like giants. Our movements are not exactly the most agile no matter how much we train, meaning we can barely keep up with a high level assassin, much less beat one. Hence, most dungeon fortresses only put us as front liners and nothing more. Lord Moloch took us in when nobody wanted us." Sebastias pitched in her own opinion regarding Moloch.

"Having a heart of gold doesn't exactly mean that he is competent in administration... but oh well, at least he had a conscience and a desire to carve out a place of his own." Jin thought to himself and somehow he felt that Yun was laughing at him.

"What's the matter, Yun?" Jin asked in his thoughts.

"Nothing much." Yun did not bother to explain herself.

"So, shall we get started?" Lord Moloch kneeled in front of Jin as if he was waiting for an imminent execution. Only then, Jin took out his phone and knocked the phone against Moloch's head. There was no killing needed since the monster was willing to be captured on its own accord and the phone absorbed the essence of Lord Moloch immediately.

As expected, the entire fortress shook as if it was crying over the loss of its owner and from the throne room, the gigantic minotaur stone statue looked at Jin before it shot out a fairly large metallic ball at the throne chair, causing it to be destroyed.

Jin immediately summoned Moloch out along with his man puppet and Moloch commanded the man puppet to hold him up so that he could initiate the dungeon core process. At the same time, Jin summoned every single monster he had in his possession. He did not worry about the potential loss of monsters in this incoming guardian fight. The rewards offered by the system were far greater than any mission he had ever done before, making it a worthy investment.

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Completion of the mission will allow the User to earn the following:

Increase in current Store Rank.

License to build a store in the Dungeon Town Fortress.

Dungeon Town Fortress to be established as a "Defend the Fort" Emergency Raid Instance.

Ability to transfer customers to Dungeon Town Fortress in case of Monster Raids.

A Sum of 100,000 Dungeon Dollars

More details will be available upon completion.

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If what Moloch said was true and the results of the guardian fight was a measure of the resources they would be getting, Jin definitely would go all in.

"I'm ready," Jin said to Moloch and everyone behind them was nervous about what was going to take place. The man puppet brought the demon Minotaur plushie closer to the core and the plushie moved its hand to activate it.

A bright light shone from the core and a loud booming screech came from above. A tremendously menacing behemoth magically appeared from the ceiling and decided to crash itself into the crowd in front of the throne.

Jin saw what was coming and unhesitatingly unsummoned every monster as fast as he could, preventing the behemoth from destroying his 'army' of monsters.

Unfortunately, the minotaurs that were not captured by Jin were completely obliterated and the impact from the crash sent almost everyone flying into the walls of the spacious throne room.

Even the solid stone walls of the throne room were barely standing from the attack of the behemoth. It roared once more and the smoke that accompanied the crash was dispelled almost instantly.

It was then Jin was able to witness the looks and ferocity of the dungeon core guardian. It's beautiful black stone skin. Its fangs that surprisingly complemented its bull head created a fantasy monster from Jin's darkest nightmares. Its legs, both front and hind, had spikes attached, ready to be shot out at a moment's notice to counter any attacks aimed at its legs.

Its defining feature though, was its metal like hair mane started from his head and grew all the way down its back. It looked like the bundle of steel hair had a will of its own as it pierced a dying Minotaur's head, leaving nothing behind.

Jin had not felt such abyssal fear coming out from his heart ever.

"Holy cow..."

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### **Chapter 182 Bull Behemoth - Part 1**

The bull behemoth roared once more, which caused everyone in the vicinity to shield their ears due to the how deafening the roar was. This immobilised Jin and the minotaurs, which allowed the behemoth to pick off the stationary targets like he was picking off flowers from a flower bed.

Most were able to quickly overcome the ringing in their ears caused by the behemoth's shout. Jin and Moloch were of course among them. "Tsk, I cannot believe the dungeon core gave us the hardest difficulty." Moloch cursed loudly under his breath. Jin somehow managed to overhear Moloch despite the persistent ringing after the shout of the behemoth.

"What do you mean the hardest difficulty?!!" Jin shouted as he could not even hear himself when he spoke normally.

"No time for that, throw all your firepower towards at the dungeon core guardian!" Moloch commanded all his remaining troops to fire at the behemoth. Fanatic Minotaurs from the first gate had brought their ballistae and bombards into the throne room before the initiation of the dungeon core. They immediately acceded to Moloch's command.

Despite being stationary, those siege weapons proved to a decent opening attack and also provided enough time for the rest to regroup. Jin summoned half of the zombies he still had and ordered them to harass the behemoth and keep him busy while the siege weapons rained down hell. Unfortunately, the siege weapons were destroyed almost instantaneously with one swipe from the behemoth so this plan was blown out of the water.

Surprisingly, Derek the Alpha Zombie appeared once more, which was akin to winning the lottery twice in a row. It actually was pretty similar, since "I Am The Alpha V1.0" could be seen as the lottery for zombies. Anyhow, since it was his second time in command, Derek knew what to do as compared to when he was enhanced the first time.

Hence, he made a platoon of elemental zombies and asked them to fall back for a moment as the main regiment of zombies charged forward as furiously as they could. The spikes of the behemoth proved useful against the zombies as they were shot out of the legs to prevent the zombies from biting the behemoth.

However, quantity triumphed over quality as the spikes regeneration rate was slower than the number of the zombies coming at the behemoth. The behemoth was very quickly being overwhelmed. In the meantime, Jin summoned out Peppers, Milk and Zeru.

"Milk! Prepare God's Punch!"

"Peppers! You know what you need to do!"

"Zeru! Execute your best moves against it once Peppers finishes destroying it!" Jin commanded all three bellators to do their best.

"Master, it would be best if you could immobilise it. Although the size of this thing should warrant a slower movement, it does not seem to work that way in this world!" Peppers shouted.

"I will think of a way as soon as possible. For now though, both of you start casting!" Jin agreed with Peppers after seeing how the colossal behemoth moved so agilely despite its size. He then summoned Ke Mi the Zither Mistress, Shu the Ancient Treant, Que Er the Magpie Queen, Zhi Nu the Battle Weaver, and Niu Lang the Cowherd.

As if they knew what Jin had in mind, they immediately headed to battle doing what they did best. Ke Mi the Zither Mistress played her Zither with absolute elegance in the midst of the messy chaos in the throne room. Her battle songs not only sharpened the souls of her companions, allowing them to concentrate better, it also caused the behemoth's movement to slow down a little.

Shu the Ancient Treant started to gather the elemental zombies around it as he fired them off one by one like a slingshot towards the behemoth. The elemental zombies that crashed into the behemoth discharged all of their whole elemental power as they continued to scratch and bite it to the best of their abilities. The behemoth was annoyed by this and started to use its metal hair bundle to sweep them off its back.

The zombies being catapult to the bull behemoth's back distracted it sufficiently for Niu Lang to get close to it and blow the Taurus horn that he held. What appeared from the horn was a surprise to Moloch. He witnessed the Mechataur come punching out of the horn.

"I gave the control of the Mechataur and the other bulls to Niu Lang because he seemed to have the affinity towards all cows, bulls and buffalos," Jin said as he summoned Mr Derpy from his phone.

This time round he gave a Mr Derpy a command that made him grin widely.

Not to mention, Mechataur actually had a cockpit. Niu Lang entered it as Mechataur opened the cockpit hatch for him after it was summoned. To Niu Lang's pleasant astonishment, there were Chinese words that appeared in the cockpit console system as he held onto the controls. In the cockpit console, he suddenly heard a "Welcome Niu Lang" in the voice of Taurus.

"Lord Taurus?!" Niu Lang cried out and the console indicated it to insert the Taurus Horn into it. The moment it did that, a jolt went through his brain and a series of information entered his mind.

"Thank You from the bottom of my heart, Lord Taurus." Niu Lang teared up as he gripped the control sticks and placed legs onto the paddles. With a flick of a button, the console system lit up brightly. "Taurus Titan System unlocked, initiating Heavy Armament mode." Mechataur, who was a previously simple minotaur looking robot, suddenly underwent an amazing transformation.

Two jumbo sized Gatling guns grew out from each side of its arms. Its chest opened up and revealed not just a heavy blasting cannon but also multiple missile slots. Behind its shoulder plates, two homing missile launchers were activated and aimed at the behemoth. Its tail separated into three prongs as it acted as a tripod against the recoil.

"EAT LEAD!" Niu Lang and Mechataur shouted in sync. Continuous sounds of bombardment drowned the Heavy Armament Version of Mechataur in smoke as the Gatling guns rotated speedily to rain bullets of lead upon the Behemoth, who was trying to get up after being punched by the very same massive robot. Missiles screamed and exploded when they came into contact with the skin of bull behemoth. Cannons pierced holes through the behemoth. The zombies that were still on the behemoth and had not been burned by the friendly fire crawled into the holes to discharge their elemental energy inside of the behemoth for extra damage.

Niu Lang later realised that the reason the behemoth was still pinned down was all thanks to Zhi Nu the Battle Weaver as her strings immobilised the massive bull momentarily the instance the behemoth had gone went down. Of course, it was with her weaving strings. But Zhi Nu couldn't have done it alone. Such a colossal behemoth would be extremely taxing to pin down and if it had not been for the help of Que Er, the Magpie Queen which boosted everyone's magic or chi capacity through her Magpie Witchery since no one could have lasted so long against something so large.

The bombardments from Mechataur were fierce but they were not enough to keep it down. Eventually, it ran out of ammo and Mechataur overheated from the constant barrage of attacks. Even Niu Lang, who was in the cockpit, felt the heat emitted from the gigantic robot.

"One minute temporary emergency shutdown for cooldown." The console system indicated red and out popped a cycling pedal. Niu Lang immediately stepped onto the cycling pedal and rode like his life depended on it, which it sort of did. By doing so, it would help to accelerate the cooling system.

"GOOOODDDDD PUNCH!" Milk was in midair, courtesy of our friendly neighbourhood slingshot tree, and sent her beautiful signature attack crashing down into the behemoth's face. The golden fist of holy judgement burned through the face of the behemoth.

"I am not done!! PART TWO!" With the boost of magic powers by Magpie Queen, Milk was able to transcend her limits by twirling her entire body once before executing another God Punch. The punch displayed a silver fist rather than gold but the damage it did against the behemoth was still immense.

However, something unexpected happened to the behemoth after Milk punched it.

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## **Chapter 183 Bull Behemoth - Part 2**

Instead of the beast flinching from the attacks, a roar fiercer than the initial one caused everyone around it to fly once again into the walls of the throne room. Even Mechataur was lifted from the ground as a result of the shockwave impact of the behemoth's roar.

"Phase Two?!! How can this be!" the man puppet held tightly onto Moloch since the plushie looked as if it was about to fly away from shock.

"I do not know what the hell phase two is but I'm gonna give it a two phased explosion!" Peppers managed to finish casting her explosive magic because Mr Derpy had predicted that something like this would occur and it used its body to protect Peppers from the explosion.

Not only that, the bull behemoth heard Peppers and decided to charge towards her after also sensing a gathering of intense density of magic from her. Mr Derpy did not hesitate to retaliate back which he acted as a bodyguard as commanded by Jin. Meanwhile, Peppers continued to finalise the casting of her explosive magic in order to make sure there would be lesser drawbacks from the magical spell.

"Any moment now Ms Peppers! " Mr Derpy shouted as its eyes shone in green, causing the entire throne room to shudder in perpetual fear. "I am Shadow Dagen! A Fragment of the Lord Dagen himself! Taste his wrath!!!!" Mr Derpy shouted as a magical circle immediately appeared at the dungeon core guardian's feet as he continued to wrestle with it.

Suddenly, massive amounts of gigantic tentacles appeared from the magic circle and grabbed the behemoth before wrapping it up like an Egyptian mummy. The tentacles did not only grab the behemoth but they also excreted poison and acid, which corroded the skin of the behemoth. The guardian did not hesitate to try and break free of its new biological constraints but the more it tried, the more pain it felt.

"Shu!!! Now!!!" Jin shouted at Shu as the tree used the additional magical powers of the magpie to grow roots under the throne room and break the floor that the behemoth was standing on. The roots pushed the behemoth out of the throne room and eventually broke the iron doors that sealed off the area, placing it atop the broken bridge where the battle between Mechataur and Mr Derpy had taken place.

The fusion of magical roots and dark tentacles was disgusting but undoubtedly useful as they immobilised the struggling behemoth. Its constraints were further tightened by Zhi Nu, who had placed tens of heavenly string 'bomb' traps near the entrance. She initially placed it there in case the behemoth tried to break away from entrapment but little did she know that it actually enhanced the immobilisation of the behemoth.

"Super Big Bang Bammmmmmm Version 2.0!" Jin carried Peppers once more towards the entrance of the Throne room as she aimed her magical staff at the Katamari that consisted of a ball of strings, roots, and tentacles along with a flustered bull behemoth.

As usual, a rainbow coloured complex magical circle appeared in front of Peppers and instead of a human silhouette, a tremendously oversized fish head slowly emerged from the magical circle. The fish opened its mouth slowly as if it was about to inhale a great amount of air. However, out of its mouth, it 'exhaled' a greenish blue beam that burned the tentacles, roots and eventually the behemoth.

The behemoth tried to move away from this terrifying blast but the fish head was able to follow its target, giving the behemoth zero reprieves from the damage it took. The blast beam ensued for the next ten seconds before Peppers fainted from the strain of the magical spell, rainbow vomit still leaking out of her mouth.

Jin quickly turned her around to let the vomit out of her body and for her to breathe or else the vomit would clog up her windpipe. The weakened Milk staggered towards Jin and held onto Peppers. "I will take care of her from here. Go." Milk whispered with whatever strength she had left.

Jin nodded his head as he took out Bam and Boo. He turned them into a cannon and started to fire at the behemoth, which was panting crazily. "Looks like it did not manage to enter phase 2 successfully, you guys disrupted its regeneration process." Moloch came towards Jin as he was firing his cannon, sweating like a pig.

"Man, if you can talk that much, you should help with attacking or something," Jin complained towards Moloch but it was also at that moment that he saw a figure standing on top of the broken bridge and he trailed off.

"... Technique. White Lotus Breeze." Zeru swung his sword once and white flowery petals magically surfaced from his swing as the petals indolently descended onto the broken behemoth. When a petal of the white lotus touched the behemoth, a river of blood gushed out of the behemoth as if a fireman had turned on the water hose at full power. The behemoth, unsurprisingly, screamed in agonising pain.

More of the white lotus petals descended upon the behemoth and the bridge was beginning to overflow with blood, tainting the river below in a dark scarlet red. Despite its wounds though, the behemoth stood up again with all strength it could muster and stared at the man firing a cannon at him.

Jin was overextending his limit with this simple act too. At Grade 2, he was only able to shoot two cannon shots from his bamboo cannon and theoretically at grade 4, he should only manage with four. However, with the Magpie Witchery, which allowed him to boost his chi, he already exceeded four shots and till now, he had already fired off more than ten shots.

He was barely standing straight and the recoil of the cannon was not helping him at all. Jin was simply firing based solely on willpower and remembering the training he had received from Zeru in the Farm World to exert himself even further. His Dantian somehow managed to produce just enough chi to shoot a chi cannon shot once again.

"Didn't Moloch say there was a time limit?!" Jin thought to himself as he fired off the last shot he could muster before he fell to the ground, feeling extremely dizzy and weak.

The Behemoth snorted the moment the cannon shots stopped hitting him before it roared once more and from within, the bleeding stopped. The bull behemoth stood up on two legs and white wings stained with blood emerged from its back. Jin then felt a warm tender light shining from it.

"Do not be deceived by that tender warmness. That shine, it hurts eventually." Moloch smirked as the man puppet stood before Jin. "But not to fear master, I provide you with some shade." Moloch's man puppet snapped its finger and poker cards appeared in front of him.

He threw the cards at the Winged Behemoth but the 'angel' shot them down in an instant with ray beams from its eyes. However, the cards did not exactly disappear. Instead, as they dissolved in the ray beams, the cards transformed into doves and they continued to fly towards the angel.

The doves flew and crashed into the behemoth before exploding into blasts of green fire. The Winged Behemoth was angered by the attack and decided to swoop down to destroy its enemies. At this point, Moloch's man puppet clapped once and out came tens of poker cards as they started to revolve around him. Moloch swung his hand in a circular motion and the cards enlarged themselves to become a hundred layer barrier to halt the winged behemoth's advance.

The Winged Behemoth did not care though and started to use all its might to punch through the card barrier. However, it belatedly noticed that each time a card broke, pieces of the card would still cut the behemoth. The wounds were minor, but for a protective barrier to do damage against the enemy was still a feat.

As it broke through the last card barrier, the Winged behemoth saw Jin squatting with his Bam Katana Form. "That chi regeneration from Jin's Dantian point is amazing." Yun thought to herself as she saw the entire scene unfolded before her eyes while she was in the Dungeon Maker.

Jin poured whatever chi he still had, but being too weak to even propel himself upwards, Moloch gave him a helping hand. By placing an enlarged card under Jin, the card pushed him upwards.

It was at this time that Jin felt something stirring within him. It was as if a Panda was growling along with him. Without even looking, he understood this particular feeling as he felt some power returned to his legs.

"Grade 5." He smirked to himself.

However, what he did not notice was that not only did he attain Grade 5, something within him had been unlocked when he reached Grade 5 and he had already unconsciously used it in the battle against the Winged Behemoth.

Black Yin and white Yang energy flowed out of him and encircled the katana, which strengthened it tremendously. What he did not know was that his Katana had been infused with Black Fire and White Ice.

The Winged Behemoth received Jin's Katana pierce with its own punch... only to see its arm shrouded in blocks of White Ice whilst burning with Black Fire. It yelled in agony as it fell to the ground. However, before its body reached to the ground, the guardian disappeared and an area wide announcement was given by the dungeon core.

"Time's up."



## Chapter 184 Dilemma

How devastating the battle had been was clear to see when you looked at the mess it left behind.. A number of Zombies laid flat on the ground, unmoving. Dead minotaurs were piled up in the corners of the throne room. Siege weapons had been broken to pieces and were unrepairable. Mechataur was barely able to function after the overexertion of its new mode and many others just lied on the floor from exhaustion.

Probably the only few who were left standing were Zeru, Shu and Moloch. However, even the Ancient Treant had spent most of his magical powers on the previous root entrapment spell it had cast on the bull behemoth.

"Looks like you did not give it your best shot, which was commanded by your Master." Moloch casually remarked towards Zeru, who came forward to pick Jin up.

"As a bellator, it is indeed crucial for me to follow the commands of my master. And I did execute that technique to the best of my ability." Zeru carried Jin towards Milk and Peppers. "But I am his master too. And being his master, I am obliged to take care of my disciple to make sure he does not come to any harm but also push him past his limits. It looks like you did the same too. You look powerless and all, but I can sense that you are hiding more than you are showing."

"Good insight and foresight." Moloch did not speak any more as he walked alongside Zeru.

At this moment, Yun appeared from a portal, which startled Moloch. She was carrying a crate full of potions and with a snap of her fingers, the boar knights emerged from her phone. Without any commands even voiced out, they immediately assisted Yun by distributing the potions to the fallen monsters.

Yun walked towards Jin and his bellators before she personally took out a unique golden bottle and slowly fed its contents into Jin's mouth. Jin also used all his leftover strength to sip the potion and force it down through his throat.

Fortunately, the effects were rather immediate. Jin could eventually stand and walk but was still suffering from a bad migraine. "Careful! Overexertion of chi has left you weak. The potion enables you to recover faster but you still need proper rest once you have finished with matters here." Yun and Zeru rushed to steady him

"I would like to say that I'm fine but it looks like I will need to rely on both of you for a while. Thank you." Jin whispered as he looked at Moloch.

"No, Thank you Master Jin for an excellent battle." Moloch bowed in front of him.

"Now, I believe some questions need to be answered." Jin stared sternly at Moloch.

"Please understand Master. Those questions can wait. We should initiate the dungeon town fortress before our rewards are forfeited by the dungeon core." Moloch gestured with his hands towards the direction of the exposed dungeon core and Jin reluctantly walked towards the dungeon core with the help of Yun and Zeru.

It was not that he did not trust Moloch, but from the expression Moloch had during the battle, it felt like there were some things that had been... forgotten. Maybe Jin did not ask the right questions, which was why Moloch did not explain.

Still, it was obvious that Moloch was withholding information. For example, how did he know there was a Phase 2 of the guardian? Is it common to have a Phase 2 or was it only for this particular dungeon guardian? Surely being the lord of this dungeon fortress would come with its own perks. Such as knowing a thing or two about the guardian manifestation of this particular dungeon core.

In any case, Jin did not have any strength to fight back verbally or physically and decided to just go with the flow. Moloch reached towards the dungeon core and wanted to place his hand on the core's metallic ball body but he halted midway.

"I too have questions for you Master, for I am curious. You are indeed the epitome of mystery to me too. Most summoners can only summon one or two monsters. Very high level summoners can control only 10 low level monsters at once. Even the world's strongest and mightiest summoner would probably only be able to control a few extremely high level monster at once, mainly because they have mutual respect over a long bonding period." Moloch explained his curiosity to Jin.

"But here, not only have you surprised me time and time again, you have defied the meaning of a "monster summoner". I mean, HUNDREDS of zombies? Various humanoids/humans under your command? Take away all that, but what about the capturing process. I expected you to capture me with a summoning ritual contract but no. You just hit me with a metal plate that shone and I was under your command."

"I do not feel obliged to serve you, like what I felt in the presence of Demon King Baal. Instead, I feel as if I was willing to serve you all along as if it was a natural given for me to protect you. I must say, in my eyes, you are not just a Legendary level summoner. You might, in fact, be a Demigod or God level summoner. "

"However, from this fight, I can see that you still have yet to reach the full potential of your powers, which is frightening, to say the least. But my pet peeve is that you seemed to act as a warrior rather than a mage, which kind of contradicts the meaning of being a summoner. Argh, it's just me ranting anyways." Moloch could see Jin was looking pretty annoyed. Moloch had stopped him from asking questions but right now, he was talking non stop.

"Erm, anyway. Because of all these weird traits you possess, I was wondering if you would like to try and see if you could activate this dungeon core. For fun really. I would like to see if a summoner of your capability would be able to create an affinity with the dungeon core, seeing as you have such a high affinity with monsters already." Moloch shrugged his man puppet's shoulder and Jin nodded his head gently.

He moved forward beside Moloch and following his instructions. Jin placed his hands against the dungeon core. "Welp, I guess you are just a normal human." Moloch felt a little dejected to see that nothing was happening.

"Jin, place your phone on the core instead." Yun, who was beside Jin, whispered.

Suddenly Jin felt chills running down his spine. Previously, it would indeed have been a no brainer to put the phone down so that the System within him could control the town fortress. A choice he would have made in a heartbeat.

However, after the incident he had had with the System, he wasn't so sure. He still hadn't forgiven the system for throwing him into a moral dilemma, though he did regret not thinking straight. It was true that if he let the system control it, the fortress would definitely be better managed in a more efficient manner than what Moloch could have done. However, wouldn't that go against Moloch's idea of becoming a lord?

If that was the case, maybe Moloch already knew that humans could not activate the dungeon core and wanted to quell the thirst of greed by allowing Jin to try it for himself. This was so that he could avoid the "if only I had touched the dungeon core instead" scenario. Hence, Jin would undoubtedly place his trust in Moloch and he would have full control of the town.

Of course, Moloch had been captured by Jin but after the dungeon core guardian battle, Jin was wondering if it had really been a good choice to let someone so mysterious and secretive take over the dungeon town fortress.

Both choices had their pros and cons that would impact the future of this dungeon town fortress. In the long run, Moloch would be able to do well if he and Jin were able to overcome the obstacles, namely King Baal. This was because Moloch knew what he wanted but it would be tough.

On the other hand, giving the system the dungeon core would guarantee the short-term safety of the town. This was because the system would definitely utilise resources from its own stockpile to maximise the town's defences since it would be protecting its own interests as well. However, this was still a dungeon TOWN fortress. Jin had no first hand knowledge on how the system would handle the citizens.

"What are you waiting for?" Both Yun and Moloch spoke at the same time, which caused Jin to get irritated.

"I just want to sleep..."

## **Chapter 185 Dungeon City Fortress**

"Master Jin, be quick. I don't know how long the dungeon core will stay exposed for so you better get a move on or all the effort we put in will end up wasted." Moloch said and Yun was looking at Jin with a slightly puzzled look. "Isn't it obvious enough to let the System take care of management?" Yun spoke her thoughts to Jin.

"Do I really have to choose a side...?" Jin scratched his head for a moment before he grabbed Moloch off the man puppet. The man puppet immediately squatted and curled into a ball as a result of the sudden detachment of its main source.

"You said you are a puppet right?" Jin looked at the minotaur plushie but Moloch felt very exposed without the man puppet as if he was naked. It nodded his head cutely... and went ahead and did the most unconventional thing ever.

He took his phone out and stuffed the entirety of it into Moloch's mouth. His heavy handed shoving of the phone into the plushie caused Moloch to choke momentarily. He subsequently pushed Moloch into the dungeon core. At that moment, he also released a bit of his chi into Moloch, which caused his phone to be activated from within the plushie.

The insides of the metallic ball shaped Dungeon Core immediately shone brightly. Subsequently, an entire monitor along with an old school mechanical keyboard appeared right in front of it. There was even music playing from the dungeon core.

"It's a brand new day~!

Brand new day~!

A brand new morning has come~!

Be Happy ~! Be Happy~!

The wind of happiness continues to blow as we start our day~!

One, Two, Three, Let's Go~! "

The music had accompanying lyrics that came from the metallic ball as it was heard throughout the whole throne room.

"Oh My Gosh! This seems so creepy despite the cheerful deposition of the song. Wait... that's probably why it's creepy" Yun was taken aback by the sudden song coming from the metallic ball and so was Jin. Moloch eventually threw up the phone from its stuffed mouth and Jin noticed it was covered with cotton. He then slowly put Moloch back onto the man puppet.

However, the man puppet immediately got up and slapped Jin each time Moloch shouted at him. "Do not! Ever! Do! That! Again! Else I will put super glue on my man puppet." Moloch was angry but at the same time, he was blushing as well. As much as Jin was stunned by the slapping, he also noticed that the slaps were really weak as compared to the ferocity of magic Moloch wielded.

Once the music subsided from the metallic ball, the monitor lit up. "Dungeon Town Fortress or Dungeon Fortress?" Moloch went ahead with his man puppet and entered the option of the Dungeon Town Fortress without any hesitation.

"Congratulations! You have cleared 3 Phases of the Dungeon Core Guardian. You are eligible for a Dungeon Town Fortress with iron wall fortifications, a starter set of shops and inns, a starter set of service and industry components, a complete wiring of electrical supply as well as piping for your water supply." The monitor displayed the details clearly and Moloch was able to see what was given as a reward.

"Alternatively, you could also start with the area of land of a Dungeon City Fortress but no other perks would be given other than a basic wiring and piping provided for all houses." The console gave the group another option that surprised Jin. Was the hard fought struggle against the guardian really that great that the dungeon core gave the option of an immediate Dungeon City Fortress.

"Hmm, a town with a basic set of facilities and a complete wall fortification would be great but that dungeon city fortress is extremely tempting as well." Moloch was thinking out loud.

"Why would you want a Dungeon City Fortress? Isn't it incomplete? I doubt we have the resources to even feed the masses if it is just land." Jin replied as he finally felt the effects of the potions he drank kicking in.

"Because the land is the most important commodity. The current Dungeon Fortress we are in will roughly be the size of the Dungeon Town Fortress. However, if we choose the Dungeon City Fortress, we would have even more room to expand as well as more production than a Dungeon Town Fortress." Moloch explained to Jin.

"Besides, it is hard to expand with a Dungeon Town Fortress. We need to either pay more dungeon dollars to expand per square feet, which could cost more in the long run even. On the flip side though, we would have a solid foundation."

"So you are suggesting we take the Dungeon City Fortress and build up from scratch? How confident are you on being able to do that? Did you not say that you would be content with just a Dungeon Town Fortress? Would it not be easier for King Baal to siege the Dungeon City Fortress since we would not have proper fortifications?" Jin was concerned. He understood Moloch had a long running interest but he was currently being too greedy.

"The System said it would help with the defences," Yun spoke to break up the argument. "Jin, what you did just now... was unconventional to say the least, but it did give the System partial access to the Town Building. Technically, it can brute force the dungeon core to grant itself full access but it decided to take a step back and observe what this Moloch plushie is able to do." Yun added and Moloch was slightly confused. It was then that both Jin and Yun provided him with a short explanation regarding Jin not being a monster summoner, but instead a dungeon supplier.

"I see! Now I finally understand why you stuffed that phone into me and hoped that it would work." Moloch nodded his head upon hearing Jin's circumstances.

"I believe what Jin did was a good choice, though a little abrupt. If he had chosen the System, it would probably have immediately chosen the former while just you alone would have taken the latter despite there being no guarantee on if it will work out in the long run." Yun replied to Moloch.

"It can work! All I need is time... and some breathing room." Moloch somehow felt slightly ashamed to admit that he would not be so bold to create a Dungeon City Fortress all by himself if it was not for Jin's help.

"So, how far is the System willing to go in terms of defences? Just walls? Maybe some cannons?" Jin asked Yun but she shook her head.

"Just because you are in the Dungeon World does not mean you cannot apply concepts from the modern world. If you do that, the Dungeon City Fortress will have no need for walls." Yun replied.

"But in the modern world, there aren't any defences in most cities except for city-wide monitoring and most defences come from the borders, such as anti-air missiles or deterrence with military force. How can they... Oh." Jin realised he had just voiced out all his options.

"A standard metal fencing should be sufficient. City-Wide Monitoring will prevent any sneaky bastards and in terms of chasing the enemies down, we would have the upper hand since we have intelligence on their movements in this city."

"Regardless, we need to focus on our basic needs first since we will only be given standard housing," Moloch interjected and hoped that this would not turn into another conjecture discussion and instead prove to be useful.

"Can we change the housing to our own specifications?" Jin typed the question onto the monitor, hoping that it would have a response. The metallic ball kept quiet for a while before responding. "Additional changes to specifications require dungeon dollars. Please choose an option before proceeding to the city/town building."

"Let's choose Dungeon City Fortress first and then we will go from there." Jin finally gave in to the idea of having a Dungeon City Fortress instead of a fully equipped Dungeon Town Fortress. That way, he could build a modern city within this small part of the dungeon world and perhaps create an urban battlefield for his customers.

Moloch proceeded to select the City Fortress option and the entire dungeon shook violently. The group watched the throne room crumble before their eyes and the dungeon space was expanding rapidly with the dungeon core ball at the centre of it all.

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## **Chapter 186 Needs of A City**

When the dungeon finally stopped shaking, Moloch looked at the monitor in front of the metallic ball to check available options he had for building things. "Updated blueprints needed before consideration of building," The monitor displayed its answer.

"Say, if we are still in the building process since this is currently an empty plot of land, wouldn't we be very vulnerable to attacks?" Jin questioned now that he had seen just how massive the area of land they had been bestowed was. He had asked the Magpie Queen to send a Magpie to fly from one end of the dungeon space to the other. It had been five minutes... the magpie familiar had yet to return to Que Er.

"Ah, don't you worry. The dungeon core has already set up a barrier to ban hostile forces from coming in. Even if they somehow manage to brute force their way through, they would be randomly teleported to another Dungeon Fortress, Wild Dungeon, or Dungeon Town Fortress." Moloch replied.

"We have about three months or so before the barrier goes down. In the meantime, adventurers who wish to come here and trade will still be permitted and Monsters that want to live here will be given permission as well." Moloch added.

"But there are so many administrative things to sort through. Three months is not enough!" Jin questioned Moloch once more but he just shook his head. "Never enough. In any case, you mentioned that you had specific housing requirements?"

"I will introduce you your adviser that will take charge in telling you the things that I want." Jin beckoned Peppers to come forward and formally introduced her to Moloch.

"Peppers, I know that I have already given you a task to read and understand the weakness of every cultivator as well as how to improve them. Initially, I wanted you to be a teacher like Zeru, helping with the classes, conducting lectures, etc. However, I believe that you are needed as a special adviser here more than anything right now." Jin placed his hands on her shoulders and gripped tightly. He knew that she had just woken up from the use of her signature spell but life had to move on.

"What do you need of me?" Peppers asked as she rubbed her eyes.

"I need you to learn the various bureaucracy systems on our earth and try to explain to Moloch here that the Feudal System is not as efficient as he believes it to be. After which, I need you to implement a political system here. Also, find the flaws in modern-world political systems and make some modifications before introducing them here. There will be lots of paperwork to do." Peppers lost it upon hearing paperwork. It meant that she could do research and apply her theoretical work into practice!

"Understood, I will get right to it-" Jin stopped Peppers from finishing her sentence.

"No, rest for today. You have already done great." Jin said as he asked Milk to bring Peppers away.

"I do not think I can deal with city management alone... It's not that I do not trust Moloch but the placement of buildings is of great importance. Maybe I should pay 'her' a visit too." Jin thought to himself. He believed it would be better to seek professional help when it came to city management.

"Who are you thinking of?" Yun asked as Jin's thoughts didn't specify a name.

"Just an old friend... in the civil engineering and district development sector." Jin quietly sent his thoughts to Yun and she could feel a sense of loneliness coming from him.

"Anyways, Moloch. I am going back to my world for now. Once you have gathered all your followers that arise from the dead, use this key. It should provide you more solace and comfort in comparison to sleeping on the empty ground of a dungeon." Jin passed a key to Moloch, which was a time limited access to a guest room in the Sanctum of Worlds since Jin had yet to create a proper space for them to stay. Perhaps, he did not need to create a room for them to stay seeing as housing was soon to be built in the Dungeon City Fortress.

He probably also had a lot going on in his mind for he knew how hard it was to create a city from scratch. Too many simulation games instead of studying or properly planning his life during his university life made him realised the pains of creating and maintaining an actual city. By no means was Jin an expert though, and he recognised that. He knew that with the System backing Moloch up,

everything would be fine. He was now glad that he had done what he did by stuffing the phone into Moloch, no matter how unconventional.

Eventually, Jin bid farewell to his new monsters and saw that it was already 5 am in the morning, courtesy of his storage watch. "Perhaps I should get some proper sleep in my own house for once." Jin thought to himself and then he realised he had yet to thank everyone who had participated in the battle.

Well, sure, he could just go back home and pretend that this was just another day... But no. These monsters were, in a way, his workers and today they had done a fabulous job. Jin knew that he himself could never have hoped to achieve what they had done today alone. Heck, he had even seen how those minotaurs from the Dungeon World had tried to fight against the behemoth and applauded their bravery against such terrifying foe.

So instead of going back to the real world, Jin decided to enter the Sanctum of Worlds and visited each individual room in order to thank every monster personally. Needless to say, the monsters were already ecstatic to receive praise from their master, but having him personally enter their instance to thank them individually? It was an honour for them.

Some even started talking about their experiences against the minotaurs and the bull behemoth. Oh, but the zombies? Jin did not really know how to make them feel appreciated other than turning all the rides on and asking Peppers to throw some fireworks for the zombies to look at in their ever black skies.

While the humanoids and humans had all played major roles in the dungeon fortress, Jin knew that the unsung heroes of this dungeon run were definitely the zombies. They may not be heavy hitting but they sure kept all the enemies, especially the behemoth, occupied.

"You know, technically, you can find more humanoids or humans to aid you, and not just your new city but for the dungeon store too. A blacksmith and a proper maintenance crew for Mechataur are all valid options." Yun said as she casually talked to Jin alongside other humanoids.

"As if I have the time to find these people when I already have to take charge of the store. I can't just leave the store because I want to do other stuff." Jin suddenly had so many things to do that he felt a little overwhelmed.

"Maybe you should start reducing your work hours so that you have more time on your hands," Yun suggested to Jin but his only reaction to her suggestion was his furrowed brows.

"What do you mean? Won't that lead to less money earned? Is that not undesirable for the System?" Jin asked once they were back in the shop.

"If you use it wisely, I think that the time would be well spent. Currently, you are working in the from afternoon 1 to 10 pm, sometimes it even drags till 11 pm. That is roughly 10 working hours, which is longer than most shops' opening hours." Yun opened the side gate of the storehouse and held the door open for Jin.

"Not to mention, you have hardly taken any breaks these past two weeks. You have practically been working nonstop and if it weren't for your cultivation, you would have broken down a long time ago. This is rather unhealthy." Yun added.



"So you are saying that..." Jin pondered for a while before Yun answered for him.

"That you need better time management. Manage your time, otherwise, there is no way you can manage both your dungeon supplier as well as your new city."

"Well, that's kind of true. I'll see what I can do." Jin then paused and wanted to ask Yun why he would need a real blacksmith when the System was already selling armour, weapons and general supply items. In the end though, he just continued walking.

"Perhaps, I will do that when I have a clearer head. I am just too tired to discuss anything right now." All Jin could think about right now was a pillow for his head. The effects of the potions might have kicked in a long time ago but the body still needed rest.

And he did sleep when Jin reached home. Just a bit too long.

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## **Chapter 187 Nightmare**

"Hmmm...What time is it?" Jin thought as he woke up feeling a little groggy. However, he noticed that the place that he was woken up in was more than just a little different from where he fell asleep. There was no bed beneath him, there were no windows displaying the urban view outside nor were any of his belongings around him.

The shirt that he was wearing was not his and was instead a straitjacket. Jin noticed that there were chains and high level restrictive inscriptions binding him. He tried to look around but he could not even move a single inch. He felt constricted, unable to breathe normally.

Eventually, he became more aware of his surroundings. The walls were cold and the only other light source other than a dimly lit candle in the corner of his room was light filtering in from under the door.

Jin struggled as he panicked due to the drastic change of environment but it was all to no avail. "What is this place?!" Jin tried to talk but he was muted by a mouthpiece that robbed him of speech.

"What is with this darkness?!" Jin tried to comprehend what was happening it but the more he thought about the situation he was in, the more desperate he became. Jin tried to use his chi but it was to no avail.

Suddenly, he realised that this body was not actually his! Jin had tried to harness the Dantian point of this body, only to find that the chi was completely different from his usual chi. All chi fell under one category but every person's chi was unique as if it had a personality like their users. For example, some might be light and peaceful like Milk's healing maiden chi while some chi might make you feel determined to succeed like Bu Dong's and Bin Yong's chi.

On the other hand, some could be dark and cold, similar to the one Jin felt generating from 'his' Dantian point. However, this was not just any dark and cold chi. It was not pitch dark but rather crepuscular in nature, as if the darkness crawled up his skin and kissed his neck, only to bite down like a sharp fang ready to sink into your pulsating carotid artery. Its coldness crippled your senses, making him numb for the fang of darkness to take over while the cold continued to wash over him. Jin knew that this chi could leave wounds deeper than mere flesh.

It was only then Jin realised he could hear the thoughts of someone else.

"Patience. The day will come when the Twelve receive their retribution. Hmmph. Hmm Hmm He He He~!" He had a grimaced look under his mouthpiece as if he noticed Jin with him and Jin couldn't help but shiver from the thought of someone so skilled in observation.

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"JIN! WAKE UP!" Yun shouted at the top of her lungs and somehow that woke Jin up, cold sweat had soaked the clothes he was in. He was panting heavily after that weird dream he had just experienced. Jin hurriedly touched his entire body to make sure that he was able to move around.

"What happened to you? Why are you touching yourself? Was it a nightmare or was it..." Yun gave Jin a naughty smile but to Yun's surprise, Jin sighed in relief.

"No, just a bad nightmare... I think." Jin responded, unsure of what to make of what he had just experienced. Was that really a dream? Why did it feel so real then? Was he lucid dreaming?

"Oh... Cause you overslept for nearly the entire day. It's already evening." Yun pointed at the alarm clock at him and Jin was flabbergasted. "It's already 6 pm?! What about the shop?" Jin was a little jumpy when he realised that he had slept for more than 12 hours and missed nearly a whole day's worth of work.

"Do not worry too much! I was actually planning to let you sleep over a little anyway while I managed the shop for you. Though I did not expect you to sleep over by more than 7-8 hours." Yun said as she shook her head in disappointment.

"Sorry, I did put on my alarm though." Jin turned on his phone to check, only to realise it was turned off.

"Yeah, I turned it off for you when I got back from the shop after my dinner break. It was definitely working since my ears are still hurting. Even when I tried to shake you to wake you up you were not responding." Yun was a little frustrated.

"...Is that why I feel pain in my cheeks right now?" Jin asked as he rubbed his cheeks to soothe the pain he was feeling.

"Well, I tried to use some force to wake you up." Yun started to snigger as she shrugged her shoulders.

"And you can see, even without you, I was able to run the shop successfully. Although some people did ask about you." Yun said proudly but it made Jin feel a little disappointed.

"But I was slower since I was working at the cash register as well as serving the food. Had to ask Milk to come and help with serving the food for a while. Didn't know it was that hard." Yun tried to cheer him up, hoping that he did not think too much about the whole issue.

"In any case, anything important happened when I was gone?" Jin asked and Yun, remembering something important, widened her eyes in realisation and shook Jin's bed even more.

"Yes! Yes! Xiong Da came by and asked for you. Apparently, he wants you to be the witness of the duel against Ji Ao. However, you were not around so he announced that he would conduct the battle at your shop if possible." Yun said vividly.

"But I do not have an arena prepared for a cultivator versus cultivator fight. All I have are random monster arenas." Jin replied to Yun as he yawned. It looked like the nightmare he had did not allow him to have a proper rest at all.

"Hmmph, maybe create a variant of that the arena battles? Perhaps monsters fighting beside them to increase the Xiong Da's winning chances?" Yun suggested.

"Or let them fight two monsters each and both of them then meet each other on the last final stage duelling for the win?" Yun added on to her suggestion.

"Then if Ji Ao loses to the monsters, he would be later shown as the inferior one? But that way Xiong Da won't get to fight him." Jin thought to himself whether if that was really a good idea.

"Maybe allow both of them to be resurrected at the last stage? During the final stage, they are not allowed to be resurrected. However, fighting against the monsters would probably give them a slight edge for the final fight but the rewards are hidden until they killed the monsters. But seeing how Ji Ao is usually the cunning one, he would probably just kill himself at the start and he will resurrect with full health waiting in the final fight. Such act would most likely lower his reputation among the crowd too." Yun replied.

"I see. If that's the way, I believe the crowd, which I assume his love crush Ruo Ying will be among the spectators observing how Xiong Da had grown as he fights against the monsters. Also, the judge would see that this would most likely be an unfair fight against Xiong Da since Ji Ao was already waiting there for him. They will grow to respect him even more if he can win against this Ji Ao." Jin thought this was an ingenious idea to bring Xiong Da's reputation up among his friends and customers in the shop but it was a risky gamble. If Ji Ao decides to fight against the monsters fair and square, all of this conjecture would not happen.

"Trust in Xiong Da, he had practised hard and you have helped him a lot. Both you and I also have seen how much effort he has put in for over the past few weeks." Yun reaffirmed Jin's decision.

"Alright then, but let's take some precautions since we are 'performing' for the crowd." Jin grinned a little and Yun felt excited to see the outcome how all this unfold.

They were looking forward to the battle and both were rooting for Xiong Da from the depths bottom of their hearts.

## Chapter 188 Shop Sign

Jin had a change of clothes and decided to throw additional sets of clothing into his storage ring quickly but it seemed that his wardrobe was thinning out. "I have to do the laundry again," The thought of doing housework hit Jin, making him wish that he would be in some fantasy novel that he does not even need to change his clothes regularly.

Regardless, today is not the day for housework as he quickly dashed out of his house to reach the store promptly. There were already some people waiting to enter the store and one of them was Xiong Da.

"Boss! I was worried sick! What happened to you? Are you okay?" Xiong Da asked and Jin nodded his head.

"I was...eh...I overslept." Jin decided to admit that he overslept and everyone in the queue looked at each other before laughing in unison.

"Boss Boss! If you had something important to do, just say so. No one would blame you!" A customer shouted heartily at Jin.

"Yeah Boss, you do not have act Panda-ish on us." Another female customer giggled as she commented.

"Haha, Boss, by the way, we really like your new signage. Did not know that it was up, until this morning!" Xiong Da added as he pointed at the top of the store. Jin then realised that the signage that the System promised was already up. It took no chance to immediately hang it up in order to draw more attention.

And attention it did draw.

It was not a majestic sign ...it was an overly majestic neon billboard with an innocent looking Panda hugging onto a hoard of equipment like swords, axes and gold coins. However, it looked like it was sleeping while biting onto a bamboo spear. The billboard was overly huge that it nearly covered the entire 2nd and 3rd floor of the traditional storehouse.

Right at the bottom of the billboard, the words "Dungeons and Pandas" was written in a simple, elegant calligraphy that eluded the beauty of the words. Surprisingly, it felt a little poignant but the bittersweet aftertaste of the calligraphy on the thick bamboo sign was overshadowed by the gigantic cute billboard above it.

"The System has no sense of taste, putting such a big billboard neon sign at the middle of nowhere. This is not Osaka where the Gilco Running Man was surrounded with multiple signboards from other shops." Jin could not help but laugh bitterly as he thought about it.

"You seem a little disappointed, is it not to your liking?" Yun caught up with Jin after leaving the house.

"I have mixed feelings about it," Jin replied in thought.

"Try activating your Chi to it. You will understand." Jin did what Yun said and suddenly he was transported to another world.

Scenes of him trying to fight against monsters, capturing monsters, the escape from the zombies from the Shanghai Tower and the recent fight against the Bull Behemoth. They were all rushing into his mind until Jin broke the Chi flow from it.

He immediately felt an adrenaline rush, as if he was pumped up to go for another round of a fight. "I ...understand what you meant now." Jin had really underestimated the powers of the System. To make him feel so excited, so anxious for another fight. This high grade sign board was not to be underestimated.

"Mmmhmm, all the other customers who poured their Chi into the signboard shared similar feelings too. While the new customers do not have experience of the dungeons here, the System made them incite similar incidents and memories that would give them an urge to go for battle." Yun explained in Jin's head.

"Boss, why are you in a daze?! Your signboard looks too good that you cannot help but admire your store for a moment?" Xiong Da was being sarcastic but Jin nodded.

"It looks perfect," Jin said shamelessly which made all the customers laugh at Jin's boldness to create such a gigantic billboard. It will surely create and attract attention from other people.

Jin subsequently opened his store but he asked Xiong Da to come over to one side and both Yun and Jin decided to tell Xiong Da about the plan they had. However, when Xiong Da heard about the entire plan, he stepped back and bowed.

"Boss. Ms Yun. I respect the both of you for wanting to help me. But I think this is not necessary. I really want to fight fair and square with Ji Ao no matter how dirty or underhanded his methods are." Xiong Da requested not to do such a thing for him. If they want him to fight against monsters, he would and in fact, he would like to as well, so he can get into the mood for a battle.

"I see, if that's the case, I am sorry. I thought you were really that desperate to win and that was why you wanted to have the duel over here." It seemed that both Jin and Yun misinterpreted Xiong Da's intention.

"Yes and no. Yes, I chose here because I wanted to show you how much I have improved and no matter the outcome, this place had already grown to be something like my second home. Although technically, I own more than 4 apartments... but you get what I mean." Xiong Da could not help boasting a little although his intentions were clear to Jin.

"No because, in the end, I know that this is all about my selfish ego. I mean, Ruo Ying has her own life. If she cannot be happy, I cannot be happy either. But the selfish me also want myself to be happy by making her mine. However, the more I think about it, the more I feel that by doing so, I am going to be like Ji Ao." Xiong Da justified himself.

"I was really really tempted to do what you said, but in the end I think, I should just try my best. In this day and age, I doubt doing something so earnest would get you the girl but it's worth a try." Xiong Da shrugged his shoulders.

It was at this moment that Jin punched Xiong Da to the floor with a Lazy Panda Swipe. This surprised almost everyone in the store. "WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU THINKING? YOU THINK THIS IS LIKE A DUNGEON INSTANCE?! IT'S OKAY TO LOSE?" Jin shouted so loud that it made the customers stop what they were doing just to see the commotion. Even Zhen Qing was shocked by Jin's outburst. It was the first time she saw him behaving this way.

"Do not give me that kind of bullshit! You want to save that girl. You save her all the way. You think war and love are fair? No fucking way. You do what you need to get your girl! But you know what? I actually respect you for trying your best to stay righteous but now you are having doubts about yourself! Do not give me this kind of crap! Were all those training sessions for nothing? Do you think the Fishing Instance

was easy to set up?!" Jin continued to rage, at which point Yun decided to intervene by pulling Jin back away from Xiong Da.

Meanwhile, Xiong Da was on the ground reflecting on himself. Jin was right since when was the almighty lawyer and the shameless famous food gourmet so scared of a dirty fighter like Lan Ji Ao? He wiped the bit of blood from his nose and stood up with confidence.

"You are right, Boss. I will do what I need to do. No matter what, I will get Ruo Ying by myself even if I brave through the 18 floors of hell and back!" Xiong Da said with assertiveness.

"Then I will create the arena for you." Jin finally cooled down a bit, unknowingly with the help of Milk via his phone with a calming magic spell.

"Thank you, Boss. I look forward to it." Xiong Da could not help but hug Jin hard despite what he had done to him.

However, little did he know that, even before all that commotion, someone was watching Xiong Da from the side lines ever since he entered the shop. "Xiong Xiong..." Ruo Ying who hid herself among the crowd whispered his name as she could not help but teared a crystal of joy and relief from her eyes.

Ruo Ying adjusted her jacket and her cap as she walked out of the shop before she got noticed by Xiong Da.

## **Chapter 189 Lan Ji Ao**

"Heh, so this is the place where that stupid Hippo wants to duel? What a stupid looking sign board!"

Lan Ji Ao saw the shop sign from afar as he got out of the subway station. In fact, it was so eye-catching that the entire shopping district had been talking about it for a whole day.

"Flashy shop, dead Hippo..." Ji Ao took out his phone and called Ruo Ying.

"Where are you? I just got out of the station. Let's quickly get this done with so that we can continue with what we were doing back home." Ji Ao smirked at the thought of it. On the other hand, Ruo Ying only replied by saying that she was waiting for him at a nearby bus stop.

She felt stupid for the past few months. She felt really stupid to have listened to Ji Ao just because he had the money to pay for her father's debts and bills. Ruo Ying did not want to burden Xiong Da because she sincerely liked him for what he was. She never wanted to give Xiong Da the impression that she was willing to go for Ji Ao.

All she desired was a life free of debt and she did not want to show Xiong Da that side of her family nor her desperate attempts to clear the debts her family owed. He was too considerate, almost to the point of being gullible. Ruo Ying could have used him but she did not expect that her heart was not willing to do so. But now, even with Ji Ao, she was not able to run away from the increasing debts since Ji Ao only paid off the interest so that she would stay with him.

He knew that if he cleared all of her family's debt, Ruo Ying would just break away from him. No, he did not welcome that sort of notion since he l.u.s.t.ed after her beautiful body every day and night.

However, Ruo Ying did not give in to him and his money that easily. Her cultivation of the Esthetical Egret Style allowed her to struggle against Ji Ao's advances, which was also why Ji Ao was always so frustrated. Due to this, he constantly beat her up since he was able to get into neither the mood nor the body.

But as time went by, it seemed that he began to take more enjoyment in beating her body to a pulp rather than attempting copulation with Ruo Ying. The beatings made his blood race, probably the other side of his cultivation, And now with Xiong Da interfering for the second time, he wanted nothing more than to feast on the fears of a scarred hippo once more.

"Shall we go grab a bite to eat first?" Ji Ao wrapped his arms around Ruo Ying when they met up and licked her tender but bruised neck as a show of his affection. Ruo Ying, on the other hand, struggled once more, though all this served was to make Ji Ao's blood boil in anticipation.

"Ahhh, the spirit of the rebellious Egret is back again. Ohh, I have to thank that fat useless Hippo for this part of you." Ji Ao backed away, giving the illusion to Ruo Ying that she had attained a small victory. He knew that once he had beaten Xiong Da, she would be devastated because her white knight would not be able to save her.

"Lan Ji Ao. You came." Xiong Da was standing in front of the shop and was waiting for them patiently while restraining himself from beating Ji Ao up straight away outside on the streets. He wanted to show Jin, the customers, as well as the random passer-bys that he was the greater man compared to this dirty sneaky fellow.

"My, my, would you look at the Hippo. Looks like you are confident that you will win this match. I am pleasantly surprised. Back then, you were nearly pissing your pants when you were about to duel with me." Ji Ao tightened his grip over the girl with a cap, who Xiong Da identified as Ruo Ying. She looked up as she adjusted her cap, looking at Xiong Da in the process.

Their eyes connected from that one glance and both managed to pass their feelings to each other through mere eye contact. "I am sorry. I am sorry I was so foolish. Please save me!" Ruo Ying did not utter a sound but Xiong Da understood the meaning behind her gaze comforted her with one glance. However, the despair in her eyes was also as real as the hope. She knew that the odds of Xiong Da winning was extremely low... but the chance was not zero.

"I will." Xiong Da nodded very slightly and only Ruo Ying managed to capture that gesture.

"So where is this arena you spoke of?" Ji Ao asked. He knew that Xiong Da purposely chose this place so that there would be no home ground advantage for him. But what did he have to be scared for? Xiong Da was just a measly Grade 1 Cultivator a few months ago. At most... very most, if you stretched it, He might just be a Grade 2 Cultivator, which was still something to scoff at.

In fact, there was nothing much to worry about. Xiong Da did not know that Ji Ao had increased his Grade to 4, allowing him to learn a new intermediate technique just a week ago. It wasn't just Xiong Da who had been training. Ji Ao was looking forward to humiliating Xiong Da even more and he used that as his motivation.

All these thoughts were happening in Ji Ao's head while the conflicted trio were walking into the store.

"How about we draw up a contract?" Ji Ao wished to play the same 'game' with Xiong Da as he had done with Ruo Ying.

"No! Ah-" Ruo Ying felt a powerful grip pressed down on her bruised arm, which was obviously Ji Ao in an attempt to silence her. Xiong Da was extremely uncomfortable but Jin was sending him a voice transmission. "Do not do anything rash. Control that anger and only release it when the time is right."

"No need. I already have one prepared here." Xiong Da took out a document file from his storage ring and slammed it down upon the table. "If you win. You will gain all of my material possessions." Xiong Da purposely did not tell him the losing conditions because they were all in the contract. He took out a suitcase from his storage ring and opened it, revealing thousands upon thousands of USD notes right in front of Ji Ao.

"If you lose, Ruo Ying returns to me. Now, sign the contract." Xiong Da demanded as he opened the first page of the contract while he shoved a pen at him. Ruo Ying was extremely shocked by this turn of events. How did Xiong Da have so much money in his hands? Did he loan it all out just to get her back? Was he really that confident in winning or it was all just a ruse?

Meanwhile, Ji Ao was delighted, no, he was exhilarated to see that suitcase. "HA HA HA HA! This is like striking the lottery prematurely!" Ji Ao could not imagine what kind of possessions Xiong Da had as he turned the document file page by page to see stocks, some more cash, and even a couple properties. The documents were legitimate and the contract was definitely a lucky break for Ji Ao.

Without any hesitation, he signed the contract with Xiong Da on the impulse of greed, which made Xiong Da smirk, but only for a second. He immediately reverted to his desperate face as he continued acting desperate for Ruo Ying. Jin then realised why Xiong Da had said that the reputation method from the fight was a small thing. It was because he had already prepared something that would cause Ji Ao's immediate downfall.

"This is Boss Jin. We will be going to the third floor to enter an instance, where we will have our match." Xiong Da explained to Ji Ao as calmly as he could. "What instance? A Dungeon Instance?"

"That does not matter. It is just a dimensional space similar to that of a dungeon instance. It has a boxing ring inside. You and I can fight to our hearts' content there. All of this will be telecasted on the TVs here as a sign of proof and witness." Xiong Da introduced the Panda Muscles. Jin had eventually settled on creating a bigger match ring to stage the fight, which Xiong Da requested. No Monsters, No Powers up or anything... just lots of witnesses.

Convenient witnesses.

"I see. Then you mister. You shall be our judge." Ji Ao knew that in dungeon instances there would be no deaths, which meant that he could choose anyone to be the judge. It also meant that he could go all out against Xiong Da. Although he usually increased his chances of winning by inserting a person he knew to be the judge, he did not care much about that since he was fighting against a Grade 2 Hippo.

"Me?" The man in the middle of the store pointed at himself, confused about why he was selected. He had slightly long unkempt hair that was tied into a short ponytail, wore a red cheapish jacket along with a simple black shirt that had a white skull printed on it



"Yes, you." Ji Ao nodded his head as he beckoned the perplexed man to follow them up onto the stage. The customer also followed them as Ji Ao tried to buddy up with the chosen judge when they went up the stairs.

"Big Brother, you looked like someone who needs money and I feel a connection between the two of us. If you find anything that can tip the match in my favour, it would be appreciated. Also, how about letting me win and I give you some of this sweet sweet cash?" Ji Ao whispered to the customer when Xiong Da was going up the stairs.

"Ooo.. Sure." Mei Shi Zuo replied as he gave Ji Ao a cheeky thumbs up.

"So that bastard really did choose him! That's exactly what Jin's little assistant predicted." Luo Bo said as she ordered a cheesecake and asked Peppers to join her.

"When searching for someone in a crowd, individual neurons tuned to different visual spaces shift their selectivity to colour and direction depending on the task at hand." Peppers tried to flaunt her knowledge regarding Xiong Da's plan while she excitedly waited for her cheesecake.

"Well at least part 1 of the plan has been executed perfectly." Jia Le held tightly onto Bin Yong as she was anxious regarding how things would unfold.

"Don't worry. Xiong Da will have his revenge." Jin said as he was privy to Xiong Da's personal plan.

#### Chapter 190 The Hippo Plan - Part 1

Before that fateful day of the fight, Xiong Da had conversed with new found friends he had fought within Jin's shop. In particular, he had become good buddies with Bin Yong and his group of friends. Their battle against the zombies in the Great Wall of China Instance had bonded them to a level that was more than just friends.

Not just them, Yue Han called his sister Yue Wen along and she too contacted Se Lang and the rest of the police cultivators. Apparently, they too knew who Xiong Da was and did not mind helping. However, not all of them were able to make it but Se Lang and Xue Ping promised to help.

After he explained his situation to Bin Yong and the others in the Pandamonium group chat, they had agreed to help him on the day of the fight. Jin had thought that Xiong Da was so focused on getting his revenge and the girl back that he would just fight this battle for love blindly without a plan. He later apologised to Xiong Da for the outburst that he had displayed. "It was really immature of me to do such a thing," Jin said to Xiong Da as an apology.

"Nah, I really needed and appreciated it. I have been an adult for too long that I was being a little too realistic. I forgot that sometimes love needed some craziness and immaturity." Xiong Da said to Jin and told him that everything was under control though he might still need some of Jin's help.

However, that outburst was not just for him. It was also for Jin himself when he remembered how powerless he had been in almost every situation but that would be left as a story for another day. When Xiong Da, Ji Ao, and Shi Zuo were all teleported into the Panda Muscles, Ruo Ying was left back at the first level of the store feeling both scared and lonely due to a large number of people watching the fight.

"Hi! By any chance, are you Ruo Ying?" Yue Wen, the cultivator of the Healing Maiden Style tapped her shoulder lightly. Ruo Ying acted on reflex and quickly blocked the moment she felt someone touching her shoulders, which startled Yue Wen a little.

"Woah woah woah, calm down! I am one of Xiong Da's friends. Actually, most of us here are friends and acquaintances of his." Yue Wen said as she raised her hand in surrender to show that she came in peace.

"Sorry! Sorry!" Ruo Ying bowed her head slightly to apologise but her cap fell off and everyone finally saw the true beauty she possessed. If not for the bruise by the side of her forehead, her irresistible pulchritude would make every guy in the shop fall in love with her.

"Damn it, that fatty better win." Bin Yong growled in anger as he saw the obvious abuse Ruo Ying had to experience. Even Jia Le and Luo Bo wanted to go into the Panda Muscles and teach Ji Ao a lesson.

"Don't worry. I can heal your physical wounds... but as for the heart, I will leave that to our dear fatty." Yue Wen winked at Ruo Ying as she started to pour her chi into Ruo Ying. "The wounds might not disappear instantly but my chi would help revitalise your meridian points, allowing you to recover faster." Yue Wen added.

"Milk, we have a potential customer that has been injured on the 1st floor. Although Yue Wen has it covered, I want our patient to be in tip top condition. Come here once you are available." Jin made a phone call through his Panda Port to let the others know that the boss of this shop would not leave any injustice hanging. Milk eventually came by to attend to Ruo Ying but Yue Wen had already accelerated the healing process. There was almost nothing Milk really need to do but she still cast a calming spell for Ruo Ying.

"Ms Ruo Ying, I am a policeman working at the Tiangong Police Station." Se Lang presented himself in front of Ruo Ying as he walked into the shop, almost as if he had been called to the scene of a crime. Not to mention the timing was impeccable and right beside him was Police Detective Xue Ping. Se Lang went closer to Ruo Ying and whispered. "And an acquaintance of Xiong Da."

He immediately returned to his professional stance and started to ask Ruo Ying a few questions. "May I query about the injury? It does not seem like a fall." Se Lang asked. Ruo Ying was speechless. She did not know where to start and suddenly felt that she had underestimated Xiong Da's love for her and started to break down crying.

"Miss, if you feel that you need a quiet place to voice out your troubles, we can provide you with that." Xue Ping sat beside Ruo Ying and passed her a tissue which Jin conveniently placed a box of right beside them.

"No, it's okay. I want to say it in front of all of you. Xiong Xiong is doing so much for me. I will fully expose Ji Ao even though he said I would regret doing so." Ruo Ying wiped her tears away and started to pour her entire story out to the small group. It was around this time that the other customers noticed that every station was tuned to the boxing ring in Panda Muscles.

"Sorry to intrude on your entertainment time. I would like to ask all of you to be witnesses for the fight. If you are unhappy and do not wish to watch it, I will give you a refund." Jin shouted but the customers were not angry at all.

In fact, they were all looking forward to it.

"Brother Xiong Da is fighting?! Oh, I can already see him trashing that arrogant shithole." A male customer voiced his opinion out after seeing how Ji Ao acted in front of the shop. The ruckus was too obvious to not overlook.

"Anyone up for a bet? Loser gets to buy Zhen Qing's black pepper pork buns. Of course, I am definitely voting for Brother Xiong Da." One of the usual gambling customers shouted out and they some even supported him.

"Damn it, here I thought I would be the only one who thought that Brother Xiong Da would be winning this. I thought I could make a bet out of this." The gambling customer spoke up again and some of them laughed.

"The camaraderie in this store..." Ruo Ying noticed that almost everyone knew who Xiong Da was and they were earnestly rooting for him.

"Xiong Da had influenced not just me but almost everyone else to work hard in this dungeon supplier store. I think this shop would indeed be different without him around. Also at the rate he is training and cultivating, he might even beat me in terms of cultivation. So trust him, he will win you back." Jin smiled at Ruo Ying and he offered her an onigiri and plain water to calm herself down.

"Part 2 of the hippo plan executed." Jin thought to himself after seeing Ruo Ying finally started to trust Xiong Da's friends.