

## **Dungeon S 381**

### **Chapter 381 Lynn's Business Meeting**

For once, Lynn was in her office in the Restaurant Train of Delicacy. Jin had created it for her in advance when designing that particular instance. At that point, he did not know that the kitchen instance could be expanded to suit the Sub System User's needs.

And when Lynn found out that there was a train car dedicated just for her... she thought it was a waste of space and resources. But in recent times, Lynn came around to appreciate it a lot more.

It allowed Lynn to concentrate solely on her work and provided her with a working space away from the kitchen. It was a great place to relax and gather her thoughts, especially when sometimes she could not feel at ease upon hearing the penguins communicating in a crazy ruckus without her as the Chef handling them.

Lynn was initially uncomfortable to leave them on their own but as the time went by, she realised there were instances when she had overlooked a few steps due to the increasing amount of orders which the penguins immediately corrected her about it.

That was when she began to see that the 'mess' the penguins were in, was actually an organised one. Even though she did not fully comprehend why they were so messy in their routine, the food they created was still up to her standard. That was especially true when those penguins came from the Sub System.

But slowly, she came to the conclusion that the penguins NPCs, who had been helping out, were behaving in such a way in order to optimise the workflow within the kitchen. It prevented any wastage of resources as per Lynn's instructions and that included idle time. (They were clearly not humans!)

The training of her ninja disciples, cooking dishes in advance, having a minimum amount of food stock prepared in case of a flood of customers with the opening of the Raid Event and not to mention her personal ninja training had made her almost as busy as Jin in her own unique way.

Within a month after receiving the Sub System, Lynn had experienced her own cultivation grade to increase at a soaring pace to the point she attained Grade 5 Peak. Even the Sub System was delighted by the quick advancement and showered her with rewards such as refurnishing her office train car with a mini kitchen in order to experiment on things. And because the train car space was limited by width, those equipment were 'storage friendly' courtesy of the Sub System.

The Food Sub System had given her equipment in modules so that she could plug and play certain kitchen equipment together. When she advanced to Grade 5 after the major goblin operations, the Sub System bestowed her a new train car right beside her office and it included a fully functional kitchen, similar to the kitchen instance that was being used by the ninja penguins. Needless to say, the kitchen train car had plug and play modules too and she could finally cook what she liked without disturbing the ecosystem of the kitchen.

For example, if she needed more space to test on various broths, she could keep her large cabinet oven via the Sub System and place more cooking stoves in lieu of space. Of course, her experimental cooking now could only be contained within this particular train car. Jin promised that once they had set up the

Dungeon City Fortress, he would create a cooking lab for her so she could perform tests on all kinds of other things. After all, science did have a significant impact on the cooking industry.

On the flipside, her office was now filled with books with regards to cooking such as the science of good cooking. Some of it came from the customers that sold their books in the library section on the second and third floor of the store. Among those, some explained things like how fermentation worked, the various ways of achieving different umami (savory taste) and many more. There were also cooking manuals and recently, the cooking books she bought from the Goblin World for her to peruse. (Fortunately, the Sub System could translate them in the blink of an eye.)

However, what she was most interested in was the Farming World. At the moment, she worked rather closely with the werejackals and werewolves since their home instance had become an experimental ground for her food. She had long ago noticed that the tomatoes the werejackals grew were so much juicier than the one she got from the Sub System's food market.

After that recognition of the Farming World products, her heart desired for more results. She tried comparing the result by getting her own world's tomato seeds, the ones from the Sub System food market and werejackal's food products and let them all be grown via the Werehumans method.

The Sub System's tomatoes were superior to the ones sold in the food market after being grown by the Werehumans and the same was true for the ones from her world. Yet, no matter how well they tended to the crops, those two products could not beat the original tomato taste from the Farming World.

Still, the taste of a raw ingredient was just one aspect of cooking. It did not mean that the other two were in any way inferior especially after they were enhanced via the Werejackal's farming methods. As a cook, she knew not to ignore any ingredients. No matter what food she was given, Lynn had to find a way to bring out the most potential of those raw ingredients. That was her ultimate goal.

If Jin managed to invade the Farming world and eradicate the mess their inhabitants were in, there might be a chance that Lynn would have access to Farming World's more exotic products. If possible, she even wished to own some land there, to grow more food and maybe even try to crossbreed some of them to improve it further.

That was one of the reasons why she had been so eager to lend her support during the Town Hall council meeting back when Jin asked for help to go to war. ( And she wished to personally support Jin too.) Unfortunately, the Sub System food market did not have any access to the Farming World products, which was why she was all the more delighted to help Jin out.

Initially, she did not understand why the Farming World had decreased the sales of their goods until they stopped outright. She also regretted not having to purchase more of their products when she still had the chance though back then. (Though the reason she could not buy more was that Lynn's net profit margin was too meagre as compared to recent times.)

Lynn thought that the products had been too exclusive due to their amazing taste so that the Sub System was unable to purchase it. Only after Jin informed them in the meeting about the circumstances of the Farming world did she learn that inhabitants were already trying their best to be self sufficient against the Demon Rats occupation that they just did not have any extra to sell.

Ever since Jin had announced that they would not be attacking the Demon Rats anytime soon, Lynn was a tad disappointed but she had plenty other things in mind. Firstly, an update to her food menu. After this particular goblin raid event, Lynn realised that more communication was needed to liaise with Jin on the subject. Therefore, she decided to initiate a business meetup with Jin. (That and to make sure Qiu Yue was not hogging onto Jin 24 hours a day.)

Lynn was thinking of producing a special theme menu that would only be available during the duration of a particular theme. Only once in a while would they reintroduce the theme again for nostalgia sake. Jin loved the idea, but he felt it was not feasible in the long run.

"It would place too much stress on you. I want your food to be of the highest quality and cost somewhat reasonable prices since the focus here is after all the dungeons. That is also why the System and I worked out a deal to make the Sub System sell your ingredients at 85% of the selling price. The other 15% will be absorbed by me. I was planning to do the same with the Fishing instance but the System stated that good sushi had to be priced well for them to be recognised." Jin replied when Lynn introduced that concept to him in her office.

"I agree, the sushi and even the Chef's cutting techniques is top notch. There's only one other restaurant that I can think of at the top of my head which could beat Chef Roro's sushi making skills. Even the quality of fish that we have would not be a match to them." Lynn told him as Jin took a look at her office.

"That amazing eh? We should go there sometime to bring back a few dishes for Chef Roro to taste. I'm sure it won't hurt if he gets a chance to compare so he could work harder in the future." Jin jest as he thought back the time when he purchased Chef Roro. He was one of the top tier chefs offered by the System and his wage was equally of a top tier value too. Any more than that would cost him more than a bomb and even the System would not be willing to loan that kind of amount out for him unless his turnover was in the millions.

"Aaaanyways, affordability is just one factor. The most important thing is for you to not stress out about this 'theme' thing. What I'd suggest is that we introduce those goblin themes within your restaurant train cars and even make the penguins wear side goblin masks. Something similar to the high class premium train cars where the penguins are in kimonos etc but of a lower budget. After all, it is an instance, changing some furniture and interior decor in a moment's notice won't be an issue at all." Jin proposed as he took his phone out and showed a few pictures of the products he sold in the redemption counter as references for Lynn.

"Ahh...you know I am not that great with art and design...the best I could make was that high class premium car." Lynn implied that this should be a job for Jin with all the awesome looking dungeons and interior deco designs.

"Nonsense, you are underestimating yourself too much. The last time I checked your high class premium car, the backdrop, the music and even the little scenery ornaments synchronised well with each other that it gave the relaxing ambience I yearn at times." Jin complimented Lynn and she felt proud that her work was recognised.

"Hmm....instead of figurines and such, we can use this opportunity to open a small souvenir store at the train station to sell goblin themed tableware, plates, bowls, even saucers! Oh, and we can't forget

accessories like kitchen magnets, aprons, supermarket tote bags etc. This way, the customers won't be so bored while waiting for the trains too." Jin added and Lynn was amazed by the business ideas he had.

"Ah! But, But!" Jin suddenly went to the edge of his seat with leaned towards the table, closer to Lynn. "Bread! We can make themed bread! Like those bread with toasted symbols or pictures. Ah, what's it called again... it's at the tip of my tongue but I cannot remember how they are called." Jin looked up as he was trying hard to recall.

"You mean Artisan bread stencilling?" Lynn asked with a grin, seeing how cute Jin could be at times and he typed Lynn's answer in his phone.

"Ahh, I guess so! Something similar to that. Or donuts! Or erm cupcakes!" Jin started to babble whatever ideas he could think of and Lynn filtered through them and realised that most were actually viable. If they tasted decent and were priced fairly cheap, those goblin themed bread could be sold at a daily basis. Besides, her penguins needed more of a challenge. They were already producing the food faster than Lynn could have imagined especially after she taught them all she knew.

This themed bread would indeed be a challenge for them to take up. She was already looking forward to letting the penguins design and come up the type of baked goods to be sold.

And by directly competing against each other, to see who could sell the most, the champion could learn something about Lynn's personal knowledge on bread.

Besides, Lynn had sold her own Black pepper pork buns for a living for the past year or so which meant baked goods were within her speciality. "I wonder if it would be a hit..." Lynn imagined a crowd rushing over for the freshly baked bread and perhaps duelling it out just for the last piece of bread. (Oh...on hindsight, she really could predict the future rather well!)

"That way, you do not need to worry that much about those heavy themes...like erm 'Burning Volcano City Ramen!' that kind of theme heavy products. If the baked goods sell well, we can continue for perhaps a few more months before phasing them out." Jin added and Lynn loved the prospects of having an accessory store and a bakery in the restaurant train instance.

"I will get cracking on the bread part but I need you to do me a favour and get those goblin designs up for me to choose from." Lynn became a little playful with her words and Jin giggled as he nodded wilfully. He hardly saw her this relaxed and yet enthusiastic at the same time. (She also did not want Jin to know that she planned to get her penguins to design too and wondered which one would the customers like the best.)

"It will be up in a jiffy since I have the imposter Jins to do the job! But first, Xiong Da gave me a ton of things to consider before I can meet up with you again." Jin laughed as he pulled up the suitcase right by his side.

"Hmm maybe... in a few hours, you can look forward to some French toast accompanied by a cup of Black Ivory Coffee." Lynn chuckled and sent him off. "...and perhaps with some love in it too." She curled her hair at the side of her ear as she walked towards the experimental kitchen train car to test out the new ideas she had in her head.

## Chapter 382 Police Partnership Finalised

Jin had many things on his plate so he decided to take things a bit slowly for the rest of November considering that he had successfully completed the monthly mission portion from the System. (That is assuming that the gangsters did not harass him that much.) First on the list was the police partnership contract.

With the new partnership deal with the Tiangong District Police Station and only them (he did not trust the other departments), they had made Dungeons and Panda their official training partner for at least a year. According to the contract, every law enforcement officer, including their admin personnel, would have certain privileges when going into the dungeons in Jin's store.

The most apparent perk was a major discount on the dungeons. Every one of them would receive a credit budget of 3500 Yuan (500USD) the moment they registered with Dungeons and Pandas. The System naturally checked their records with the police's database, but the policemen themselves did not know it.

The HR personnel had technically only provided him with a list of names approved for by their captain. Jin, on the other hand, did not trust the police HR personnel with this list of approved names, mainly because a piece of paper could be forged while the central police database records were something that could be trusted. (Even though it was apparently not hackproof since the System had gained access to it, but it was way better than just a simple piece of paper.)

Nevertheless, with the threat of the Banned Emperor and the Ruby Rats, the System made sure the information in the police database was reliable by cross referencing with the police's payroll records. Sure, it could not catch moles coming into the dungeon that way, but at the very least, the System was able to inform him about a fake record that was recently altered into the database and provide a substantial level of security checks before allowing the policeman to train in Jin's dungeons.

Ever since the assassination attempt by the Banned Emperor lackeys against the Head of the Royal Tiger Zodiac, Hu Yuan Ba, the System had asked Kraft to increase the security checks against the customers who entered Jin's store.

The customers did not need to be checked in person. After they entered their data into the registration machine to gain access to the functions of Jin's store, most of the customers forgot about it. But in the background, the System would ensure that every customer's data was being processed, verified and identified any possible threats. To date, it had made a potential threat list that was being constantly revised and updated based on the actions, facial expressions and even conversations the customers had while inside 'Dungeons and Pandas'.

It might seem scary, but considering that they were within the belly of a beast, they had no choice to be subjected to the System's constant vigilant monitoring. With Jin being the last known Royal Panda descendant, the System would take no chances in regards to protecting him even though it did not show it out openly.

One might ask what about the reincarnation process? If the System thought that the threat was similar to the Ruby Rats, the System would have preferred to let Jin handle it by himself as such an opportunity

would allow him to gain experience fighting them, overcoming the odds and only assist him when it was needed. If Jin ever died, the System had sufficient top tier quality materials for an in-house reincarnation process.

However, the System could not say the same about the Banned Emperor assassins. With their knowledge on how to destroy the dantian with a forbidden technique, the System would spare no cost to ensure the survivability of Jin. That was why, even when it was 99.77% sure that it was Ming who was helping Jin in some way, it would be best for Jin to have a mentor that was once mercilessly hunted down by the Twelve Royal Zodiacs.

After the System saw the items and weapons related to the Demon Exorcists in the Grade 8 reward box, the System learned from Jin's expression that he knew something about the Demon Exorcists even though they were supposed to be a secret organisation to begin with. Unbeknown to Jin and Yun, the System had recruited Grandma Yuan as a Sub System user back then not because she was just a mere instructor to Yun, but more importantly, she came from a long line of Demon Exorcists and was the perfect instructor for Yun. (since she was supposedly the next in line to inherit the System.)

Back to the topic of the Police Partnership. Aside from the credit wallet budget of 3500 Yuan, each time they cleared a dungeon, the System or rather, Jin's store would not only reward them medals but a one time increment of 100 Yuan (15 USD) towards their next month budget of Pandamonium Credits. Yes, registering would give them 3500 Yuan at the start and each month thereafter would allow them to receive a base credit of 3500 Yuan. It was a minor incentive for the policemen who managed to work hard to clear the dungeon.

However, the amount in that wallet would not be addictive but rather replaced. Let's say Deng Long did not participate in any dungeons, for November, his credit of 3500 Yuan would be brought forward to the month of December. Assuming he spent 3000 Yuan worth of credits and cleared three dungeons for December, he would be receiving 3800 Yuan worth of credits for January. Naturally if Deng Long decided to go the extra mile and he decided to fork out his own money to play the dungeons while clearing fifteen dungeon instances, he would be receiving a total of 5000 Yuan for the following month.

It was an idea that Jin thought about since the one proposed by their HR personnel was stiff and inflexible. They had wished to control the money like how they had been doing for the past month or so with the Ruby Rat Triad's money. Nonetheless, they admitted it was a hassle for them too since the system for that was already in place.

However, the HR personnel loved Jin's idea and model for it and calculated that it was still within the upper limits of their budget for training. After Jin offered them the juicy perk that his 'team' would do all the accounts and transactions for the police, HR personnel felt it was worth the upper ceiling of the training budget if they had one less troublesome task to do, considering the fact that the policemen were actively taking money endlessly from the coffers.

Apart from the discount, the HR personnel ultimately went ahead with the deal mainly because Jin did offer them something which they could not resist, just as he had promised Gupta. Jin was willing to sell them weapons such as pistols, taser guns, batons as well as ammunition and even armour at a price that the finance and accounting personnel in the HR department could not believe. (This would have been

impossible if Hou Fei did not personally provide them with samples of those equipment in the first place to replicate them.)

The price that Jin was selling was even less than the discounted price from their approved manufacturers. He might be just a dungeon supplier, but the System had manipulated the records with the help of Kraft to get the license with the least amount of restrictions. Going beyond that, Kraft had also issued Jin licenses which included the sales of food, alcohol, weapons and many more. Of course, such a license permit would prove to be expensive except Jin's turnover in the near future would be sufficient to pay the next year's reregistration.

Hence, after several in house testing and the permission from the central police station to procure weapons from their soon to be exclusive training partner, the deal was done. Technically speaking, it was not possible for a district size police station to procure such items since they were not a major district. That was also despite the revised threat assessment by Tiangong's Police Captain, Mao Pai Huo, that they had justification to buy such equipment.

But what Pai Huo did not know was that behind the scenes, Yang Ling, the daughter of the Royal Tiger Zodiac Clan caught wind of such news with regards to Jin's actions and gave the green light for Tiangong District Police Station to procure them. With Royal Zodiac Tiger family as the major 'shareholder' of the Police and key protectors of certain regions in Shenzhen, she backed the words of the Police Captain. (Perhaps, Jin did think about such a thing in advance? He couldn't, right...could he?)

With these two sweet perks of the deal, the police also upheld their bargain by erecting a temporary police post in one of the vacant stores so the policemen in Tiangong district had one additional post to report to during their patrols. This increased the patrols in the shopping district and ensured that they could conduct a rapid response to Jin's store if the Ruby Rats ever dared to disturb them again.

One additional perk from the deal was that Jin was allowed to use lethal force without consequence should he judge that he or his customers were in mortal danger. Of course, there needed to be video evidence which should not be a problem within the shop instance but the police also took this chance to procure more security cameras to monitor the shopping district. The Police Captain used an overarching excuse that the shopping district needed additional monitoring which immediately received the approval from the Central police headquarters.

It was quite a win win situation for both parties since one could enforce order better while the other was guaranteed more profit coming in. With the police contract approved, that was one thing that could be removed from the checklist. Only because of this, Hou Fei began to bug him for the military contract too since he rendered his services personally and in a business sense.

"Though I hate to admit it, considering your relations with the Royal Zodiac Tigers, business wise it would be better if you team up with Yang Ling. That way, you will have a better chance to secure a Royal Zodiac initiated military exercise rather than a normal military exercise. It will definitely yield you more cash in return. Of course, if put me in the scene and you can be rest assured to have the Snake and Tiger Royal Zodiac 'working' together." Hou Fei remarked during a night visit to Jin's store.

"I thought you said you do not have such clout to do so?" Jin was refining the final details of the Deep One Dungeon which he planned to release in the latter half of November.

"Yang Ling's family has an army and a triad under their command. I may perhaps have certain contacts...well more like many contacts to make things happen, but initiating a large scale army exercise that can bring in lots of moolah? I wish. You can expect to earn 10x more from Yang Ling's family than from me." Hou Fei replied dejectedly.

"Awww, and here I thought I could perhaps initiate a Tiger Army Division vs Snake Army Division exercise." Jin pretended to sound disappointment and chuckled after that.

"I personally would recommend you do monster extermination exercises since those things do happen even right now. You might not have heard about this but a freak monster horde was recently exterminated in the southwestern part of Russia. There were some casualties due to the lag of response time, but the observers mostly blamed the inadequacies of the military for handling the situation." Hou Fei informed him as he searched for the article for Jin to read.

"Heh, I will consider, but you know I have many things to do nowadays, right? The setting up of the Dungeon City Fortress is a top most priority since we do not really have that much time left in the automated dungeon barrier. About 2 months or so?"

"To be exact 57 days." The System replied and Jin could only sigh louder.

"So yea, the police is simple enough, I do not have to create any new additional instance for them. The army, on the other hand... I mean it would be interesting since it could strengthen my own forces indirectly but I have been thinking how to." Jin admitted.

"Modern warfare? You will probably need your troops to be familiar with modern war tactics since your Dungeon City Fortress would be that way. Perhaps copy a random city and use it to simulate the Monster Horde?" Hou Fei was throwing his ideas around.

"Hmm, that's a simple and realistic idea, the officers might like and it should be simple to plan. But how the horde moves is a different issue and those army nut heads have to think on their feet to defend against them. On the other hand, my horde gets to experience modern defence tactics which could be used for the defence of my Dungeon City Fortress..." Jin stopped fiddling the console and considered Hou Fei's proposal more seriously.

"Alright, but let me at least get the basic infrastructure up first, then we further discuss about the military exercise contract." Jin conceded and Hou Fei gave the okay sign and left him for Panda Muscles. (Since he was considered 'staff' he benefited from free training)

"Now...time to finish this crazy dungeon. I cannot wait to see how the cultivators will react to this!" Jin whispered to himself with glee.

"Do not forget to visit Grandma Yuan else System will issue it as an impromptu mission with penalties involved" The System stated and Jin unwittingly nodded his head as he placed all his focus on completing the Deep One Dungeon.

## **Chapter 383 Premiere of the Deep Ones Dungeon**



"Finally, some bro time together." Shi Zuo said as he placed his shoulders over Bin Yong. It was an unusually peculiar sight to watch the two interact since Shi Zuo was practically dragging Bin Yong into Jin's store. It was now the latter half of November as well as the opening premiere of the long anticipated Deep Ones Dungeon.

The Goblin Raid Events were still ongoing, but Jin figured he could make use of the hype while providing new experiences for the veteran cultivators and regular customers who consistently supported him.

On a separate note, Jin recently found out that the Chinese government had created an initiative to keep their citizens fit. Every month starting in November, the government would credit 150 Yuan (20USD) for redemption in their citizen's personal electronic wallets or bank accounts should they have accumulated five hours or more in sports related activities.

There were incremental rewards such as supermarket discounts too, but they were harder to earn if the citizens went the extra mile. All of these activities could be monitored through a particular health app in Mechat to promote fitness and wellness. That included participating in authorised and licensed sports complexes or gyms.

Naturally, Jin was included in the list of authorised health complexes with the aid of the System and the cultivators were elated to find out that his store was selected for such an initiative. According to the System and Kraft, people were willing to pay more in order to earn something for free and this was one such instance.

That was also why Jin coincided the start of the government's initiative with the opening of the Deep Ones Dungeon instance. (Actually, it was a day after. Jin needed to make sure he indeed had access to the government's incentive.) Another reason was that the government was willing to reimburse 3000 Yuan (434USD) to any authorised sports shop that had a minimum amount of 5000 sports related sales accumulated from their customers. That included the sales of the dungeon instance tickets since cultivation was considered the epitome of sports. Rigorous training and the increase in grade would eventually lead to a better, healthier lifestyle...or at least that was what the researchers claimed.

When Jin heard about the 5000 sports sales, he was wondering if the System was secretly preparing Jin for this particular initiative by the government since its previous mission in October sounded very similar to what the government deployed. "Could it be that the System is as simple minded as humans?" Jin wondered to himself when he saw the crowd rushing in for the premiere of the Deep Ones Dungeon instance.

"System would like to make it clear that it was just a coincidence that the previous mission was similar to the government's initiative." The System stated as it activated a screen console above Jin with a countdown timer.

"Yeah, I definitely believe you. Trust me, you are the best. Praise be to the Almighty Benevolent Spendthrift System!" Jin did not hold back his sarcasm. In the meantime, he looked at his much anticipated dungeons goers and prepared a short speech with regards to the Deep Ones Dungeon to hype and excite them up a little more before the timer hits zero.

Fortunately for Jin, there were many speculations about the Deep Ones after a few cultivators saw some of them during the first Western Diversion instance (well to Jin and his monsters, the real goblin battle).

The rumours stated that those cultivators saw ferocious, deep sea monsters slaughtering orcs the moment they left the boat. It was a terrifying scene and hence, people anticipated that this particular dungeon would be something similar.

Jin neither denied nor confirmed the rumours. Some people believed that those cultivators were privileged enough to enjoy a sneak peek preview of the Deep Ones by Jin, a sly advertising tactic in the cultivators' opinion to spread the gossip for his future dungeon instance.

Despite their opinions, the rumour spreading was indeed useful even though Jin had not purposely planned it this way beforehand. All he wanted was for the Deep Ones to vent some of their frustrations for waiting for their turn to shine (especially Derpy with his grand entrance). However, he decided to let the rumours spread since it was creating hype way more efficiently than the System expected compared to their own banners and trailers.

Jin also considered to continue implementing this sort of preview for future dungeons, just a small cameo of the monsters in the next dungeon as a sneak peek. But he had to do it in a way which would require the dungeon goers to have a keen eye to catch such cameos in the middle of a dungeon. (nor did Jin forget the future creation of the secret Gentlebear instance which he neglected it for some time.) It was not an easy feat but he did incorporate what he wanted to do for the next dungeon in the Deep Ones Dungeons.

"Firstly, thank you and welcome to the opening premiere of the Deep Ones Dungeon Instance. As you guys have heard, there had been sightings of the Deep Ones in the Goblin Raid dungeon. However, nothing else was shown to you guys and those rumours did not reveal much about the current plot of the dungeon. I presume the anticipation must be killing you guys by now??" Jin asked and the crowd cheered in unison.

"Alright, alright I will give you a hint. Instead of (just) senseless fighting, your objective this time will be to meet with a certain NPC and from there you might learn the true meaning of terror through the dungeon." Jin spoke with a somewhat evil grin and everyone kept quiet for a moment to digest what he was saying before he continued "...or that's what I hope you will feel. I'm sure some of the Pandawans out there will casually crash the dungeon and walk out unscathed." Jin sighed heavily and a few started to chuckle. They were none other than Shi Zuo and Bin Yong.

"Does it involve swimming? I do not really know how to swim." One of the cultivators raised their hand and asked which made some of the other cultivators laugh.

"Erm...well, technically we can all walk on water, right? Just a matter of duration. But no worries, I had planned a little on that aspect so you will be able to clear this dungeon without the need to swim. Of course, you are free to do so, if you wish... at your own risk, of course." Jin answered and many started to whisper. They interpreted it both ways. Most believed that the dungeon scenario was on land, probably a coastal town since the name Deep Ones from Lovecraftian stories struck fear and despair in the stories via seaports and coastal towns.

Others believed the plot would have something to do with a large ship where people would meet each other and decide to do something about the ongoing monster horde that plagued the ship. In this case, it would definitely be the Deep Ones. Jin managed to eavesdrop and smirked when he heard the cultivators' ideas.

"Good ideas which I'd all considered about when I created them but so far it seems that they will find their expectations subverted." Jin thought to himself as Mr Patsu came to interrupt Jin with the continuation of the countdown. Bear Cub One followed him while wearing a fluffy shark headgear which further strengthened the ship story theorised by the cultivators. Jin smiled as he stepped down from the bar counter, which he was using as a temporary stage to address the others. Perhaps he really should create an event space to announce this kind of stuff.

"4...3...2...1!!!" Mr Patsu slammed a big red button on an augmented virtual console and suddenly, shadow figures of the Deep Ones emerged from the corners of the medieval goblin themes and the cultivators could see that the shop interior decor seemed to head for a dark turn.

Then the lights began to flash to simulate the horrors of a blackout along with the sounds of lightning and thunder booming in the background. The cultivators could see the seemingly peaceful medieval goblin theme feel of the shop turn into an atmosphere of the eerie western 80's era. It had some resemblance similar to the previous Halloween gothic theme but with grimmer colours.

Suddenly the entire shop instance went totally dark, and the cultivators all pretended to scream for participation sake (though there were some that really screamed, men included.) Lo and behold, the corners of the auditoriums and the walls were now filled with dark, grotesque tentacles moving around occasionally to scare the cultivators in conjunction with the medieval goblin theme that was still around.

It was to emulate the sense of fear that would patiently wait for the customers. To make the customers feel somewhat afraid yet at the same time obsessively curious about it. Some of the male cultivators jokingly warned that if the females got too close to the tentacles on the wall, they would be grabbed by them, inciting a few sexual innuendos.

"No worries, my tentacles are equal to all genders." Jin smiled wickedly. The just teased lady cultivators took that opportunity to push their male counterparts towards the wall. True enough, the black tentacles on the wall wrapped around them for a few seconds before releasing them away. The male cultivators seemed like they were already scarred for life as the lady cultivators had their fill of fun bullying them.

Separately, the cultivators also noticed the design of the bar was sombre green. A closer look at the bar counter and seats revealed that they all had some sort of Lovecraftian design to them. It was rather exquisite and some who were fans of such horror genre began to ask where to buy such items. "It's all custom made by my suppliers, in short, Trade Secret. " Jin smiled gently this time round, and it had been ages since those customers especially the regular ones to hear such a phrase.

"Alright, what are we waiting for? Come on. Let's go, bro." Shi Zuo grabbed Bin Yong, who was already scared shitless by the opening ceremony. He was not surprised and deeply empathised with the girls, Luo Bo and Jia Le who did not want to try the new dungeon and let the guys try it out first to hear about their experience before attempting the dungeon instance.

"We've been through the Halloween event and survived through that. You even played it three times, remember?" Shi Zuo was trying to encourage his buddy.

"BECAUSE! You guys were not free at all THREE occasions. I had to bring each of you individually into that dungeon instance! And I have no idea how, but Boss Jin had designed it in such a way that I got

scared every time I entered it. I still get shivers whenever I think about that stupid Pumpkin Face. " Bin Yong replied with exasperation in his voice when he remembered the sinister Pyro Jack.

"Okay, chill man. Let's do this first before our temporary attribute buff from the restaurant instance expires." Shi Zuo said as he took his phone out to find the dungeon ticket option in the Pandamonium App. As usual, a tech savvy guy like Shi Zuo was amazed by the developers of the app for pushing out new updates this quickly.

Just as Jin had promised, everybody was now able to be teleported from the shop instance or any other particular service instance they were at to the dungeon they wished to play. There were even lobbies which helped people with matchmaking or create their own party beforehand to play the dungeons. This update by the System was to facilitate even less queuing time than before and to test out the true ability of the matchmaking technology the System had been collating data ever since day one.

Of course, those who created a party of their own would not be subjected to any matchmaking and the difficulty of the dungeon instance would be adjusted accordingly unless at the request by the lobby maker. With higher difficulty came better rewards. Similar to other dungeons, Jin continued to give out Panda medals via the stages they completed but this particular Deep Ones dungeon was slightly different.

He gave the System free rein to judge how much medals were to be given based on the cultivator's progress. It was a new sort of predictive model which Qiu Yue recommended and wanted to see if the System could accommodate such an adaptive reward model.

There was a set of defined criteria (of course not revealed to the cultivators, who would have to try and figure them out) but depending on the cultivator's approach of playing, the System would give the amount of panda medals accordingly.

Last but not least, the Pandamonium app could also synchronise the data it received to the Mechat's health app so that the cultivators would be able to redeem their sports and wellness rewards from the government's initiative.

Hence, Shi Zuo did not bother about Bin Yong's wailing antics and forcefully registered him into his lobby via his phone app. And within an instant, they were teleported.

...Into a derelict room, strapped to a chair. Both arms and legs were wrapped tightly around the chair, and even their torsos were tightly bound.

"Where are WE??!?!?!?!?!?" Bin Yong shouted in panic as his echo reverberated within the entire room.

## **Chapter 384 Black Suits**

The ceiling lights were dangling as if they were about to fall onto them anytime. The muddled mirror right in front of them made things worse as it allowed them to see the state of condition they were

currently in. Shi Zuo tried to struggle and look around if there was anything they could use to get themselves out.

"Bro, this whole thing just doesn't sit right with me... Can't I just use the emergency escape from this place? They will refund us, right?" Bin Yong trembled but Shi Zuo demanded him to calm down.

"Look, this is just the start, and we are still able to talk to each other. Boss Jin may have placed us in this situation, but so far, none of his instances has ever been unfair or impossible to solve. It's just that our storage rings and even our phones are not within our possession. " Shi Zuo tried to calm Bin Yong down

"Besides we are Pandawans, do you want that Hippo to tease us because we failed a new instance in record time? So let's take a deep breath, simmer down and try to find something in this room to break out." Shi Zuo managed to convince Bin Yong at the mention of Xiong Da.

Suddenly, they heard some footsteps coming towards them, and from the sounds of it, very rushed ones. Eventually, it seemed whoever it was making those footsteps made some attempts to open the door, but it was to no avail. If the door was locked even from the outside, that possibly means help. After a little pause, a complete silence enveloped the entire situation the Pandawans were in, and the next thing they heard was some static noises before the door was forced opened violently.

It was a.... They could not believe their eyes. The fact that both Shi Zuo and Bin Yong were still in shock because of the thing they saw broke all expectations of the dungeon. It was a teenage girl dressed in full panda pyjamas with a full panda mask who entered their 'prison cell'.

"Your mission, should you choose to accept it; Find Captain Hei in 34th Street, Exit A of Penn Station." The pyjamas girl announced as she pulled off the restrains with all her might from Shi Zuo, helping him to be free. He did not hesitate to save his buddy, but while both of them were preoccupied with removing the restrains that they did not see pyjamas girl with the full panda mask vanishing. Both were a bit baffled but figured this was just part of the instance's setting.

Shi Zuo took a quick peek out of the room and noticed that there were no guards, nor any strict security measures in place or anything of that sort. When he felt it was safe enough, he beckoned Bin Yong to follow right behind him. As of now, they were feeling extremely vulnerable without access to any weapons. (Though they kind of forgot that they themselves were living weapons). For some reason, they decided to be cautious and stealthily tried to find a way out without making any noise.

No matter how hard they looked, there were no signs of enemies. It appeared as if they were locked up in some abandoned building the more they searched the vicinity. "Looks like a recently moved office to me. Not much dust, some leftover documents in the trash, a few broken tables and some vandalism...in some weird old English. Hmm, thou...shall, urgh I cannot read the whole thing. It looked cryptic to me." Shi Zuo whispered to Bin Yong as he quietly opened a door, which finally revealed a glimpse of the outside world to them instead of just closed rooms, walkways and corridors.

"Maybe because we are just awfully bad at English?" Bin Yong rebutted and they chuckled a little before stepping forward.

Both kept their silence for a moment as they could not believe their eyes the moment they saw what was beyond the windows. Bellowing thunderstorms, along with the heavy rainfall, made it almost

difficult to see what was afar. But there was one thing that hit a raw nerve for both of them as they saw a landmark that should be familiar to almost everyone in the world.

"The Empire State Building." Bin Yong walked closer to the window to have a better look at it. At the spur of the moment, Shi Zuo quickly realised why that turned out to be a terrible idea. True enough, Bin Yong also saw what was beneath it- a guy in dark sunglasses among the crowd in the streets that seemingly made eye contact with him.

That guy in the black suit suddenly stood up from his seat and began to place his hand at his ear, as if he was communicating with someone while keeping a close eye at Bin Yong.

Shi Zuo saw what was going on and quickly pulled Bin Yong back. "Shit. I think I have figured, what is going on here. This is not a simple dungeon instance where we just rush in to fight and kill the boss. We are not the pursuers here, we are the escapees!" Shi Zuo explained as he started to look for exits in the current level they were in.

"Remember what the girl said? Your mission if you choose to accept? Didn't that sound very familiar to you?" Shi Zuo finally found an exit to a staircase and beckoned Bin Yong to follow him. This was his turn to shine finally. Unless he was mistaken, this particular dungeon was designed to be some spy action thriller kind of instance, and it was making his heart pump a hell of a lot faster. He had always wanted to try this kind of agent type of dungeon instances.

There had been some dungeon suppliers that boasted offering this kind of spy thriller dungeons and till now, he had yet to experience something worthwhile. But this dungeon instance by Jin, he knew, no... He trusted Jin to provide him with a full blown spy agent experience. He did not know what exactly would be in store for them in this current dungeon and did not care even if they were supposed to be the terrorists that would destroy New York or some handsome team of spies that saves the day.

All Shi Zuo had in mind right now was to survive first and get to 34th Street as soon as possible to find Captain Hei to get the next piece of information. "Now I get what Boss Jin meant by terror!!" Shi Zuo thought to himself grinning when suddenly a door swung open with one of the guys in black suits.

Shi Zuo did not hesitate to kick the door back and ordered Bin Yong to jump and slam at the door as he continued to run down the stairs swiftly. Bin Yong obliged and once again hindered the movement of the guy in the black suit.

Albeit their little stunt, three more black suits were rushing towards them when they reached the first floor, and Shi Zuo immediately engaged them in hand to hand combat. While Bin Yong had yet to find out the truth about this instance, he saw his friend jump in to engage with three enemies.

He could no longer remain passive since this was after all a dungeon instance. If he had been so fearful, Bin Yong should have just left at the start. Therefore, Bin Yong hurried towards Shi Zuo to help him out since he would take a frontal fight every day of the week over this instance, where they had no knowledge of what exactly was happening.

The Black Suits put up a good fight but what they lacked was teamwork, something which Shi Zuo and Bin Yong excelled in, and with the combined efforts of both their attacks, Shi Zuo managed to knock out two black suits while Bin Yong was handling the last.

However, in their euphoria of handling the ones in front of them, they seemed to have forgotten about the one that was chasing them from behind. Shi Zuo only noticed him when he pounced towards Bin Yong. At the spur of the moment, he did not hesitate to charge and rushed up to block the black suit guy from side ambushing his friend.

Unlike the other three, this black suit was armed with a dagger, but before he could use it, Shi Zuo smashed his hand onto the railings, making him drop the knife as it bounced down to the ground near Bin Yong.

Though hurt, the surviving black suit of the trio continued to struggle against Bin Yong and what followed was an intense bout of hand to hand combat....until he who had been losing against Bing Yong, had withdrawn a few steps away from him.

He threw his sunglasses away and the instant Bin Yong saw his aberrant set of ghoulish yellow eyes. That exposé instantly made Bin Yong reach for the dropped dagger for self defence. In retaliation, the Black Suit hissed at him and opened his mouth to reveal his unnaturally long tongue. Soon his jaws expanded, allowing more and more teeth to grow out as it became visibly sharper, longer and deadlier. Bin Yong realised those Black Suits had to be the Deep Ones in disguise.

"That Boss Jin is getting creepier!" Bin Yong rapidly dashed into the transforming Deep One, hoping to kill him before he fully transformed. Unfortunately, the Deep One was not as vulnerable as Bin Yong had expected. With his already grown out tail, he not only parried Bin Yong's blade but even counterattacked with a piercing stab.

Instinctively, Bin Yong raised his left arm, but without his familiar shield, he had nothing to block the incoming attack, causing him to be injured by the tail jab. Nonetheless, with sufficient experience in dungeons, Bin Yong had used that attack as an opportunity to strike the fish's head. Straight into this eye socket.

"Bombardier Beetle Style, Bombardment Counterattack!" An outburst of smoke emerged from the dagger, causing searing pain to the Deep One as well as giving Bin Yong the chance to pierce into where he hoped would be his heart. "Ramming Blast of the Beetle!!" Bin Yong shouted as he penetrated the tough skin layer of the Deep One and greenish brown blood slowly flowed out of the Deep One's body. Bin Yong always use that as a shield technique which he figured this was an equally good opportunity to test out the impact with other weapons.

"Bro! Dagger!! QUICK!" Shi Zuo's opponent was beginning to change its form too and the only weapon they had access to was the dagger. However, Shi Zuo was not willing to simply wait for the Deep One to transform as he continued to throw punches furiously as if he had entered into some blood rage while he waited for Bin Yong's reinforcement.

"Switch!" Bin Yong shouted and Shi Zuo gave it one last kick that made his enemy fly backwards while Bin Yong jumped up from the first floor to the landing of the half turn stairs and tried the same finishing move against the transforming Deep One.

But unlike the previous Deep One, it seemed that Bin Yong had missed the vital part, which he compensated by punching the Deep One once at the head. That sucker punch gave him the momentum to swing his right fist to the hilt of the still stuck dagger, finally causing a fatal blow to the Deep One.

He did not hesitate to pull the dagger out as he looked at Shi Zuo land safely on the other two unconscious Black Suits. Bin Yong then threw the dagger at Shi Zuo. They both understood it was foolish to take chances and it was better to finish the job before those two woke up.

However, Shi Zuo did not comply immediately. Instead, he began to strip the two black suits down. "What are you doing?" Bin Yong asked as he hurried down the stairs before Shi Zuo told him to quickly strip the other Black Suit.

"We need to check if they are carrying anything else to improve our chances of surviving like wiretaps, communication wires, phones or wallets." Shi Zuo explained as he checked every pocket the Black Suits had.

True enough, they found another dagger as well as a storage ring which contained an iron sword, a small buckler and two iron hatchets. They were not their original weapons, but at the very least those were weapons that they were proficient in. Shi Zuo took the hatchets while Bin Yong equipped the buckler. Thankfully, the items came with a back holster, which allowed them to place their weapons at their back.

Only then did Shi Zuo notice that it was a bad idea. They needed to blend in the crowd to reach 34th Street and not to stick out like a sore thumb. So he took one of the black suit's outer jacket and tied the sleeves around his waist while he forcefully wore the holster at his waist. That way the outer jacket hid the hatchets.

Seeing how Shi Zuo did it, Bin Yong placed his new loot back in the storage ring and copied it by hiding the daggers at his waist with the holster too. "Ready?" Shi Zuo asked, to which Bin Yong nodded as they proceed to slit the throats of the two unconscious Black Suits.

After which, both cultivators cautious opened the door before exiting to the streets. Their experience of the dungeon instance had barely begun.

## **Chapter 385 Grand Central Terminal Part 1**

The two Pandawans tried to hide in the crowd, but no matter where they went, Bin Yong kept on having this irrational fear lingering on him that someone was watching them. It felt like they were looking over their every move and only waiting for the right moment to strike.

Perhaps it was just the pouring rain and constant thundering of the clouds that made Bin Yong feel so insecure since they were the only guys without an umbrella among the crowd? In a way, that made them stand out amongst the soulless crowd who continued with their daily lives.

Despite the fact they looked indifferent, the crowd's attention would occasionally shift their focus on the Pandawans briefly before they returned to their meaninglessly daily routine. That alone reinforced that anxiety Bin Yong was sensing. Meanwhile, Shi Zuo was looking for directions to reach 34th Street. Fortunately, simplified maps were placed at the bus station near them.



"If I am not wrong, the last street sign I saw should mean we are somewhere here, near 42nd Street. The Grand Central terminal station should be there and just a few blocks ahead." Shi Zuo figured that if they could find a subway station, they could use it to travel to Penn Station. After all, Boss Jin made the dungeon instance in a modern setting, so there should be some trains prepared in a modern day replicated version of New York City... right?

"Good, the longer we are out in the open, the more we risk getting caught, again. I do not see any agents around, but who knows with Boss Jin. Maybe he made the first ones into plain obvious agents, just so that he could trick us. For all we know, one of these people could turn any minute now." Bin Yong said while looking around nervously. His behaviour started to be anything but natural. Several bystanders slowed their pace as they stared disapprovingly at him.

"Dude, you are doing it again. Why are you getting so worked up ever since the beginning of the dungeon? This is not like you at all." Shi Zuo pulled his friend towards him and took big steps to distance themselves from the crowd while whispering to his friend.

"Have you not read about the Deep Ones before?" Bin Yong asked, and Shi Zuo shook his head sluggishly under the pouring rain.

"I only briefly read a summary about them on the net. They are just minion monsters in some cosmic horror genre. So, what about them? We already killed a few of them, and we can always kill some more. Have a little bit of faith in your abilities." Shi Zuo tried to encourage his friend in a relaxed way as he plotted out the road in his mind to reach the Grand Central Terminal. Bin Yong sighed after he realised why Shi Zuo was taking this so calm. It made sense for him being a tech guy who loved action and spies not to be well versed in the lore of the Lovecraftian stories.

However, Bin Yong had adored those stories in his youth, which he still loved to read during his pastime. As an aspiring animator back then, they inspired a dark period of his drawings phase and allowed Bin Yong to grow out of his slump to the point he was nearly fanatical about it. Yet, it was a phase of learning and growing, which eventually led him to his desired graphical art direction. He did use some for his portfolio, and the interviewers were impressed by the various art style he could develop.

To his knowledge, no one had ever come close to create the image of the perfect Deep Ones. Sure, there were vague descriptions of such monsters in the Lovecraftian books, and he had seen at a lot of attempts trying to give them form, but it was not until recently when he had killed them during their transformation that he experienced this indescribable anxious feeling his heart was secretly harbouring.

It was also apparent that it was not even their final form yet but those eyes which Bin Yong had stared into summoned an indisputable pull of trepidation stirring within him. If he could choose sides, he would instead prefer being on their good graces than against them. The fate of those going against the dark powers rarely if ever ended up positively.

"So, you are aware of the greatness of Lord Dagen..." A whisper caressed Bin Yong's ears as he was watching out for Shi Zuo, who did not appear to have heard the voice.

"Lord...Dagen?" Bin Yong was a little confused when he heard that particular name, especially since it came out of nowhere all of a sudden. He did some research as a refresher before coming to Jin's dungeon and even read some of the articles about the Deep Ones that the cultivators encountered in

the Pandamonium forum pages. But none of it rang a bell, as he only knew of the name Dagon instead of Dagen. Then again, perhaps Boss Jin purposely renamed it to possibly throw the cultivators off track.

"So, you are aware of the greatness of Lord Dagen?" The whisper got a little louder and Bin Yong looked towards Shi Zuo to look out for any change of expression and actions upon hearing that whisper again.

"You are chosen. Not him. Come to 34th Street, Exit B of Penn Station to learn the real truth." The familiar whisper continued to creep around his brain non stop, and it lingered for a little longer before he managed to get a grip on himself.

"Lord Dagon...Lord Dagen..." Bin Yong was lost in his thought as he repeated the name a few times. Dagon was a long standing word associated with fish in Canaanite language, leading to the interpretation as a Fish God. However, modern records indicated that word to have been used for grain. Thus, Lovecraft could have used the mistaken myth of the fish god as the object of worship for the Deep Ones in his story. Yet, there were arguments stating Dagon was just an analogy in his novel, for the Deep Ones truly worshipped the Great Old One, Cthulhu.

"Hello?... Snap out of your daze. We need to move quickly before some of your feared Deep Ones really do catch up." Shi Zuo snapped his fingers a few times in front of Bin Yong and at the third snap, Bin Yong awoke from his train of thoughts.

"Roughly three blocks down and then a left, afterwards we should be able to get a glimpse of New York City's crown jewel landmark." Shi Zuo informed him as he quietly 'borrowed' two umbrellas that were conveniently left near a stand beside a general convenience store, hoping to truly blend within the crowd.

In less than a few minutes, the duo reached the Grand Central Terminal. Only there was no one else going towards the station at all. It was quite a contrast, the inside of the terminal station being completely empty compared to the busy, bustling crowd walking in the rain.

"Not good, this is definitely a trap. We shoul-" Suddenly the large doors behind them closed shut without any warning. The two tried to open it almost immediately, but it was not budging a single bit. Shi Zuo quickly took his hatchet out and tried to hack at the door knobs to open it. But no matter how much strength he put into it, the door frame around the knob was too thick to pierce through. It was to the point that the handle for the hatchet broke with Shi Zuo's eighth attempt, and the hatchet blade remained lodged on the door itself.

"I think you should stop trying. We have company." Bin Yong warned him as there were a more than just a couple of Black Suits staring at them from the second floor of the grand central terminal. Intensifying the moment, the Pandawans heard thunder flashing from outside as the two Pandawans helplessly watched the scene of the black suits fully transforming themselves to the rumoured Deep Ones.

What they did not know was that this was not the real Grand Central Terminal. None of them had ever gone to New York before so they were unaware that the real Grand Central Terminal did not have a pure all wooden front door. (They were mainly vintage doors with 3x3 glass panels.)

Jin did not make this dungeon instance as straightforward as the previous dungeons. He wanted his customers to actively look for clues rather than simply rushing in blindly against the monsters. Sure, they

could do that, but that would mostly ensure that they would have an unnecessarily harder time trying to complete his dungeons (if they survived).

Jin wanted to make sure that everyone had a fulfilling experience and hoped to do more of this in the future rather than giving the cultivators just some monsters to fight. If someone's sole desire was to contend and test their cultivation, they could have gone for the random monster arena instances he set up previously.

The 'correct' approach, at least the way he designed it, would have been to start by collecting some information on their situation. Jin did not expect his customers to have some prior knowledge to be able to complete an instance, so anyone could learn what was necessary by exploring more of the city of this particular dungeon instance such as the general stores or even the abandoned building that they were teleported to at the start of the dungeon instance. (Granted that the location of the abandoned building slightly differed with every new instance to provide a fresh new perspective to the dungeon instance.)

There would be magazines around the stands to show the picture of the real Grand Central Terminal. Also, there was a torn page with regards to that in the abandoned building that they were searching around for enemies previously. Unfortunately, they had not paid too much attention to it.

Should they have realised that it was the fake station and walked further down instead of entering, the real station would have been just a corner turn away with no Deep Ones lurking in there awaiting them. They would have been able to take the ride to Penn Station and find Captain Hei to proceed with the instance.

The tens of fish eyes were stalking their new prey, but they were unlike the Deep Ones Jin used to have. The cultivators who had caught glimpses of the Deep Ones previously in the Goblin Western Diversion would be equally shocked. These slicker and stronger Deep Ones still possessed webbed hands, feet and fish heads but now they featured a spiked spine instead of a large fin behind their back coupled with a deadly killer tail.

Jin had used the upgrade cards from his complimentary reward by the System upon reaching Grade 8 to 'mutate' the fellow Deep Ones to gain this new look. Initially, they had looked intimidating in the sea but flabby on land with all the gills and fish scales. But since Jin wanted to do an infested city scenario, he had made sure that the newly mutated Deep Ones not only looked equally scary on both terrains but were also decently agile on land too.

Instead of transforming all of them to fit this instance, he only made 50 go through that mutation to test them out since he did not have the time let them experiment on any monsters. (Perhaps, he should create an in-house arena to let the monsters duel with each other.) In the meantime, with the help of Shadow Dagen's magical powers as well as the System's, Jin enabled a few of the Deep Ones to wield some wicked, unholy oceanic magic. Therefore, the rain and thunder were not something he had designed but came as a result of the work of the Deep Ones' magical rituals. (This in turn, saved some money recreating the background from Jin's point of view.)

A Deep One undoubtedly leapt to the centre of the Grand Central Terminal main concourse, at the top of the iconic clock. If the cultivators were aware that that brass clock was valued at 20 million USD in real life, they might suffer a heartache seeing the claws of the Deep One latching itself into the opal glass.

"Sacrificessssssss!!!" The Deep One on the clock roared as it wielded a long, broken and rotten wooden staff (with some seaweed hanging onto it) and pointed to the sky. The clouds grew even gloomier from what the duo was seeing and suddenly, the glass attached to the ceilings broke and out gushed three magical waterfalls flooding the concourse with water.

The water that was pouring in quickly reaching knee deep and hindered the movements of Shi Zuo and Bin Yong who began to run the moment they saw a few Deep Ones jumping down from the second floor to the first while others were standing in wait. The Deep Ones, on the other hand, loved the incoming waterfall as it quickened their pace since (their webbed feet were not ideal on such smooth floors of the main concourse).

"We have to move to higher ground. With the waterfall, escaping underground will only make things worse." Shi Zuo said as he focused his chi towards his feet, allowing him to walk on water the moment he jumped out.

"To the roof, then?" Bin Yong suggested and Shi Zuo agreed as he evaded an incoming attack from a Deep One and pierced the broken shaft of the hatchet into the Deep One's eye socket and hacked it from the back.

They had a short term plan, but survival seemed nigh impossible when the odds of overwhelming numbers and lack of proper equipment were clearly stacked against them.

## **Chapter 386 Grand Central Terminal Part 2**

At first, they were happy since it seemed the Deep Ones wished for a one on one match as merely two of them had taken the initiative to attack out of the few that jumped from the second floor. The rest were either standing on the 2nd floor observing the fight or lurking at the sides of the main concourse, guarding the exits in case they decided to run away.

Judging from how quickly they died previously, the Pandawan Duo figured it would be simple to kill them before they executed their plans of escaping. They want to show that they were not the ones to be messed with either. (Besides, if all they do is to escape, what fun would it be for a dungeon instance?) While the Deep Ones slowly made their way towards Shi Zuo and Bin Yong, they were already looking out for possible climbing spots to use in order to reach the roof as fast as possible. Maybe those pillars at the side of the Grand Central Terminal, the side stairs or perhaps a single full charge through the main concourse while evading the rest of the Deep Ones.

Their strategy was to kill the Deep Ones once they found what they were looking for, and if circumstances did not allow them to be together, at the very least run separately to reach the broken roof windows. That way, they would at least not be at such a disadvantage than they were currently in since the swamp like situation benefited the Deep Ones more than the cultivators. Knowing not to fight someone in their advantageous element was basic Fighting 101. (But sometimes, cultivators wished to confront against such high odds, hoping to surmount them for the sense of achievement.)

Considering that the waterfall was consistently pouring water into the main concourse and rising. Shi Zuo felt it was strange that the water level was able to raise since there should be multiple exits in the Grand Terminal main hall that lead to the numerous subway platforms. "Unless...could it be that the subway platforms have already been flooded...?" Shi Zuo thought to himself. This made him even more assured that they should escape upwards instead of downwards. (Welp, they did not know that this was all a trap, and the real subway platforms were not there at all.)

However, as soon as they engaged with the Deep Ones, they noticed that they had been sorely mistaken. The Deep Ones' movements were fluid, and their claw strikes, kicks and even tail jabs were damningly accurate. If not for the mini buckler Bin Yong had on him, he would have suffered multiple injuries to his left arm once again. (The previous bleeding had been closed off with chi and applying a makeshift bandage out of the Black Suit's clothes)

Yet, it seemed that the mini buckler would not last much longer since there were no enchantments on it to withstand such violent abuse from the Deep One attacks. Bin Yong really wished he had his durable shield right about now, which had been imbued with multiple middle grade defensive inscriptions which he had invested time and money on.

"Darn it! Stupid fish head, if only I had my personal weapons with me!" Bin Yong cursed under a heavy breath as he estimated that the shield could take at most four more hits before it breaks. In the meantime, while his sword strikes were true, they were not strong enough to inflict sufficient damage against the Deep One's natural armoured scales.

The Deep One even began to laugh at how pathetic Bin Yong's struggle was,

angering him further to the point he felt focusing all his chi into the makeshift sword so that he could do a proper stab. He figured that he could continue fighting since he had the two knives as a replacement if the sword broke.

At the same time, Bin Yong tried to refrain from doing that since it would not be ideal for him because of the difference in the weapon's attribute. He would not be familiar with the short reach of the dagger nor was he well versed handling a dagger. Bin Yong could wield it like a short sword, but he would not be fully utilising what a knife could offer.

Shi Zuo was not faring any better as he could feel that his hatchet could not stand the strain of his attacks nor the impact against the armoured scales of his own Deep One. It was bound to break within the next few strikes if he was not careful. That was why he was attacking with not just his weapon but with his fists and kicks too. Simultaneously, he tried to find any possible soft spots with his melee combat so that he could plunge his axe blade into it.

"Hahahaha, useless Pandawaannsssss." The Deep Mage laughed as he clapped with his two webbed hands at the amusement they provided. There and then, the Deep Mage brought his beloved staff towards him and plucked out what seemed to be two rings. "Catch Ringsssss~!" He shouted as he threw the rings up high towards the direction of Bin Yong and Shi Zuo. The rings immediately glittered and the two cultivators could recognise the chi that was being emanated out by the rings. They were none other than their very own storage rings that had been missing since the start of this instance.

Still, though their Leader was helping them to even out the odds, that did not mean the Deep Ones in front of them would be kind enough to simply wait until they were ready. They immediately became even more aggressive, preventing them from catching their rings.

However, Shi Zuo had already predicted such an outcome as he threw his hatchet with whatever strength he could summon towards his own opponent to distract him briefly. The hatchet broke into pieces upon contact due to the immense rush of chi that was transferred into it, causing the Deep One to flinch badly. Shi Zuo took that opportunity to rush tackle Bin Yong's Deep One so that his teammate had the window of chance to reach for his own storage ring.

"I will not disappoint you!" Bin Yong shouted as he jumped forward to insert a quick, nasty knee strike at the face of flinched Deep One, giving Shi Zuo more time to keep the other one pinned down. He realised that Shi Zuo was potentially sacrificing himself so that he could reach for his storage ring.

Moving forward, he was about to grab the storage ring before it dropped into the flooded floors of the main concourse, but it was at that point of time that something very strange occurred. The Deep Ones they were fighting as well as Shi Zuo and even the Deep Mage had stopped moving completely, seemingly frozen in time. "Have you comprehended the greatness of Lord Dagen?" That particular whisper came back to haunt Bin Yong. "Abandon your fellow friend. Climb to the roof and reach 34th Street, Exit B of Penn Station. The Truth is awaiting you."

"I will not abandon him!" Bin Yong tried to scream with all his might though there was no sound coming from his mouth at all, nor were his muscles moving to produce those sounds.

"Denial is merely a minor obstacle in the process to the road of enlightenment and ultimately, the Blessing of Lord Dagen." The whispers gently rubbed and enveloped Bin Yong's mind once more before the time stasis released everyone in the Grand Central main concourse.

His body continued what it was doing, but the sudden control of his body made him miss the falling ring. Quickly following to where it fell, he used his chi to pull the storage ring towards him. (If not for the short proximity range for the chi to work on the storage ring, Shi Zuo wouldn't have tried to sacrifice himself to let Bin Yong retrieve his.)

The moment the storage ring slipped into Bin Yong's fingers, four spare swords furiously fuelled with chi flew out of his storage ring as projectiles and targeted the free Deep One.

Needless to say, the Deep One defended with ease, but it allowed Shi Zuo to stop struggling with the Deep One underneath him and quickly get out of the way. Bin Yong immediately threw a spare axe to his friend from his storage ring. The four good friends including Jia Le and Luo Bo always knew that there might come a time when their own storage ring might go missing or not work, hence each of them always kept a few spare weapons for their teammates.

"Finally, a decent weapon." Shi Zuo poured his chi into the axe. While it might not be the latest, strongest and lightest axe he bought, it was something he had used before to great effect. This axe was none other than the one he got from the Bank Heist instance. A rare drop which allowed the Three Headed Bear in the Weapons Armoury to create an Ice Elemental Weapon, before Jin had changed the way he handed out rewards.

Shi Zuo grinned when he realised that the Ice Elemental Axe could be surprisingly effective in this particular stage. He poured a lot more chi in and slammed it into the flooded concourse as the Deep One who deflected the sword projectiles continued rush towards him.

"Axe Art... SCREW THIS GODDAMN FISH ATTACKKKK!!!" Shi Zuo shouted out blatantly as the ice elemental axe unleashed a cascade of icy glacier spikes at the Deep One, piercing its natural armoured scales. The chi ice spikes were strong enough to penetrate through the body and out of its back. Greenish foul blood leaked out of the Deep One as it tried to struggle one final time.

The Deep One portrayed its savagery by breaking the ice spikes with its ...fish mouth. It opened its mouth widely and crunched on the tip of the ice spike despite the wound it had. When the Deep One got free, it released an enthralling scream of wrath to the Deep Ones who were watching before throwing itself again at Shi Zuo.

"Just die already!" Shi Zuo whirled his axe haphazardly and gave a swing to the abdominal wound the Deep One had, severing it into half the moment the fish monster got into range.

Bin Yong also had an easy time killing his target with a few precise strikes with his improved gear. In their happiness, both had forgotten about their escape plan as the Deep Mage snapped his finger once more. This time four Deep Ones moved into action against the Pandawan Duo.

As they cracked their webbed knuckles, the Deep Ones on the second floors threw forked tridents at them to even the odds against the well-equipped cultivators. It then struck both of them that this was not going to end any time soon.

Hope was in limited supply and running out fast.

## **Chapter 387 The Eventual Loss**

A relatively large number of spectators in Auditorium Number Three was watching the intense fight between the Deep Ones and the Pandawans. Usually, when there were Pandawans participating in the dungeons, the System would focus the movie screens on their dungeon instance, which lead to them being quite famous in Jin's shop.

As long as they put up a good fight, it really did not matter if they lost the instance because people were using them as a metric to gauge how hard a dungeon could be. And this particular Deep One Dungeon was showing them no mercy at all. Unlike the Shaolin Football Dungeon instance where many of the cultivators fought against the (even now) unbeatable Savants, this latest addition, while not as brutal, kept sending waves of increasingly more and more dangerous Deep Ones against Bin Yong and Shi Zuo especially with them armed with a trident.

On that side note, the Deep Ones were all trained with basic spear proficiency as compared to them previously brandishing their weapons crudely when Jin caught them in the Fishing World. It was all thanks to Wyrstriker, the Wyvern Goblin Knight who tirelessly trained them while Jin prepared the Deep One training instance. Wyrstriker could not believe the regimental training he used to hate would be

implemented by him to ensure the teaching of Deep Ones was orderly. It was no doubt the fastest way to teach them the ways of the spear in a short span of time.

The fight against four Deep Ones had been still beatable with some nonstandard attacks, but that was never the end of it. The Deep Mage creepily laughed as it snapped its fingers and sent double that number against the two cultivators. Thankfully, Shi Zuo had managed to find his storage ring during the battle against the four Deep Ones which he found it by chance when the ring glittered under the water in response to the chi his was emitting. The fight then escalated rather quickly from that point on and it was apparent how the difficulty level went up a notch with each Pandawan having to beat at least four on their own.

Bin Yong and Shi Zuo had been forced to use a number of intermediate battle techniques that were usually kept in reserve to use in Middle Boss fights because of the amount of chi it expends. Before they knew it, the duo had unconsciously used up the gathered chi that was needed to let them walk on water in their fights. That forced them to fight unknowingly in knee deep waters, pushing their dexterity limit to the next level. But in Jin's eyes, pushing their self imposed limit was the few viable ways to further their cultivation.

Unlike Xiong Da, who could endure hits because of his unique cultivation, Shi Zuo was more of an all out offensive cultivator. To him, offence was indeed his best defence. Even the spectators and viewers who had subscribed to Pandaflix, Jins very own dungeon instance streaming, were baffled to learn that Shi Zuo had not fully utilised his Mad Monkey Cultivation until this particular dungeon instance.

It was a brand new sight to watch him jumping around out of the waters on to the lower platforms and pillars to maintain his agility and attack them from tricky angles to counter the Deep Ones' home field advantage. It was exhausting for Shi Zuo which was why he did not use it as often as he should. (Though the System was pleased with the new data input.)

While the Deep Ones managed to block his wild attacks with their spears and armoured spike tails, all eight were subsequently defeated with Bin Yong making use of their distraction thanks to his Bombardier Beetle Style. Needless to say, the Deep Mage simply snapped his fingers yet again and now Sixteen Deep Ones stepped forward.

It was definitely going nowhere for both of them. At first, they thought the Deep Ones would be willing to let them go after demonstrating their strength against them. But as the duels went by and with their numbers increasing with each fight, it was evident that the Deep Ones were merely toying with the two Pandawans.

Instead of continuing to fight them, they tried to resume their plan to run away and climb up to the roof. Unfortunately, it became futile after the Deep Mage managed to slip a few spells of his own to thwart their initial plans. Redirecting the continuous waterfall like a water hydro pump, he splashed them off the walls. Not willing to give up, they tried again.

Bin Yong eventually managed to evade the initial few water spells and climbed to the reach the windows grills by the walls of the Grand Central Terminal. The Deep Mage then used a charged water orb spell as a sort of deviation when the real spell was an elusive binding rope made out of water. The rope pulled Bin Yong towards the 2nd floor by slamming him right to the ground.



To his surprise, the Deep Ones did not finish him off despite the injury he incurred, which allowed them to do so rather effortlessly. Instead, they dragged him to the railings and pushed him back down into the main concourse area again. They seemed keen on continuing their match and thus not granting him an easy death.

Eventually, Shi Zuo was confident that the only way out was for one of the two parties to perish. At this point, they honestly considered giving up to return later with a new strategy since they believed that the pattern of this particular deathtrap would not change and only be harder the more they killed. As if the Deep Mage could feel their lacking resolve, it sniggered and threw a tied up rucksack he conjured at them. Both Bin Yong and Shi Zuo were cautious when they saw the rucksack, but the Deep Mage demanded them to open it.

At that point, they guessed that they were fully at the mercy of the Deep Mage and Bin Yong did not hesitate to open it. Initially, they were shocked with a face of disbelief when they saw the contents of the bag. Only at a closer inspection, did they realise they had been scammed. "What the?! All these panda medals are broken!" Bin Yong took two pieces out and showed it to the Deep Mage.

Now, the still spectating Deep Ones laughed eerily with their lowly muffled vocal cords that sounded more like a tortured goat struggling to scream than a burst of proper laughter. "Foolisssshh Meatsssss. Gather threeeee piecesssss." The Deep Mage clasped his hands together to signal that they could be combined and Bin Yong did what was told. To their surprise, three broken pieces of Panda Medals did become a whole. And judging from the bag of mixed fragments, there would be at least 20 to 30 Bronze Panda Medals in there.

"Fightttt with my breathennssss. More Medaaalllssss" Deep Mage explained and it was to keep them even longer in the dungeon instance.

"So...I presume we are not going anywhere until we defeat that Magical Deep One." Shi Zuo was taking a breather, since the sixteen Deep Ones remained on standby ever since their escape attempts, as he peeked into the rucksack once more.

"Seems that way, but if we dare to attack that Magical Deep One, we might incur the wrath of every Deep One in this Grand Central Terminal. The only proper way appears to be to survive the waves until it's his turn." Bin Yong remarked as he could see that it would not end soon.

"I don't think I have enough chi potions for them all. I also doubt they are going to be nice enough to give us breaks to consume them except during those intervals when he snapped his fingers." Shi Zuo checked his storage ring and confirmed that his inventory of chi potions was still untouched

"And so, I assume this is where hopelessness and dread come into play?" Shi Zuo chugged one chi potion before the Deep Mage signalled to the waiting sixteen Deep Ones to attack them.

"It does not have to be that way. You can be spared, if you believe in the greatness of Lord Dagen, clueless one." Bin Yong heard that whisper when it abruptly entered his head as he prepared to defend himself from the Deep Ones.

"You and only you have been deemed worthy." The whisper continued, but Bin Yong gritted his teeth, trying to ignore the deafening chatter that spoke to him continuously in his head. It was as if he was trying to pass a sanity check while fighting against the Deep Ones.

However, the spectators did not know that Bin Yong was tormented by the unnatural mutters. They assumed the wounds from the previous battles hindered him. Contrary to Shi Zuo's cultivation, Bin Yong was an all rounder that did not excel in any attributes. His strength, defence and agility were above average. Though his Bombardier Beetle Style made him fight more defensively, his techniques could be used as an offensive tactic against his opponents.

Even though Bin Yong had experienced fighting a large group of monsters during the Goblin Raid Event, taking on tens of Orcs by himself, this was a different type of monsters. The Deep Ones had stronger scaled armour, and their arsenal of natural weapons such as teeth, tails and claws along with the proficiency to hold spear arms. Not to mention, they were even more ruthless and bloodthirsty than the Orcs who would whatever it takes to kill their opponent.

Maybe because they had this particular feral instinct which made them behave differently from a comparatively disciplined mind like the Orcs. Therefore, having sixteen Deep Ones attacking at the same time was a completely different scenario against the ones he encountered. Even the spectators were having a hard time imagining themselves trying to fight against one, much alone sixteen.

Sadly, their defeat was ensured when an exhausted Bin Yong accidentally missed a block, and a Deep One clawed his neck open, causing him to die from the massive instant loss of blood. No longer dividing their forces, they focused their attention on Shi Zuo, who had managed to take down three.

As the last survivor, Shi Zuo could only go all out to kill as many as possible before the Deep Ones completely overwhelmed him. Though he fought valiantly, his luck came to an end when a Deep One who quietly hid under the shallow waters, sneak attacked him from the back and pierced straight through his heart.

When the Pandawans awoke back in the recovery instance, they could not help but feel a little dejected but a few of the other cultivators who had been watching the Deep One dungeon via their phones, consoled them that they were probably the first who had managed to reach sixteen Deep Ones. In the meantime, Bin Yong took a bottle of water and splashed his face a little.

He still had some shivers after the entire dungeon run and was torn between being sad for losing, and happy for it being over. A Panda Nurse beckoned him to follow her into a room. Milk was there waiting for him with a spell ready. "Those whispers are nasty, aren't they?" Milk asked after Bin Yong took a seat at the side of her desk. She turned on her torchlight to check his eye pupil movements and systematically measured his blood pressure.

"It was somewhat irritating but...I must say, it was indeed alluring. I could complain that I had trouble resisting it and fighting at the same time, but I think this is pretty much par for the course in a dungeon with this theme. In my opinion, I feel that we haven't even seen half of the dungeon yet." Bin Yong sighed as Milk had already begun casting her magic on him to remove the effects of the dungeons.

"Indeed, you guys were just too focused on reaching your objective. It seems you know a bit about Lovecraft?" She asked as she implemented the spell 'Calming Clarity' on Bin Yong.

"Actually quite a lot, and I'm sure Jin really took a lot of inspiration from there. When I saw the Empire State Building, I noticed a gigantic fish...snake like shadow wrapping itself around it. I think I managed to

have eye contact with it before I saw the first Black Suit guy and after that Shi Zuo pushed me away from the window. Oh, and I did not say this to Shi Zuo in case he got all worked up." Bin Yong told her.

"I shouldn't be saying this, but consider this a Pandawan special privilege. You are right. You have yet to see half of the dungeon. From what I saw, you guys were not even 10% close to the completion of the dungeon. Come on, don't look so gloom, others fared far worse than you." Milk tried to cheer him up as she took his blood pressure once more and asked if she could take a blood sample for research purposes after the dungeon instance. It goes without saying, Bin Yong was welcome to reject such a test if he found it too invasive.

Bin Yong eventually agreed and in exchange Milk revealed a hint about the dungeon instance.

"Remember what Boss Jin told you guys before the start of this instance? It's not all about fighting. You should take the time to appreciate the little things which flesh out the instance. You can share this piece of information with other people if you want. But I am sure you still want your first clear."

Bin Yong nodded and asked if two people were enough for this Deep One dungeon instance. "That, I really cannot say. The dungeon will scale its difficulty with the number of people. Knowing Jin, it should probably be possible to beat it solo if you know how. But just think back at every dungeon instance you successfully completed so far. How many members did your ideal group include?" Milk winked at him as she wore her lab coat with a vial of Bin Yong's blood in her hands. The Panda nurse subsequently took charge and showed Bin Yong his bed to rest.

"So... it seems this is less a James Bond kind of spy movie dungeon instance even though it seems like one at first glance, but more of a detective thriller, making us search for clues." Bin Yong thought to himself as he felt his head being all cleared up.

"This is not the end, Boss Jin. I ...no we will complete it." Bin Yong felt the need to rise to the challenge. First, he would make some preparations to be ready this time as he sent an SMS to Jia Le and Luo Bo inviting them to join them in the evening.

## **Chapter 388 Escape City**

"What's up with Bin Yong? He seems more pumped up than you?" Jia Le asked Shi Zuo as she sat beside Bin Yong who had entered a world of his own, scribbling down something in the Restaurant Instance seemingly unaware of their presence.

The moment she had finished her work, Jia Le had rushed over at the request of her boyfriend. Similar to Bin Yong, she had been busy doing overtime all week long to get her workload done and be able to leave earlier today. (Just that Bin Yong had taken the day off with Shi Zuo while Jia Le and Luo Bo continued with their day work.)

"He's been like this the whole day. He refuses to believe that the Deep One arena is the correct way to progress even when everyone else appears to end up in the same predicament as us, just in different locations." Shi Zuo informed Jia Le, as they had watched others try their luck in the newest dungeon

instance. Some were fighting at other famous places like the Madison Square Garden, Central Park, the Theatre District and even at the Statue of Liberty.

Yet, Bin Yong was still clinging on to Milk's words and hoped that the others had not been told about it. It was only a matter of time that someone else would get the first clear. So far they were luck as it seemed that they are the only Pandawans who had appeared.

"Thank goodness, Bu Dong and the rest of the high schoolers are on an excursion this week, The Venus Four probably having their semester exams and Xiong Da has some other matters to attend to, or else he could have possibly figure out the instance in a jiffy." Bin Yong thought to himself as he watched a few more Deep Ones dungeon instance streams to see if he could catch anything before attempting with the entire group.

"All I know is that I am starving." Luo Bo cried out loud and shouted for a penguin to serve her. She had followed Jia Le reluctantly even though she did not want to fight those scary looking Deep Ones, but she decided to come since Bin Yong rarely asked for favours. Besides, Shi Zuo would probably be the one paying for her too and that itself was already a plus.

The entire group enjoyed some Tonkatsu curry rice together and no matter how many times they ate Lynn's food, it seemed that it was getting tastier and more fragrant. People usually say about how tasty the first time was when they reminisced the days they ate that good full portion of delicious food, but for those in the Restaurant Train of Delicacy, the food continued to get better every time they visited it.

After a hearty meal and a short talk on what to expect, Bin Yong decided to say his piece. "Guys, this is privy information which I got from Milk." He leaned closer and the rest followed suit. "We need to search for clues in this dungeon. Just as Boss Jin warned us at the start, we should not think of this as a 'Search and annihilate every single monster you see' mission. The best case scenario might probably be that we entirely avoid having to fight any monsters until the last boss or so." Bin Yong then showed his close knitted group the notes he made while waiting for their arrival. There was not much to go about, but he eventually guessed about the Grand Central Terminal trap correctly.

"The doors are different as compared to the real Grand Terminal station, come and have a look." Bin Yong utilised the virtual screen consoles that were available to them in the Restaurant instance. He showed them screenshots of certain individual streams. "See here, they spawned right beside the Grand Terminal Station and it is extremely crowded as compared to the one we had entered. See the doors here too." Bin Yong pointed it out.

"I am no architect, but one thing we know about Boss Jin is that he is rather particular about details. I do not think this is a coincidence. Look over here there are other examples of stuff not being 'correct'." He showed how the iconic gates to Central Park and even the base of the Statue of liberty was off. He even scrutinised background in the video of the team fighting at the Statue of Liberty.

"If I am not mistaken, there's another statue right over there and of the right size compared to this one here. I think the bad heavy fog and rain pour made it hard to see. If not for the image to be of high resolution, I could not have found that original statue." Bin Yong indirectly praised Jin's Magic Eye technology. At the very least, he knew that what he was paying for Pandaflax was indeed high definition.

"I guess, it isn't truly a spy kind of dungeon instance then..." Shi Zuo rubbed his stubble while frowning, showing some disappointment, but he did enjoy the thrill from the Black Suits.

"Maybe when we are stronger, this could become a spy action thriller instance, but the fact is that we aren't able to play it this way for now. We should go about it the smart way, I guess." Bin Yong suggested and he told them about the experience he had.

"Ignore the whispers?" Jia Le asked and wondered if she had such willpower to withstand it. She too had read up on Lovecraftian lore and understood how alluring those murmuring whispers were. The protagonists were disillusioned by them, and after a while, it made them go insane. If this was any other Dungeon Supplier, it was nothing to worry about, but Jin had already proven in the Halloween Instance, that he had the means to make their fears become a reality.

"So ...does this not mean that this dungeon instance is literally like a giant escape room?" Jia Le asked by chance, and Bin Yong looked at her with his eyebrows furrowed. That was when Shi Zuo was suddenly reminded about something they had overlooked.

"Bro, don't you remember that...weird English quote we found in the abandoned building? And we never found our phones in the end." Shi Zuo asked and suddenly Bin Yong placed his palm on his temple.

"Gosh...you are right. Looking back we really didn't pay too much attention and missed out on a bunch of stuff." Bin Yong grumbled, and they finally had adjusted themselves with the right mindset going into the Deep Ones dungeon instance. Still, he could not believe it. It was amazing that Jin had created a virtual New York City, only for it to be potentially a giant escape room. For what it was worth, the wait for the release of this dungeon was indeed justified.

"Alright then, Please remember those escape games tips I gave you guys before." Luo Bo reminded them and the entire group quickly looked a final time through their chat conversations. Dungeons were just one thing they shared together as a group. The two couples had tried various other activities together since they found each other to be rather compatible.

Even Jia Le, who was a rather new member of their clique, managed to quickly blend in and get to know some of the quirks the gang had. For example, Luo Bo, who was the laziest among them, had the most influence on the guys. But with Jia Le joining the group, it replaced Bin Yong's previous craze for Luo Bo and the group dynamics was slightly more balanced. (Though there were times, Luo Bo pouted that things did not always go her way anymore.)

"As usual, I propose Shi Zuo as the team leader since Bin Yong always overanalyses things too much." Luo Bo said and even Bin Yong agreed to that. "Bin Yong as the vice leader since he ALWAYS overanalyses things too much, so that there will be someone to watch our backs if we are missing out on things."

"You know, you don't have to say it twice, right?" Bin Yong frowned but Jia Le patted his head.

"Too bad, it's the truth." Jia Le whispered barely audible, reinforcing Luo Bo's statement before the group entered the Deep One dungeon instance via their updated Pandamonium app.

As if given a second chance, they were teleported into the exact same derelict room with that muddled glass facing right in front of them. The four were tied up and instead of struggling, they began to carefully examine the room while waiting for the little Panda Pyjamas girl to appear.

She did not make them wait long, almost immediately entering by breaking open the door. Not panicking, the group slowly observed what the Panda Pyjamas girl did. "Your mission, should you choose to accept it; Find Captain Hei in 34th Street, Exit A of Penn Stati-"

"We accept." The whole group said in unison despite the fact that they were still tied to the chairs which kind of shocked the little girl for a moment. Then, she stepped back while moving her panda mask a little to reveal that cute smile she was hiding. From her pocket, she took out a phone and placed it on the floor.

"Your first objective is to reach Grand Central Terminal. I will call you if you manage to reach there correctly and safely." This time instead of pulling the straps out of the chairs for them, she disappeared after placing the phone on the floor. However, what she said corresponded to Bin Yong's doubts.

" She said 'Correctly'. So bro, your theory might be right after all." Shi Zuo was finally convinced by Bin Yong's way of thinking.

"Our cultivation is still active right?" Jia Le asked as she struggled a little after the disappearance of the little girl right in front of her eyes.

"It should be, it was not blocked the last time I remembered. Just that, we did not think of using it immediately." Bin Yong answered and it assured Jia Le as she laid back and began casting a cultivation technique. Soon enough, there were vines growing from the bottom of her chair with razor sharp leaves, which at the behest of Jia Le, cut open the straps for her. Afterwards, she assisted the others in getting free.

"Now this is something different. Shi Zuo picked it up as he examined the phone. The first thing that he saw was the battery lifespan. Not only was it blinking at 10%, but it was also none other than Bin Yong's phone... who had the lousiest battery life among the four of them. Mainly because he refused to change his phone after eight odd years since he claimed that it was still working fine for him.

"Seriously, if we lose because your battery dies out early, I am so dragging you to the Hua Wee store in the shopping district and get you a new replacement immediately.' Shi Zuo cursed a little as he knew that Bin Yong's phone booted up real slow. The power button was slightly faulty and turning it off might prove to be a nuisance and eventually consume more battery than it should.

"After getting a new phone for you, I will take your old phone and smash it into bits. I will make sure I crash and burn every single component." Shi Zuo sighed as he looked at the worn out phone before leaving it with Bin Yong.

"I am guessing that it is also a sort of timer for us to complete this mission." Jia Le chimed in as she was examining around the room once more. Luo Bo was already flipping the torture chairs upside down to see if there were any clues at all.

True enough, they found a tattered handbook stained with blood, hidden inside the chair's broken cushion. Luo Bo was just trying her luck by poking her finger into those small cushion holes to see if she

managed to feel anything. For a clue to be found so quickly, she became excited that she bounced around a little while Bin Yong was looking through the contents of the tattered handbook.

"From the looks of it, these...are something like coded cyphers, I think." Bin Yong browsed through the contents for a while before giving it to Shi Zuo.(They would never guess that Boss Jin was well versed in cypher coding, and all credits were given to his grandfather teaching him that.)

"Yeah, and all written in tortured human blood I presume? Hahahaha!" Shi Zuo was not helping the situation at all with his awfully cold comment. They checked the other torture chairs just in case before heading out of the room.

However, Jia Le turned around again as if to make sure she did not miss out anything else in the room. "Escape Room, huh? More like Escape City." Jia Le mumbled to herself to which the System secretly awarded the group ten panda medals to their current dungeon score for being the first group to correctly guess the true name and nature of this particular dungeon.

## **Chapter 389 Speculations**

"Oh, hey look. Bin Yong's team is trying out the dungeon once more, and this time the audio is clearer than usual for some reason. Usually, there would be some background music accompanying it." One of the viewers who recently failed the Deep Ones Dungeon Instance saw Bin Yong and friends on the screen. With the introduction of Pandaflix, the System had also been implementing ways to improve the stream, especially to a generation of cultivators who could not sit still and watch stuff for long.

Hence, it had placed background music and the music selection surprisingly came from Ke Mi. Somehow, the System found out that she had the flair to choose the kind of music for certain dungeon themes. All it had to do was to expose her to all the available music and she would pick ones that would suit the dungeon. Not to mention, Ke Mi could alter the music tune in her head, inadvertently creating a new set of music for the System to have copyright free music. Jin listened to it and suggested that a compilation of such music could sell in the future.

While the viewer and the following group that gathered around her upon hearing Bin Yong's name had failed the Deep One dungeon instance multiple times, they were not too unhappy about it. The main reason for this was the surprisingly high amount of Panda Medals that was being rewarded, which Boss Jin had been quite stingy since the opening of his dungeon supplier store. One of the cultivators had posted a thread on the Pandamonium Forum to check how much medals one would be able to obtain in this recent dungeon.

Many had stated that even without going that far in, the amount of medals they earned had been twice, or even three times more compared to the amount given in the previous dungeon. Some also wondered if it was a bug that allowed them to earn that many Panda Medals.

However, Jin personally gave a brief statement in the forums (his account was Panda verified) that there was no issue with the amount of panda medals being awarded. In fact, he revealed that there would be

a revision of Panda Medals for all dungeons by the end of the month, which would be officially announced in due time.

Mr Know-It-All who was in the loop of every news of Jin made a few simple speculations on the current behaviour for Jin's increased rewards for the currency. According to him, the most likely and common scenario would be more weapons and/or inscriptions coming in, since the ones he currently sold were kind of general and basic despite the supreme quality.

Inscriptions like attack, defence or support Inscription were pretty standard such that the customers could buy them in other places, though getting from those from Jin's store should not be a waste. If they followed the trend of his other additional inventory, they were guaranteed to be at least slightly stronger than the average inscriptions produced from outsiders.

There was a collective term for such inscriptions that were better than average inscriptions of the same grade and the public dubbed these kinds of inscriptions as a plus. For example, Attack Plus Grade One inscription. Though some swore that Jin's inscriptions were a notch better than the Plus versions that they even want to nickname them as Panda+ for the fun of it. (Perhaps it might be true in the future.)

Furthermore, Mr Know-It-All speculated that Jin was going to bring in more very specific, distinct inscription stocks that would definitely improve the dungeon experience of the cultivators as well as aiding them with passing the dungeon even more efficiently. For example, Fire Element Attack Enchantment inscription which provides fire elemental damage for a short burst of time or Water Element Defence Inscriptions where the user would have better resistance against water spells or attacks.

He even deduced there was a possibility of 'species killer' kind of equipment. Some of the cultivators asked in the thread what those were and Mr Know-It-All briefly explained that those inscriptions could probably be more effective against certain monsters. For example, 'Orc Killer' Inscriptions.

Those inscriptions would prove to be very useful against the Orcs in the Goblin Raid Dungeons, making it easier for the cultivators to pit against the orcs if they had a hard time, or simply wished to feel more like a god of war on the battlefield.

However, that particular inscription would be useless and not effective at all against any other kind of monster. Mr Know-It-All mentioned that those inscriptions had existed in the past mainly to combat monsters attacking cities. But since the monsters in a monster horde wave tended to vary by species, it was decided to be more useful to use general inscriptions than highly specific ones. He added that nowadays it should be rare to even find a particular 'Species Killer' kind of inscription on the market. Most were probably gathering dust in the showroom of weapon collectors.

One of the cultivators posted his own theory stating that it could be the first signs of an upcoming general inflation in prices since more and more people began to participate in the dungeons. He believed Boss Jin wished to inflate the prices of his goods after his removal of Panda Credits in favour of only using Panda Medals.

Therefore, he had increased the number of Panda Medals to give the illusion that the store would not be ripping the customers off. Even though he admitted removing the Panda Credits was a decent move



to avoid confusing newcomers, he felt the prices for the food items were rather hefty since they could either be bought with money or Panda Medals.

Whereas, Panda Credits was something like an extra bonus for people to utilise to buy their food. Despite his theory sounding rather logical and some found it appealing, others argued back that the new tickets all came with food vouchers for any main dish of their choice. Other than that, they had to top up, which they found that particular reward method to be better. Especially since some remembered that the main dishes could be more expensive with Panda Credits.

The older customers continued to argue that the credits had depended on the number of tickets they bought and reintroducing that system would have made those delicious dishes inaccessible. With the lure of food and dungeon at the same time, they felt it was already worth the price especially since they could not get to enjoy such heavenly taste anywhere else.

It was both a pity and wonder that such mind blowing food was found in this oddly unique dungeon supplier shop and not in proper restaurants. It's indeed a wonder since people agreed such luxurious heaven defying dishes were available to them either before (to buff themselves) or after a dungeon instance (to recover after a good fight), making it an excellent combination of both.

Some even praised that they felt healthier and stronger after tasting Jin's food, as if it was a health supplementary tonic that tasted incredibly delicious. Xiong Da once mentioned that if this place would allow delivery, he would stop cooking and simply buy from this place twenty four seven. Of course, Jin adamantly refused, stating that the quality of the food also depended on how fresh the food was being served from the kitchen. By providing a delivery service, it would reduce the quality of the food.

No doubt Xiong Da pouted, stating that he was willing to throw craploads of money at Boss Jin who seemingly did not want it at all. "What kind of business owner does not want more cash?! You sure, you are Chinese?!" Xiong Da exclaimed and everyone beside him shared the same sentiment.

Yet, he was also relieved that Boss Jin did not compromise on quality, which was why he and many others continued to come back to this dungeon supplier store. However, Jin mysteriously pointed out that in the future, they may drastically change the way they did things. When pressed any further, Xiong Da only received the two infamous words "Trade Secret" from Jin's mouth.

Another of Mr Know-It-All's deductions was that Jin was going to experiment in some future instance that could involve big stuff. Literally big stuff. "If he can have Pandawans drive tanks in dungeons, there may be no limit to what else he can build in the future. Going one step further should the demand be high enough he could potentially sell off the rights to own cars, tanks and other items. It might be only real inside the store of particular dungeon supplier, but god be damned if I can ever fly around in my private spaceship or build a luxurious mansion of my own. One day, it may be a better alternative to someone's dreaded reality."

Upon posting that, many cultivators liked his post so much that it quickly became the hottest topic of the day. Still, he warned others that those were all speculations, and one could only dream that Jin could create such things. Some admitted that they would not mind staying in a beautiful instance compared to the cramped housing they had to live in.

Others theorised that if Jin was building housing estates, the government could potentially see him as a potential cash cow and invest in him more. All these posts made Jin laughed as a few things they stated could potentially become true if the Dungeon Fortress City turns out the way he planned to.

Even the System was starting to calculate the possibility of cultivators staying permanently and aiding Jin by earning dungeon dollars in the Dungeon World which would provide more profit for the System. And the System desired money, for money was power. To a point, that it could even consider that revenge against the Zodiacs was a secondary objective.

If Jin managed to carve a city in the dungeon world, the profit would be immensely high. At the moment, it would be correct to say that the store did not earn as much cash from the cultivators as the System wanted to.

On the other hand, the money flow from the Gearbox armour sales, courtesy of the unknowing Yang Ling, was in the millions. Without it, it would have been quite challenging to help fund Jin's mini war all the way. Sure, they could potentially sell more of those gearbox armour but eventually, someone would intervene by copying those ideas and producing even better ones.

That was the sad reality of the competitive market. The only way to curb that was to limit the number of stocks available and sell it sparingly to various worlds, but the System was unwilling to do so. Hence, the long term solution was to get the Dungeon Fortress City up and running so that it could generate profits that outmatch profits of the short term sales of the Gearboxes.

That was when Another Jin's negotiating came in very handy. He was getting more and more proficient in it thanks to all the other trades he made. His rude and rowdy way of hard bargaining was something certain worlds had never encountered before, and it was to the point that they had to bend over just to receive the goods and hand over the money.

It went without saying that a certain fox, Kiyu, greatly aided him behind the scenes at the command of Kraft's instructions by influencing Jin's words with some magical power. (When asked by Jin why it was not detected by those high level mages, Kraft said it was something like a natural ability to Kiyu.)

This proved to Another Jin that words themselves indeed had power in them. Judging by the reaction of the royal purple fox, she enjoyed watching those lowly 'worms' succumb to Jin's negotiation prowess. Witnessing the power of Kiyu firsthand after her debut, he also recommended Qiu Yue to use her if she ever needed to get a deal from Goblin King Sol and Orc King Frost Echo. Yet, it was plain obvious, she was already excellent at pulling those two's strings without the help of one of Kraft's foxes.

The spectators who were discussing amongst themselves how far the Pandawans would make it this round had begun to notice that Bin Yong's group was still not moving out to fight against Deep Ones but rather searching for things. They were already shocked when the little panda masked girl they all had encountered changed her actions the moment they replied to her.

Come to think of it, almost all of the cultivators thought it was already an order, not a question nor a request. None had tried answering her, thinking she was merely part of the setting, so it was quite the discovery learning she would hand them a possibly important clue for the dungeon instance.

Not any less important seemed to be the existence of that tattered handbook for the viewers. Some even began to try and guess the contents of the book when briefly shown by the Magic Eye of the dungeon instance.

Mr Know-It-All, who was at the scene in his favourite spot, suddenly found himself justifying the group's success when some people began to loudly accuse Boss Jin of having purposely given the Pandawans a head start or a possible clue.

"I doubt Boss Jin would play favourites. Bin Yong and Shi Zuo might have discovered the true intention of the dungeon instances themselves. They are not the only ones, as I myself had begun to suspect that this dungeon is not what it seemed to be after watching various attempts by many cultivators." Mr Know-It-All further proved his point, by posting a few screenshots in the Pandamonium forum on the differences in the architecture of the famous landmarks and compared them in various dungeons.

"As I am sure we can all agree, Boss Jin takes pride in his work by being meticulous with even the smallest details. Like the comment of cold morning air blowing in our face during the goblin forest instances or the dusty remnants of an explosion in the Goblin Raid Dungeons. These 'errors' are totally out of the normal, and it leads me to believe those Pandawans might have figured out the dungeon instance they were in. That should be why they are searching for more clues as compared to the previous time when they went in blind." Mr Know-it-All remarked.

With just a simple analysis of Mr Know-It-All, the entire mood of the crowd changed. Jin, who was at the sidelines, was amazed by the power of knowledge and influence that Mr Know-It-All wielded. It was not a joke.

Even without going into any instance, his observation and knowledge in the dungeon instances on the forums made him as famous as the Pandawans in his shop, if not more. Also, for some reason, Jin realised that he had yet to introduce himself formally to Jin (or anyone else). While he did fill in his personal data when making an account to enter the shop instance, it would have been rude for Jin to snoop around, if the other party did not wish for it.

However, Jin was equally surprised to learn that not even his long time friend from Sea Mesh called him by his true name. Upon this realisation, Jin began to doubt the validity of the contact information he had filled in even though it was just a random thought. While it was no crime to enter a fake name to register for an account in the Pandamonium app, it would not have been that much of a problem in the past as compared to now.

One should not forget that the System had upgraded their security some time ago and was checking everyone's real identity with a proper, thorough ID check via the nation's registry. The thing is, Mr Know-it-all's personal ID information checked out. "Maybe that could be a possible valid reason why he never enters my dungeons since revealing their cultivation speaks volumes of his identity. That could also be the explanation of why he refused to help me when I casually asked about the tutoring matter." Jin thought to himself.

In any case, Jin kept that at the back burner, since there was no problem with Mr Know-It-All so far and quietly focused on Bin Yong's instance. He smirked a little as he saw how that little bit of information from Milk had motivated them to change their strategy and look for alternate ways. "A little bit of playing cheat, but they are famous enough in my store to have some influence on the crowd. If they

would know any better, I might have to pay them for advertising my dungeons instead of them paying me." Jin sniggered.

### **Chapter 390 Solving as a Team**

Their search was proving to be the correct choice of action. The group found lots of hidden messages and possible clues that could potentially help them in this dungeon instance. They also avoided going outside nor look out of the windows to try and avoid being influenced by those whispers.

As the leader, Shi Zuo collaborated with everyone and had suggested to bring all the evidence back to the 'torture' room as fast as possible since they were racing against a timer.

Unlike the other dungeon instances where their phone battery power did not deplete and could be used infinitely to check on the maps and stuff, Bin Yong's handphone was indeed running out of battery. With each percentage decrease, it made Shi Zuo feel that he grown 10 years old for being so stressed out.

Hence, he had demanded Bin Yong to turn off all possible apps to reduce the amount of battery the phone was consuming. They did not know if it would help and they could only pray for the best. That was until Luo Bo found a dusty old handphone battery lying in one of the abandoned office desks.

Shi Zuo then remembered Bin Yong's phone was so old that they would actually work with replacement batteries, unlike the newer ones the rest of them had which did not have a replacement cover to remove the battery pack. Still, he did not want to risk removing the battery since it would mean powering up the old phone again unless it was absolutely necessary. With the way this dungeon instance was clearly not pulling its punches, he'd rather find out when the battery died out. (or hoped not to find anything at all.)

Back in the torture room, they laid out all the clues they had found. Luo Bo had brought in a few weird looking pamphlets. She arranged them in the same pattern she had found them, in case that was of importance. Bin Yong went back to the room where they had found the cryptic looking quote the first time and noted it down by using the random scraps of pen and paper around the place.

Meanwhile, Jia Le had searched the entire building and found out that there was a door that was sealed shut with a weird combination lock. She tried to utilise her cultivation, but the door would not even budge a single inch. In fact, it felt like the door itself was defending itself from the blow.

True enough, Jin used the exact same kind of door that was previously used to block away potential intruders from the shop's basement for the dungeon instance. But instead of Grade 19, he used a Grade 15 door since he yet to encounter anyone of that level around the area. (It was highly unlikely that the Tiger Lord would visit him) Even if there was a Grade 15 cultivator that coincidentally entered Jin's store, the System would automatically swap the door for the Grade 19 one. (well, that's not to say if a Grade 19 or 20 cultivator comes in, then Jin guessed he would probably allow him to destroy a normal door as a bonus for being that high level.)

Talking about the basement door, the store's basement was cordoned off from the public since the shop instance handled all the entrances to everything from service instances to shopping instances. The

library on the second and third floor was surprisingly popular since some students used that area as a studying corner while others used it to grab a bit of snooze time before going back to the shopping district. (Some guys even used that place as a place to pass the time to wait for their girlfriends in the shopping district.)

Jin did not care about those two parts of the store for now as his shop instance was sufficient to cater to almost every need he has. Even the mini garden park previously used by Lynn and the other cultivators while waiting for their turns became a gathering place for some people. (Mostly the elderlies before they enter the shop for their dungeon instances early in the morning).

On a separate note, Jia Le did find an interesting fragment piece that was glowing...eerily dark. She was a little afraid to hold on to it and decided to take a trashcan which she nonchalantly emptied the contents on the floor and used it to hold the fragment emanating such dark energy. When the rest of the group saw it, they too got wary and commended Jia Le on such an innovative idea. Who knew what might happen to her if she held on to the fragment without any care.

"So, remember, think simple. Most escape rooms are meant to be solvable. If we overanalyse it too much, it might backfire on us. But Bin Yong, go ahead and overanalyse stuff" Luo Bo emphasised the last part which made Bin Yong rolled his eyes in annoyance before they gathered together to look through the clues.

"I tried to decipher the cypher. It might fall into one of two categories, but I am willing to bet it is a prime number to alphabets decryption kind of code." Shi Zuo told them as he was used to having this kind of puzzles and probably the best analytical mind among the four of them. (Even though they said Bin Yong overanalysed things too much, as a tech guy he fulfilled the cliché of loving the crack puzzles.)

"Why would you say that? I do not see any numbers at all? Its all dots, curves and lines along with cursive alphabets. Are you sure you are not overanalysing it?" Bin Yong asked with a little sarcasm in it as he borrowed the tattered handbook to flip through.

"Well you are not wrong, my dear Watson. That was what I thought as well...until I saw this." Shi Zuo took out a piece of folded paper and as he unfolded it, there were scribbles of numbers and a few weird patterns. Bin Yong looked through it a bit confused at first before he understood that it seemed to correspond the odd patterns to the numbers.

He then noticed there was actually a page that has seemingly been purposely removed from the tattered book. Shi Zuo added it was not that hard to find, but if he had not seen a few of those bloodied patterns on that tattered handbook, he would have thought that it was merely just scribbles too.

"Hmm, but the quote that we found, it still does not make any sense nor fulfil any of that cypher code. I copied every single word and even the way it was written and where it was written to make sure we do not overlook any patterns." Bin Yong said. "The only clue I can make out from this entire quote is the possible missing letters, but I can't make any heads or tails from it." Bin Yong sighed.

"What are the letters that are missing?" Luo Bo asked and Bin Yong said it was Y, H and A.

"Coincidentally, those were the words there seemed to be missing in these three pamphlets as well." Luo Bo had noticed a possible correlation as she showed the rest. It was a picture of a lottery draw to the holiday vacation to the city of Las Vegas. However, the word Y was deliberately missing from the

word 'city' from the first pamphlet and so was the 'A' in Vegas in the second. "Win a Ooliday trip." Luo Bo purposely emphasised the missing H in the word Holiday in the third.

"Perhaps, write those letters in that particular cursive writing on the pamphlet as per the quotes?" Jia Le suggested and they just gave it a try. To their surprise, it did work as the three pieces of advertisement suddenly glowed. The glowing caused lines and dots to appear on the paper throughout the picture, turning it bloody red which made Luo Bo scream a little before the glow faded away.

"Now, this is something to look forward to." Shi Zuo tried to use the cypher code to decrypt the lines and what he got was 4-7-9 which correspond to D, G and I according to the alphabetical list.

"D-G-I? Dig? Gid?" Jia Le tried solving it out loud. "Are we looking for some place to dig? or is it a combination with Y-H-A? I see no pattern at all." Jia Le was getting even more confused than before.

"What if we turn it back to numbers? You said you saw a lock, right? is it a number combination lock or alphabetical lock?" Bin Yong asked and Jia Le shook her head.

"It was neither, it's more of a key kind of thing, and somehow I think it has something to do with this particular fragment here." Jia Le replied and then Luo Bo emphasised the group that they needed to think simple.

"Let's just do what the clue seems to provide us with. Dig. Well, we can only dig at the bottom of the ground I presume? I am sure Boss Jin is not that evil to make us dig every corner we can find... right?" Luo Bo asked and everyone agreed.

So far, it was either their luck or them accepting the mission, but they had not encountered any Deep Ones, and they hoped it stayed that way since they have to weapons with them. Not to mention, with four cultivators in the dungeon, it also meant that the difficulty level of the dungeon by dishing out more Deep Ones or stronger fish men.

They collectively went to the basement of the abandoned building without a hitch which was incidentally a carpark with a rusted old broken car at the center of it all. Other than that, there was only solid, concrete ground everywhere, making it impossible to dig with their bare hands. Unless...Yeah, everyone who was at the carpark thought the same.

To remove that damn busted car away.

True enough, beneath the car was a pile of moveable rubble and soil which Shi Zuo and Bin Yong had the honours of digging whatever possible clue up, since their girlfriends refused to help. (Poor guys...) After a few minutes of digging, Shi Zuo noticed there was a glimpse of something metallic which prompted them to uncover the contents even more aggressively to reach it.

It was some lockbox with a weird keyhole to it. When shown to Luo Bo and Jia Le, they both were at a loss of what kind of lockbox it was supposed to be...until Jia Le incidentally compared it with the fragment that was left in the trashcan.

"Say, does anyone want to risk holding the fragment and try to insert it into this keyhole? Somehow I feel that it might fit in quite nicely." Jia Le commented and everyone looked at each other for a while.

"Erm, let's search insides of the car first. Perhaps there are some safety gloves or maybe some thick cloth or something that might help us avoid holding it directly." Bin Yong gave a reasonable rationale and they started rummaging the broken down vehicle.

"Hey, I found a wire here, looks like something Bin Yong could use! Does the car have a USB port to jack it in?" Luo Bo managed to pull the backseats open and squeezed through to check the trunk of the car. Meanwhile, Shi Zuo could not help but watch his girlfriend's butt poking out of the car seats.

"Oh, Baby, you are so hot." Shi Zuo remarked bluntly.

"Of course! I've known that for a long time. Still thanks for noticing, my darling monkey." Luo Bo teased her boyfriend a bit as she pulled her arms back and handed Shi Zuo the USB cable.

"Hey, quit flirting in the middle of the mission. A Dungeon Instance is not the right place for that." Bin Yong said a bit annoyed as he checked the phone's battery. It was starting to get dangerously low at 5% before he passed it over to Shi Zuo.

"That's not what I heard, dear Bin Bin. Weren't you and Jia Le all touchy in the Dungeon Heist Instance when all of us were stuck in that lift, and it broke down of all a sudden?!" Luo Bo refuted his complaints and Bin Yong immediately kept quiet. Clearly, he still felt very guilty about that seeing how Jia Le was quite vulnerable during that dungeon instance since it was barely their second dungeon out together at that point of time. (Oddly, they did not blame Boss Jin for it.)

"Hey, look! It's charging! This is fantastic!" Shi Zuo shouted in delight when suddenly they heard growls coming from the dark isolated corners of the underground carpark. It was undeniable that Shi Zuo's excitement awoke the feral Deep Ones.

"I guess we are on the right track if there are Deep Ones not disguising themselves as those Black Suits." Bin Yong said as he cracked his knuckles but Jia Le tapped him on his shoulders while she stepped forward.

"I diligently watched your dungeon stream during the afternoon lunch break. I suggest you to take the back seat and watch. Without your weapons, I believed I am way better than you." Jia Le sniggered a little as she summoned her cultivation with ease.

Silhouettes of five Bellflowers bloomed so wildly and vividly above her head that a scene of the wind blowing the purple petals into the far end could be seen.