

## Dungeon S 241

### Chapter 241 The Truth

"So you are my opponent for today?" Jin asked as he brought up his Katana up and readied his battle stance.

"You are always so outraged against the System, even though it tries to help you... Even though I try my best for your sake. So this is your chance. Fight me, talk to me and tell me honestly what exactly is your problem with the System!" Yun dashed through with a straight charge. No schemes, no tricks.

Jin was a little hesitant to tell the truth, even though he was indeed angry with the System. "What? Too sissy to even voice out your worries? I am still able to hear your thoughts, you know!" Yun slammed her cleaver towards Jin's Katana and the impact caused dust to fly about tens of metres away.

Jin did not imagine that Yun had such high strength and he nearly lost his footing clashing head on with Yun. With a knee kick, Yun pushed Jin away and started to slam her cleaver once more at Jin.

"Why?! Can't you speak? Am I proving to be too difficult of an opponent for you?" Yun's eyes were glowing with rage as Jin dodged the attack and the cleaver smashed the ground, causing the cleaver to be stuck.

But Yun was not done, she raised her hand up and summoned a spherical ball of black flames and directed it towards Jin. Jin had no chance but to be torched alive by the black flames and he yelled in pain.

"Is that not black fire? How is Yun able to use a Panda Spiritual Union skill? Or was it just a generic skill?" Jin was unable to figure it out but thankfully, he managed to tolerate the burn as the flames subsequently died out.

However, this did not stop Yun from attacking as Jin saw the edge of the cleaver coming towards his torso area. If not for the Perfectly Normal Parry Slash, he would have been cut into two. Yun continued her barrage of attacks while Jin did not even have the chance to take a breather.

"Still not speaking? How about this?" Yun released her cleaver and went towards Jin barehanded. Yet Jin did not dare to retaliate using his Katana. His hesitation proved to be his downfall. In the next moment, Yun sent out an impactful punch that caused him to vomit some blood and stomach acid.

"Oh my god! Is Boss Jin getting wrecked?" A customer wondered out loud, as he could only make out the silhouettes with the rest still being covered by the dome of darkness.

"Are you willing to speak now? Do you need any more persuasion?" Yun followed up with a kick towards Jin's stomach to force him to spit out his thoughts.

"FINE! I ADMIT IT! I AM ANGRY AT THE SYSTEM! I AM ANGRY AT YOU!" Jin finally broke his silence as he endured the kick from Yun's heels. Yun finally stopped and allowed him to speak.

"I have always been following the System's commands, and the System had been forcing me to do things which I found outrageous! I did not mind doing this kind of stuff previously but after that incident, I could not bring myself to trust the System!" Jin shouted from the bottom of his heart as he tried to stand up.

"I still have no clue about what the end goal of the System is. How CAN I be sure whether it is helping me because it wants to help me or because it is trying to fulfil some hidden agenda! I am sick of being kept in the dark like how the others treated me when I was young! They told me to follow their orders, without questioning anything! Told me not to ask about how you died! How Dad died! Can you imagine being told as a little kid, that you would never again be able to see your parents? That even though resurrection is possible, it would not work in your case, that there was NO WAY of resurrecting them!!! Telling me to simply accept that fact and not to stick my nose in other people's business!" Jin cried as he spoke his heart out.

"I feel troubled. I feel irritated, worried that I cannot trust anybody! What absolute loyalty?! You guys seem to be more loyal to the System rather than me! Even though I tried my best to gain respect from all the other monsters! I built houses for them, I made the houses especially in a way so that they could feel at home. I tried to listen to their problems! I tried what I could! I am so busy ALL THE TIME! I haven't even had the time to simply relax, play any kind of game, meet up with some friends or anything of that sort. Ever since I started this whole business! I am so tired of it!" Jin raised his sword and tried to hit Yun back, but she dodged it as if it was perfectly normal.

It was at that moment that she held Jin and slapped him in the face. She struck him so hard that he fell to the ground again. At that moment, the cinematic magic eye diverted its attention to Qiu Yue and her opponents, the three goblins.

"The System is your inheritance from your grandfather, your great grandfather and the generations before that. The System is your prophecy to fulfil. To rebuild and continue the Royal Zodiac Panda Bloodline." Yun said as Jin was lying on the floor, stunned.

"What do you even mean...?" Jin did not know how to reply. He was in so much pain that he was unable to comprehend what he had heard when Yun told him the truth.

"You are technically the last descendant of the Royal Zodiac Panda Bloodline. I did not wish to tell you anything previously because I was afraid you would become arrogant. That you would end up flaunting your powers, your title. I wanted to keep quiet until I knew that you were ready."

"Did Grandpa Ming know about it?" Jin tried to stand up, but Yun kicked him down again.

"Stay down! And listen with your head low! You do not deserve to know the truth! Always kicking a fuss, being so immature about things. Why can't you see things at a wider perspective!" Yun shouted at Jin as he held onto his torso.

"Then if I am the last descendant, why did Grandpa Ming not rebuild the Bloodline! Why did you not rebuild the bloodline?" Jin managed to ask, and Yun folded her arms.

"Because of some idiot, who tried to be a smartass, challenging the twelve zodiacs even though he was not ready. The System subsequently punished my dad by refusing him its powers and reversed time to make sure that no one would know about it." Yun answered.

"The System is that powerful? To even reverse time?!" Jin continued to wallow at the ground for being this distrusting against the System.

"Yes, and I was killed before I ever had the chance to inherit the System's powers. Eventually, the responsibility has been passed on to you," Yun explained as she paced around Jin.

"Do you know... the identity of your killer...?" Jin swallowed his saliva before asking it.

"The last remaining family retainer of the Banned Emperor." Yun said without any doubts.

"So, the System...took your soul?" Jin slowly folded his arms and legs into a grovelling position.

"Mine and the ones from our ancestors. The former members of the Royal Panda Zodiac Sect, excluding Ming." Yun replied as she approved of Jin's change in attitude.

"But I have never heard of this particular Zodiac before..." Jin lowered his head as he spoke.

"Well, it is not surprising... It could even be considered classified information of the highest grade. It is only known by the Royal Panda Zodiac. All traces of it have been erased in collaboration with the Jade Emperor." Yun sighed and shook her head before she started to walk away.

"Complete your mission at hand, and we shall talk more in private." Yun walked away as she snapped her finger and disappeared while Jin realised that the dome of darkness was removed.

Jin then noticed that Qiu Yue was struggling terribly against the three goblins. With the floating platform that he was on heading straight towards them. He braced himself for impact as he moved at top speed and shouted at Qiu Yue.

"Qiu Yue! DO A HIGH JUMP!" He kept waving his hand up into the air to exaggerate his intentions.

## **Chapter 242 Saving The Damsel**

The two floating platforms united once again as they crashed into each other. The impact caused the goblins to lose their balance and fall down, while Qiu Yue did as Jin instructed and ended up unaffected by the collision.

The crash did not hurt Jin, though he couldn't help but fly forward due to the momentum. He used that opportunity to initiate his Panda Rolling which allowed him to dive and evade the crushing impact, making him head straight into the group of goblins. Thankfully, he utilised less than 20% of panda rolling to move closer towards the goblins, and Qiu Yue did not manage to see his skill in action.

The injuries he incurred by Yun's moves were still causing Jin a fair amount of pain, but he had no time to heal them, so he gritted his teeth and tried to complete this mission as soon as possible. He was still trying to grasp all the information he just learnt. It was impossible that the System or Yun would come out with such an explicit lie merely to bluff him.

So if she was telling the truth, Jin had to buck up, since it would no longer be purely about being the best dungeon supplier rather it would go above that with his end goal changing to the revival of his bloodline. The System must be projecting a grand outline when he thought about it as he fought with the goblins.

The Tiger Princess Yang Ling, the meeting at the zoo with Ku Wai. It all started to make some sense as to what the System was plotting.

"WOAH!" Ripcaller tried to plunge his two daggers into Jin ruthlessly but Jin barely managed to evade it.

"Master, I do not think this is the perfect time to think about other stuff." Ripcaller, the dagger goblin sent a voice transmission to warn him about his diverted attention.

"I will not go easy on you the next strike." Ripcaller smiled as he stepped backwards and unravelled his short bow to set loose an arrow towards Jin's direction.

"Argh, the pain!" Jin wanted to dodge the second time but the pain from Yun's punishment caused him to stagger, and it was imminent that the arrow would strike him. If he could only move his body sideways to prevent a direct hit from the arrow...Jin closed his eyes as he struggled to move his body.

"Clang!"

The arrowhead was deflected at the nick of time, all thanks to Qiu Yue blocking it by stretching her hand out with her katana. It was a haphazard move which she did not have any confidence that it will help Jin. But Lady Luck was by her side. At closer inspection, Qiu Yue also realised that the arrow was coated with poison which made her saving grace even more vital to save Jin.

"What happened to you?!" Qiu Yue stood in front of her damsel in distress as she saw Jin's severe wounds while he clutched onto his stomach.

"As you could see, I got beaten up pretty badly." Jin let out a slight smile and thanked his white knight with shining katana.

"Well, looks like you managed to hold your ground. I thought I was a goner if you did not come and interrupt the battle." Qiu Yue faced her katana towards the three goblins as they tried to flank and surround the two of them.

"Any bright ideas?" Jin asked Qiu Yue for her opinion since she assumed that Jin was a styleless cultivator.

"The dagger goblin is the most dangerous out of those three. The sword goblin had some fancy swordplay which I think I can win if I concentrate on him. But the spear goblin was brutally disruptive. Seeing your condition, I think it would be best to surrender and retain our honour." Qiu Yue suggested.

"Retain our honour? What are you some white knight in shining armour?" Jin could not believe she thought of herself in that way.

"Hehe, my damsel. I would rather keep you to myself than have the goblins grab you away." Qiu Yue played along before she helped Jin to stand up.

"I will try my best to distract and keep the spear goblin and dagger goblin's attention to me. Heavy DPS on the sword goblin and save me." Jin decided to play a little more aggressive despite his wounds, and Qiu Yue was rather impressed by his dauntless guts.

"He did change a bit." Qiu Yue thought to herself before she nodded her head. "Have a good dance, my lady." Qiu Yue continued to play a fool with Jin which caused him to roll his eyes.

Although he was known as a styleless cultivator by Qiu Yue, she knew that he had a few tricks under his sleeves. That was because Jin had once shown her that he could learn various techniques from other styles without learning the base cultivation. So he was going to take advantage of that information and used his skills as subtle as possible.

"Hey daggers and spear boy, your opponent is me." Jin beckoned them to come towards him while Qiu Yue charged towards Slashreaver, the sword goblin.

"Your death, your choosing." Piercestriker, the spear goblin said proudly as he ran towards Jin while twirling his spear from one hand to the other. Meanwhile, Ripcaller was shooting arrows as fire support to prevent Jin from moving close, allowing Piercestriker to gain momentum for his Deep Thrust skill.

Jin held onto his katana and focused on his incoming opponent. His eyes once again glowed with inverted triangles, and his focus was extremely sharp. He could feel the wind, the goblin's muscle movement and the direction where his spear was going to strike despite the distraction twirling of his spear.

"One hit! That is all I need!" Jin lowered his knees and steadied himself for the evade and parry with the perfectly normal parry slash that he was keeping.

During the fight with Werecoat Nyanmi, Jin began to realise that the Perfectly Normal Parry Slash was not random at all. It was based on various factors, and although he could not explain it well, he felt like it was a game of precision.

"Aim your sword at the right spot against the incoming weapon strike and deal the blow against the weapon so that you can deflect at the right time, the skill will trigger." Jin tried to recall the steps he took.

With the help of his Inverse Eyes, that was what he called it at the moment; he could somehow pinpoint the right place and time for his sword to clash with Piercestriker's spear strike, allowing Jin's perfectly normal parry slash skill to trigger. True enough, the ability activated and Jin deflected the spearhead and slid his sword along the pole of the goblin's spear and straight to his right upper chest.

The goblin shouted in pain but struggled madly as he tried to bite Jin back. A common tactic Jin already knew it would deploy based on various runs he watched. Hence, instead of Piercestriker's teeth that sunk into Jin's flesh, Jin's wakizashi was the one the spear goblin ate, and blood was oozing nonstop.

Jin did a proper cut through the neck when he removed the wakizashi out of the spear goblin's mouth and pushed him away. He pointed his katana towards Ripcaller and provoked him. Jin was thankful that his pain was numbed by the rush of adrenaline he had upon using Inverse Eyes.

"You are next." Jin breathed deeply while trying to hide his pain, though it was very obvious to Ripcaller.

"Don't make me laugh." Ripcaller rubbed his two blades together to make an irritating scratching noise before he dashed towards Jin.

## **Chapter 243 The Damsel to the Rescue**

"What do you think the odds of them passing the last stage of the arena are?" Bin Yong asked Shi Zuo for his honest opinion.

"Not sure, Boss Jin seems to have been injured badly by the previous fight. Considering that he is still barely alive means that he was fighting a boss we might have difficulty encountering." Shi Zuo deduced, and Bin Yong pondered for a moment.

"The beatings he took was so drastic, and he should have just used his cultivation to take it down instead of continuing to hold back." Bin Yong replied, but Shi Zuo shook his head when Ripcaller took no mercy in charging head on against Jin who was battered down by his previous wounds.

"Perhaps he did utilise his cultivation, and that was when the camera turned away. Or maybe he was earnestly testing himself out against the monsters. Perhaps, Jin does not really want his customers or other people to know his true cultivation." Shi Zuo suggested as he saw Jin struggle against Ripcaller, the dagger goblin.

"Why would he even do that? Have we not seen that his cultivation grade was at Grade 3 last month when he was fighting against the very same goblins?" Bin Yong continued to survey Jin's desperate actions against Ripcaller as their blades clashed against each other.

"Don't you remember how Jin fought rather easily against those goblins? I figured that Boss was hiding his actual ability to showcase how strong the goblins had become." Shi Zuo responded.

"Are you saying the AI that controls the goblins is improving day by day, battle by battle?" Bin Yong took a step back to analyse and realised what he said contained some truth. He remembered not being able to use the same tactic repeatedly against the same group of monsters.

"Yeah, remember how we fought against Sir Bacon in the past and how we fought him in the very same random arena about a week ago? His actions were less predictable, and he managed to break our technique. We barely scraped through the last fight." Shi Zuo was praising how much potential Jin's monster AIs had, though he did not know the fact that his monsters were all real.

"Even so, Jin is fighting handicapped with a restriction of his abilities on top of his wounds. I think if he can win this round, it would be a pyrrhic victory." Shi Zuo said as the urge of wanting to go into the battlefield to help him was strong for some reason.

The battle ensued for both Qiu Yue and Jin, and each of their individual contest of strength felt like it had a reached stalemate. Both sides were waiting for each other to make a mistake so that they can clinch victory over the other.

Qiu lashed her katana at Slashreaver, the sword goblin, yet the sword goblin had kept his trump card for this particular moment. He stepped back and imitated Bu Dong's Angry Ape style sword art which almost everyone in the auditorium recognised.

Some could not believe the goblin was able to perform such an act but they realised they were the ones who were wrong. Slashreaver's attack went through and Qiu Yue who underestimated the sword goblin paid the price of a severe slash wound at her stomach.

"Urgh!" Qiu Yue deflected another blow before she fell to the ground with her wound overflowing with blood to the point that her innards were exposed. She was trying her best not to aggravate the wound, but Slashreaver's relentless attacks did not give her any time to even drink a potion.

However, even in this situation, she did not wish to call for Jin's help since it might make Jin lose his focus in battle.

"Ah...in the end, I am still the useless one in dungeons." Qiu Yue thought to herself as her hands started to feel weak, unable even to block another blow against the sword goblin.

"It's the end." The goblin exerted out a fair amount of chi, and an amalgamation of half goblin, half angry looking ape silhouette appeared above it.

"Angry Gob-Ape Pronounces Its Superiority!" The goblin shouted which attracted the attention of Jin.

"That little bastard! How dare he use that skill!" Jin realised what was going on and gritted his teeth as he executed a panda rolling without care of being stabbed in the back by Ripcaller to save Qiu Yue.

He tolerated the pain and knew full well that the dagger was poisoned but this was not the time to overthink. He had to save Qiu Yue or else his mission would fail, and Yun might not reveal to him the entire truth.

Slashreaver noticed that Boss Jin was coming and decided to aim his attack at him instead of the dying Red Panda cultivator. Jin, on the other hand, tried to utilise the Inverse Eyes ability once more, but to his dismay, it was not activating so he jumped out from his Panda Rolling and held his sword backwards.

Jin pounced forward and utilised Lazy Panda Swipe without thinking too much to deflect the blow against Slashreaver copied sword art.

As Jin clashed swords with the goblins, the Pandas silhouettes came out, but it was too brief that the customers were unable to count how many pandas were in the skies. One thing was for sure. There was a sufficient amount in the sky to let the customers be in awe even for just a moment.

The Lazy Panda Swipe blasted Slashreaver out of the floating platform, and Ripcaller tried to save his friend. However, he too had underestimated the power of Jin's Lazy Panda Swipe at maximum power, and he was being pushed out of the floating platform too, causing a very lucky win for Jin.

Qiu Yue was fainting out from the excessive loss of blood, and she did not manage to see the battle that was happening right in front of her. Jin quickly ran towards her and aided her up. "You are stronger than I expected you to be...What have you been hiding Jin?" Qiu Yue was gasping for air as she held onto her wounded stomach. Her clothes were entirely stained with blood, and her consciousness was beginning to fade away.

"Shh...drink this potion. Sip it. Swallow it. Do not stop drinking." Jin said his instructions in steps because he knew being hasty would not help the current situation. Although he knew that this was just a dungeon, he simply did not want her to fade away at that moment. There was still a lingering attachment of wanting to save her no matter what.

Qiu Yue followed Jin's instructions and tried her best to sip it. The bleeding stopped momentarily, and Jin proceeded to give her a stronger chi potion to compensate for the loss of health and chi.

"Why did you want to save me...? Isn't this just a dungeon?" Qiu Yue managed to stabilise when the potion's effect kicked in after a few minutes.

"I cannot bear to see you die. Be it in a dungeon or in real life." Jin scratched his head innocently. It was at that time the magic eye closed up in the random arena, and the System had already replaced Auditorium Six's screen with another dungeon run.

"To have the damsel rescue the shining white knight. How embarrassing this is for such a turn in events." Qiu Yue said as she had the strength to place her hands on her face to hide her blush from Jin. "This nostalgic warmth of his arms. I really did miss this." Qiu Yue thought to herself maybe she could just relax in his embrace for a moment.

In the meantime, the customers who were watching in the auditorium were discussing what they had exactly seen in the random arena instance. "I think I saw at least four pandas." A customer said as he confidently raised four fingers.

"I will say six." Bin Yong gave his own opinion though others began to disagree. Some even tried to look into the Pandaflix for the playback, but to their surprise, it was not in any of the streams at all.

"Sorry guys! The video would not be up unless Boss Jin allowed it. Till then, we will be heading to Auditorium Four to check out the PvE Card Battle that is happening as we speak!" Mr Patsu and Bear Cub One quickly squeezed through a small vent that connects every auditorium, so that they do not have to fight against the crowd to get out of the hall.

## **Chapter 244 Quality Time**

Jin took the treasure with him as he helped Qiu Yue up before the random arena battle instance teleported them back to the shop instance. It was at this moment, people started to crowd around Jin with no respect of proximity, which baffled poor Jin.

"Boss! Boss! What is your true cultivation!?!"

"Boss! How did you manage to attain such a high foundation base without revealing your cultivation?!"

"Boss! That guy with the puppet plushie on his head. Who is that? Is it a new monster for a future dungeon you have yet to reveal?!"

Many questions surfaced, and Jin finally connected the dots to the System's mission message. "Others were watching. I get it now..." Jin thought to himself. Separately, Qiu Yue was astounded by the crowd and did not know how to react as the customers started to crowd around Jin and her.

"Wait...What?! Jin is the Boss of this particular dungeon supplier store?" Qiu Yue asked blatantly, yet no one answered her directly and instead everyone was focusing all their attention on Jin.

"Guys, guys break it up! Let's give the Boss a bit of a rest. You all saw how tough this instance has been for both of them." Yun shouted in her eye catching red latex suit, as she stood on the bar counter and clapped her hands to shift the mob's attention to her.



"Come on! Boss at least tell us about your cultivation. Just answer this question." A customer pleaded him.

"Okay. Just one question and I will leave. My cultivation is Panda." Jin roared and grabbed Qiu Yue, who was still perplexed at what was happening to the other part of the shop instance and together they fled the area.

"Damn it, why did you ask such a silly question!" Another customer criticised the previous customer for asking such a stupid question before the crowd slowly started to disperse.

"I wanted to ask about his cultivation grade...I guess I was too nervous." The customer frowned, but his friend cheered him up by buying him a Panda Soda.

Jin and Qiu Yue were back at the store with the registration machines, and he asked Qiu Yue to follow him to the third floor where it was pleasant and tranquil. Even Qiu Yue was dumbfounded by the look of the Zen Gallery. She was then offered a can of Bamboo Juice by Jin to drink.

He sat beside her and began to ponder how to untangle this whole mess which either Yun or the System made. He could foresee being bombarded with more questions by the customers the next chance they would get, but at the very least it did help him to add some credibility to his subsequent explanation.

"Erm, yes. As you might have probably figured out, the boss of this dungeon supplier store would be me. I am currently a dungeon supplier." Jin took out his wallet and showed Qiu Yue his certification, which she held onto with her hands trembling.

"I cannot believe it... You are really doing what you have been aiming for." Qiu Yue spoke to herself and looked Jin in the eyes. "You are walking the dream that you have wanted to walk, without being held down by the chains of society." Qiu Yue's voice quivered, and tears started to flow down her cheeks.

"Wait, wait, why are you crying!" Jin panicked a little as he tried to glance around if anyone was looking at them. He started to scavenge through his storage watch to see if he had any tissues or towels that he could lend Qiu Yue, but his clumsiness made Qiu Yue laugh a bit.

"Oh my gosh, you are still the same." Qiu Yue had already taken a piece of tissue out from her own storage ring and wiped the tears away.

"I have never wanted to lie to you or anything. I just wanted to show you the work I have put in for this dungeon supplier store. I'd also like to know your thoughts on it without any bias." Jin replied.

"How did you even create all of this? I mean, you should not possibly have a dungeon supplier certificate unless you went through a five year course in Dungeon Catching..." Qiu Yue could not put the pieces together.

"Ehh...I..." Jin did not know whether this was the right time to confess about the System and complete the main objective of the mission.

"No, I am sorry. I didn't mean to degrade you or anything! Don't be mistaken. I am very happy for you. I just... no... I mean, congratulations!" Qiu Yue was somewhat hesitant with her words, and she started to have some feelings of regret for not sticking through with Jin.

"I have something to tell you. And only you. Do you mind staying with me, until I close the shop? I will tell you the whole story at that time." Jin went close to her ears and pretended to whisper, but he was sending her a close range voice transmission because he did not wish for anybody to eavesdrop. Unlike the standard voice transmission, close range voice transmissions could not be captured, decrypted or leaked by any other means.

Seeing how Jin was using close range voice transmission, Qiu Yue believed he had a pretty important secret that he was not able to tell just anybody. She nodded her head and forced a smile at Jin.

"Alright, if that's the case, do you mind me accompanying you around the store? I can show you where you could get your very own pet!" Jin told Qiu Yue, which instantly resulted in her mood perking up.

"Come follow me!" Jin beckoned Qiu Yue as he explained the 'landmarks' of his store, starting with the Zen gallery and later to the second floor. "Let me buy you one of these first," Jin said to Qiu Yue when he introduced her to the Loot Box machine and got her a few packs of cosmetic items.

"You sure? I can pay for it too you know. After all, you are running a business here." Qiu Yue remembered that Jin had already paid the tickets for the random arena battle dungeon instance and also the Vanilla Milkshake at Lele Cafe. "Oh, now it also makes sense how Jin knows the boss of Lele café." A random thought came to her mind.

"It's okay, treat it as my apology for hiding the truth from you," Jin argued, and Qiu Yue shook her head.

"Actually, when I think about it, even if you had told me the truth, I would not have believed you. If not for the things that I saw myself and heard how everyone called you Boss, I doubt I would have thought of you being the Boss. Although now thinking back on it you do match the description from my friend..." Qiu Yue deduced as she thought back how things fell into place so conveniently. "Still... Thank you, Jin."

Afterwards, both of them returned to the shop instance, and Jin brought her to the Pet Battle Card Vending Machine where Jin assisted her in getting her very own Digital Pet. For this, Jin told Qiu Yue, that she had to pay for it herself because the pet was hers to own and the machine needed her information from the Pandamonium app as verification. Hence, the payment was also linked to her Pandamonium account.

"Oh my! This is a Red Panda!!!" Qiu Yue could not believe her eyes as she held onto the newly born pet that appeared right in front of her. The feeling of the Red Panda was so real that she could not help but hug it real tight until the Red Panda squeaked a little. Qiu Yue released her grip to take another look but this time around, the red panda slipped through her hands and ran up her arms to her shoulders. It later wrapped itself around her, and Qiu Yue took the chance to rub her face against its face.

"Jin, this invention of yours, is like the best thing ever! I can own a Red Panda now!" Qiu Yue then asked Jin to take a few pictures of her and the Red Panda together. They also unveiled the several packs of cosmetic items together and passed the time until the shop officially closed.

"Qiu Yue. Come with me." Jin asked her when he confirmed everyone had left the shop including Zhen Qing. Jin had decided to complete the mission as stated by the System and get the full story from his mother once he was done.

## Chapter 245 Second in Command

"What is this place?" Qiu Yue asked as she saw a white room with just a table at the centre of it all. Was this another dungeon instance or some sort of isolation room which Jin wanted to speak to her about?

"I do have something to tell you and it's about this dungeon supplier store that I am working at." Jin snapped his fingers, and two chairs appeared right in front of them.

"What? How did you do that?!" Qiu Yue was astonished by the sudden appearance of the two chairs, but Jin continued with his explanation as if nothing out of the ordinary happened and gestured her to have a seat first.

"You know me. You know the norms, the practices on how to be a Dungeon Supplier since you searched for information on it for me back then. So I am not going to lie to you." Jin said with a serious look on his face. Qiu Yue was a little scared when Jin became earnest. Did he go through some underhanded means to get the ownership of this store? Or worse, did he kill someone to be this store's owner? No, that cannot be, she has never even heard of a dungeon supplier store in Tiangong Shopping District until recently.

"Please do not ask how I got it, but I happened to attain a special...entity, that helped me with the creation of the store." Jin tried to explain what has happened to him but Qiu Yue still looked clueless.

"You know how the main characters in those light fantasy novels have special powers?" Jin tried another angle of approach, and Qiu Yue nodded her head.

"My situation is somewhat similar to that. Somehow, I've attained a system to help me." Jin backed his words with another snap of his fingers, causing the previous group of goblins, that they fought against, to appear right in front of them. Qiu Yue did not know what to say upon seeing the goblins kneeling right in front of him.

"Wait...Wait a minute. Are you saying, you attained some special powers, and you used it to create a shop?" Qiu Yue was dumbfounded for a moment before she asked Jin.

"Well, sort of. It is less me becoming all powerful, but more like if I had a genie of some sort, that could grant wishes. Although there are also limitations to that. Try to imagine it as something similar to your previous battle, with Moloch. Though I doubt I can ask for anything I want for free, unlike the powers of command you wield in battle. It is sort of a 'give and take' situation with the system for whatever I want to do. Remember those blueprints I asked you for? It was actually for one of the dungeon instances I would like to create." Jin explained but he tried to keep it simple for now. Telling her there is a whole different world besides theirs would just freak her out even more.

"Well, that is how it would seem to my customers. But in actual fact, I am creating more than just a dungeon instance. I am creating an entire city from scratch. A living, breathing city. That is why I need your help, now more than ever." Jin stood up and bowed as he asked Qiu Yue directly. He knew that beating around the bush would not help when dealing with her and she would definitely have more questions to ask. It would be best to strike now in a conversation.

"I... I..." Qiu Yue was extremely confused. Her ex-boyfriend, who just admitted to having one of those "systems" you only read about, now asked for her help in creating an entire city? How could she even do that? What about supplies? Is it not just an illusory instance? If it is an illusory instance, why would he need it to be this realistic?

"I need some time to think about it, and I have a lot of questions running through my mind." Qiu Yue replied, but Jin nodded his head and told her not to worry.

"Firstly, why me?" Qiu Yue asked.

"Because you know me the best. You know my goals of being a dungeon supplier. In return, I will give you a decent wage and a Red Panda cultivation courtesy of the aforementioned System. This should also prove to you that the System exists, and I am not crazy. Unless you think I somehow managed to find a perfect Red Panda Cultivation Manual. Besides, weren't you the one, who once said that if I ever become a dungeon supplier, you would become my second-in-charge?" Jin answered with a blush on his face.

"But, but, but! Erm, I meant purely business, if you reject or have any doubts about it, I do not mind you not taking up the job. However, it will cause me some problems if you refuse my offer." Jin hastily added before continuing bluntly.

"What do you mean?" Qiu Yue tilted her head a bit and folded her arms as she questioned him.

"You are currently the only real person that knows about my situation." Jin answered with his head down.

"So what? Are you going to eliminate me? Are you going to brainwash me if I refuse?" Qiu Yue asked with a strict tone.

"Technically, it would not be me but the System. But to answer your question, yes, it would most likely want to erase your memories of this whole conversation, unless I manage to recruit you. But I vow that I am not going to let it do that and will take full responsibility for any consequences in introducing this System to you. I have asked you out of my own volition, and you have the right to refuse and walk away from this without any consequences." Jin now looked straight at her eyes as he spoke.

"I see," Qiu Yue replied with a nod. She has known Jin long enough time to be able to differentiate if Jin was telling the truth or not. It came as a shock to her, but Qiu Yue started to make some sense of things. For example, the uniqueness of the dungeon as compared to those by the previous suppliers that she had participated before, and the fantastic store that Jin currently had.

"Then second question: How much are you willing to pay me if I choose to work here? I mean, you are headhunting me so I would like a higher salary than my current job." Qiu Yue decided to tease Jin a bit.

"100,000 Yuan per month. (Close to 15,000 USD!) Allowance and lodging shall be given if needed. Overtime given too." Jin gave a high offer immediately even though he was still earning peanuts from the System. Besides, the System wanted her to help him, might as well take this opportunity to take advantage of the System's vague mission objectives.

Qiu Yue had her eyes wide open as she was shocked by the salary offered by Jin. She was earning roughly 24,000 Yuan (approximately 3,500USD) including overtime, and she thought that with a new

shop like Jin's, she would probably be offered lower. Qiu Yue intended to bargain a little before shrugging it off as a sort of big favour given to Jin but never in her life would she have thought she would be earning this much.

"Don't believe me?" Jin snapped his fingers, and a suitcase appeared right in front of her. He later opened the suitcase and showed the wads of cash in his possession. At a closer inspection, Qiu Yue noticed the notes were in hundreds, and she even looked within the stack of cash to check whether or not the notes were all the same. Not a prank where the first note was in US dollars and the rest of the stack of notes were of a different denomination. "If you accept this job offer now, I will present to you this suitcase as a bonus."

"I..." Qiu Yue had no idea on how to reply to Jin's offer. It looked as if he was desperate but at the same time, she knew that he was genuine about the proposal.

"But you do not even know my talents other than some discussion through chat. Why are you so certain about hiring me?" Qiu Yue presented a logical question towards Jin, but he laughed it off.

"Are you kidding me? A quick search online and I could find multiple publications by you and your team in those reputable journals. There is no way I am making a mistake in getting you into my store. Besides, I still remember how you loved to analyse dungeons and the composition of dungeon monsters back when we were still dating. You are a damn good pick for my store." Jin said with such passion about his confidence in her that it somewhat moved Qiu Yue.

"Alright, for you, Jin. I will do it. I will accept your job offer, and shall become your second-in-command." Qiu Yue nodded her head, and she could see Jin getting excited.

"But, you have to give me some time to quit my job as well as doing my responsibility to handle the project I am working to other people." Qiu Yue said.

"No problem, but it will be best if you-" Jin remembered that his Dungeon City Fortress had a deadline of three months before the Dungeon Core's shields came down.

"No worries, I will come and help you for the coming weekend. Besides, I need to 'get' some information from my workplace to help to build your 'city'. But you have to fill me in with the details!" Qiu Yue winked at Jin as he offered to call a cab for her.

## **Chapter 246 A Proper Conversation - Part 1**

"Now, we can have a proper talk. But first... You have successfully completed your mission." Yun congratulated as she drank her Black Ivory Coffee at the bar island counter when Jin returned to the Shop Level One instance after hailing a cab for Qiu Yue. Yun also placed a cup of Black Ivory Coffee in front of Jin as he sat beside her.

"You must have many questions in your mind. Speak freely." Yun told him, but it was easier said than done for Jin. There were so many questions on his mind that he did not even know what to ask first. While he was spending his time with Qiu Yue, he was also trying to sort through the questions, and his

mind was ever wandering. If Qiu Yue's focus had not been on the new Red Panda Pet that she was holding, she would have noticed how very distracted Jin was.

"I... want to know more about this revival of bloodline issue. And why did you want me to become a dungeon supplier? Did you lie to me when you said that I needed to be the number one dungeon supplier? Was it only a means to an end?" Jin drank his coffee as he gathered the courage to ask this burning question on his mind.

"I believe Zeru has told you about the Twelve Zodiacs' fight against the Banned Emperor?" Yun questioned him, and Jin nodded his head.

"He did not give you the full story." Yun took another sip of coffee before she swung her barstool to face Jin.

"From the wisdom of our forefathers that coexisted with the System, this story may seem like an exaggeration from our part, but it is nonetheless the truth. The Twelve Zodiacs were nothing compared to our Panda Clan when they were plotting against the Banned Emperor." Yun started her story, and Jin listened to it intently.

"The Panda Clan that aided the rebellion owned stores, similar to what you were doing right now. We were the ones that provided sanctuary for the twelve other cultivators along with their clanmates to meet with the Jade Prince. We were the ones who provided them with training, weapons, armour and intelligence on the Banned Emperor's movement. After all, the Panda Clan operated bars, weaponsmiths, restaurants and had access to many other establishments. We have been a conglomerate, that secretly raised funds against the Banned Emperor's ruling." Yun explained.

"During the battle against the Banned Emperor, we supported them with resources such as potions, restrictive barriers and food for the twelve cultivators to fight against the Banned Emperor for twelve days and nights. That was not all... Remember how the Jade Prince did not arrive until the twelfth night? When the Banned Emperor was occupied with the Zodiac cultivators, the Jade Prince, along with his subjects, raided the palace and performed the coup d'état. Of course, we were the ones who coordinated the entire operation and supplied the manpower with the necessary items."

"Eventually, when the rebellion ended, the Jade Prince was crowned as Emperor and rewarded the twelve cultivators and their clans by appointing them as the Royal Zodiacs." That was when Yun paused for a moment.

"But not us." Yun shook her head.

"He knew that he owed the greatest debt to the Panda Clan. In fact, without the Panda Conglomerate, the rebellion he planned for would have never seen the light of day, nor come to fruition, having been crushed in its infancy. He was grateful, but at the same time wary. Concerned that if they were capable of bringing down the Banned Emperor, they could also usurp the newly crowned Jade Emperor."

"The Jade Emperor had other plans... He summoned all of the Panda Clan Elders to convene for a secret meeting in the royal palace after the coronation. He asked them to come alone, without their other clan members, with the excuse of that meeting being too important to be leaked."

"Before continuing, have you heard the legend, that whenever an Emperor was crowned, they would have a wish that could be granted by the heavens and hell?" Yun asked as she took a breather by drinking another sip of coffee. "Yes, it has been passed down in later generations, considered folklore along with the Jade Emperor and the Zodiacs..." Jin replied.

"As you can imagine, it is more than just a legend. The Jade Emperor shared his honest thoughts with the Panda Clan Elders. He expressed his gratitude to them for helping him throughout the entire course of rebellion." Yun interrupted and continued her explanation.

"Of course, the Panda Clan Elders lowered their heads and said that they would serve the Emperor that kind of bullshit swearing-in ceremony stuff. But the Jade Emperor was still not at ease, so he decided to use the one wish the Heavens granted him on the Panda Clan."

"He declared that by the heaven's decree the Panda Clan would be granted the title Zeroth of the Royal Zodiacs, meaning that it would come first before the Twelve Zodiacs. The Panda Clan was no doubt delighted and honoured when they heard that they earned such a favour from the Jade Emperor. They believed that the reason they were not invited to the coronation ceremony was that the Jade Emperor wished to employ their services in secret, something similar to shadow agents."

"But at that moment when the Jade Emperor announced the title, he had one condition. He would only allow one Panda Family in the clan to survive. He reasoned that the rest would be 'absorbed' and become the 'Will of the Heavens' to subsequently aid the one and only Panda Clan Elder."

"The Panda Clan Elders were in a dilemma, and some had the suspicion that the Jade Emperor just needed an excuse to remove them entirely. No one knew what this 'Will of Heavens' was and they requested that they needed some time to discuss in private. The Jade Emperor allowed it and left them to their own devices."

"However, he was already executing his plan as he walked out of the room," Yun said with a little bitterness.

"All of the Panda Elders in that room were forcibly removed through the Jade Emperor's wish. The twelve Royal Zodiacs clans proceeded to kill the remaining prominent panda clan members and labelled them as part of the retainer families of the Banned Emperor."

"What the Jade Emperor did not know was that the Panda Clan Elders were shrewd enough to keep an Elder out of his sight at all times, even before the rebellion started. They figured that the Jade Emperor might turn out to be a threat to them when he requested for that secret meeting and needed to keep a high potential elder out of the loop to protect their clan roots and revive it if needed. As history has shown, their foresight was proved correct."

"So unknown to the Jade Emperor, the wish that he had made solely to kill off the entire Panda Clan came true. Either because of his wish, or maybe as a compromise to appease the Panda Clan Elders. Whatever the case, the so called 'Will of the Heavens' became the System, and the last remaining Panda Clan Elder inherited it." Yun stopped for a moment to drink her coffee.

"Utilising the knowledge of the Panda Clan, the System became a business oriented entity that empowered the subsequent generations of the remaining Panda Clan members. However, only one single member was able to wield such powers. Even within the remaining Panda Clan Elder's family,

there was internal strife once they found out the true powers of the System and everyone fought against their clan members and siblings, to become the successor. It was only in recent generations that it became more of an inheritance thing."

"Wait, so doesn't that mean that there are other Panda Clan members out there?" Jin questioned.

"Yes but you alone are a direct descendant. Additionally, your bloodline is the purest of them all. The Panda Bloodline that flows in the others is thin, resulting in them holding different cultivations, a different surname, being from a different family. Yet, the System refuses to tell me who they are and if there are others who inherited the System." Yun replied.

"Wait, did you not say that I am the only one that inherited it?" Jin was slightly confused.

"Well, that is only half true. You have inherited the Main System. There are other Sub-Systems out there, meaning other Panda Clan remnants, who were considered worthy by the System have been granted minor System abilities to aid them in their journey to revive the Panda Clan bloodline." Yun clarified.

"So..." Jin realised something.

"Yes, if the System determines that you are ultimately not worthy of its time and resources, it might migrate out of you and proceed to other inheritors if necessary. I don't wish to unsettle you, but in the long history of the Panda Clan remnants it would not be the first time that was to happen." Yun said bluntly.

## **Chapter 247 A Proper Conversation - Part 2**

"I am not the only one..." Jin did not know how to react. He has been given a chance to prove himself again and again, but he defied the System at every turn ever since the incident. Looking back at it, a cold shiver ran down Jin's spine at the realisation, that he could have lost everything, at any moment. Yun was considerate enough to give Jin some time to reflect before continuing her explanation.

"What happened to Grandpa Ming? You said that there were other Panda Clan remnants around. Why did Grandpa Ming still have access to the inheritance of the System even though the System denied him? Should it not have transferred over to someone else?"

"Simple answer. There were no worthy ones to be transferred over during his generation. All were equally useless. Even Zeru's Master was a failure in the end. It seemed that his work would go down the drain." Yun answered.

"Wait, what do you mean? Zeru's Master Tou Ma was a Panda Clan Remnant?" Jin was shocked at the discovery of the new fact. Did Zeru know all along that Jin was a Panda Clan Descendent? Was that the real reason why Zeru called him Master and not the System's enforced blind loyalty to Jin?"

"Yes, but Tou Ma did some senseless stuff when he realised he was able to utilise the powers of the Sub System in his hands. He nearly caused an economic crash in the shadows before the Royal Zodiac Snake Clan managed to find Tou Ma and stopped him from doing so." Yun described.



"Initially, he did it for the good of the people, but after Zeru's retirement, Tou Ma's ethics and morals went spiralling down. Eventually, the System withdrew its Sub System from Tou Ma before the Royal Zodiac Snake Clan interrogated him. Confidential reports that were secretly obtained at a later time by other Panda Clan Remnants have shown that the Royal Zodiac Snake Clan could not get any information from him even after continuous torture. However, it was also reported that Tou Ma was silently removed and it was announced to the public that he had died due to cardiac arrest. Most people still don't know the real truth, which is why he was still hailed as a public hero." Yun explained and Jin could not believe what he heard.

"All this manipulation of seemingly public information..." Jin knew that these kind of practices were a common thing in the country politics but hearing it first-hand made him realise how lucky he was, protected in his own bubble of comfort.

"The way the inheritance of the Main System has usually been handled, was for someone close to you, most often your relatives or guardians, to be summoned as your mentor. However, in your situation, this was not possible. Ming himself has been excommunicated, and I have been killed before I got the chance to learn about these things. My soul was damaged so badly that I do not even remember your existence or even giving birth to you. The System recreated me after that incident. To me, your existence has been as if I was introduced to a previously unknown relative. As if one day I was simply told, that the person in front of me has blood relations with me and that I should treat him like family. Hence, I am not too sorry for mistreating you. Because I really do not see you as my kid even if I have tried to act that way. You were not wrong to call me 'a figment, a property of the System'. In the end, I am just a facilitator to oversee you." Yun finally admitted it in all honesty, the cruel truth.

"But I do not deny that I do feel that guiding you have awoken my maternal instincts at times. It's just that...I simply do not know how to help you since I did not go through any of this System thing. Everything was bombarded onto me, and even I am just learning the ropes." Yun used this chance to stand up and stepped aside from the bar stool.

"I am sorry, let us restart this relationship between you, me and the System. I shall not pretend to be your mother. Please treat me as your elder sister of some sort. If you feel uncomfortable, maybe senior will be fine." Yun sincerely bowed right in front of Jin.

Jin looked at Yun who was still bowing and waiting for Jin's response. He stood up and bowed down too. "I am sorry for making so much trouble, Yun. I will reflect on my attitude and will earnestly try to work with the System from now on." Jin promised with his head down.

Yun quietly stood upright and looked at Jin before she opened her mouth. "I erm.. I am sorry that I did not inform you about this earlier too. The System was too wary after Ming's failure, and I was instructed not to say anything until now." Yun sat down again and drank her remaining coffee.

"What exactly did Ming do?" Jin asked, but Yun shook her head.

"I am not permitted to go into the details. You might learn about that in the future when the System trusts you more." Yun replied as she went into the bar island and refilled her coffee. She also took out a box of cheesecake and opened it to share with Jin. That was when Jin remembered about Qiu Yue when he saw the picture of a Red Panda playing in the snow printed on the cheesecake box.

"Why did you want me to recruit Qiu Yue? Did the System know about her? Or was it merely because she had the cultivation of the Red Panda?" Jin thanked Yun for the cheesecake and used a fork to cut the edge of the cheesecake to eat.

"To put it bluntly, you cannot hide anything from the System. She is a talented woman who has the potential capability to help out in the Dungeon City Fortress. The System thinks that if it cannot reign or revive the Panda Bloodline in this country, or perhaps this world, the Dungeon City Fortress can be used as a backup plan. It is considering to bestow her a Sub-System to help you out. Therefore, she will be a Bellator at your service." Yun munched on the cheesecake as she explained to Jin.

"Speaking of that, what exactly is a Tier 2 Bellator Network...?" Jin asked when she mentioned Bellator.

"The ability for you to govern- \*cough\* I mean manage people bestowed with Sub Systems. We still call them 'bellator' because they are considered warriors fighting for you, only on another front aside from the battlefield. Also, that chef you brought in? Zhen Qing. The System has also been highly considering to bestow upon her a Sub System related to cooking."

"Why her?" Jin was curious. He initially wanted to help her because of her excellent food and some personal interest in her before Qiu Yue came back into his life.

"Her emotional cooking. The System tried hard to replicate that, but it was unable to do so. True, her cooking could not match with the System's knowledge of food, but as a commoner, she was still able to portray the emotion in her cooking. The System has a Sub System that could help her further that ability into something more effective." Yun was now talking properly with Jin, cooperating with him and discussing how they could work things out together. Perhaps, the concept of being an emotionless overseer limited to survey Jin's progress did not suit her after all.

"That is why I need you to take the initiative to push her more. I believe she is at the edge of creating something good, but it seems that she has encountered something like a chef's block? If there is such a term. In any case, the System and I shall issue another mission to you." Yun prodded Jin to look into his phone.

"Get Zhen Qing to create the first main dish for the Dungeons and Panda's restaurant. Reward: 'Perfectible Penguin Ruling the Kitchen Hell' Cultivation Style." The System notified Jin via his phone once more, and Jin nodded his head at Yun.

"Penguin? Not Panda?" Jin was surprised, although Zhen Qing did say that she wanted a penguin cultivation, but for a System that based itself on a Panda Bloodline to hand out manuals for other cultivation styles, he did not understand the rationale.

"Yes, Penguin. Remember how I said the Panda Clan was a conglomerate of stores and businesses? That was because people with various cultivations came together, united by a common cause and decided to serve the Panda Clan instead. Their influence was one of the largest and if not for the Jade Emperor's rise in power and quick subduing of the Panda Clan's higher echelons, we might have been the ones to control the economy of this country." Yun replied.

"Therefore, the System had accumulated sufficient knowledge to create top notch cultivation manuals suitable for anybody. Not only that, the System rewards sub Systems based on meritocracy and as a potential candidate to carry out 'the will of the heavens' if the direct descendent fails. All in all, they do

not care about short term goals. If the System needs to wait for 100 years or even 1000 years for a person suited for the revival of the Panda Clan should their direct descendent fails, then so be it."

"But right now, you are still around, and the Dantian Core Resurrection made the job easier for the System to resurrect if necessary. Well, unless you are killed by the Banned Emperor retainers like what had happened to me, that will be entirely a different issue. I will explain to you more once you get to increase your cultivation. And I really need you to get stronger. Do not slack off in your training or cultivation. For the moment, do not think much and not anger the System unnecessarily." Yun took a breather from explaining and finished the last piece of the cheesecake. It looked like Yun did not want to talk about her death yet and Jin also needed time to reflect on what was said that night.

"Looks like I really need to plan my schedule properly. Many things are piling up." Jin noted the mission in his notes and promised himself to try and complete as soon as possible, as he brought the cups and plate into the dishwasher before he locked the shop for the day.

"But first...I need to cultivate." Jin decided not to think about it at this moment as he entered the Hot Spring Instance for his medical herbal bath. "Oh yeah, I also need to remember to recreate this hot spring instance for my cultivation purpose."

## **Chapter 248 A Heart-to-Heart Talk - Part 1**

Jin laid in the hot spring pool, but this time round, he was sitting right beside the maple tree. Unlike last time, he had learned his lesson and no longer merely lay at the edge of the pool for the penguins to pull him up. Right now, he had purposely brought some carabiners, long pieces of climbing rope and a climbing harness which he bought in one of the stores in Tiangong Shopping District as he strapped himself up before sitting down in the pool.

"Master, it might not be as effective if you are not totally naked." Mr Patsu reminded him loudly, but it also understood Jin's intention when he brought the harness and carabiners.

"I understand, but you know safety first, right? What is the use of effectiveness if I drown in my sludge? I promise to redesign the hot spring instance in the future." Jin thanked Mr Patsu for his concerns as he aided the Penguins to set up the ropes with the aid of the maple tree.

"Is it just me or is the maple tree getting bigger each time I enter?" Jin thought to himself before ignoring the tree and sitting in the water with his cultivation pose, and he eventually reached the state of tranquillity.

The imagery in his mind changed to the same scene of bamboo trees, but it was slightly different than usual. There was now a wooden cabin in the middle of the bamboo forest. Jin figured Ming would be there and walked towards it.

"Gramps! You there?!" Jin shouted, but there was no response. Instead, he felt a weird tingling sensation as the bamboo leaves fluttered when there was no wind in the area.

\*CLANG\*

"Good, your senses improved...Hmm?! Did you unlock a particular Eye technique?" Ming came out from his hiding area as he clashed swords with Jin, who had activated the Inverse Eyes technique to have a clearer picture of his surroundings. Jin was thankful it worked when he needed it.

"Not sure what to call it when it appeared. I just call it the Inverse Eye technique now. Is there a proper name to it?" Jin loosened his sword arm, but surprisingly Ming did not allow him to let his guard down.

"Did I tell you to stop defending?" Ming questioned him loudly as he struck forward with his sword.

"I promised that I would train you and you need to get stronger fast. It seems that you have already been given the truth from the System so I shall not hold back either." Ming was so furiously attacking Jin that his Inverse Eyes could not keep up.

"Your defence technique is admirable, but your attack is sorely lacking. You have been relying on Zeru's Perfectly Normal Parry Slash too much. As you can see, I too can parry." Ming said as he counter parried Jin's Perfectly Normal Parry Slash with Jin having no chance of defending himself as he received the attack.

Oddly enough, there was no blood oozing out, but the pain from the slash could be felt. Even with the Inverse Eyes, he could not see any openings in Ming's attacks. It was as if Ming knew every weak spot of his. That was when he noticed that Ming was using Inverse Eyes as well. That realisation, however, gave Ming the perfect opportunity to take advantage of Jin's pause and he plunged his sword into Jin's stomach.

"Distraction! How can you afford to be distracted during a battle!" Ming took out the sword from Jin's body, who fell over and was lying in pain once again.

"Your flaws. Easily distracted. Poor defence. Poor attack. You rely too much on abilities. Your strength? None. How are you going to live up and protect the name of the Panda Clan?" Ming shouted as he folded his arms and listed all of Jin's bad points.

"I..." Jin was in too much pain that he could not reply Ming.

"Well, at least your naming sense is better than mine I guess." Ming scratched his beard as he extended his hand to help Jin up.

"Naming sense?" Jin placed his shoulders around Ming and was assisted into the wooden cabin.

"I called this eye technique Triangle Eyes...Hahaha! But Inverse Eyes sounds so much better." Ming helped Jin onto a chair and threw him a wet towel near the sink.

"In any case, instead of training, I think you want to know more about my banishment from the System right? Since my dear daughter and that big lofty System will not spell it out." Ming smiled as he poured a cup of drink which eluded a particular scent of aroma and passed it to Jin.

"You have to earn it from me. Learn the Panda Spiritual Union skills while increasing your cultivation grade. I believe Zeru did say that increasing your cultivation grade will unlock the so-called chains on the Spiritual Union skills." Ming said as he sipped his drink.

"I am assuming that you are hearing and seeing what I am doing?" Jin placed his hands on his face as he learnt that all his family members including the long dead ones were all serial stalkers. Perhaps that was

how they could have garnered intelligence against the Banned Emperor too. It was a terrifying thought to be born in a family of stalkers.

"Hahaha! No no no. I will not know anything until you arrive here. The moment you...erm, check into this place. I have access to your memories, which reminds me... I have been meaning to ask a crucial question..." Ming leaned forward.

"That chef girl is a hottie, and so is that Red Panda though I feel she is more of a cutie instead. Which would you go for? Or are you waiting for the opportunity to strike both? I mean knocking up both girls means that you increase your probability of keeping the Panda Clan alive too." Ming's eyebrows perked up, and Jin laughed bitterly.

"At this rate, I think I will go for abstinence..." Jin said with a dead tone.

"Still, concerning looks, you have not found the one that suits your taste yet." Ming placed his hands on his chin and voiced a slight thought.

"Oh, yea... I forgot... you said that my taste for girls was similar to yours in your letter before you passed away." Jin did not know how to advance this particular conversation. Jin felt that he would rather be in pain than to continue this part of the discussion.

"Haha anyways, I was just teasing you. I am not like the System. If I accessed each and every memory of yours, I would go nuts trying to process it. Remember that I was in the military? I am able to extract specific information, the ones that I need to know to improve your training. Besides, the information erm...kind of presents itself the moment you enter this place. You are dying to improve, dying to know something. This made such specific information extraction relatively easy although it is still tiring to keep on extracting it from your subconscious."

"That is why that will also be one point of your agenda when you come to this place...Hmm, we should name this place too." Ming leaned back as he rocked his chair and thought about what he should name this place where Ming and Jin met.

"Agenda? This place?" Jin was confused.

"Guarding your subconscious. In the event you are taken or kidnapped, you need to train your subconscious to protect yourself. You know, in case they dive into your brain to extract information like how I did it just now. Especially when you have so many flaws already. I bet you would be easily kidnapped. Bwahahaha!" Ming laughed as he stood up.

"Come with me. I shall bring you to a more secure place to teach you the basics." Ming stood up and went to his bed to press a button, revealing a small hatch at the bottom of his bed. He lifted his bed like a piece of paper and opened the hatch door.

"Get in."

Jin carefully stepped down the ladder through the hatch shaft, but all that awaited him was complete darkness. Ming followed behind and somehow managed to find the switch to the lights in this basement underneath the cabin. It was basically an empty room with only two chairs at the centre. There was a light bulb in the middle of the room which provided sufficient illumination.

"Is it that vital to learn how to protect my subconscious? Should it really be a higher priority compared to you teaching me how to defend myself?" Jin tried to affirm the rationale behind Ming's latest action.

"You don't use your brain that much, do you? Care to go over what happened earlier in your store when you came out of the random arena dungeon instance?" Ming scoffed at Jin as he sat down in one chair.

"Customers started to ask what my cultivation grade was. Erm...I figured it's either the System or Yun, who started the live stream of the dungeon instance run in the auditorium." Jin could not figure what Ming was getting at.

"Analyse it more. Why would Yun or the System want the audience to see your fight and Red Panda Cutie? Why did she not listen to your command?" Ming asked.

"I honestly have no idea... I could only list out the disadvantage or maybe to create an obstacle for the mission to progress?" Jin answered cluelessly.

"Stop thinking that Yun is out there to harm you. You already know the truth that she is your ally. She would not do something that random just to spite you. Think harder." Ming now folded his arms and looked sternly at Jin.

"To provide entertainment for the audience? To show that I am a competent dungeon supplier?" Jin tried to guess.

"You are nearly there. Why would the System want to show the audience that you are a competent dungeon supplier, but not allow you to reveal your cultivation?" Ming tried to probe further.

"Ehh... So that the audience would respect me for showing restraint towards myself?"

"No." Ming shook his head lightly.

"I don't know the answer..." Jin honestly wanted to give up.

"Because there are enemies in the midst of your audience." Ming looked him straight in the eyes.

"Enemies...?" Jin started to think of the advantages of showing the audience.

"Yes, the world is not as friendly as you think it is. There are enemies hidden in your backyard. People who are jealous of your success. They should probably be thinking something along the lines of: 'How can this pathetic no-name dungeon supplier suddenly create a store that had instant fame in no time? All through word of mouth?' " Ming crossed one of his legs, and he spoke to Jin.

"By showing a constant restraint of my strength against insurmountable odds, it indirectly portrays that I am a person who does not back down from fights." Jin started to analyse and comment on the System's decision.

"Yes, and that last part where you accidentally, but yet briefly showed your cultivation off to the audience was a perfect taunt to fuck them off. To send out the message to not mess with you." Ming did not bite his words when he gave his praise.

"That also means that the threats you will handle in the future are going to be the bigger fishes. They will not send out their small pawns to disturb you. Well...I guess they might. But I am preparing you for the big ones. The ones that can potentially mess you up." Ming explained.

"I shall give you a titbit — the Royal Zodiac Snake Clan. They are experts in regards to information extraction from the mind. Extraction comes along with torture. The way I extracted information from you is what I have learned from a good buddy of mine who came from the Royal Zodiac Snake Clan. If I dare brag, he is a direct descendant of the Snake Clan too." Ming smiled evilly as he thought about the past.

"Too bad, I was unable to kill him since I do not have the System." Ming sighed before looking at Jin.

"I will eventually have to kill, don't I? To get revenge and revive the Panda Bloodline. Is that why the System wanted me to kill people in the Dungeon World? Even though I said I would not kill anyone for resources." Jin asked with a solemn look in his face.

"Kid. I am not here to dictate what you can or cannot do." Ming took out a cigar from his pocket and lit a fire.

"By all means, befriend the Royal Zodiacs. Regain fame for the Panda Clan once again by acting diplomatically. Make them respect the promised title 'Zeroth of the Royal Zodiacs' or kill every one of them. I do not care."

"All I care about is that you are my grandson. Eat, sleep, live. Love and fuck. That is all I ask of you. To enjoy yourself. Life is short no matter how long someone can live. I have learnt that no matter how others force their expectations on you, you are the captain of your heart. Live for yourself." Ming said as he blew the smoke away from Jin.

"But to live life to the fullest, you need to learn how to protect yourself, your employees and in the future, your own family. Therefore, I am teaching you the ways to defend yourself so you can enjoy yourself to the fullest extent." Ming was genuinely concerned for Jin.

"Gramps, sometimes I feel that you are not honest about yourself when you were alive." Jin broke out a small smile at Ming.

"Bwahahaha!! That is true. It looks like only when someone is dead, that you can only wish that you appreciated your own family more." Ming laughed loudly.

"Isn't that for the living to say and not the dead?" Jin sniggered at his remark.

"Bahh, you always apply cold water to the burned area. Did I use the internet meme correctly?" Ming rolled his eyes seeing Jin laugh crazily.

"That is beside the point. We shall start with the training soon." Ming clapped his fingers and suddenly Jin's hands and feet were chained up to the chair.

"Stay in this darkness for a month. Do not worry, time here is accelerated, a month in this room is just five minutes in the real world. Good luck! Try not to turn insane." Ming stood up and walked away slowly.

"Oh, one more thing. Should you try anything funny like breaking out of the chains? More restraints will appear to lock you up. And there is no giving up since I do not permit that." Ming started to climb up the ladder.

"What happened to allowing me to enjoy life to the fullest?" Jin said as a rebuttal.

"One cannot enjoy and appreciate life thoroughly without experiencing the suffering of life," Ming replied as he climbed out of the basement and closed the hatch. When he closed it, the lights were immediately cut off.

"Solitary confinement huh. Guess, it is a good time for me to reflect on my own actions and what I can do better." Jin thought to himself. "Not to mention, what to do once I get out of here." Jin shook his head at the issues he needed to address.

"Maybe I can do something in the dark like cultivating myself?" Jin tried, but because he was all chained up, he could not get into a proper stance to start cultivation. "Urgh, It is not possible." Jin tried to shake his hands and feet, but soon enough, he felt that more chains started to grab him and tied him even more tightly on the chair.

"Shit! Is it that sensitive?" Jin could only rely on his sense of touch and sound to hear the chains crawling up to him.

It was at that moment he felt a sense of déjà vu...

## **Chapter 250 Total Darkness**

"Isn't this the same situation as that dream that I had before?" Jin thought to himself and tried to stay calm. It would not help to get even more agitated, and he would only end up clamped down by more chains if he moved too much.

"Wait, wait, wait. This is not the same as that dream. There is no inscription charm or any lighting. It is just pure darkness." Jin spoke to himself as he tried to regulate his breathing. He roughly knew the effects of total darkness when placed into complete isolation.

Humans were not meant to stay in total darkness, and it was considered a torture technique during wartime. The sensory deprivation and the lack of light would cause the body's natural cycle and circadian rhythm to go haywire. Also, the lack of interaction could make a person lose their mind mainly because humans could never stay idle for long. Their desire to be busy was in their innate nature, which cannot be fought against. Jin remembered about how he read how people would prefer to have pain as a stimulus than not doing anything and lived in boredom.



Therefore, Jin roughly figured out Ming's objective for chaining him up in the dark. If total darkness could make someone lose their mind, it was also the best way to temper one's mind, that was under the condition that Jin would survive the one month of darkness.

At this point, Jin decided to reflect on what he had learnt so far about the System, about Yun and his interactions with Ming. Previously he never had the time to sit down properly and think about this kind of things, so he started to consolidate the information he had gathered from all three of them.

At the very least, he was finally certain, that all three were not going to harm him in any way... at least not any time soon. However, he did find it ironic that the System denied Ming, but Ming was still around within him to guide him. Nevertheless, he did wonder why the System did not say anything about Ming especially when Jin's unfiltered thoughts could always be heard by Yun.

Maybe the System automatically removed Ming from their listening logs since it hated him so much for failing. Jin also wondered why Ming would want to do something so stupid but then again Jin started to realise he was dumb not to trust the System too. "Hahaha, the pot calling the kettle black rings so true in this situation!" Jin sighed as he spoke to himself.

Although the goal was still not entirely clear for him, especially the part about the revival of the Panda Bloodline. He wondered what exactly it has got to do with being the number one dungeon supplier. Perhaps, there might be some correlation since Yun said that the old Panda Clan strived on stores previously.

It did make him wonder what the previous Panda Clan descendants with the System had done. Did they create stores as well? Judging from his own situation and how Jin was not living the high life, did it mean they all failed? Yun also said there was a case where the Panda Clan Remnant took over the System to carry out its will. Did the Remnant fail in the end too? Or was it merely because the Royal Zodiacs impeded both the direct descendants and the remnants? Or was it because of their incompetence like how Jin used to be in the beginning? Could it be laziness was some sort of Panda Clan curse passed down in the family?

Jin could not figure it out and decided put aside the issue at hand for a moment as he pondered what to create for Yang Ling, the Tiger Princess to fulfil his part of the deal. He figured that if she was making such equipment as the previously shown prototype, she must have connections with key military personnel. That would mean, that he could gain money from getting contracts with the military as well. After all the military budget in countries was always high. However, that was in the past, and now it seemed riskier than ever especially after he had learned about the truth since the Zodiacs governed the army and the police.

The more he thought about it, the more he realised that the Zodiacs were the ones that took the entire country as their backyard playground. The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer while the middle class continued to slog their lives away.

"When the time comes to clash with them, then I will settle." Jin started to begin feeling sleepy after all that random thinking. "But for now, time to go to sleep."

It was funny how Jin felt so tired considering he was in a part of his subconscious and yet, he decided not to think too much about that and went to sleep. He knew that he should not presume and rest sufficiently.

Meanwhile, in the Hot Springs service instance, Jin was producing a lot of sludge at a high speed which startled the penguins. Even Mr Muddles, their friendly neighbourhood sludge remover, who improved himself could not stop the current situation. The sludge was in such a large quantity, that it overflowed from the hot spring pool to the surrounding areas.

The Penguins decided to take refuge on the top of the cabin roof with the help of Mr Muddles as they helplessly watched Jin hanging on the top of the Maple Tree still in his cultivation stance and he continued to produce sludge from his entire body.

It was the first time they saw the production of sludge coming out of him since it was usually muddled by the hot spring pool water. Now the sludge was so thick and black that the amount Jin produced began to overflow out of the facility and over the mountain's edge. If one could see from afar, they would assume that it was some volcano mountain slowly spewing black stuff out of its peak.

"What is happening to Boss?" Mr Patsu was slightly worried, but he could not do anything. He was considering if he should call the Big Boss System for help but seeing that Jin was still hanging along the Maple tree due to his climbing harness, Mr Patsu continued to oversee the situation. Mr Patsu was after all instructed not to disturb Jin's cultivation unless his life was in mortal danger.

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"Argh!" Jin suddenly woke up when he heard footsteps in the area. He instinctively tried to look around but to no avail. He figured he was just imagining stuff. Jin did feel that he had slept for a long time, but he knew that the change in the natural cycle was bluffing him. Without anything providing him with some sense of time, it was impossible to tell whether he slept for a whole day or for a mere 10 minutes.

"There I heard it again!" Jin thought to himself now completely sure that he heard very light footsteps coming his way. Jin tried to shake that thought away. Perhaps he was overthinking in his head.

"You are not wrong. I am indeed walking towards you." A charming voice was speaking all around him.

"You desire a companion to talk to, don't you?" The voice continued.

"Am I that weak to start hearing voices in my mind so soon?" Jin thought to himself and decided not to say anything.

"Maintaining your silence huh? Don't believe that I exist?" The voice stopped for a while, and suddenly he heard a click sound. Jin recognised that sound, and it was distinct enough to know what it was.

"A gun?" Jin judged in his thoughts and continued to stay mute. If he ever talked back to that voice, he assumed, that would be the point when went insane from talking to thin air, to nothing. The next moment, Jin sensed an object pressing on his forehead. It was cold, hard and definitely felt like steel.

"Still not talking? Pretending to be tough?" The voice spoke, and suddenly Jin felt a shove on his forehead, the metal barrel was pressing forward and leaving a mark on Jin's forehead, yet Jin decided not to say a thing.

"I could be hallucinating" Jin wondered to himself as he maintained his silence.

"I am not done with you. I will be back the moment you let your guard down. Hmph." The steps were loud, but they were moving away from Jin.

"Please do not come back..." Jin said to himself as his voice echoed throughout the entire room.