

Dungeon S 191

Chapter 191 The Hippo Plan - Part 2

"Gentlemen, are you ready?" Shi Zuo was standing at the centre of the brightly lit boxing ring but Ji Ao sniggered and proposed something to Xiong Da.

"Hey, Xiong Da. How about we fight like boxers? No weapons. Just you and me with our fists?" Ji Ao took out his shirt and revealed a series of large crocodile scales tattooed on his back. He had gotten it to show his ferocity. Ji Ao wanted to do this in case Xiong Da had some high grade weapon that he might have acquired since he was now seen as a rich fat guy. Without weapons, Ji Ao thought that it would increase his chance to win even further.

Damn, if Ji Ao knew Xiong Da was rich, he would have plummeted him into pieces the first time round and extorted money from him. Ahh but this would be equally a good chance too.

"Sure," Xiong Da took out his shirt to reveal his enormously big belly, so white and tender fresh. Ji Ao could not help but chuckle as he flexed his abdominal muscles to reveal his six packs. "Just warming up." Ji Ao smiled deviously at Xiong Da but he did not care.

"Since I am the witness, can I propose the rules of engagement?" Shi Zuo said and Ji Ao readily agreed. "One round, unlimited time. No physical weapons, fight till death since this is an instance. Simple enough? Can I have your storage rings and shirts for safe keeping?" Both agreed and they gave their shirts and storage rings to him.

What Xiong Da did not know was that Ji Ao had already told Shi Zuo what to do and the rules of engagement which Shi Zuo readily agreed.

"Ooo, that sneaky guy is definitely going to use magical scrolls or temporary inscriptions." Luo Bo tried to figure what Shi Zuo was saying as she watched the telecast from the Stations.

"Does not matter," Jin commented that knowing how strong Xiong Da was even at just Grade 3. He would not be surprised if Xiong Da could overpower his opponent with raw physical strength. If the fishing service instance was working for Xiong Da as intended, Jin would not be surprised if he was at Grade 4 right now.

Xiong Da started to do some simple footwork and jumped on the spot. Ji Ao laughed at the ridiculous hippo trying to imitate a proper boxer. Ji Ao betted that Xiong Da did not know that he was once a professional boxer and even had made a small name for himself.

"Ready? Fight!" Shi Zuo shouted as he quickly stepped back and out of the way of the two's fighting. Xiong Da went in hoping to strike Ji Ao with a punch but the Croc dodged just in time.

"So slow!" Ji Ao shouted as he delivered a counterpunch straight into the fatty's belly. Xiong Da immediately fell to the ground from the counterpunch and saw four crocodile silhouettes laughing at the hippo that was on the floor.

Ji Ao did not give him any chance and continued to kick and stomp on Xiong Da without any care. Each kick and stomp were forceful and gave no quarters for Xiong Da to even recover. "This is way too easy!!!

I should have just allowed him to punch me once." Ji Ao thought to himself as he sniggered and continued by going over him and sat on his belly.

"This is the most comfortable punching bag I have ever enjoyed." Ji Ao continued to punch repeatedly as Xiong Da tried to block the attacks to his face with his hands. The jabs from Ji Ao started to show its effects as Xiong Da arms and chest started to bleed.

This was one of the passive technique of the Crazy Crocodile Style. Able to bleed the opponent despite using fists.

"Xiong Xiong!" Ruo Ying saw Xiong Da being beaten so badly that she wanted to go to the third floor and stop Ji Ao. Xue Ping grabbed her hand and told her to calm down.

"Calm down?! Xiong Xiong is risking his life for me! Betting his personal possession for me! And he is bleeding like crazy just for me! How can I stand here and not do anything? I did nothing but hurt his feelings for the past few months and I have regretted my stupid choice for ignoring him ever since because I really love him so much that I do not want to hurt him with my problems!" Ruo Ying broke down again as she tried to struggle out of Xue Ping's grab. She even portrayed her cultivation of the Esthetic Egret Style but it was no match for the Prancing Puma.

"That beetch!" Ji Ao apparently heard the whole conversation through a loudspeaker from Shi Zuo's phone. "You! Are you also in cahoots!?" Ji Ao realised that the guy he chose was a mistake.

"Does not matter, this Xiong Xiong of yours has been broken by me and you will be too." Ji Ao cursed under his breath.

"That was not part of the plan at all, Bro." Xiong Da looked at Shi Zuo with tears. Tears of joy and happiness that Ruo Ying felt that way for him.

"Luo Bo wants to play cupid again. I am just the cupid bow." Shi Zuo shrugged his shoulders and Xiong Da could only laugh. "Please thank Ms Cupid for me."

"What are you laughing at?!" Ji Ao wanted to throw another punch but Xiong Da eyes turned extremely deadly and even managed to catch Ji Ao's punch with ease.

"I was just playing with you but playtime is over because the Hippo needs Egret for some alone time together." Xiong Da said with a grin on his face as he portrayed his Hungry Hippo Style.

"One... Two... Three? Four?!" Ji Ao was panicking as he saw four hippos right above Xiong Da's head and then he felt something crushed so easily and realised that it was his fist. They were all into pieces. Only after that realisation did he notice the pain.

"ARRRRRGGGHHH!!!!" Ji Ao screamed.

Xiong Da returned the favours by holding onto his right arm and broke them into two and later crushed them with raw brute strength. "Oh, I purposely chose this boxing ring because I knew you were a boxer and now I am beating you in your own field. To show just how pathetic you are."

Afterwards, Xiong Da held onto Ji Ao's legs and slammed with a simple overhead throw which crippled his back immediately. "I am going to crush your bones one by one. Especially your hands and legs which were used to abuse Ruo Ying."

It was then that Jin suddenly turned off the telecast and all the stations were back to the dungeon fights that were ongoing.

"AWWWWW BOSSS!!" The entire crowd was booing at Boss Jin.

"Hey! There might be minors in this shop okay? It was kind of obvious who would win." Jin said and almost every customer started complaining. "If you wish to continue, you can buy the streaming download feature. If you want, you can watch the playback of this match. I assure you this way you will not miss any of it." Jin said nonchalantly.

"Damn it, Boss, if I did not respect you, I would have beaten you up now on the spot for being this shameless and ruthless in business." One of the customers complained as he quickly signed up for the streaming feature in the Pandamonium.

Jin could only smile politely. "It's nothing personal... It's just good business."

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Chapter 192 The Hippo Plan -Part 3

"Very sneaky technique. I like it." Yun smirked as she sent her thoughts to Jin as they saw many customers logging onto their Pandamonium accounts just to watch the fight unfold. That few Yuan for the subscription? It was well worth it to see such a bastard get a beating.

"I am not wrong, there are some minors in the store." He glanced sideways towards Bu Dong and Yue Han, which made Yun roll her eyes while maintaining her smile. Even Bu Dong and Yue Han bought the subscription just to watch the brutal violence that was happening in Panda Muscles.

"Wait, wait! Please wait!" Ji Ao was trying to get out of the mess he was in but there was really no way out. The storage rings were given to Shi Zuo and Xiong Da even ripped off his belt and shoes away in case of any hidden weapons. All he was left with were his pants.

However, Ji Ao could not run away even if he wanted to. Xiong Da had broken his spine into two and Ji Ao was in extreme pain. If it weren't for his cultivation, he would have already been paralysed and killed. What he did not understand was how Xiong Da managed to cultivate to a Grade similar to his in such a short period of time. "Was he not a Grade 1 Cultivator for the past few months? Did he take some demon drugs to gain this kind of insane power?" He accidentally voiced out his thoughts and these were overheard by Xiong Da.

"Drugs? Hahahahahaha!" Xiong Da grabbed Ji Ao by his neck and brought it close to his face. "The power of wealth and hard work. A mere jerk like you would not understand how desperate and determined I was to crush you." Xiong Da punched him in his stomach again, making Ji Ao feel like fainting before Xiong Da threw him to the ground again.

"You think you will get away with this? You think I will not come back even stronger just to bite you?" Ji Ao was bitter when facing his impending defeat yet Xiong Da was laughing loudly.

"Hahahahaha!!! Do not worry, you will not find the opportunity to do so." Xiong Da went forward and kicked his opponent's face, causing him to fly to the corner of the boxing ring post.

"Bullshit! I will find you! I will crush you! I will make sure Ruo Ying suffers even more because of this!" Ji Ao could not even talk properly at this point but he could only curse Xiong Da in his thoughts.

"Hey, hey, no sleeping." Xiong Da brought Ji Ao's hand out of the boxing ring and stomped on it hard, causing it to dislocate entirely. For the next ten minutes, Xiong Da had his fun breaking him again and again before he asked Shi Zuo for his warclub to end his opponent- no, his victim's suffering immediately.

It was indeed a good thing that Jin had switched the channels off from the main store and directed them to the Pandamonium because it was indeed way too brutal. It was also in the interest of Xiong Da to not let Ruo Ying watch the full thing since she might not be able to take the brutality of it.

"Good. Let him die that way." Ruo Ying felt more satisfied than ever when Luo Bo showed her the broadcast, which discredited Jin's thought. "I guess the hate for him was more than just superficial." Jin reminded himself not to underestimate the other gender's feelings.

"Now that he is dead, he should be in the recovery instance. Time for Part 3 of the plan. Boss Jin, do you mind letting us enter the recovery instance?" Detective Xue Ping was ready to act on the next part of the plan with Se Lang. She might not have known Xiong Da directly but upon hearing the cruel things Ruo Ying had been subject to, Xue Ping could not wait to arrest this guy.

"Yes. I do mind." Jin shook his head which caused everyone to be surprised. They thought that Jin wanted to help Xiong Da catch this guy?

"The recovery instance is a highly controlled environment as well as part of a dungeon experience for other customers. The other customers have the right to rest. From what I see, we have things all under control. Besides, he has nowhere to run when he comes out of the recovery instance." Jin replied and he was not wrong.

Besides, from what Jin knew, the recovery instance did not have an entrance and only an exit. He did not query if it was part of the System's design but he would check it out once this entire thing blew over. He knew that only Milk and Yun were able to access it since he tried to do so a few times after he found out Peppers tried to enter it once but was denied access too.

"I understand, we will wait outside the exit of the recovery instance." Xue Ping beckoned Se Lang to follow her as they saw the hero of the day walking down the stairs. People started to cheer for him.

"Brother Xiong Da, that was intense, man! How did you get to Grade 4 so quickly?!" Bin Yong congratulated him.

"All thanks to Boss Jin. He worked hard for me too." Xiong Da laughed heartily but subsequently stopped because he saw that Ruo Ying was too guilty to look at him in the eye. He thanked the rest first for their support and his friends for coming to help him before approaching her.

"Hey," Xiong Da stood in front of her.

"...Thank you. Xiong Da." Ruo Ying did not dare to look at him in the eye for all the wrong decisions she had made. Xiong Da wanted to console her but he was interrupted by some loud shouts coming from the stairs.

"I HAVE DONE NOTHING WRONG! LET GO OF ME!" Ji Ao tried to struggle but Se Lang and Xue Ping's combined cultivation strength stopped him from escaping. Not to mention, he was handcuffed by an inscription that suppressed the strength of a cultivator, which made Ji Ao's mouth the only thing he was free to use.

"I have friends that will get me out. You watch out, hippo. Next time I see you, you will be hippo meat." Ji Ao snapped at them.

"Do not worry, those friends will join you." Xue Ping scoffed at him. The previous time that Xue Ping and Lee An had come to visit Jin after a raid was based on information from Xiong Da's private investigations. Ji Ao was not only going to face charges for forced imprisonment and assault but also for the pedalling of drugs too.

"Oh and remember the contract that you signed? It's a contract of forfeit. A forfeit of your entire material possessions too. See you in court for your charges." Xiong Da said with confidence.

"Court?!" Ji Ao was too angry to even think.

"You do not know him? Well then, doesn't it suck to be you. He is from HHH law firm." Se Lang pushed him out of the store and towards a waiting patrol car.

"Fatty... HHH law firm? Oh my god! You are that infamous attorney that co-founded a law firm at the age of 34?" Luo Bo suddenly understood why she had always felt that Xiong Da was so familiar.

"Oh, you know me?" Xiong Da stuck his tongue out to pretend to be innocent.

"How did you even have the time to work on cases when you were out here training?" Jin was pleasantly surprised too but Xiong Da just shrugged before Ruo Ying stared at him.

"I..." She tried to voice her own opinion. Xiong Da immediately turned back and said. "I am still the Xiong Da that you know and love. I too am sorry that I tried to hide things. I just wanted to see if someone was really genuine about me rather than just for my money. I am also sorry I was too weak to save you back then."

"And... I still like you." Xiong Da scratched his head as he said it so innocently.

"Idiot Xiong Xiong. Why did you say it out loud?" Ruo Ying nodded gently and finally showed a faultless smile as she poked Xiong Da's belly.

"I LIKE RUO YINGGGGGG!!" Xiong Da unhesitantly picked Ruo Ying up. The subject of his intimacy squealed a little before laughing. The rest of his friends were also happy that everything had ended well for him.

Xiong Da's efforts had finally paid off.

Chapter 193 Being Followed

Everything ended without a hitch in Jin's shop. There was even a slight boost to revenue thanks to the stunt he pulled during Xiong Da's fight. It was then that he realised he had forgotten something.

"Yun, did Lai Fu come by to claim his fishing instance I promised him?" Jin began to close his shop and decided to return home to do some housework after also remembering all the clothes he had yet to wash.

"He actually came by and asked if he could come by next week instead. Apparently, the notice was too short for his friends to rush down and they needed some more preparation time." Yun yawned as she walked back with Jin.

"Ah, I am not surprised. By the way, how is the lottery going? Anyone manage to grab the big prize yet?" Jin asked as they walked back together.

"Not really, but at least there were some claims and they were quite satisfied with the lottery considering it's somewhat a 'free' gift for the things they bought from the district," Yun said but suddenly she felt distressed.

"What's wrong? A headache?" Jin noticed the sudden change in her expression.

"No, it's the System. Someone is trying to break into your shop but do not worry too much." Yun recovered from her weird headache and told Jin about it.

"Why didn't the System just tell me directly? I am still holding my phone. Also, do you want to go back and take a look at the culprit?" Oddly, Jin did not feel any panic at all since Yun had just said that there was nothing to worry about.

"Maybe it feels that it would be more natural to announce it through me than through your phone." Yun gave a weak smile but got serious as she later realised they were being followed too.

"Why do I feel that the store break in and being followed by some obvious people is kind of connected?" Jin casually said as he turned around and took out Bam in Katana form. Yun did not do anything for the moment and continued to stay alert.

Multiple men appeared from the shadows and they were all well dressed. Black suit, leather shoes and sunglasses despite the fact that it was night time. Perhaps the moonlight was too blinding for them.

"Break in? Did I order you to do that Ku Wai?" A female voice was heard behind the group of men as they made way for her to go through. Jin later saw that she looked fairly young but she was actually in a wheelchair with a familiar looking person pushing her through the crowd.

"No, Princess. I did not do that nor did I order that. Do you want me to send people to investigate?" Ku Wai asked politely.

"It's fine, the break-in attempt is under control." Jin blurted out, which caused each and every of the black suits to take their pistols out and aimed at him. However, just a gentle rise of the lady's hand made them lower their guns.

"I am sorry...Jin, was it?" The lady spoke as Ku Wai pushed her wheelchair forward where there was a street light that illuminated her beauty that was hidden from the shadows. Her facial physical features were comparable to Yun's fairly strict but appealing elegance. Her hair was long and slightly curly at the edge of her hair and she was wearing a tight henley shirt which revealed her slim figure.

"Yes, I am." Jin nodded and sheath his sword as Yun had her arms folded.

"I am sorry for the sudden disruption of your daily life but let's just say I would like a favour from you even though we had barely met." The lady got straight to the point before even saying her name.

"Before anything, can I ask for your name and why do we need to talk under such circumstances?" Jin asked but it seemed everyone except for Ku Wai was irritated. Only a glance from Ku Wai allowed the rest of the black suits back down from their usual aggression.

"Ah, I apologise! Sometimes I get too preoccupied with things that I forget simple stuff but I am surprised that you do not know of me. I am Hu Yang Ling, the youngest daughter of the head of the Royal Zodiac Tiger Sect." Yang Ling said.

"Oh, no wonder you wished to meet me this way." Jin realised that it must have been hard for important figures of the country to walk around peacefully without being targeted.

"Firstly, thank you for sparing Ku Wai. He might not be the strongest nor most talented in my sect but he is a very loyal person that has protected me in many instances. It would indeed have been disappointing if I had lost him. Also, I presume I also need to thank you for the panda photo that you gave Ku Wai. I wanted a picture of a baby panda on a whim and did not expect Ku Wai to really try and obtain it so I thank you for doing the job for him." Yang Ling said.

"However, I came here to do more than just thank you." Yang Ling became serious as she beckoned Jin to follow her to her car for a private conversation.

"I will return home first and help you with your laundry since obviously, you do not have time to do so," Yun spoke like a true mother as Jin put his hands together and said sorry before following Yang Ling to her car.

"Your wife?" Yang Ling asked casually, hoping to ease the tension between them before the serious conversation started.

"No. Just a ...close relative." Jin could not possibly say that Yun was his mother, especially since they had the means to dig into his past.

"I see." Yang Ling seemed relieved for some particular reason before the black suits opened the SUV. Jin saw that the interior of the SUV was styled like a limousine. Seats at the back of the SUV were facing

each other and the seats were clearly made of high quality material. He then noticed that Yang Ling being on a wheelchair was not an act. Ku Wai was assisting her into the SUV.

The moment the SUV doors closed, they suddenly started to move, which Jin made realise he had been tricked into entering the car. "Jin, I assure you that this is not a kidnapping." Yang Ling tried to explain the urgency they were in but it was not helping her case that everything was pointing to a kidnapping. Jin seemed like he was ready to fight back.

"Calm down Jin. I swear on the honour of my name, I promise that Princess really does need your help." Ku Wai bowed his head a little to show the sincerity of Yang Ling's request. Jin calmed down before he folded his arms.

"What do you want from me?" Jin's words were short and direct.

"I know that you are a dungeon supplier. I have even sent people to your shop to spy on you ever since Ku Wai returned from the hospital and we found out how he was defeated. Those monsters that are in the dungeon... they are too unique, to the point that I doubt the reports delivered by my men." Yang Ling started to praise Jin.

"Please get to the point," Jin said.

"Well, although its true that the selection of your monsters is still... erm... lacking in variety, it is justifiable since your cultivation is lower than Ku Wai's. But still, I have to admit that I even if I have dabbled in dimensional instance technology before, have no way to recreate what you have created. Even the dungeon suppliers that the Royal Zodiac have contracted were unable to do what you did." Yang Ling babbled on, which made Jin slightly uncomfortable.

"So... I want you to create a dungeon for me." Yang Ling leaned forward as she felt very excited saying it.

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Chapter 194 Come To My Shop

"Then just come to my shop. I see no reason why I should accommodate you more than any other customer." Jin said bluntly, which made Yang Ling laugh while Ku Wai frowned.

"Mind your words, dungeon supplier. You might have bested me but that does not mean that you have the right to insult the Princess!" Ku Wai raised his voice despite being humble in his request minutes ago.

"No, no, it's fine." Yang Ling stopped laughing and reverted back to her serious face as she took out a suitcase and opened it to show stacks of neatly placed cash right in front of Jin.

"I appreciate the offer and while I admit that this amount of money is indeed very tempting, I will not just create a dungeon for you for money." Jin knew that he had the upper hand right now in this

conversation because Yang Ling had praised him. He might not know how much he could push this potential investor cum customer but he thought that trying would not hurt him. He had nothing to lose since they were in need of his help and he did not need theirs.

What he knew was that she had never experienced the joy and exhilaration experienced by the customers/spies who had actually participated and had only read through reports, which was unacceptable in his eyes. It was akin to telling a chef that you liked their food because you had seen other people eating it, but you did not wish to eat the food because you wanted the chef to create something new just for you to eat.

"Is it because you need samples of monsters? If that's the case, our Sect has many strong monsters for you to observe, experiment and even fight against." Yang Ling said as if it was nothing to her.

"No. That is not what I meant." Jin shook his head before continuing to explain his 'justification' in a more logical sense.

"I do not know your cultivation style or grade. I do not know how you fight. I do not know the reason behind your sudden obsession with my dungeons. I do not know if you will just take my technology and recreate it since these are my trade secrets and also, you have not tried any of my dungeons before, so I do not feel obliged to help you." Jin tried to justify himself but in the end, he revealed the real reason behind his rejection.

"My cultivation was crippled ever since the moment I lost the movement of my legs." Yang Ling spoke seriously to which Ku Wai seemed shocked since she had spoken the truth to a stranger. If outsiders knew what the other Royal Zodiac Sects knew, that her cultivation was really crippled, they would take advantage of the Royal Zodiac Tiger Sect.

Currently, almost every Sect thought that Yang Ling was in a wheelchair to hide her cultivation from other Sects. In the previous Royal Zodiac generations, there were one or two royal cultivators that hid their true cultivation by pretending to be sick. They assumed that Yang Ling was doing the same too.

"I want you to create a special dungeon for me so that I can remember the days of cultivating and fighting. I also heard that fighting your monsters provides spiritual force. There might be a small chance that I might recover my cultivation if I absorb enough spiritual force. It's a selfish reason but the kindness that you showed Ku Wai along with the fact that you are a dungeon supplier made me believe that I can trust you for this task." Jin noticed that Yang Ling spoke with some truth in her words. He did not know why but he felt she was still hiding something. At the very least they were not all lies.

"Lost your legs?" Jin thought about how similar she was to Ke Mi, the Zither Mistress.

"I am sorry to ask but have you not tried other cultivation styles to remedy your injury?" Jin asked.

"Are you actually stupid? The only cultivation you are allowed to cultivate in a specific Royal Zodiac Sect is that particular cultivation and no other." Ku Wai's had some angst in his words as Jin displayed his ignorance to Yang Ling.

"Secretly, I did. They did not work though. The only reason my father still keeps me around is that I am very good with numbers and management." Yang Ling replied, which reminded Jin that he still had yet to visit his ex-girlfriend for some advice on city management.

When the car pulled up, Jin realised he was back at his store. While it was easy to walk to his store, taking a car was somewhat of a different matter since the roads did not connect his house to the Tiangong shopping district.

"How's the break in attempt being handled?" Jin asked Yun, who was still back at his house doing housework, through his phone and she replied that the attempt was just simple lockpicking. The lawbreaker did not stay any longer after failing a few times.

"Why am I back at my store?" Jin asked Yang Ling.

"Did you not say that I have not tried your dungeons so you won't help me? Well, I am going to try them now." Yang Ling replied and Ku Wai also insisted on coming along. "That way, you will know how I fight and I get to have a first hand look at your technology to see if they are really as good as what was stated in the report." Yang Ling said in a way to soothe her possible 'saviour'.

Yang Ling inwardly admitted that she was being impulsive and did not think through much since she usually got what she wanted without much effort. She did not expect that the name of the Royal Zodiac did not mean much to Jin as compared to other people. How could one be that oblivious to a Royal Zodiac Sect, much less the family that controlled it?

Besides, she could not ignore the prophecy the Zodiac fortune teller had said since half of it had already come true. "A picture might be worth a thousand words but the picture of a baby panda is worth much more."

Despite being such a cringing prophecy, the two hundred year old fortune teller was never wrong. Many of the Royal Zodiac Sect members that had heeded her advice and managed to grasp the meaning behind her cryptic yet embarrassing prophecies always did extremely well in life. Hence, she could not help but think that Ku Wai or Jin might be the one that would be able to turn her life around.

However, even Ku Wai did not know about this prophecy of hers and thought that the baby panda photo was just based on a whim.

"Fine, considering you are some sort of a big shot and afraid that people might target you, I am willing to let you in after opening hours. But only this once. I will not entertain requests like this in the future. If you want to experience my dungeons again, you will have to do it during opening hours." Jin said as he let Yang Ling and Ku Wai enter the shop while he asked the other black suits to move away as they could attract unwanted attention, especially since it was in the middle of the night.

"That's more like it!" Yang Ling smiled as she entered the shop with Ku Wai. Jin subsequently tried to explain how the shop worked, totally forgetting that Yang Ling had read reports on his shop and already knew what to do.

"So Jin, what dungeon should I pick?" Yang Ling asked as she continued to look at the menu.

"If it were up to me, I would say the Music Theatre Instance." Jin knew not many chose that dungeon because it was really too hard despite the fact that the dungeon was already modified to fit cultivator's level.

Even Bu Dong, Bin Yong and his group or the Venus Four would not be able to clear the Music Theatre in one go. Only the Venus Four managed to clear it after a few tries and they even thought that was the hardest dungeon they ever cleared. It was however very rewarding after clearing the instance.

Jin eventually told them that the Music Theatre dungeon instance was some sort of dungeons for veterans despite the modification to the difficulty level. The number of choices and the subtle choices that one could make in the dungeon made it hard for cultivators who were used to simple dungeon crawlers.

It was also an attempt to throw off the System learning capability and see if the System could subsequently recreate a similar dungeon like this. Jin also used this Music Theatre instance as an experience to create the Gentlebear instance but it was still working in progress due to the complexity in choices he wanted cultivators to make in a mystery dungeon.

"Okay, let's go with that then." Yang Ling agreed as she was then ushered to Station 3, which was the closest to the cash port.

After the payment, both Ku Wai and Yang Ling entered the instance with both excitement and trepidation.

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Chapter 195 Terrifying Tiger

"So, the two of you are the new guards eh?" A Panda spoke up when Yang Ling and Ku Wai teleported in. He was smoking his cigar, wearing a tweed cap along with a coat and had an eyepatch covering his right eye.

"And you are?" Yang Ling was unfamiliar with the Music Theatre Instance since her reports only consisted of the Goblin Forest and the Bank Heist Instance. Ku Wai wanted to stand in front of Yang Ling but she stopped him for a moment and allowed the One Eyed Panda to speak.

"Name's Hui. I am the driver and manager of this musical group, The Enlightened. Boss Jin said that he would be bringing in a few guards once in a while as a favour for me." The Panda looked at Yang Ling who was in a wheelchair as he continued to smoke his cigar.

"Well, if he let you in, you must be good at something." Hui threw the cigar on the floor and asked them to follow him. It was then that Yang Ling and Ku Wai finally took in the sights, at this particular instance.

They were in the outskirts of a small village. Apparently, the travelling music group was restocking their wares and supplies for the trip to the next town for their performance. Hui, the One Eyed Panda, brought the duo to meet the Enlightened members.

"They might seem like a weird group of monsters but they are one damn good music group." Hui introduced them to the group. Ke Mi, The Zither Mistress and her pet, the Great White Snake, solely

played the zither and she was a master at it. The Fire and Ice Wyrms were called Mr Hot and Ms Cold respectively and they somehow learnt how to play the drums and bass. Lastly, Hui introduced them to Ms Sandy, the Sand Witch as well as the main vocal of their group.

Jin never used the Sand Witch despite her being gifted by the system. The Music Theatre was not just a dungeon instance for the Sand Witch but it was actually her home at the same time. She was the only one that Jin had difficulty moving into the Sanctum of Worlds no matter how much he enticed her.

Ms Sandy also refused all of Jin's gifts, including the equipping of cards to increase her equipment level. She said she would not equip any new skills or weapons until someone managed to defeat the Music Theatre. Jin was suspecting that she might be an extreme introvert who only come out when she had to work. Regardless, she did her work splendidly and never cease to amaze Jin when it was her time to shine.

Jin also guessed that it was because of her that the Music Theatre Instance was extremely hard for the cultivators. Nearly everyone who fought in that instance could not get past a certain stage.

Hence, Jin figured that he should give Yang Ling the hardest instance to try so that she might be put off and not disturb Jin in the future despite the fact that she might be a potential investor. Jin realised that he might not want to meddle with the Royal Zodiacs since they always brought their own set of troubles along with them... especially if they began negotiating partnerships. Jin already had enough on his plate at the moment and politics on top of it all would just be too much. That was also one of the reasons why Jin kept his curiosity at bay when he found out that Yang Ling's cultivation had been crippled.

"We are leaving in a few minutes and travelling to the Grassland's open-air music theatre for the performance. Your objective is to prevent the musical troupe from getting injured and if possible... prevent the truck from damage in the process. Boss Jin said it is be fairly sturdy but if damaged it would be hard to repair since they did not build such things in this era." Hui said as they finished introducing themselves to the troupe.

Ku Wai was surprised to see a modern truck with an open load bed in a medieval setting. Their luggage and belongings, which he assumed were the musical instruments, were placed near the driver's seat while the rest sat at the other end of the open load bed.

Yang Ling was given the seat at the front with Hui since her disability made her very vulnerable and a cramped space that allowed for limited mobility would serve as a hindrance. It was quite clear at the moment that Yang Ling was only serving as a hindrance. Despite this, Yang Ling still persevered, disregarding the looks she received from the monsters.

"Do not worry about it Princess, I will protect the troupe when necessary." Ku Wai said as he closed the truck door and jumped into the open load box of the truck. "Hmmp, to be frank, the Enlightened members themselves already have a few tricks of their own too so you guys being guards were just for additional precaution... although it is starting to seem more of a hindrance rather than help." Hui was being sarcastic towards Yang Ling but she did not respond.

She knew she could not move but she did not know that Hui said that line to almost every cultivator he met. It just so happened that his words stung more than they should have. The ride began and the

monsters were happily chatting with each other... as expected of the bodyguard, Ku Wai was silent throughout the entire trip.

Needless to say, not long after they departed from the small village, they encountered some trouble. There was a Praying Mantis eating flesh at the side of the road with a destroyed caravan laying beside it.

Ku Wai saw the danger ahead and climbed out of the truck. Yang Ling also opened the side door of the truck, only to be stopped by Ku Wai. "Princess, it will be fine, I can handle this alone. Just relax and watch the show." Ku Wai said to her as he closed the door again, which made Yang Ling quite frustrated. "I can handle it on my own too even without my cultivation." She thought to herself.

The Praying Mantis stopped chewing the flesh on the side of the road and turned to find another caravan in the distance along with a man walking towards it. It did not care much since it was enjoying the flesh it was eating so why should it stop? Its prey was coming towards it so it did not need to move from its eating spot.

Yang Ling had already guessed that they would end up in one of Jin's premade dungeons. She was smart like that. Due to his princess' deduction, he had brought his full gear along with him. Unlike the time when he used only his fists against Jin, he was far better equipped.

Temporary inscriptions of the Tiger gave him additional strength but also a boost in agility and accuracy. He had even equipped two small triangular metal plates that had strips of metals protruding from the tip, symbolising a claw.

Since his enemy was still stationary and enjoying its snack, he might as well take the initiative. He wanted to finish it in one blow before the battle got drawn out. It would be wise to save Yang Ling's skills for a later part of the dungeon.

"Terrific Tiger Style, Sprint Strike of the Tiger." With both metal plates, which he usually used as shields, aiming at the praying mantis, he drew back his arms and squat down, all while leaning forward. With a kick, his entire body became a deadly arrow that cut through the wind and towards the Praying Mantis.

CLANG!

Metal clashed with metal. The scythes on the praying mantis' forelegs deflected the claw shields and it even tried to follow up with a slash, but Ku Wai twisted his body just in time to evade the attack.

"So this Praying Mantis knows the art of counterattacking. Interesting." Ku Wai took a few steps back and went into his fighting stance. The praying mantis even beckoned it to come closer, taunting him.

"Boss Jin sure has some interesting monsters." Yang Ling talked to herself as she started to take notes in the truck.

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Chapter 196 Troublemaker

The Praying Mantis did not give Ku Wai any quarters. It executed its swings precision and power. While the shield did reduce Ku Wai's mobility, he was thankful that he had brought it out to fight against this monster. He had made some careless miscalculations regarding the monster, which nearly cost him his arms if it were not for the shields blocking the attacks for him.

However, Ku Wai could see that the shield would not be able to last if the Praying Mantis continued being relentless in its attacks. As much of a musclehead he was, he too read the reports on Jin's dungeons.

And from the reports, he concluded with one statement... they were difficult. It was not just because they were story-based but the monsters Jin created through dimensional technology was tip top. Upon fighting against this particular praying mantis, which was definitely not the boss, he could already see that Jin's skill in creating monsters was superior to the dungeon suppliers the Royal Zodiacs contracted.

And that was without even mentioning the atmosphere and actual characters. The customers might think that it was easy for the dungeon suppliers to create an instance and fill it with the environment or non-playable characters like Hui the One Eyed Panda. It was not. To bring life into an empty world that was decided and ruled over by programming rules and a high manipulation of magic was not a feat to be underestimated.

Unfortunately, both Ku Wai and Yang Ling did not know the truth. Jin was not actually that smart, after all, it was only because of the System that Jin was able to do what he did. Yet Jin was not pushing the system to its the maximum potential because of the fallout they had had with each other.

True, the System was still giving out missions, but the missions were not as forgiving as they used to be. Perhaps the System did not really care much about Jin any more.

But with limited feedback and Yun as the middleman, playing on both teams, it was difficult for Jin and the System to reconcile.

Thankfully, Ku Wai had sufficient experience in combat and eventually learnt the patterns of the praying mantis. Hence, he started to be more aggressive in his attacks and even used the claw shields to their limits in order to close the gap between the praying mantis and himself.

He pushed forth until he was in contact with the praying mantis' underbelly. "Intermediate Fist Arts, The Ambush of the Terrifying Terrific Tiger!" He shouted loudly and his hand turned slightly shadowy in nature and yet his fist was stronger than steel. The punch was strong enough to not only cause a dent through the praying mantis' carapace body but it went into its organs too.

Ku Wai did not stop there as he poured his chi through his fist and both Hui and Yang Ling could see the Praying Mantis melt right in front of their eyes. It was part of the Terrific Tiger Style to insert chi into the cultivator's punches. But Ku Wai did more than that. He let his own chi pulsate through the praying mantis causing its body and its functions to be disrupted like microwaves vibrating the molecules and exciting it to the point where it melted.

Later, Ku Wai took out a handkerchief to wipe the melted parts of the mantis away from his hand and proceed to look at the wares that were destroyed in the caravan. "Nothing much of use nor any hidden treasure. Guess the report is true."

Ku Wai remembered that Jin's dungeons only gave their rewards at the end now, as compared to other dungeon suppliers who will place certain prizes in monsters' body. Jin used to do that but felt it was too inconvenient and broke the pacing of the story if they were in a theme.

"All clear, we can go ahead." Ku Wai knocked on Hui's side of the truck as he went back to the open load bed and joined the other monsters.

"Nice fight." Ke Mi said simply and gave him a thumbs up. Even the wrym ants were clapping with their legs. It was still a mystery how the ants were able to play instruments but Ku Wai guessed he would probably see it later on in the dungeon. However, the only one that was unhappy was Ms Sandy. In fact, she felt a little off as compared to the other monsters.

"You okay?" Ku Wai asked not because he was concerned but more to test her and check her body language. Ms Sandy, however, did not respond nor even looked at Ku Wai at all.

Meanwhile, Yang Ling was taking notes of the dungeon instances and was comparing it to the monsters they had fought before in previous dungeon suppliers. "Hmm, even the road has its uneven variations. Jin really took much into detail for his dungeon instance. Now I can roughly understand why it costs a lot. There are many things not included in the report and I am glad I have entered one of his dungeons."

Hui continued to ride his truck and Yang Ling continued to feel that this particular dungeon instance felt more like a trip along the countryside than a dungeon. "Not a bad place to be honest, I have been in the city for so long, it sure is nice to have a bit of change of scenery."

Yang Ling did not usually feel that way about life as she lowered the window of the truck. The crazy pace of competition in the Royal Zodiac family was crawling up her head. The loss of her cultivation along with her crippled legs made family ties even more strained than ever. Of course, it does not really matter much to her since she was the youngest daughter and her two other brothers would most probably be vying for the head position of the Sect.

Probably this was the one time she felt at peace for the longest time ever but that peace was interrupted after a short while. "Hmmm, I think I hit some rock or some sharp object along the way and we did not notice it." Hui said as he stopped to check the integrity of his truck, only to find out that one of the wheels was really punctured.

"Time out for a while." The Panda banged at the side of the truck to notify the rest of the monsters and Ku Wai.

Suddenly a sentient root appeared from the sides of the road which was most probably camouflaged by the tall grass. It grabbed onto Hui and caused him to fall, hitting the truck first and later the ground, which led to him becoming unconscious. More roots appeared and dragged Hui into the depths of the tall grass.

"Hui!" Ke Mi shouted and immediately looked at Mr Hot, the Fire Wrym Ant. He nodded his head and sent a blast of fire from its mandible to the tall grass. The entire field went up in flames and the roots

that were holding Hui were startled by the attack, making them flinch and throw Hui away in order to protect themselves.

The Great White Snake quickly slithered through the grassy knolls on fire to grab Hui and threw him towards the road as it tried to return back to Ke Mi's side. However, the roots that once took Hui, now targeted the Great White Snake and it held the snake tight to the ground, causing it to choke in the smoke and burn in the fire.

Ms Cold realised something was amiss and tried to blow some ice cold breath at that particular area only to see the Great White Snake being wrapped around with vines struggling. The struggle was getting weaker each second, so Ke Mi did not hesitate to use her Zither and cut the vines with sonic waves.

Ku Wai rushed in to drag it to safety, only to see he was being interrupted by roots appearing from the ground, trying to not just to grab him but to stab him too. Fortunately, he had speed inscription of the tiger on, which increased his agility and he retreated back.

"Ohohoho, not bad." A large ancient tree crawled towards the musical troupe Enlightened and it revealed its face.

No doubt, it was none other than Shu who was causing trouble.

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Chapter 197 Two Can Play The Game

"I have come for you, my little sweet Sandy," Shu spoke in an irritating voice as the others turned to look at Sandy, the Sand Witch. "I am sorry to disappoint but I have a contract that I need to fulfil." Sandy stepped out of the truck and walked towards Shu. He did not harm her, unlike the others.

"I have one condition though. Let them go. They are innocent and not under the cursed contract." Sandy said without even turning back to look back at them.

"I am sorry Sandy, but I cannot leave any witnesses behind. You know what the contract demands." Shu said as it peeled off a piece of its bark, making the accursed blood contract in the open for everyone to see. Shu even poured some magic into it and the contract glowed bright red. Upon doing so, Sandy screamed in pain as her backless dress revealed a similar blood contract that stretched from her shoulders down to her lower back.

"Now, return to me when you are done." The Treant laughed hideously as Sandy tried to control her powers and defy the Treant. But alas, her will was weak against the command of the blood contract. She could not help but fire a magical blast of sand towards the truck. "That is if you survive!"

"Sandy!" Ke Mi shouted as she deflected the sandblast away with her own sonic blast.

"You have to kill me! I cannot stop the blood contract!" There were conflicted feelings present on her face. The group was not able to get a grasp on her feelings as they seemed contradictory based on her expression. She was crying buckets of tears while smiling deviously at the same time.

"Snake!" Ke Mi could not voice out more than a few words but this was still a major improvement since when she had only just started working under Jin, all she could verbalise were primitive grunts. As if that one phrase had magic in it, the Great White Snake woke up from the slumber it had been put in by the roots of the Ancient Treant Shu.

The Sand Witch knew each of the musical troupe members' strengths and weaknesses so she knew that the Great White Snake would pose a threat to her if she was not careful. From a range, Sandy would have a better advantage against it so she took her chance to eliminate the threat as soon as possible.

However, the truck that was initially stationary started moving towards her. She then noticed Ku Wai driving it under the command of Yang Ling to smash straight into her. Instead of attacking head-on, the slight shock from seeing a truck rushing at her made her movements slow, which caused her to hesitate before transforming into sand.

It was at that point though that Sandy realised she was being ignored. She watched as the truck continued to drive towards where the ancient treant disappeared. "Oh? Seems like Yang Ling knows something." Jin smirked as he drank a cup of Black Ivory Coffee and ate a plate of cheesecake for his midnight supper.

"I have no idea what you are doing Princess but I trust you!" Ku Wai gulped down some saliva as he ran the truck with a broken tire through the vast thickets of the jungle. It was obvious that the truck was being battered by the obstacles of the jungle yet Ku Wai did not care as he pushed through, trying to maintain as much of the truck's integrity as possible.

"Trust me, if I have learnt anything from the reports regarding Jin's story themed dungeons, it's that we are given a choice for every action we take, making it as close to real life as possible. And if that does not work, we can always play the dungeon again and try to find the optimal outcome once more. Trust me, I don't like this either... it's like we're being controlled like a marionette by a puppeteer, except the puppeteer is a dungeon supplier. Anyway, despite that, I have to say that this is way better than any dungeon instance I have ever entered before." Yang Ling calmly spoke to Ku Wai but her heart was actually racing as the truck went through the jungle.

It was not from the challenge of escaping from the Sand Witch, nor was it from the thrill of riding in a truck through the jungle. It was because she saw Jin's monsters. Fire and Ice breathing ants? A tree that could initiate a blood contract? A humanoid monster manipulating sand? What in the world had Jin seen that made him able to visualise all of this? How complex was his manipulation of his dimensional technology and his knowledge of vast subjects like western magic? Basically, she wanted to know how on earth he was able to create such an intricate dungeon? She could hardly believe Jin was just a graduate from an engineering course.

Jin was definitely hiding something and even if he would not, or could not reveal it to her, she would try her best to use him to his full potential, for her sake. After all, she had power, money, and youth on her side. Sure, she was currently crippled but who knows, maybe Jin could do something about that too.

Maybe she would assign him the role of her sole dungeon supplier since she could manipulate some funds from the Royal Zodiac Tiger sect for her private use. Or maybe...just maybe get him to like her. That would save a lot of effort. Yang Ling could not help but blush a little at the prospect of having such a capable guy by her side. "Perhaps that would increase my standing with Father."

"Hmmp, Looks like the Great White Snake and Hui were able to escape." Sandy breathed a sigh of relief before standing still to regain her original body. Turning into sand was an escape ability for the Sand Witch but it took some time for her to regain her physical body. She might be able to take on a sand form but she would only be impregnable towards physical attacks, not magic attacks... and the Enlightened members were elementally and magically inclined.

As much as she wanted to defy the orders of Shu, she was unable to because of the blood contract. Jin purposely integrated this into the instance to encourage the players to find ways to save Sandy. The Venus Four used brute force and subdued her to the point that she was unable to move before they sealed her up until they were able to defeat Shu. They kept her alive despite having the chance to kill her because Jin had told them that defeating her was not the true ending of the instance. However, their method of "saving" her sort of eluded the essence of the "true" ending.

The truck eventually broke down as it crashed into a fallen log but beyond the log was a clearing where the ancient treant humming to himself happily. "What a pity, Sandy did not kill a single one of you. Well, since you are all here, how about you entertain me a little." Shu said as he grabbed a beehive he had been growing by the side of the clearing and delicately squeezed the beehive as honey began to flow into his mouth.

"Great tree, are you able to break the blood contract? If so, what do you require of us to break it?" Yang Ling was being pushed through the clearing on a wheelchair that was conveniently kept in her storage ring.

"Did I not say that no witnesses were to be left behind? She will be coming for you guys soon enough. Besides, why are you helping someone who you just met not too long ago?" Shu scoffed at Yang Ling's politeness.

"Let's say it's for mutual benefit. Sandy seemed to be in pain when she tried to kill us and I'd like to survive this particular ordeal." Yang Ling replied.

"You sure she was in pain? Are you sure she was not delighted?" Shu asked once more as he shook his branches, causing sakura blossoms to fall all around the clearing. It was really beautiful to watch, provided one had the time to enjoy it.

"I am certain she was in pain. To be honest, she probably still is" Yang Ling affirmed her answer as Ku Wai kept quiet and let Yang Ling handle the talking.

"Then let me ask you this. What is your motive? Are you truly breaking the contract in an act of kindness or are you only doing this because you hope to be rewarded and this is the most logical course of action?" Shu went off the script a little as he pried into Yang Ling's mind. To his surprise, her mind resistance was rather strong but the question confused her a little, which allowed Shu to enter her thoughts and see what was in there.

Jin was not stupid either. He had purposely sent her into the Music Theatre because of this reason. Shu was capable of something similar to mind control. The sakura blossoms were how the praying mantis was tamed by Shu. Even if Shu could not control the mind entirely, he was capable of carrying out some mind tricks, one of which was taking a look at people's thoughts. Of course, it wasn't an all-seeing eye, and the stronger one's cultivation was, the harder it was for Shu to peer through.

However, Jin remembered that Yang Ling's cultivation was crippled, hence he had asked Shu to quietly infiltrate her mind so that he could learn what she was thinking. A Member of a Royal Zodiac sect would never come with zero strings attached so Jin purposely acted dumb to make Yang Ling think he was a gullible target.

"I am doing this because it is the most logical thing to do. Kindness does not exist in my view of the world. It is an illusion or a trick people use to manipulate others." Yang Ling answered boldly.

"Your answer is commendable. Very well." Shu had already searched through her thoughts as he snapped his roots, which suddenly caused Ke Mi to erupt in a series of screams.

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Chapter 198 Playing To Their Tune

Ke Mi screamed as if her lungs were bursting and her eyes began to glow red. She punched her zither a few times and subsequently the side of the truck. At this point, her hand instinctively moved to play the zither, which caused both Mr Hot and Ms Cold to gradually fall under her control with each pluck of the zither.

"Wow, I have never seen this particular scene actually play out before. This is the first time someone has triggered this scene." Jin watched on closely as Ke Mi went into a fit of rage. He knew that all of the rage was scripted in the Dungeon Maker but he still felt it was exceedingly realistic. The scripts were based on the choices that Jin had selected. The Dungeon Maker would use the scenes to script appropriate actions for the monsters to take.

Jin was not too worried about how Ke Mi was reacting. She was not acting either as she was really in pain during the process of this particular dungeon. Jin remembered that the System had told him that all these were just copies of the real monsters. Anything positive or negative they learnt from this particular instance would merely be summarised as experience for them. Once, he was so worried that he went to their home instance to ask how they were.

Despite his care, the monsters thought that Jin was overreacting since everything was fine. Eventually, he found out that the System did not 'export' the whole experience to the monsters. It merely played it back to them, much like watching a first person movie, so that the monsters could learn what had gone wrong or what could be improved. Jin could only sigh at the marvels of the System. If only the System was capable of rewind time so that Jin could make multiple choices and pick the best one among them. However, life did not work that way and he could only accept the choice he had made and move forth.

"Princess, this is bad." Ku Wai did not bother with the wheelchair anymore and immediately carried her to safety. But was there really a safe place around them? They were in the middle of a clearing that was deep in the jungle. The ancient treant was in control of the environment and there was no one other than themselves.

"So the rest of the Enlightened troupe was blood contracted by the Treant too?" Yang Ling was confused by the sudden turn of events. "So why did the Treant make the Sand Witch attack the troupe? To confuse us?" Yang Ling could not help but question the weirdness of this particular instance. Everything was done to confuse them.

"If you think about the dungeon instance name... Don't you think it makes some sense?" Ku Wai, who was usually a muscle-head, tried to voice out his own comprehension of this particular dungeon.

"What do you mean?" Yang Ling could not wrap her head around it as Ku Wai dodged a fire blast attack from Mr Hot. She then saw that the wrym ants were carrying Ke Mi on their back while climbing out of the crashed lorry.

"That Treant is the conductor, the lead, or something like that. The rest of the musical troupe are all playing their roles to drag us into the scene. We were being played by them all along." Ku Wai used his battered shield claw to block an ice shard but it broke upon impact.

"So you are saying that we were just playing to their tune?" Yang Ling questioned as Ku Wai raced through the thickets.

"Mmhm. This jungle is their theatre, we are their audience, and this situation was all set up as part of the play. We assumed we were going to see a proper play when we ourselves were actually the unwilling actors." Ku Wai said.

"What a terrible play this is." Yang Ling shook her head and started to grasp onto what Ku Wai was trying to say. Suddenly, roots appeared in front of them, causing them to be trapped.

Not only that, they were being grabbed by Shu and were brought back to the clearing. The roots were merciless as the cultivators were dragged back against the ground, causing cuts and wounds to ravage their bodies. Ku Wai was able to tough it out but not Yang Ling due to her loss of cultivation.

However, being an ex-cultivator, Yang Ling was still able to endure the pain as they were being dragged back. Upon the clearing, they saw that Sandy, Ke Mi, Mr Hot and Ms Cold were all waiting for them.

"That was not nice of you to just run away. We have barely begun!" Shu said as he subsequently wrapped the entire clearing in a barrier of vines and roots, making it nearly impossible for the duo to escape again. He later let go of them a distance off the ground, letting them plummet. Ku Wai though, now free from the grasp of Shu, spun in mid air to save Yang Ling before she landed flat on the ground.

"It's okay, Ku Wai. I can still handle myself." She smiled at the worried Ku Wai and stared at Shu. "If you want a fight, we will give you one. Besides, I am dying to experience some action with my new gadget." Yang Ling figured there was no other way other than fighting it out with the Treant and the other mind controlled monsters.

"Are you sure princess? Did you not say that it's still in the prototype stage?" Ku Wai worriedly stared at her.

"That was why we looked for Jin, right? Jin! I know you are looking at us through this dungeon. Do you want to know why I want a dungeon? I will show it to you. Not many know the existence of this. In fact, you are the among the first to know about it. That is how much I am willing to trust you so that we can have a partnership!" Yang Ling shouted as she took out a suitcase from her storage ring.

To fully utilise the powers of storage, Yang Ling had kept a storage suitcase in her storage ring, mainly because her storage ring did not have the capacity to contain the items that were in that particular storage suitcase.

"Very well, I want to see what you have. It better live up to what you have hyped it up to be! I am going to allow you to prepare to your fullest before we start our fight, purely for entertainment purposes!" Shu lauded at Yang Ling's efforts to fight against them.

Yang Ling looked at Ku Wai with a serious gaze and he nodded his head. "This princess is too stubborn for her own good. Hmm, but I did swear that I would do anything for her... no matter what." Ku Wai placed his palm on the storage suitcase and the digital lock on the suitcase unlocked with a sophisticated click.

Inside the suitcase was an exoskeleton... though that was overstating it by quite a lot. It was essentially just a metal chest frame with piston-laden harnesses. Yang Ling had aptly named it Gearbox, which was printed on the frame. Ku Wai wore it upon his shoulders and the harnesses tightened immediately the moment it detected Ku Wai's body. The exoskeleton frame was meant to increase the capabilities of a human by detecting the movement of the user's muscles and then amplify those movements.

Each punch could potentially become two times deadlier as the frame was able to amplify the speed and strength of the user. The frame was made of a highly durable metal, although it was still inferior to Jin's Bam and Boo by a long shot. That said, it was still able to endure attacks and damage like the shield claw that Ku Wai had used before it was broken.

Ku Wai did not only equip the Gearbox frame but also attached one of its accessories, the Titan Fists, as Ku Wai had dubbed them. The metallic gauntlets were installed into the frame and he slammed his Titan Fists together.

In terms of power, they were definitely more powerful than a standard Power Fist like the one Xue Ping used and when equipped with the Gearbox frame, their speed and ferocity would be enhanced, allowing Ku Wai to break through power levels of Grade 6 despite only being a Grade 5 cultivator, which was an amazing feat, since no weapons had ever been able to do that, with the exception of certain Epic or Legend levels of inscription, but they were all owned by mysterious beings and lost to the mundane world.

"This prototype had made by the Royal Zodiac Tiger Sect's Military Armament Research Facility using the blueprint and schematics supplied by yours truly." Yang Ling spoke proudly as Ku Wai banged his fists together once more, ready to fight.

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Chapter 199 The Decoy

Jin was surprised by the sudden honesty of Yang Ling. Did she notice that Shu was collecting information on her so she decided to play the card of an honest businessman... or maybe she really wanted to start a partnership with Jin?

In spite of that, Shu did his job by transmitting the information to Jin as he continued with the dungeon instance. In addition, Ku Wai and Yang Ling were nevertheless closer to the true ending of this particular dungeon than anyone had ever been. Ku Wai had even understood the meaning of the 'Theatre' part in the title Music Theatre Dungeon instance.

Yang Ling was still sitting on the ground whilst holding onto the suitcase that Ku Wai had opened. She was so vulnerable and defenceless that she was almost begging to be a target and so Shu commanded Sandy to attack her. This time around though, Sandy looked at him and blasted her sand powers at Shu instead.

The blood contract on her back was not activated and Shu was surprised as he used his branches to fend off the sand blast. "Oh ho? You managed to deactivate it?" Shu was slightly irritated by the sudden development as Sandy walked towards Ku Wai and displayed her fighting stance to the other blood contracted monsters.

Ku Wai was surprised by Sandy as she grinned at him. "You have to thank your princess for planning it all." Both Ku Wai and Sandy looked at the back to see Yang Ling posing with a peace sign on her right hand and as she smiled deviously.

From the seemingly impenetrable barrier of roots and vines came Hui the One Eyed Panda. He was riding on the Great White Snake and there was someone else seated behind him. Ku Wai took a closer look and realised that this 'person' had the face of Yang Ling.

Only then did he realise what was happening and he started laughing at Yang Ling's ingenuity. "Princess, I cannot believe you actually used that despite the warnings from the Sect Head not to use it. No wonder I felt that you were dumber than usual... uhhhh.... No offence intended." Ku Wai spoke to the Yang Ling that was on the snake.

"The Sect Head destroyed me once, I will not let him take control of my life again. I am going to do what I want! I will use all of his resources if necessary so that I can carve a name for myself, so that my destiny will be in my own hands." the 'other' Yang Ling said as Hui helped her get down from the Great White Snake and brought her to the Yang Ling that was with Ku Wai.

As both the Yang Lings touched each other, they combined into one whole again. Yang Ling stretched her upper body a little before Hui carried her again. Not only were the monsters present taken aback, but even Jin was also flabbergasted by the current scene.

"What the heck?!" Jin could not comprehend the current scene. Shu was also confused as hell and demanded to know what was happening.

"I lost my cultivation... but that does not mean I lost my mana circuits." Yang Ling gave Shu a hint, and Shu then realised that what she had used was Western Magic. "I see, so I guess you have an Epic Level

Mastery of Manipulation Magic," Shu spoke with great understanding, which made Yang Ling astonished by the level of knowledge that the ancient Treant held.

"You flatter me, I merely have an Intermediate Level Mastery of Manipulation Magic. I combined it with Intermediate Level Mastery of both Summoning and Psionic Magic to create this original magic of my own. I have yet to fully master it, but it seems to be working quite well at the moment." Yang Ling wanted to brag a little since it was her first time using it in the field.

Jin became really curious after hearing that conversation and immediately stopped eating his midnight snack to enter the Dungeon Maker. He pulled out the entire records of the current dungeon instance that Yang Ling was still in to see what he had missed.

To his surprise, during the dungeon instance, Yang Ling was already acting before the start of the fight against the Sand Witch. She suspected that Sandy was being manipulated by another person/monster or waiting to be manipulated by that person/monster based on her intuition when Hui introduced them to her. By then, she had already noticed that something was off.

Hence, she started casting her own Psionic magic as she let her own mind control Sandy, which allowed Sandy to fight against the mind control from the blood contract. Yang Ling knew that in order to break a mind control contract, she either had to destroy the source, which she now knew was the Ancient Treant or help the victim break out of it using his/her own will.

Unfortunately, she could not let the Treant know that. If he could manipulate one monster, why would he not manipulate the rest of the monsters? It meant that he was just waiting for the right time to do so. It was at this point that Yang Ling realised how ruthless the Treant was.

If the cultivators managed to kill Sandy, the other monsters would be in grief, making them easier targets to manipulate, and using a contract would cover the way he would mind control the monsters, hence making the cultivators assume that the contract was just a one off thing.

When the Treant managed to lure the cultivators into his own playing field where he had the home advantage, he would utilise his abilities to the fullest. Judging from the current scene, Shu did just that. Everything was going according to Yang Ling's predictions.

Hence, Yang Ling decided to make a decoy by summoning a transparent slime blob and utilising it to replicate herself via manipulation magic. By using psionic magic, she was able to transfer a part of her consciousness into the transformed slime decoy, allowing her to partially take control of it. Considering the fact that she was crippled, Ku Wai would not have noticed it at all.

"After many months of training, you finally look prettier than me..." Yang Ling said proudly in the playback as the decoy nodded her head in agreement. It was a pity that Ku Wai could not see the difference. An acceptable level of deception was required when making the features of the decoy. She remembered the first time she had made the slime blob replicate her features, there was nothing but a :) on its face.

Yang Ling had to perfect her manipulation magic in her spare time but she did not regret it at all, especially since there were many times where she was needed in events as a 'special' guest but in actual fact, it was just to show the presence of Royal Zodiac Tiger Sect. Her father used her as a showpiece for minor events... and there were a lot of minor events.

With the decoy all ready, the slime blob threw Yang Ling into the tall grass on the other side of the road, where it was not being burnt by Mr Hot's flames, and of course, Yang Ling broke the fall with her psionic magic before she subsequently dragged the unconscious Hui and the Great White Snake away from the scene of battle with her psionic powers.

Once the truck had left and Sandy had her guard down, Yang Ling took the opportunity to cast a telekinesis hold onto Sandy. To her surprise, the Great White Snake was already awake and assisted Yang Ling with the hold. Sandy tried to retaliate but she had just reformed from her sand form, making her extremely vulnerable, so the Great White Snake had a major advantage against her.

"Ah Ah Ah! To think that my troupe members fell to that stupid tree." Hui woke up rubbing his head to ease the pain from the throw. "Thank you, my fellow guard, and you, little snake, for saving this old life of mine. I shall return the favour." Hui walked towards Sandy, who seemed agitated to see Hui. Despite this, she was also crying.

"I will release you from your pain." Hui removed his eyepatch, only for Yang Ling to see an empty void through that eye socket. Sandy's blood contract was forcibly removed as it was being absorbed into the void of the Panda's eye.

"I am sorry Manager Hui, I did not mean to hurt you." Sandy cried as the Great White Snake released its grip.

"It's okay, it's okay. Now... let's get back our other troupe members."

Chapter 200 Re: Control

"This is dangerous, have I also been affected by her Psionic magic?" Jin was slightly worried that everything that had happened, from the 'kidnapping' to letting her come into his store was all part of a plan she had made.

Peppers, who was slouching on a sofa in the Dungeon Maker whilst reading up on 'City Management 101 for Dummies', looked at Jin as he talked to himself. "Nope, I do not sense any residue Psionic magic on you, Master." Peppers said nonchalantly as she continued to flip another page.

"Could she be so skilled in Psionic that she did not leave a trace?" Jin became a little paranoid despite Pepper's assurance.

"Nah, even at Legendary Mastery of Psionic Magic, the magicians cannot fool my Demonic Sage Eyes as there will always be a trace of Psionic magic left behind. Let alone at Intermediate Mastery." Peppers replied as she gave another glance at Jin before returning to read her book. It was a mystery how she got such a book, but Jin assumed the System got it for her.

Magic was similar to cultivation. As long as one worked hard on understanding it and if one was able to grasp the abstract concept of the given knowledge and fundamentals behind it, they could reach a high level quickly. However, whether they would have the ability to execute it, would depend on their training, on the expansion and usage of their Mana circuits.

Some were born lucky with high levels of Mana circuits, others trained it or consumed expensive catalyst to increase the complexity of their Mana circuits. Regardless, the Mana circuits were similar to the meridian points. In fact, both the chi points and Mana circuits run parallel with each other but for some reason, many were unable to practice both magic and cultivation at the same time. Even if they do, it was even more uncommon for a user to be extremely adept with both cultivation and magic.

Hence, with the crippled cultivation and with the Dantian point not producing any chi for Yang Ling, it actually enabled her to have a better grasp of her Mana circuits. Thereby, allowing Yang Ling to reach decent levels of mastery towards magic and of all magic, Psionic and Manipulation which was one of the hardest few to learn or master.

At this point, the System beeped via the Dungeon Maker console and issued out with a mission. "Create a feasible business partnership with Yang Ling. Rewards: Adaptable Immunity towards Manipulation and Psionic Magic."

"Adaptable? What does that even mean? Will the profits in creating a partnership with her be included in my overall rankings?" Jin asked bluntly. Jin knew that the System would not give up such an amazing business opportunity with Yang Ling the moment she blurted out military research. After all, defence spending expenditures for almost every developed country was among the top few priorities in their budget despite the peace each country had. The problem was how ethical her military research was.

"I will explain this. It means that the System will assist you to filter the manipulation magic you would be affected with. For example, if Milk casts a spell to calm your nerves which is a positive manipulation magic, the System would provide you with the option to accept it or not. However, if Yang Ling casts mind control on you, you can also decide whether to accept it or not as well. If you deny both of their magic, nothing will happen to you." Peppers said as she continued to read her dummy guide.

"Oh...okay. That sounds ridiculously powerful." Jin said but Peppers looked up at Jin and shook her head.

"Not many in this world seem to really know how to use Psionic Magic well. You could say Yang Ling is indeed a rare talent in the art of Psionic Magic based on the System's database that I previously read. However, if you cross over worlds... Perhaps that might prove to be a very useful trait to have."

Within the Dungeon Maker, Jin took Peppers words into consideration and continued to watch the battle instance. With Shu still reeling from the betrayal of his mind controlled minion, he quickly tried to rein the rest of the minions into battle before they were brainwashed by Hui.

Hui, on the other hand, ran to a safer spot with Yang Ling in his hands while Ku Wai, the Great White Snake and Sandy battled it out against Ke Mi, Mr Hot, and Ms Cold. As Ke Mi did not have any mobility on her own, Shu assisted her with his roots and brought her to a higher ground where she could attack and support the ants.

Meanwhile, Yang Ling was enjoying the fluffiness of the NPC Panda. "Hmm, the fur is so fine and fluffy, I really wish to cuddle this to bed." Yang Ling thought to herself seeing that she had done all she could for this current battle. Not to mention the fatigue she accumulated expending that much energy on the clone. However, Shu was not sparing Yang Ling nor Hui as it continued to spurt out roots from the ground to attack them but Hui seemed to be fairly good at evading.

Ku Wai slammed his Titan Fists onto the Ms Cold but her ice walls proved to be a nuisance against Ku Wai, not to mention Shu's brilliant multitasking by counterattacking along with the ice wall. However, Ku Wai managed to evade the piercing roots in time with his new Gearbox frame and pressed on to counter attack. While Ms Cold was keeping Ku Wai busy, Mr Hot was preparing his fire blast that was accumulating at his mandible.

Unfortunately, Mr Hot was later interrupted by the Great White Snake which slithered with lightning speed towards him, causing Mr Hot to panic and shooting the blast prematurely, causing quite a bit of backlash to himself. The Great White Snake easily evaded the large blast and opened its mouth for the bite against the ant.

Poison seeped into Mr Hot's body as the Great White Snake slammed his body to the ground but Mr Hot tried to retaliate back as it spewed fire from its breath. It was a battle of tenacity and time, to see who was able to last longer. A burning snake or a poisoned ant.

As that battle rages on, Sandy fought head on with Ke Mi again. The roots helped Ke Mi to move around the battlefield but that did not stop Sandy. As long there was ground, there would be sand, soil and dirt, her powers would still be effective against Shu's moving root platform that Ke Mi was on. The ground shook as two large hands formed from sand grabbed onto the roots and tried to tear them apart, while Ke Mi played a battle melody that shot out multiple sonic waves towards Sandy.

Thankfully, Sandy was capable of defending herself by creating sand shields that collided with the sonic waves. Shu knew that if he loses Ke Mi, he would lose a great deal of firepower and so was the same situation on his opponents as Sandy was probably the only one capable of fighting against Ke Mi. Hence, Shu demanded Ke Mi to use her stronger techniques against Sandy.

Ke Mi acknowledged and immediately changed her battle tune to a stronger, fiercer one to turn the losing tide against the cultivators. Razor Winds were flicked out from her zither, decimating and penetrating the sand shields that Sandy cast. One of the Razor Winds managed to slash off one of Sandy's hands away.

Or did it?

Sandy transformed into Sand Form once again but this time, with a twist. A large sand twister was one of her Sand Form techniques to escape which she now used as an attack ability. She pushed herself forward against the continuous attacks of Razor Winds from Ke Mi until she was in close proximity to her.

The sand twister burdened Ke Mi's eyes, nose, ears and mouth, causing her to stop playing and at this point, Sandy quickly returned to her physical form while kicking Ke Mi towards the direction of Hui.

"Manager Hui! Now!" Sandy shouted but she was unable to save herself as she was being aggressively pierced by Shu's roots after she turned back to her physical form. Yang Ling did not waste Sandy's effort as she used her Psionic magic to telekinetically grab the flying Ke Mi in case Shu snatched her back.

Hui quickly unveiled his eye patch and released the blood contract control from Shu, resulting in Ke Mi returning to normal. Shu got even more annoyed at losing one of his best mind controlled minions and roared loudly causing his sakura blossoms to rain on them.

"No, this is not good. Do not let the petals touch you! They are as sharp as swords!" Hui shouted as an advice to the cultivators. Yang Ling immediately used her magic to move them away but there were too many of them to focus on and Ke Mi was still giddy from the backlash of the forced removal of the mind control to aid them.

Ku Wai saw the falling petals and realised that Shu was indiscriminately attacking everyone since the remaining mind controlled minions were of no use to him. "But they are still petals right?" Ku Wai shouted at Hui, to which he nodded.

"If that's the case, Intermediate Fist Art, Chi Tiger Face Rising Uppercut!" Ku Wai ignored Ms Cold and sprinted towards Shu and immediately jumped up to deliver an uppercut to the tree. Even though the Gearbox frame only covered his arms and not legs, his cultivation strength still allowed him to jump high.

As Ku Wai jumped up with his fist up high, an angry face of a ferocious tiger appeared through his fist. The chi induced tiger's face became larger with each passing second, with its mouth biting at the bark of Shu and destroyed any petals that were in the way as Ku Wai continued his uppercut.

This was not just an ordinary uppercut. Especially when you remember that it was enhanced the mechanical abilities of his Gearbox frame since the frame had a small chi emission booster that caused Ku Wai's attack to be more potent.

As the tiger face 'crawled' up Shu, Ke Mi finally stabilised herself and with a clap, her zither was pulled back to her side. A seemingly pre-made song rushed out of the zither as the petals continued to fall. But within a few seconds of the song playing, almost everyone saw that the petals were not falling towards them, in fact, they were beginning to gather. Yet, the gathering of the petals presented a huge strain for Ke Mi and she could not hold it any longer.

It was then a large blast of fire incinerated the petals and Ke Mi later realised Hui was beside her beloved Great White Snake that was grabbing onto the near dead fire wyrm ant. Apparently, the Great White Snake also had used the antidote in its fangs the moment Hui released Mr Hot from Shu's mind control.

Shu, on the other hand, suffered a great deal of damage from Ku Wai's attack but he was not done with the Ancient Treant. With the upper cut allowing him to be in mid air, he did propel himself with whatever that was remaining in the chi emission booster in the Gearbox frame and punched Shu's trunk with his infamous fist technique.

"Intermediate Fist Art! The Ambush of the Terrifying Terrific Tiger!!!!!!!"

With Ku Wai's fist stuck within Shu's trunk, Ku Wai shouted loudly as he expended all the Chi that he had within him and was hoping to melt Shu like the Praying Mantis. Unfortunately, the results were not spectacular as the ancient Treant was only partly melted. Regardless, once he saw that its branches started to fall and the roots on the ground became unresponsive, Ku Wai believed he managed to defeat this monstrosity.

Yang Ling and Ku Wai finally completed the Dungeon Instance with the entire Enlightened Troupe intact. (Well, somewhat intact.)

