

Dungeon S 491

Chapter 491 Demon Rat Research Centre

The Uote Town Guards accompanied their Guard Captain, Sebastia and Kraft to the capital arriving at the break of dawn. The first thing Jin's companions saw from afar was the encroaching tall walls made not out of brick and mortar but metal.

"Heh heh! You guys have definitely never been to the capital before, aye? The look on first timers is priceless!" Uote Guard Captain giggled loudly. The guards at the front gates demanded passes from the carriage that carried them, but with a show of the Captain's face, the guards immediately consented their entry without much hassle.

"You must hold much influence for them to let us in without even inspecting the contents of the carriage." Kraft tried to make some small talk while complimenting the captain.

"Our masters. They are expecting us. That is why they let us through. But of course, if not for my presence, the guards would be more stringent with their checks." The Demon Rat Captain replied proudly as they saw a large group of demon rats mobilising.

"Is this a normal sight for soldiers to mobilise this early?" Sebastia asked, and even the Demon Rat Captain wanted to pry into the matter.

"Not unless something happened. Let me ask." The Demon Rat Captain went out of their carriage and called over one of the Demon Rats with one rank beneath his own. It was unlikely for the normal grunts to know anything besides the need to assemble. "What? An attack at Uote town?!"

"Yes, sir! Apparently, it was a direct report from the Masters themselves when dawn broke out." The sergeant reported that not only Uote Town was affected. Even Youi and the trading town of Wecha were hit around the same timeframe. "We believe the Dark Templars are the cause of all these attacks. We are setting out now to recapture those towns."

"Do you need to follow them?" Kraft asked in a concerned manner although he already knew it would be pointless, as he had the reports from the System and had already informed him of the scouting teams' progress.

"Argh, I will bring you to meet Masters first and then I will follow the contingent." Uote Guard Captain grumbled and struggled with his choice, telling the carriage driver to hasten the speed even though the road were packed with soldiers bringing groups of slaves into battle too.

"For them to use slaves and prisoners as cannon fodder shows much about their hierarchy and intelligence level." Kraft thought and pitied the System being unable to catch any of them at all. Still, the additional resources would be a welcoming gift too.

Meanwhile, Sebastia noticed how the inhabitants were all living in cramped places in order to make way for factories that were polluting the atmosphere. There were definitely more than just one or two factories responsible for all the smog and smoke covering the entire city's sky with dark clouds.

If anything, they were exploiting a lot of the people to work hard for them to produce those Steam Tech and the demon rats did not care about a single bit of their well being. To them, one slave or prisoner of war could easily be replaced with the next. After all, the entire capital's population was their plaything.

Kraft had already used the opportunity when the Guard Captain left the carriage to send out his foxes for reconnaissance. They proceeded to map out the area with everything they saw reporting to him as well as the System. The System noticed that many war factories were producing not just Steam Tech, but weapons, armoury, and even vehicle parts such as the steam tanks and helicopters. All of them were powered with the very same Steam Tech.

The System then commanded the foxes to get more insight into these items and if possible the blueprints. However, the foxes deemed it as a secondary objective compared to what Kraft had asked them to do.

"Sorry, Captain. The masters do not wish to see anybody right now and asked us to pass you this instead." One of the guards at the doorstep of the castle denied their entry and gave the Uote Guard Captain a task instead. He quickly scrambled to tear the envelope open and read the contents of the letter.

"Urgh! After all, I did for them!" The captain crashed the papers and told them to follow him instead.

"Where are we going?" Sebastia asked with a stern tone.

"To the main Research Centre. The Masters have allowed you and only you Battle Lady to pick a weapon and armour of your choice. They want you and your companion to annihilate the demons in the north. The lion and the snake!"

"Two demons? And you are just going to give me one weapon? What about my companion?" Sebastia asked, and Kraft echoed along.

"No! No can do! Masters say only you since you gave results! Your comrade did not do anything to earn the trust of our masters! Be glad that he is able to come into the capital and see our glorious empire without doing anything!" The Uote Guard Captain vehemently refused as he told the carriage driver to move to the research centre post haste.

"Oh, come now. It doesn't have to be the latest model, but surely you have some older ones, that are just gathering dust? You know how strong demons are. Even our dear Battle Lady might have some difficulty fighting against two of them. You do not want her to lose, right? Having an extra weapon will no doubt prove a boon, and it is just one weapon, I am not asking for an army." Kraft commented, and somehow it gave the Guard Captain some headache.

"Grrrrr. We will see about it when we enter the place."

It did not take long, but the moment they entered the building, the temperature of the place shot up by at least three fold. The labourers and workers that were busy on the production line were all so hot that none wore any upper clothing. It's either they stifled themselves to death, or they injured themselves for not wearing any safety gear. (As if the demon rats were going to give them any in the first place.)

At one glance, they noticed that the rats were using the slaves for creating the parts for their combat vehicles, and everyone gave them the momentous stare before returning back to work. As much as they hated the bad treatment (still better than the slaves), the job paid just enough for the workers to send some money to their family.

Sebastia despised the current work setting as she could feel how oppressive the atmosphere was. Still, she continued on with Kraft who seemed quite at home. The Uote Guard Captain brought them into a special room whose entrance was cordoned off by guards equipped with Steam Tech. It appeared to be an even more advanced version of the power suit which Sebastia saw the ex-commander wearing back in Keyrin's territory.

If the guards were wearing such amazing power suits to defend the place, it had to be of relative importance to the rats themselves, and there was only one way to find out. Both guards turned around in their power suit in order to lift the door open for the guest to enter.

The bar handles were indeed at the bottom and the only way to open it was by lifting it up. However, just the two of them were not enough, and two more were called over. The four of them could only lift the twenty inch thick steel door enough to create a sufficient opening for their guests to enter. (They had to bend over to enter but not for the Captain.)

Once they entered, the door smashed down behind them, creating a giant noise echoing throughout the factory. What awaited them was a long spiralling staircase which took some time for them to reach their location. A spacious hall the size of two football fields and at least tall enough to place Mechataur in there. But what intrigued them most was that the place was filled with makeshift construction platforms.

Stairs leading to elevated platforms with each of the platforms used to conduct various experiments. There were caged demon rats, humans and even demons of some sort at the side of the halls as well as gadgets, broken pieces of steam tech etcetera.

"New subjects?" The cloaked figure sighed. The Captain shook his head.

"These esteemed guests are here to choose one of your newly developed experimental weapons." Guard Captain explained before he bowed himself out of the place. "Afterwards, you are to teleport them to the demons in the north...and eh give both of them weapons. Just make sure the Battle Lady stays alive at all cost. Give the other one something that may increase their chances."

As if the cloaked figure understood what the rat was saying, he nodded his head and cast a teleport spell on the Guard Captain.

"What? Why are you leaving so fast? Aren't you supposed to guide us?" Sebastia asked with a tinge of suspicion.

"Guide? I am a Guard Captain. Not some guide! You should be grateful that I guarantee an increased chance of safety for your life!" The demon rat said as he was teleported out via a magic circle.

"So I am guessing you are the guinea pigs for my experiment." The cloaked figure took a look as he asked them to follow him to the back of the hall. "The Scholars probably want you dead, which is why they made an attempt to kill you via the demons."

"The Scholars? Not the Masters?" Kraft got really curious when the cloaked figure referred to them as such.

"Hmm... yes, you are right. It should be Masters. It's rare for me to receive any guest. I am usually alone with my subjects, so it's not like I have to watch my language." The cloaked figure stopped momentarily before acknowledging and continued to walk forth.

"If the 'Masters' hate us, why don't they kill us outright? Also aren't you worried that after telling us all this we would just try to kill you?" The crafty fox asked though he had no intention to simply forego this opportunity to gather intel. His sixth sense was tingling, indicating that they had stumbled upon a rare opportunity.

"Honestly, it's not like it will make a difference. Should you choose to kill me, you will be automatically teleported to the demons anyway. If you don't kill me, I can at least provide you with a weapon allowing you to live a little bit longer. The demons are now their pet projects. They had mutated them from two non caring demons who bothered with their own businesses into some vicious murdering machines they are today. Their lust for battle is never ending, and there is nothing I can do about it."

"You seem to know a great deal about those demons," Kraft questioned with a hidden purpose.

"I've raised them myself. It's a pity that my beloved demons were forced to fight against each other instead of growing to fulfil their initial objective." The cloaked figure answered with a hint of pride before it turned into melancholy.

"Let me guess. To use them as the guardians for each country?" Kraft proposed his theory, and he could hear a soft sigh coming from the cloaked figure.

"How did you know that? This is something only one person should have been aware of." It was as if he knew about it all along.

"Because your words were tied with sorrow and regrets. Judging from your explanation, those masters of yours seem to have spoilt your work, which should have been part of some grand scheme. I've long since wondered about those elder demons like they were meant for something greater."

"Also, I feel it's just too convenient for the demons to be under their control. That is unless there was some sort of link no one else knew about... or something... or more likely, someone was used to blackmail them." Kraft seemed to know the vague identity of this cloaked figure.

"Things did not go that well, that's all." The cloaked figure went to the corner of the hall, and with murmuring words flowing out of his mouth, the illusion of the corner of the hall broke, allowing them to enter.

"You seem to be more than just some mere travellers. It would be a shame for you to die because of their scheme. Let me aid your escape at the very last minute with my experimental 'weapons' that I had developed." The cloaked figure offered an olive branch to the travellers and Kraft burst into a short laugh.

"Do you think we cannot win against your demons?" Sebastia questioned with a confident tone.

"Verily so. I suggest you come down from your high horse. No one can beat them. Many competent warriors have tried in the past. None came back alive." The cloaked figure suddenly displayed past images of various adventurers who tried to battle against the Burning Lion and Water Snake.

"I see, they sure are horrifying. Please do give us all the information on them. Sebastia looks like you will have a great work out for later. For now, try to learn their attacks." Kraft ordered, and Sebastia already had her notebook out making notes on their pattern of attacks.

"What are you doing? Have I not given you a choice to live? Don't act too rash!" The cloaked figure panicked as if he really wanted them to not fight against the demons.

"Don't worry. We know what we are doing." Kraft walked up to the cloaked figure and stare at him eye to eye. "Now how about you take off that pathetic disguise? I prefer talking face to face."

"Miss Scholar of the West."

Chapter 492 Scholar of the Wes

Upon hearing the name 'Scholar of the West', the cloaked figure stopped all movements and shivered at the name of it. "What are you talking about? Why are you bringing up my teacher?" The cloaked figure continued to lie.

"Oh, please. Stop pretending. You are not really good at it. Do I need to spell it out for you? Miss. Scholar. Of. The. West?" Kraft had yet to encounter anyone being able to fool the old fox.

Given his ability to read people's mind, it was a piece of cake for him to figure out that before them stood the real Scholar of West. He initially had not cared a single bit when he entered the hall with Uote's Guard Captain.

It was not until the cloaked figure referred to his superiors as Scholars instead of Masters. (And he was just too lazy to read people minds most of the time.) This was knowledge only a select few should be aware of. That was when he knew something was up.

It did not take long as the first image that came out from the cloaked figure's memory was none other than Gold himself. That was when he started playing around with her. "A shame, I should have played this game a little longer and make you spill the answer yourself, instead of being the one to give the answer directly." Kraft was disappointed in himself, and Sebastia patted his shoulder.

"I'm sorry, but you really are confusing me with her. Perhaps this is because I am emitting a similar magical aura as my teacher? After all, she was the one to have taught. I assume you two must be acquaintances of the Scholar of the West? I regretfully inform you that my teacher has long since passed away." The cloaked figure bowed his head but did not remove his cloak away.

"Oh? You want to continue with the game, is it? Or is it you are afraid the other two scholars will be listening in? Either way fine by me." Kraft smiled, as this meant his fun wasn't over yet. He took a piece of inscription out and threw it up the sky. The inscription shone for a moment and suddenly broke into blackish, dull looking dust before it disappeared into nothingness.

"What kind of magic is that?!" The cloaked figure felt a calming silence overtaking his presence and felt intrigued at the disappearing dust but later returned his attention to Kraft.

"Hmm? So? What do you want to do now? You can reveal your identity now. I've already blocked all possible eavesdropping in the area." Kraft explained as he removed his own disguise right in front of her by moving his hand over his face and later folded his arms.

"I... I...must insist that you are really mistaking me for someone else. Besides, you should have noticed I am a guy! Not a female like the Scholar of the West." The cloaked figure felt conflicted if he should believe the person right in front of him.

"Guess, it's better to bring someone in to verify. That should be the most optimal way of solving this impasse." Sebastia suggested to Kraft, and he nodded his head. With a snap, a portal opened, and Kraft grabbed someone's shoulder inside the portal before he yanked out his hand.

"Oooof! Kraft?! What are you doing?! Can't you see I am busy arranging the intelligence that those farm rats collected?!" Gold barked with frustration at Kraft. That was when the cloaked figure froze once more, but this time it was with bewilderment as he found the notion inconceivable. (Kraft was loving that body language of the cloaked figure a hell lot.)

"You can soon return to that boring stuff. Right now, we are in one of the top secret research facilities of the Demon Rats." Kraft explained with a sly smile.

"In the Capital?" Gold asked innocently as he glanced the hall full of experiments and Kraft could see the cloaked figure's hands trembling full of fear, anxiety and...delight.

"Yeap, and apparently, they captured this person making 'him' do all the research for them. I believe 'he' is responsible for all the Steam Tech and other stuff that the Demon Rats have access to right now."

"...I was just following orders. I could not deny...the masters....or they would punish me. And those dear to me." The cloaked figure replied with a shaky tone and Gold sighed.

"Don't worry. I understand, the North and South scholars will pay for their crimes some way or another." Gold stated confidently and tapped on both of the cloaked figure's shoulders. "Do not let the guilt swallow you. Instead, use that guilt to move you forward."

"Sounds very familiar..." The cloaked figure whispered in a soft enchanting tone.

"Hahaha! It's from a dear friend. A very, very dear friend." Gold smiled gently.

"Does that friend matter a lot to you?" The cloaked figure asked, and Gold furrowed his eyebrows. A question posed with an intent to intrude his privacy? Gold assumed that the cloaked figure right in front of him just needed some moral support to spill his secrets out to Kraft. (Gold probably knew Kraft would like to do it the hard way but decided to give the cloaked figure a chance.)

"AHhhh! My bad, I forgot to introduce you to our dear friend. He said he was once a student of the Scholar of the West!" Kraft immediately interjected.

"Oh?! Really?!" Gold's eyes and brows suddenly turned very hostile, and he held onto the other's shoulders a little longer and with slightly more force.

"Which region? She has so many students that I don't remember them all." He knew that the Scholar of the West never had taken an apprentice at all. She was always busy and kept saying that there would never be a time to do that even in the future. Either the cloaked figure was fake, or there was more than met the eye.

"Western Region, Town Copo. The soft cream bread there was delicious." The cloaked figure replied, and suddenly Gold's eyes turned from aggressive to the most delicate expression he ever had. That sentence had struck him into memory lane. The one which he had the most profound impression of and no one else should know. (Until now by our dear little sneaky Kraft. (or old Kraft))

"Ah...I remember how there was this one postman at Town Copo who was always an asshole. He once dropped his whole bag of parcels on to me." Gold said, and cloaked figure kept quiet for a while before he uttered two more words.

"El Phi-"

"- Konguru." Gold immediately turned the tap on the shoulders into a hug and grabbed the cloaked figure extremely hard. The three words were part of a magical passcode each other used to send encrypted letters to each other. No one, even Gold's closest aide, knew the passcode.

Sebastia and Kraft both smiled widely at the reunion of the two Scholars. (Unsurprisingly Kraft had waited for his moment to capture it as photo of Gold hugging the Scholar of the West.)

"Weslie. I missed you so much. Way too much. I've thought I had lost you forever!"

"So have I...so have I." The cloaked figure's voice turned into a female one as she returned the hug. She could feel some tears dropping on to her cloak.

When they released themselves from a long embrace, Gold attempted to remove the cloak, but Weslie immediately backed off, not wanting him to do that.

"Why? What is wrong?" Gold could not understand why she did not wish to reveal her face.

"...I did not survive the attack at the Tower of Compass. The North and South Scholars...they used that forbidden magic to resurrect me. ... I am not who I was anymore." Weslie said.

"They used the Necromancy ritual infused with Demonic bones?!" Gold's fury for the North and South doubled instantly. Weslie nodded reluctantly, but Gold insisted on looking at her once more.

"Appearance is superficial. I care about you more than –"

"Then can you care about this?!" Weslie immediately released her cloak and the people around them finally understood why she was so afraid to show her true appearance.

The upper right quadrant of her face was all bones and muscles with no skin at all, revealing her eye sockets. There was also a magical mark there which Gold assumed that was how the Scholars of the North and South had managed to keep her in check. (if not she would had teleported away long time ago.)

Upon their shock, Weslie quickly pulled forth her cloak, but Gold stepped in and stopped her. "Don't! I feel terrible at the sympathetic looks I get from all of you! You do not understand at all! The shame that

comes with this accursed mark and being unable to do anything than to crave for death every day!" Weslie shouted and Gold could feel a sharp pain in her words.

"Then why don't you kill yourself?" Sebastia questioned her directly, and suddenly Weslie stopped her tantrum and cried.

"I tried...I tried to hang myself...I tried to cut my wrist. Even an explosion spell! There was nothing which worked. Given time I would always revive, looking even worse than before. After I refused to work, they promised me to tell me more about this curse, even a way to remove it... They just did so, to see me dive into the abyss of despair even more." Weslie suddenly broke down.

"It's a pact. The North and South scholars knew that she would commit suicide, so they tied her to a demon-." Gold attempting to explain the forbidden spell from memory.

"Not just one...demon." Weslie interjected with a depressed look. "Two of them."

"The Burning Lion and the Water Snake Demon?" Kraft asked, and she nodded her head. "Is that why you said no matter what, we would not win?"

"Yes... the demons have been informed that my life has been bound to theirs. They know that if they die, I will die too." Weslie stated. "So even before their transformation, they started to fight till the end against anyone to ensure that they do not die. Eventually, the scholars started using them as a nice way to execute troublesome individuals or 'heroes' that they deem as a threat."

"But didn't the reports say that the Burning Lion and Water Snake Demon were fighting each other? Aren't they fighting for the large Litoride Gem in the oasis?" Gold asked, but Weslie shook her head.

"That's a false rumour started by the Demon Rats. To make the resistance think that they could rely on the demons to make more trouble for the Demon Rats. In the end, it's a trap for them. They all think that by going there, they can earn an ally, but all that awaits them there is death." Weslie replied.

"So the only way to free you from the curse would be to kill both demons?" Sebastia asked again, and with a frightened look on her eyes, she nodded her head slightly.

"No, we cannot do that. The curse will be lifted, and she will die because of it." Gold answered Sebastia and Weslie pulled his hands.

"If they can do that, let me. Please, let me go. To have seen you once more...to know you have comrades willing to fight against the Demon Rats...I am happy enough." Weslie interjected with a guilty smile and tears on her face, but Gold could clearly see she did not really want to die.

"I do not want to be under their commands any more too, but that does not mean I cannot fight back."

Weslie murmured another set of magical words and the illusion on the wall broke again, and it showed a ton of new experimental weapons. "I've been working secretly behind their backs and used their resources to create these. I only hope your friend's anti-eavesdropping spell still works or they will notice all of this."

"You have my guarantee, my spell still works." Kraft bowed and realised that the Scholar of the West was very well versed with mechanics as well as spells. Gold later boasted to him that she was more than just gifted. Some people even dubbed her the rare once in a millennium kind of genius.

"If you take some of these, it will definitely improve your chances of winning against the demons." Weslie offered, but that was when Kraft shook his head.

"We do not need those at all," Kraft replied, and Sebastia chuckled at his response.

"What? What...are you talking about?" Weslie became even more confused as Gold seemed extremely confident about his comrade too.

"Gold. You did well. Really well for this particular series of operations. I am glad Jin managed to recruit you." Kraft said as he walked towards Gold to give him a pat on the shoulders.

"So! As a present or should I say a reward for your services, I will be handling those two pets so you can save your girl. As for you, darling, your hidden resistance is remarkable. You deemed more than worthy of being under the service of my master" Kraft declared proudly.

"Kraft...you... terrible, glorious bastard." Gold immediately understood the underlying meaning to that as he immediately bowed with gratefulness.

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Chapter 493 East Meets Wes

"What are you talking about?" Weslie asked in a panicked tone. "Are you crazy? Haven't I established the fact that they could not be defeated???"

"Oh! No worries, Weslie. Trust him, he can defeat them in a blink of an eye. Besides, our master, who was way weaker than him, managed to defeat Keyrin and Spiky." Gold answered, and Weslie was extremely confused.

"Your Master? Defeated the Thunder Ram Demon and the Altered Transforming Spider Demon?! What is happening?" Weslie questioned, but Kraft interrupted them.

"Gold, you know how to do that necromancy whatever shit ritual, right? You probably will have to redo it since those demons are going to die soon." Kraft as he stretched a little before he asked if Sebastia was ready. When the latter nodded, Gold asked Weslie to teleport the two of his comrades.

"No! I am not going to, even though I have an obligation to do so!" Weslie refused, and Kraft sighed.

"We do not have much time. Seems like Jin is stuck with something major and it's best to take her away before more nuisances arrive. My anti eavesdropping inscription does not last that long, it's a cheap one. You want to ask your girlfriend to hurry it up?" Kraft asked, and suddenly both scholars' faces turned red.

"She is not my girlfriend!"

"He is not my boyfriend!"

The two disagreed with Kraft simultaneously. They felt embarrassed, and it made the other two laugh together while averting away from each other's gaze.

"Look at you two! Already so synchronised! Just like an old married couple! Alright, just teleport me, and you two can enjoy your catch up chat. Gold don't forget to take her collection with you afterwards." Kraft teased them before getting serious.

"Please teleport me as well." Sebastia did not wish to remain as the third wheel in the following conversation.

Gold scratched his head as he glanced at Weslie's eyes and later looked away immediately. And then he turned back and asked her to trust them. "I assure you that they will be alright. They can put things right. Soon you will be out of this accursed loop."

Gold's constant pleading drove Weslie into a dilemma. She initially wanted things to end for her because there was nothing more than suffering. However, long after she had already accepted her fate, she was suddenly given the opportunity to finally rest... But now she hesitated.

Especially because Gold, the one Weslie lost all chances to be reunited with, was in front of her and somehow he did not mind her to die. Still, that trickster looking guy did command Gold to recreate a necromancy ritual. Why was Gold that desperate to remove her? She could not understand a single bit. And he was so confident that things would go alright.

Still, did she really wish to be bonded to Gold for the rest of her life? Hell yeah. He had been nothing less of a gentleman, a loveable attitude with an inquisitive outlook. To her, she did not mind going through the river of death again just for him. But still, did Gold feel the same for her?

Would she become a burden to Gold?

As much as Weslie wanted to be with him, she did not know whether this was the effect of isolation or if these were her true feelings.

Sometimes, the Scholar of the West felt that Gold was merely accommodating her, and he admitted once that he did not do much to get her attention, as if implying that he treated her as just a friend.

"...Fine. But I have a lot of questions, and you better be prepared to answer them! I am not willing to die for good just yet!" Weslie said as she cast a teleportation spell on both of them and left Gold and Weslie alone. (But not before Kraft released another anti eavesdropping inscription in the area.)

"What do you wish to know?" Gold dragged two chairs in front of them and Weslie sat down.

"You can start by telling me how you got involved with those people," Weslie demanded, and Gold started recounting their encounter with Jin and what followed after. (He had been very apt at explaining this since more and more people kept asking him the very same question. At this rate, he could have written a bible on his lord and saviour, the System.)

"Ahhh finally out of the awkward situation," Kraft spoke as he took out his trusty No Mercy revolver. His mouth turned into a wicked grin. He could not help it since every time he took out this weapon, a blood bath was imminent.

"They have too many things to sort out. Our fight may not give them enough time for that. Both of them obviously want each other at the same time, but seem to believe that they both are just treating each other as friends." Sebastia sighed.

"Scholars are a weird bunch of people. They should be wise, yet in some ways, they are no more mature than our 'young' Master." Kraft said as he heard the flowing of water and cracking of fire in the distance.

"Anyways, go enjoy some exercise first. Once you have had enough, I will enter the fray. Otherwise, it will all be over too soon."

"Thank you, Bellator Kraft. Please do give me your thoughts on my techniques as well." Sebastia bowed formerfully as the snake's head emerged from the snowy ground.

"Sure, why not. It will buy those clumsy scholars some time to sort their feelings. But remember. After I intervene, please keep whatever you see to yourself. I've not revealed my true strength to Jin yet. Just keep it as a surprise for now." Kraft said, and Sebastia promised.

"Same goes to you System. I'm looking forward to Jin's shocked face, so don't you dare spoil my fun!" Sebastia added as she cracked her knuckles while the Burning Lion was seen charging from afar.

"Well, what are you waiting for? Get working! Mr Fox does not have all day!" Kraft sniggered as the Water Snake Demon went forth towards Sebastia immediately.

"So...you were killed and resurrected?" Weslie did not expect Gold to act so rashly which he eventually admitted his own mistakes.

"Well... technically no. At least not at that point in time. Please keep it to yourself, but unlike Grey, Brown, Yellow or the rest of them, I submitted to Jin, when he promised me that I would see all of them again, just by letting myself hit by his metal box (phone)."

"Sigh. But can you fully blame me? Master Jin, or more accurately his hidden power, is an anomaly, that none could have foreseen. His subordinate Zeru had broken into one of our hideouts and stolen some freshly acquired Living Armour Plates seeds.

"We had to pay a hefty price to get them in the first place and could have used the money to fund our operations for months... or at least prevent them from falling into the wrong hands. But hey! As you can see I am still alright! Fine and dandy and I achieved the impossible and the envy of all the past Scholars." Gold said with a slightly arrogant, filthy tone which made Weslie laughed.

"Immortality," Weslie said with a smile despite her cloak hiding her eyes.

"With conditions!" Gold smiled widely before he again tried to lower her cloak down. "Don't worry. It's just the two of us here. " Her peaceful, delicate eyes along with that sweet looking mouth was a sight for sore eyes as Gold curled her hair behind the right ear where the flesh and bones were apparent.

Weslie retracted her head a little and Gold apologised, thinking that without the skin, touching the muscle would have hurt her, but she shook her head furiously. After multiple suicide attempts, she felt very little at all.

"...I want you to join us. To see the world we live in and many more. To meet Jin and all those whose life your spell has saved. My Master has even granted us a mansion with a farm in front of it, tended by all of us. You could finally live out the simple life a lot of people dream about." Gold said, but Weslie could see that he was struggling to say something out. It was not until he took a deep breath.

"...I ...I missed you. I really did. Not a day went by where I did not regret that I was unable to protect you." Gold confessed while looking straight into her eyes.

"I always regret not able to say it as I grabbed onto your nearly cold corpse as we fled away from the Compass Tower...I promise I will absolutely slaughter the North and South Scholars for defiling your corpse." Gold then realised he might have been a little too emotional as he saw her eyes were flooded with tears. He remembered how West used her last breath to teleport Gold even further away from the scene as he had already used the last of his mana to fight against the mutiny.

"As I thought, that my life was over at the fight, my last thought was hoping you would be safe. When I awoke once more, I was looking forward to meet you again... but then I saw what they did to me. What they forced me to do since then..." Weslie felt those nightmarish memories were ever recurring.

"Every time I created a new weapon, I wished that none of them would be used against you. Each and every day, my heart ached, and it grew numb by the consistent demands of North and South. I am sorry. I am so sorry! I tried to undermine them. I really tried." Tears flowed like an unending river and Gold attempted to come closer and put his shoulder around her, but she took the initiative first.

"I will only get uglier, you know? Even if you manage to recreate that necromancy ritual! I may look worse! I might even be a different person than what you see now! You know the repercussions of re-resurrecting a dead person!" Weslie cried, and Gold sighed because it seemed like she did not remember whatever they discussed a while ago.

"So please, let me be yours. Not because I owed you. Not because of the guilt that I have. But because I really did like you. – No, I still do! Please let me be in your arms until the end of my life." Weslie wept.

Gold never thought that a logic driven lady like Weslie could fall into the traps of emotions and act way beyond reason. But he understood the fear...even though it was just a little. Since he too had experienced death. Not once nor twice but like a frequent traveller going through the customs. All he could do now was to comfort her until she experienced the System's resurrection herself.

"Scholar Gold, System has determined that Scholar Weslie won't require the necromancy ritual. Her soul has been tightly linked to the two Elder Demons due to various circumstances. System speculates that this was done to prevent the deterioration of her skills and abilities." The System suddenly informed Gold about it.

"Your rivals have used the highest quality of blood ritual normally performed by powerful demons. Scholar of the West, Weslie's fate is greatly intertwined with the two Elder Demons." System then provided the most optimal solution.

"To assure a perfect capture, both Elder Demons have to be killed simultaneously, or her soul may fracture."

"Roger that. Any relevant information from our cute malware Foxy?" Kraft overheard the conversation from the System Channel, and the System notified that there was nothing of note yet.

"Boring!" Kraft yawned on sight as Sebastia was working out furiously.

"Sebas, Girl! You heard the System. Just weaken, I will kill them together. Enough with the warm up, time to show off your skills, before I finish it."

"Yes, Bellator Kraft!" Sebastia smiled as she performed her Demonic Minotaur Martial Arts, Drawing the Full Moon, Dividing the Watermelon, and cutting the Water Snake's tail away despite the watery illusion it used. The Burning Lion had already received damage through its innards with her 'Noodles that Skips The Mouth and into Stomach' punch.

"Okay, that is good enough." Kraft sneered as he aimed at his No Mercy at the two Elder Demons.

Suddenly, Weslie felt a strange feeling coursing through her whole body. She could feel her circulation system begin to fail her. Her breathing was getting worse along with it. "Gold!" Her eyes were trembling with even more tears as Gold held onto her.

Even though he knew that she was going to be resurrected again, Gold could not help but tear at the sight of it. "Shhh Shhh...I am at your side. Do not worry, Weslie. I am here. I am here for you. I am not going anywhere. It's just like a short dream. And once you wake up, I will still be by your side."

Weslie tried her best to cling on to Gold, but her strength was waning by the second, and she disliked that feeling a lot. For the second time in her life, she was fading away from her lover.

"At the very least...I finally confessed my feelings for him. This time he is here for me..." She thought to herself as she could see Gold sweet talking her as if encouraging her that everything will go just fine.

"You idiot. Thank you for giving me hope..." Weslie smiled weakly as she closed her eyes in peace and soon her flesh disintegrated, leaving just her cloaked robe and dust. However, within that robe, Gold could feel something heavy and went to dig into the robe.

What he found was the Litoride Gem that the Elder Demon Burning Lion and Water Snake had treasured. "Hahah, those North, South bastards...I know you were bastards. But to go the extra mile... to defile my gift to my love and use it the catalyst for her life. I am – We will never forgive you."

"But first...System suggests that Scholar Gold welcome his lover at Werejackal's home instance. System has placed her in your bed. A kiss will be sufficient to wake her up." The System notified before it automatically teleported Gold back with all the items in that basement hall.

"Damn System. I didn't know you were such a romantic."

Chapter 494 New Dungeon Concep

Back in the Dungeon Maker Jin would have preferred to work on his idea for a new dungeon. However, he realised that there were a number of issues that he shouldn't be delaying. One of such problems concerned the Farming World.

There were many updates on his minions' scouting missions, but the most intriguing thing was the reports about his newest addition of monster force - human slaves.

Jin asked the System to show him a live feed where regrettable his biggest worry turned out to be true. Among the slaves, hundreds of them were ordinary humans. It was a somewhat unsettling feeling which Jin should ironically be accustomed by now.

The dungeon supplier had already foreseen that one day they would inevitably capture some humans, but it was still bizarre acknowledging that he now literally owned the lives of hundreds of them, who were supposed to be equal to him given their country's laws.

It was true that amongst his monsters there were those with human like appearances, like Ke Mi, Niu Lang and of course the werebeasts. Yet at least in his subconscious, he could justify that Ke Mi was multiple centuries old, which made it a bit hard to think of her as a human, and Nie Lang was given to him by the System.

The werebeasts had initially been human, but Jin could not help but associate them as a werebeast, a different species, though if he was honest, he might admit that it was just his conscience trying to pacify itself.

And then there were the Savants, which Kraft had 'gifted' Jin to help and protect him. They had always been a grey area. Even though their bodies were technically robots, they still possessed their human memories. Were they really that different from humans?

Jin kept silent for a while as he was sorting his thoughts.

"Not the most ideal form of monsters but they are still regarded as resources." The System stated as sort of console for Jin who seemed to be deeply rooted in thought.

"... yeah, I guess humans are monsters in the eyes of other species..." Jin sighed and finally accepted the fact that the System could capture humans too. Just mulling his brain was not going to solve this problem.

Even if he released them back to the farming world, would they want to return back as slaves again? Should Jin give a choice for them to stay? And if he does that, would that make him biased against other monsters who were forced to stay under his command?

That was especially true when the humanoid species like the orcs and goblins too viewed the humans as monsters too. However, he was curious why slaughtering the Ruby Rats did not yield him any of the cultivators or even the demon exorcist trainees, and that was where the System stepped in to reason with him.

"It is not because they have resurrective powers, the System had programmed your weapons and powers such that they will not resurrect anybody from this Earth. Even if you use your monsters, they will not be able to capture anybody from this place." The System explained which made Jin even more curious.

"Treat it as a programming syntax. It will create a paradoxical loop or a potential bug in the system commands. System had performed simulations before and had deduced it was not worth the problem to catch humans from this particular Earth."

"However, humans from other worlds were of a different matter. Though they may look like humans, their DNA syntax varied greatly from the ones in this Earth, allowing the System to capture them. So technically speaking, those humans that you obtained were of irregularity and can be considered as out of the norm from your 'standard or average range' of homo sapiens." The System explained, and Jin took the time to digest the information.

Jin eventually accepted the information the System had given and believed it for now until he has further concrete evidence of its word. Still, the dungeon supplier would meet with them later and decide on his future course of action. He took another look at the reviews and was delighted to find a lot of construction materials were among them. (All thanks to the hundreds of dead Demon Rats.)

"That will definitely reduce the cost of my new idea."

The System briefly recounted the efficiency of Wolte, the Silver Mage and Dark Templars, and also informed that they had just captured the last two of the Elder Demons that Gold required Jin for the parts of the Living Armour plates were captured.

"What?! Who captured the Burning Lion Demon and Water Snake Demon?"

"Who else but yours truly?" Kraft appeared and removed his coat. "Gosh, that place was freezing cold. Any longer in there and I'd have gotten frostbite."

"Why did you do that?" Jin queried. "You normally won't lift a finger for this kind of things."

"Why you hurt me, Master! I do a good deed, and everyone treats me like I've gone crazy." Kraft dramatically played the part of a wronged samaritan. Jin just watched the theatrics without entertaining him, patiently waiting for Kraft to get serious again.

"Tssk, you are no fun. And here I brought a new present for you, one I know you will love. Our 'buy two get three' deal included a Scholar from the Farming World and guess what? She is rather adept in regards to Steam Tech!"

"North or South Scholar?" Jin was surprised at this revelation.

"None of them. You have one more try. Maybe third time's the charm." Kraft conjured two ceramic plates with 'X' on it, emphasising that Jin was wrong while also asking the penguins for some warm food and a hot Blue Mountain coffee via the Dungeon Maker.

"A new Scholar? But I remember Gold telling us that the selection is still far away. There should only be four Scholars at a time, and West was killed according to him."

"Nah, still wrong. Well, can't fully blame you for getting wrong information with Gold not knowing any better. We found the Scholar of the West. Turns out that North and South turned her into an undead by binding her soul to the two Elder Demons."

"Oh?" Jin quickly used the Dungeon Maker to check on the stats of the Scholar of the West. "Weslie, huh..." Jin turned his console screen to Gold's home instance to have a look at the new Scholar and marvelled at how affectionate Gold was treating her.

"Hooooohhh. Is this why you've been so cooperative suddenly? Didn't know you supported their relationship so much that you were willing to kill those demons for her." (Was this old fox, a softie after all?)

"Hahah! Just doing a service for a colleague. Besides, we are going to turn her into our spy very soon just like we did with Ayse." Kraft explained how she was the creator of the Steam Tech and all other technology that the Demon Rats were using.

"Wow, given her abilities, she will be instrumental in the future. Honestly, she sounds much more like a Scholar compared to Gold." Jin stated bluntly, and Kraft laughed hysterically.

"Oh, that's a good one. A good burn. Come to think of it, did Gold ever tell us what speciality he had." Kraft asked 'innocently' before he thanked the penguins for bringing the food to him.

"I swear if Gold tells us it's martial arts, I will make him retire and focus just on farming. Hmm, but that's already pretty much what he is doing most of the time, anyway." Jin said before he briefly analysed the four Elder Demons in the Dungeon Maker.

"Should probably be something more general like farming. I guess in the Farming World, this makes him very valuable. Or else, how would he know about the living armour plates."

"Speaking of them, did you know that the Elder Demons required for the upgrade were pretty much a pet project by the Scholar of the West?" Kraft fanned the flames as he sipped his coffee slowly.

"Ehhhh??? Don't tell me that he was really missing her so much that he manipulated me into getting her pets... I am so going to punish him if that's the case." Jin recalled how terrible the fight was with Keyrin and not to mention that troublesome spider which apparently was called Spiky according to the System's revised entry.

"Punishment? That sounds right my alley. Would love to see the reaction on Weslie's face when you tell him."

"You sick bastard," Jin said as he stole a piece of tonkatsu from his plate.

"Always was and always will be." Kraft agreed as he poured some of this coffee into his Tonkatsu curry rice making Jin nearly puke out the cutlet he was chewing on. "What? Coffee Curry? Never heard of it? Want to give some a try?" Kraft asked with a mischievous grin.

"No thanks...I'd rather trust Lynn than your version." Jin shook his head furiously, which turned out to be a mistake. With a snap of his fingers, Evon appeared jumping into Jin's face and temporarily disabling him. (Jin probably felt that if he struggled more, Evon would use a stronger anaesthetic to numb him.)

Not missing the chance Kraft used his chopsticks to shoot another cutlet directly into Jin's surprised open mouth and another one in Evon's direction as a reward for playing along. Unable to prevent it, Jin swallowed it down. It tasted better than expected, but he wouldn't admit that to Kraft after what he did.

Knowing better than to try and argue with Kraft he gave a deadpan stare and subsequently asked the System for details about his two Sub System Users.

"They returned back to the terrace house not too long ago. One is in the bathroom while the other is already resting on their bed."

"Want to see some steamy action?" Kraft teased, and Jin only gave him a death stare back in return.

"Good. Looks like you still have some moral inclination and haven't been infected by this perverted old fox yet." Yun suddenly appeared right behind Kraft and pulled his ear.

"Ow ow ow! That's painful, Yun!" Kraft complained, but Yun was not letting go at all. Apparently, she had infused herself with a cultivation that ...was good at pinching. It was some type of crab cultivation though Jin was unable to clearly identify it as the silhouette was only briefly revealed.

"The girls are my responsibility. Try anything funny, and you two will have to answer to me." Yun warned before performing the very same disappearing act which most bellators nowadays did.

"I will get the information from them some other day. Looks like everyone had a rough day." Jin sighed, remembering he had not slept for a long time already. However, it was more vital to complete the new idea as soon as possible, so his sleep would have to wait a bit.

"So what are you going to do?" Kraft asked with more seriousness as he continued with his food.

"A Dungeon Cave in the Goblin World."

"That's a surprise. Why not putting a store there?" Kraft asked as he found it intriguing.

"Nah, it feels too unnatural to place a dungeon supplier store there. But! That does not mean I cannot take money from them in other ways. It will be a store but not exactly a store." Jin said as he pitched his idea to Kraft and the System.

First things first, Jin was going to place it at the borders between the orcs and goblins. Right smack at the middle. Then he would be using Goblin King Sol and Orc King Frost Echo to spread the news about the discovery of the new dungeon he made.

It was going to be exactly like the traditionally styled dungeon where a party of four would enter the dungeon and kill monsters. Upon killing the monsters and surviving the traps in the dungeon, there would be a chest at the end of each dungeon floor. Not only that, clearing a level will reveal a staircase down to even more troublesome foes.

Loot wise? The System had noted that the Demon Rats turned items were an overall boon. A lot of them were growable seeds, and Werejackal Grey had identified them as weapon plants and armour plants which could be grown within their home instance or the Floating Agriculture Sector in the Dungeon City Fortress.

With a bit of DNA manipulation, the armour and weapon plants could produce a significant variation of loot for the Goblin and Orcs to equip. That way, the Orcs would have a reason to fight while attempting to keep peace with the goblins.

How would they do that?

Jin had ensured that the party of four would need at least a surviving goblins and an orc or else they would be rejected out of the room. And because the Dungeon Cave was still a dimensional instance, any party that lost one party member could be kicked out of the Dungeon Cave though Jin was still theory crafting and changes would be made along the way.

"But of course, not during a fight. That would be stupid. The party will be teleported after they finished their room back to an Altar in front of the cave. And with their treasure chest too. Depending on how far they made it, they will get only a fraction of the prizes, but we want to motivate them to try again after all."

He believed that would at least force them to comply watching each other's back. However, Jin understood that this was just an ideal scenario, and it was questionable how successful it would be.

So, in order to establish a precedent and also show off such trust was possible, Jin was going to ask the Goblin King and Orc King to come together, hoping them to participate the very first dungeon crawl.

While it could prove dangerous to any kings, the two were already under the protection of the System so even if they somehow died, they could simply be resurrected. In fact, Jin predicted that it would deepen their bond and may prove to be the start for a healthy Goblin-Orc relationship.

"Ok, that covers the rewards part, but you haven't told us how exactly you will profit from this." Kraft was curious how it was going to work.

"Nothing in this world is free. I plan to add an Altar of some sort right in front of the Dungeon Cave. It will provide them with the 'blessing of safe return' in exchange for something...which I had yet to work the kinks out."

"Perhaps an offering of at least forty silvers. And without it, they won't be allowed entry into the dungeon entrance. I think we can later ask for a higher price, for those who are able to conquer the first five floors." Jin answered as he began to visualise the whole concept, and Kraft nodded his head.

"Sounds good, but just putting weapons and armours inside as rewards will limit your customer base. You should add other things like fruits, vegetables and stuff like that." Kraft replied.

"After a war, most of the Orcs and Goblins won't travel to the end of their borders for some adventure. They require money to buy food. Therefore, we should give them what they crave. Let's also insert junk like stuff we get from the Demon Rats to make it rarer for tastier food materials to appear." Kraft suggested capitalising on the current situation.

"We can use a system similar to how pachinko works. We 'give' them stuff they won't need in the dungeon as their rewards and repurchase it posing as merchants outside the cave. It will make them think: 'Hey! It's worth it to enter the dungeons!'" Kraft added, and Jin's eyes opened up.

"A fake self driven economy....one that benefits us and not them," Jin whispered to himself.

"Well, technically you can make it benefit them, but that can come later! You need the money, right? Anyway, you will appear more magnanimous, if you benefit them later down the line, instead of giving them everything up front." Kraft continued his ramblings as he worked his brain juice.

"And we can also charge portal services to controlled town areas. Heck, we can even charge them by providing some 'services'. If we reward them with a seed of some food and use 'magic' to make it grow, they can get it cheaper than buying it upfront. We can earn back our 'losses' know." Kraft spoke slyly but said all these were just ideas for his master to play with which Jin got even more interested.

"I see, I see... I will get right to it!" Jin sounded very motivated as he fired up his Dungeon Maker to see if it was feasible. All the sudden brainstorming made Jin feel that this particular Dungeon Cave concept he created could be the next big thing in the Goblin World. All he need to do was to play it right. There would be some manipulation in the back end with the two kings and Jin would need the aid of Qiu Yue to do so.

"Oh and eh make the entrance fee cheaper. A traveller pays like a silver for like 5 days of rest in an inn." Kraft snorted when he remembered Jin wanted to charge 40 silvers for it, there would literally be no one coming at all to venture if the price was that exorbitant. Economy in the Goblin World does not work the same as the Earth his master was staying in.

"Then, I guess I really need to make use of the Goblins that Qiu Yue had contracted for more information." Jin was thinking of the ministers especially the one versed in economics to advise on some things as well as asking the Deep Ones to start putting some value on the items he wished to place in the dungeon chests.

"Looks like another sleepless night!" Jin smiled to himself as he too called for a Blue Mountain coffee via the penguins.

Chapter 495 Charity Funding

While most of the site was cordoned off by the Police, Dungeons and Panda was the only shop that was still operating in Tiangong Shopping District, and a high number of customers came in to share their sympathies on the day after the incident.

Many of those regular customers petitioned to Jin to set up a fund for the victims, and since it was additional money for their reconstruction, he accepted graciously. However, as shrewd a businessman as he was, Jin did take advantage of the situation and their kindness (to a certain extent.)

First, he asked the System to create an impromptu page within the Pandemonium app similar to a Gofundme account in the West. The icon for it within the Pandemonium was shaped as Panda wearing a construction cap holding onto a donation box. The System made sure to create the most innocent looking pair of eyes for the Panda to attract even more sympathy from the crowd.

On the very top of the page, it stated that 15% of every purchase made through the site, regardless if it was from dungeons, food or items, would be used for the reconstruction efforts of the Tiangong Shopping District.

Alternatively, they could choose to put it into a donation fund for the residents and store owners that were affected by the triad attack. After their first purchase, they would get a physical Donator Panda

badge from Yun which they could wear showing off that they had helped out as well as an electronic one to show their contributions to everyone.

To spread the news, Jin conducted a brief Q&A session together with Kiyu where he also promised that all the dealings for the funds would be transparent for all to see and a breakdown of the funds received would also be reported in real time. The customers were surprised that Jin was willing to be so open about it and they poured in their support significantly, some were even from overseas which Jin had no idea how.

Qiu Yue's ex superior Yi San who happened to pop by as part of the Urban Development Ministry to assess the destruction also took the time to pay them a courtesy call. Qiu Yue informed the older woman that Jin was currently busy and they spent some time with small before she introduced Jin to Yi San.

"You have a troublesome headache ahead of you." Yi San said after exchanging some pleasantries. Though she wasn't part of the department of the Urban Development Ministry that dealt with this, she was called down to assess the damage as a visiting consultant since Yi San was involved in redeveloping this particular region of Tiangong District previously. Yet, with one look, she knew enough to know it's a major trouble.

"Yeah, I am doing what I can to get things going as soon as possible, especially considering this is supposed to be the time of the year where shops should be earning the most money. It is definitely a blow to all of us." Jin lamented.

"I'm sure the banks definitely make it hard for you to lend some money and only do so by devaluing the land here based on its past history. I also doubt money you can receive that way will be sufficient unless you get it from external sources." Yi San remarked, and Jin understood what that meant.

The quickest and 'safest' way to get the money would be to turn to the Triads and people with influence like Hou Fei, his Panda Remnant that had a decent position in the Royal Zodiac Snake Clan or Yang Ling, the Tiger Princess.

Perhaps, Jin could try to coerce Grandma Yuan into giving him a bit of money, maybe as some sort of development fund from JODE since she was going to create a branch here in Shenzhen using his dungeon supplier store.

However, given his prior history with her, he could already foresee Grandma Yuan yapping away with her constant nagging turning this into a Trial he would have to overcome by himself.

"You are not wrong, Old Birdy is certainly that type of person. She'd rather see you suffer and wring in pain-" Kraft commented in the System Channel before hearing a loud thump sound in the background.

"Do not listen to him, Jin! You've done a good deed and have taken in her former disciples. It won't hurt to ask her." Yun replied and surprisingly sided with her old instructor.

Yi San then gave Jin a few additional pieces of advice and her contact number if needed help in the redevelopment portion. She figured she could try and squeeze a bit of funds to help 'redecorating' the place since the district was also slated for major reworks previously.

"Ehh...let's just say I have someone in mind. If I contract a private construction company to rework the stuff and send you the bill, will you ever consider that? Perhaps pay the necessary reworks?" Jin tried his luck since he knew he should be able to match whatever criteria they needed to meet with the help of the System. Every bit of cash helps, even if it was obtained by somewhat cheating the government funds.

"I am not exactly sure, but I can check it out for you. The most, I can repay you a given amount. Let me check if I can increase the funding at my side." Yi San as she bid Jin and Qiu Yue goodbye.

"Thank you, Senior, for helping me a lot. I surely owe you one." Qiu Yue bowed as she walked her out to the front door.

"No need. I received an anonymous donation right around the time that leecher went missing and you transferred jobs." Yi San replied with a cunning smile. "Take this as a repayment of the favour as well as the revenge taken."

"But I did not do anything!" Qiu Yue tried to counter, but Yi San placed a finger at her mouth.

"I totally agree with you. It must have been just a lucky coincidence." Yi San winked and left the area.

"Kraft." Qiu Yue rolled her eyes, and she called out his name via the System Channel only to get an innocent bird like whistle before he disappeared into nonexistence as always.

Later in the day, Jin met up with Xiong Da and Grandma Yuan to finalise the development lease deal of Tiangong Shopping District. Just as expected, Grandma Yuan decided not to render any help to Jin when he hinted about it as subtlety as he could.

"I expect you to pay the full amount just as agreed... however, we can arrange a delay for the remaining payment due in half a years time. Is that agreeable?" Grandma Yuan suggested, and the System immediately recalculated the expenses at lightning speed.

"According to System's calculation, User should have the budget to begin basic reconstruction with this delay." The System stated before it paused for a while. "Should the User promise to complete a Dungeon Takeover for at least one Rank 80 Dungeon Run in the Dungeon World by the end of December, System will consider releasing the funds for operating cost of a month for the furnishing of the town."

Jin happily agreed to Grandma Yuan's proposal, and they concluded the finer details of the lease contract. "After you clear this hurdle, I will provide you with the necessary funds for the creation of JODE branch. Do your best." Grandma Yuan left a voice transmission to Jin before exiting the room.

With the legal documents for the lease agreement out of his way, Xiong Da remained in the client's meeting area and asked Jin for a moment of his time. He then wrote a cheque and placed it down on the table, slowly pushing it towards him. Jin saw the cheque and turned pale from the amount Xiong Da was offering.

"No. Xiong Da." Jin shook his head vigorously. He needed the money, but he could not accept such a massive amount of money from his most loyal customer.

"Ahhh! Don't hesitate to take it. Even if I don't use it, the money is just left rotting in the bank. Might as well let it do some decent work." Xiong Da smiled.

"This is too much. I cannot, Xiong Da. I already owe you so much for all the services you've provided by me. People are queuing up for you, dying to pay you just a fraction of this amount for you to agree to be their legal representative. Yet, I am using you like nobody's business!" Jin exclaimed, and Xiong Da laughed.

"And yet you still dare to say it so shamelessly right in front of me!!" Xiong Da continued to laugh before he was serious with the donation.

"Take it. This Shopping District had become one of my fondest memories. If not for you, I would neither be as strong nor as happy as I am currently. You did your part to save the district from the clutches of the evil triads. I can't just sit and watch you getting punished for something that was burdened upon you. "

"As a regular customer, I am sure you have the vision to make it rise like a phoenix from its ashes. Allow me to provide you with the means. Make it great, Jin. That is all I request! Then perhaps, I can collect that favour back from you by enjoying the dungeons first hand." Xiong Da insisted with glee on his face.

"Very well. But I am putting this in the Pandamonium Aid page so you can track the accountability of it!" Jin agreed, and Xiong Da approved such an action.

"With this amount of money, it will take some time for the cheque to be processed. The System is willing to forgo the previous condition and allow you to start remodelling the Tiangong Shopping District." The System said as Jin left his office with a heart unburdened.

"I am not a saint, nor am I a businessman who does not know how to repay his debts. I will use this money to refurbish the Shopping District, but I will also continue on with the plan for the Dungeon Cave. Like you said, we need to diversify a bit, and Kraft's suggestion was decent."

"By creating a sort of adventurer camp near the Dungeon Cave, we can take advantage of their economy in there to fuel our workhorses. In the future, I want us to be rich enough to be able to handle such an expense by ourselves." Jin made a promise to himself as he quietly teleported when he saw no CCTVs around.

Without wasting any more time, Jin had already asked Hou Fei for his help to contact a construction company to cordon the whole Tiangong Shopping District while blocking the entrance of the subway station.

There were too many onlookers such as high rise apartments around the district overseeing the rumbles and Jin needed a total enclosure or at least sufficient enough to block the view from most apartments for the dungeon supplier to do its magic.

The construction company was initially curious why they would put up only acoustic construction barriers without the start of any demolition, but a job was a job. The lead administrator tried to persuade Jin to take on their services, but he adamantly declined.

The dungeon supplier excused himself by stating that he did not have the money as off yet. Seeing how their potential client was penniless, they could only grumble for not telling them sooner the moment they received payment for the setting up of the barriers.

In the meantime, the Goblin King and Orc King had already sent out the announcements about the Dungeon Cave, a ruin appearing so suddenly right in the middle of both of their borders.

They both claimed in their royal decrees that it was the result of some hidden collaboration by both nations. This became the first successful case of cooperation ever since the inception of their mending relationship after the war.

"A small sized adventurer base camp has been set up near the Dungeon Cave! Our allies, the half masked humanoids have shared with us, that they had similar experiences with these caves, especially from where they came." The town criers spread the news throughout the Kingdoms.

"They require members of at least two different races to enter the cave after paying some tribute. Those who do not fulfil these criteria are rejected by the Dungeon Cave. Our glorious King and our friendly counterpart have agreed to band powers and money together and try to conquer the Dungeon Cave!"

The Orcs were very excited about this piece of news. Finally, they would have another way to vent their frustration for losing the previous war. If this could itch their crave for a good fight, and with their new King setting the example, they would gladly temporarily join forces with the goblins for the Dungeon Cave.

On the other hand, the goblins were interested in the Dungeon Cave primarily of the relics or items that were hidden inside. They knew that such dungeons would usually have treasures of great value. The goblins did not mind working the Orcs if it helps them to earn some extra cash.

"First few scouting runs indicate that the monsters are pegged to their dungeon floors and rewards are given after the monsters are cleared for that particular floor. A reward chest has magically appear filled with relics, weapons, armours and even fresh food stock." The town crier continued.

"Both the Kings believed that by running that dungeon, the lives of both goblins and orcs can potentially improve as a whole. The most important thing is that even after one ever gets defeated, you will not die!" The town crier said, and many of the orcs and goblins alike scoffed at the advertising part of the decree.

"More importantly, not only does one come out relatively unscathed depending on your progress, you still get a minor reward! A seemingly unlimited number of people could attempt the dungeon run at the same time." The town crier added, and many people despite a little sceptical about it, was equally excited by the thrills of earning treasure and weirdly enough, food. Both races also believed that since the Kings were leading them, it should be at least reliable enough to trust.

The news spread fast, and so did the number of adventurers who wished to try their luck with this new and exotic Dungeon Cave. Unknowingly to Jin, some of the humans who had stayed in the goblin towns had also begun to spread such news to their counterparts. (Including the human spies and their diplomats.)

"Gosh, it looks like I underestimated this world's crave for adventure and dungeon!" Jin exclaimed as he teleported to the site for the adventurer's base camp upon hearing the System's review of the situation.

Chapter 496 Adventurer Base Camp

The Dungeon Cave in the middle of the two borders had been conveniently placed by Jin near an abandoned town in the goblin's regions. He believed that if there were signs of development for the base camp, the abandoned buildings would soon fill up.

As of now the adventurer base camp was loaded with various makeshift tent stores that were at least dozens of metres away from the Dungeon Cave's entrance. Colourfully draped linen cloth roofs were used as shelters from the weather while the first merchants had laid out items varying from weapons, armour, accessories and even food.

Nearly all of these merchants if not all, were Jin's Orcs and Goblins that had been working on the construction of the fortress city. All chosen members had been confirmed to have a decent amount of experience in the ways of a merchant. However, for the orcs, they were obliged to wear a half mask to conceal their identity in case someone were to recognise them.

It was a sad price to pay, having been resurrected yet being unable to tell anyone about it. Should any of their friends or relatives come to visit the Dungeon Cave, the Orcs were forced to feign ignorance.

Nevertheless, Jin allowed them to control the prices of the wares they held, thereby helping them to reforge any bonds if they so chose. (As long as they earnt a profit at the end of the day.)

Jin wanted to see the progress of the market driven by buying and selling his own goods. Items retrieved from the dungeon by the adventurers would be purchased at a lower price and subsequently sold at a higher tagged price. And of course, not directly selling back to the said adventurers.

He already made the preparations so that there would be a black market merchant that would periodically come to buy off those goods that were sold by the adventurers for slightly more favourable rates than the merchants, to prevent any of his own merchants from stockpiling. (However, it would be mostly limited to weapons and armours).

This was because he knew there were a plethora of major underworld gangs in the various worlds that worked away from the law and would definitely try to take a piece of the Dungeon Cave's loot. (He learnt much from the Triads.)

So instead of allowing some other underworld gang to prosper, why not make use of this opportunity to create his own fake underworld gang? Some of the Orcs who heard about this idea immediately volunteered.

The System verified that those who did had underworld operational experiences, making them the best candidate to set up their own gang within the Dungeon Cave territory.

Jin already had a particular mischievous individual in mind to be in charge of them, one he could perfectly envision as a Bandit Leader without any trouble. (It would be a perfect reward for him helping

with the Elder Demons while simultaneously allow the bored Fox Fanatic to incite Chaos upon somebody else.)

On the surface, this was still seen as a giant cooperation project between the Goblins and the Orcs. The dungeon supplier had, therefore, asked both Kings to station their staunch defenders to ensure law and order were in place. Goblin King Sol sent Wyrstriker's father, Argent, the Spear General and Gladio, the Sword General to monitor the lands for at least the first few months of its inception. Meanwhile, Orc King Frost Echo, sent out Cross, the Orcs' Spymaster for the first month.

It had been months since the Goblins and Orcs had started traded items, slowly mending their relationship under the watchful eyes of Spymaster Cross and Dagger General Igni. This adventurer's base camp existence would be the best proof that both races could peacefully coexist and therefore, lots of steps were taken to ensure this would go right.

Even though Jin could have created two Dungeon Cave Entrances or perhaps even three to include the humans, that would just have been an easy way out for this world, and nothing would have improved. Qiu Yue had also strongly encouraged her boss to make them work together.

The Red Panda cultivator who had the two Kings under her control dipped her hands into this adventurer base camp by making the trade routes which she established between both races to create a checkpoint there.

For now, they would be using this particular checkpoint as a place to rest and replenish certain stocks. However, Qiu Yue hoped that if this base camp grew big enough, she could build up a trading post right there.

Lynn had also chimed in by getting her penguins to create a makeshift spot to earn money from travellers and adventurers. Jin had already allocated a large enough space that could potentially feed hundreds in one go with huge makeshift tents for the adventurer's to partake the food. With the giant Horned Chicken as her new meat dish, she had already whipped up a few simple but very satisfying dishes to be served in that area.

And as Jin had created the makeshift tents for the restaurant, he realised sanitisation could become a problem. The location did not have any lakes or other sources of water anywhere in the vicinity, so he asked the System to work on a proper sanitisation area for the goblins and orcs.

That was also when (soon to be Bandit Leader?) Kraft jumped in and proposed Jin to utilise the Emerald Mountain Hot Spring Instance.

Jin realised that was a brilliant idea and told the System to create scrolls of portals to the Emerald Mountain Hot Spring instances which could be sold for a price by the merchants.

On top of that, he was planning to use that particular idea to create a portal scroll to enter the Deep Reservoir Fishing Instance as well, allowing anyone to fish up food to eat. (But of course, priced at a significantly lower cost as compared to the ones they sold for his cultivators.) At that point, Jin also considered if he should instead directly integrate the Restaurant instance into the scroll since the fishing instance was already part of it.

Operation: Dungeon Cave had to work. For the prospect of future and more importantly, immediate profit!

Both the Goblin and Orc Kings were leading a rather large entourage of people who wished to fight in this particular dungeon. Thus, it might take some time for both parties to arrive, so that they could officially open the Dungeon Cave. Jin had decided to use whatever time he had to get on with the renovation of the Tiangong Shopping District.

While waiting for the System to create a render of the new landscape for the shopping district, he focused on a few miscellaneous issues which may potentially allow Jin to expand in the long run.

The first was to allow the store owners who were interested to sell some of his merchandise in the area. In short, he would become their supplier for goods to sell for certain stores, for example, the weapons, clothes as well as inscriptions.

He already had some specifics in mind. He Rong, the owner of Toyz Connection, could sell the Spinning Tops seeing how it was a major hit ever since its inception. Lai Fu was the perfect candidate to sell some of his own produce which he would get from the Agriculture Sector. If they proved a hit, he might be able to sell them in his world and save the transaction fee that could occur while dealing in the System's black market.

On a separate note, since the System had captured humans, Jin figured he might as well use them for the delivery services his customers had been pestering about for a long time now. This would ensure they would get more cash in a relatively quick time. He and Lynn had thought about it and ultimately decided to sell only the following.

Chashu Ramen in Red Snapper Broth, the Tonkatsu Curry Rice for the main dishes. Onigiris, the Triple Cheese Pizza, Fried Oreo pie and the cheesecake for dessert. Drinks wise, Jin had made everything available, but the only drawback was that the users could only use Pandamonium App to order them and it was not available in other food delivery apps.

The reason was rather obvious for him but not the customers.

However, when the news broke out in the Pandamonium forum, everyone went batshit crazy that Jin was going to allow delivery only within 10kilometres of the vicinity (even ignoring that the prices had been jacked up 20% to cover transportation fees).

They argued that if he allowed other food delivery services to handle, he would be able to cater to more customers and further distances. (Oh, and the sub icon within the Pandamonium app? Jin had named the food delivery service as Pandafull.)

Yet, Jin made his stand and replied in the forums stating that this was for now just an experimental project. He wanted to ensure that the food remained at its highest quality when being delivered.

And the dungeon supplier was not joking.

Jin had the System to create a delivery bag that provided temporal stasis for the food which utilised the same concept as the storage areas for Lynn's kitchen. He also enhanced it with gravitational inscriptions

to ensure the food would not be rocked should the Farming Humans get into any accidents like tripping or accidental crushing of the bag.

He did not trust other food delivery drivers to maintain the food in their best condition. Worse, his reputation could suffer, if some decided to try possibly cheating the customers. (There were documented cases of this) But now that he had Farming Humans, he had reliable workers after inserting a few upgrade cards he created himself.

The customised upgrade cards were no weapons but the Pandafull Delivery Bags, detailed information about Shenzhen's location on par with GPS as well the (most expensive one to create) and a temporary Humble Horse Cultivation Grade 1.

In the future, they would have to learn the Cultivation themselves as it was quite costly to upkeep, but on the flipside it allowed them to move long distances on foot quickly without the need for any bikes, allowing them to take short cuts based on their 'inherent' knowledge of the city.

These former slaves were already grateful that they had seemingly somehow survived the fight against the 'demonic' beings at the trading town of Wecha. While it was strange that they awoke somewhere unfamiliar, most initially assumed that not much would change, trading one Master for another.

Fortunately, they could not have been more wrong. Food was a hundred times better than the scraps of stale bread. There were a spacious bed and roof above them instead of the hard dusty ground that had awaited them each day. The Farming Humans was also afraid when the first being they encountered had been some of the Orcs who were still occupying the Guest Home Instance. They thought they were going through another hellhole.

However, they soon realised that those Orcs were far more compassionate than those Demon Rats could have ever been. Many of them showed them the ropes and even introduced them to other minions in the place, including the infamous resistance group, Jacks from their farming world.

Meanwhile, the announcement of this particular food service had caused Lynn's penguins to be working overtime, busy preparing sufficient food not just for the dungeon supplier store but for the Pandafull delivery service.

Based on the statistics of the type of food that was consumed in the Restaurant Instance for the past month, they had begun creating dozens of dishes and placed them into temporal stasis awaiting the next day when the service would go live.

The whole endeavour was not cheap, but Jin believed the Pandafull delivery service will bring in more than sufficient profit to cover the cost which the System concurred as well.

Chapter 497 Dungeon Cave Opening Ceremony

"So, we meet again." Frost Echo greeted Sol, who bowed slightly in return. Hundreds of eager adventurers were awaiting the opening of the Dungeon Cave. Each one equally afraid to enter too late,

fearing that others might clear out the cave within a single trip given their vast numbers at the adventurer's base camp.

Though the town criers and even the Kings had assured them repeatedly that the half masked humanoids promised the Cave would be filled with wonders and surprise regardless of their adventurers, it was hard to believe.

Jin had initially proposed the first party to be led by the respective Kings, but many in their council spoke out against such an endeavour. What might be seen as the most powerful sign of cooperation would definitely threaten the minor humanoid towns as well as the humans who were staying at the side of the Goblins.

Both sides agreed that assassins and spies from other countries would be within the adventurer camp just waiting for an opportunity to sabotage such an act should the kings enter the dungeon cave. Thus, the kings had decided to heed their council's advice and solely be present for the opening of this Dungeon Cave.

"No fun..." Kraft had already been looking forward to collecting some more 'volunteers' amongst any wannabe assassins, but Jin consoled him by reminding him about his new responsibilities. He himself was comforted by the fact that the two kings preferred the event to proceed with success rather than risk any interruptions.

Before the opening of the Dungeon Cave, both of the Kings were given a chance to address the audience. Groups of adventurers were already speculating which king would be the first to give their speech as it was basically an extension of power emphasising for all how the power balance really was.

However, all this speculation was for nought as Jin, who had been on site as soon as the System informed him about their arrival, proposed to decide everything with 'the will of the Gods'.

A simple coin toss would decide which king would speak first. Everyone in the vicinity disagreed with the way it was handled but also accepted that it was a rather 'fair' idea to get things done without any political implications.

The coin tossed by Jin as a (relatively) neutral party landed with on tails, which represented the Orc King's choice, and so Frost Echo went up the temporary podium and gave his speech to both Orcs and Goblins and the visiting Humans. It was rather short rhetoric but filled with emotions that he hoped that the Orcs could learn to cooperate alongside the goblins. He ended by using himself as an example with his life entrusted to a Goblin, their current Spymaster.

Most of the Orcs may have been sceptical by this in the past, but the Goblins had already proven their superiority by winning the war. (And Orcs who always loved a good fight will respect the champion.) Therefore they were at least willing to give it a try, seeing how the Dungeon Cave somehow required a variety of races to enter.

The subsequent speech by the Goblin King was more factual and reminded both races that in that cave, the only one watching their backs would be their fellow comrades. "It's like a trial of fire, to see if the bonds of Orcs, Goblins and maybe even Humans and Humanoids can be forged and tempered through the cave, giving rise to a better understanding among all our races."

Goblin King Sol admitted that it would not be an easy task but used the examples of the Orc and Goblin merchants at the adventurer camp who came together regardless of race so they could do one job. To service the adventurers through the cave and grow rich with them. His speech was surprisingly well received, especially that last particular line made both races simultaneously cheer because that was what they all wanted to accomplish.

At the end of these two short speeches, Jin came forward to activate the Altar right in front of them. The Panda Altar with a plate right in front of it shone brightly and spoke in a strange sounding voice (Chinese) since it was governed by the System. (In fact, the whole piece of land between the two kingdoms had been bought by Qiu Yue for dirt cheap, giving the System control of the place.)

"Worthy Adventurers! Heed my warning. This cave is filled with treacherous traps and monsters! Offer a tribute if you wish to enter this perilous place, and you will be protected by my blessing!" Jin translated for the confused looking adventurers.

"From our personal experience, the tribute required consists of at least two copper coins for each adventurer before the Dungeon Cave will allow anyone entry. Upon noting that the adventurers have placed their tribute, the Panda Statue will glow slightly to see whether the tribute was genuine." Jin explained briefly how they had set it up to work.

"Any outsiders who attempt to enter without paying any tribute will be attacked by heavenly flames without any mercy." Jin continued and warned them, leading to murmuring among themselves.

"Do not worry, the Panda Statue and the Dungeon Cave are in a way sentient like how certain mages can speak to animals and trees. So you can be sure that you guys won't have to risk your lives unless stated clearly."

"Venerated Masked One, I have heard, that one does not die inside the cave, is that not true? Are there parts of the cave where death is unavoidable?" One of the Orcs asked, and Jin nodded his head.

"Our race has studied this sort of Dungeon Cave back in our homeland. We have managed to place a spell for the first ten floors ensuring that none of you may be killed as long as you do not venture further down." The half masked panda cultivator assured the masses.

"However, we cannot guarantee anything below the tenth floor because our magic seems unable to reach deeper. Perhaps in the future, when we find a way to purify a particular floor of the Dungeon Cave without too many expenses, we will do so. Some of the materials you may find could prove quite helpful for our research." Jin created an impromptu excuse.

While Jin could have made the dungeon participants unkillable for every part of this new Dungeon experience, he figured that this could potentially create an imbalance in their societies. Seasoned adventurers might grow to the point where they could band together sparking wars.

Both kings agreed to the idea that sometimes death was necessary for the kingdoms to maintain the balance of power. Still, the only things that would not die were Jin's monsters, and those were dying for fights especially the ones who had stayed in the Sanctum of Worlds for the longest time and had no other work to do.

Even the Orcs who were working in the construction had been permitted to take turns in order to enter the dungeons and let out some frustration. On the condition that their skins ought to be tainted with other colours so they would be unrecognisable as the former orcs that dwelled in their country.

Customised helmets were also made to protect their identity, and the System had provided them with weapons and armour which it had collected from killing Demon Rats.

"So, beware of this dungeon, for after the tenth floor, even some of our Humanoids have been unable to make it back to the surface. It's regrettable, but our kind is not as numerous as your two races. For the glory of exploration and the endless amount of rewards, we have opened this Dungeon Cave for the rest to enter!" Jin stopped dramatically as his last statement resulted in a lot of cheerful applause.

"To help our kind learn even more about these caves, and to help you accomplish this, we have prepared a dozen of counters right over there. That one will create an adventurer license card. This ordinary looking card shall give you the most important ability in that dungeon. The ability to escape at any time." Jin announced, and everyone started to chat loudly. Most had assumed they would have to climb back to the top to return from the dungeon cave, but if what Jin shared was true, it would change everything.

"This card can act as your identification keeping track of how many floors of the dungeon you have conquered as well as the number of times it has taken you to conquer each floor. Additionally, you can use the card as magical storage for the items you receive or are rewarded inside the cave. Should you ever lose this, nobody else can open it. Even if someone dares to kill you within the cave to try and steal something from you, it will be in vain" Jin said, and everyone was delighted at that particular fact.

"Speaking of killing! Let me be perfectly clear so that none of you succumbs to the temptation of greed. Like I said, the Dungeon Cave is sentient! Not only can it place one party on a different first floor compared to another party, it despises the act of betrayal. Should one of you kill your own party members, the Dungeon Cave will haunt you forever! If you do not believe me, then try it! Some of those who went before you were trapped in the Dungeon Cave eternally, for their insolence." Jin warned in a dead serious tone, and both races felt that something similar might have happened with the Humanoids.

"Then what if one of our comrades dies during a fight?" The goblin wanna be adventurer asked loudly.

"If your comrade dies a swift death, we recommend recovering the fallen body so that he can be handled by our specialists (Panda Nurses) after your fight. The Dungeon Cave may reward such an act of benevolence in the future. For it is ever watching, ever remembering the acts of the adventurers in the cave."

"However! If a fight proves too challenging and you feel the need to escape with the license card, then it might be advisable to do so instead. Eventually, the license card will automatically teleport the fallen to the adventurer's guild we have set up. It's a spell mechanism that we have put in place to account and set a memorial up for them. So, there is no shame in retreating, for you live another day to take your revenge in this ruthless Dungeon Cave." Jin replied.

"Esteemed masked one, you said the card will teleport the dead, but what if someone stole that card instead?" An Orc queried, and Jin smirked at him.

"Any of you can give it a try. Trust me, it won't be something pleasant." Jin concluded his explanation to the masses and a large number of Orcs and Goblins had begun rushing towards the counters filled with half masked pandas humanoids to get their adventurer cards.

They were all the farming Humans which Jin used to have the counters operational. It would feel unnatural to use Orcs and goblins for this particular case. Some of them were excited to work for their new master while others were just curious how the Orc's world looked like based on their conversations in the Guest Instance.

Without further ado, Jin had Adventurer 001, while the Kings received 002 and 002 as part of the ceremonial courtesy of the adventurer base camp. The next card started with 004 and the first 300 would later become as the 'First Generation of Adventurers'.

"And thus begins the great Adventurer Age." Kraft who had been at the sidelines to spy on any suspicious looking characters, teased his master as he patted him on his shoulder.

"Hopefully. I'm already happy if we can earn some money from all this fake economy." Jin sighed in his transmission to Kraft since he did not want anyone else to know what this whole scheme was about.

Right now, the adventurers had brought some cash with them and with any luck, they would be buying the services provided in his place. Registration to be an adventurer, food, accommodation were the things Jin was trying to earn from them.

But the most important thing was that people from all over the kingdoms would bring their goods to most likely banter, buy and sell which allowed the System to earn money. The adventurers were just the lure in Jin's eyes.

It's the economy of both kingdoms, with hopefully soon even the humans and maybe some humanoids, but ultimately the purchasing power of those kingdoms combined was the deal behind this Dungeon Cave scheme. Jin might not be a business student, but he believed that this particular scheme was an excellent way to control the economy of this world.

And if that was not enough? The Dungeon Cave would be collating data from all the adventurers, and any adventurers who died would technically come into the possession of the System which it will gladly use to increase the workforce for both the Dungeon Cave or the Dungeon Fortress City.

No matter the outcome, the System always wins!

Chapter 498 Dungeon Cave Instance

For the first time in history, the commoners between the Goblins and Orcs reached a compromise and banded together to try their luck in the Dungeon Cave. For the reward of attempting to see each other as equals, Orc King Frost Echo had personally enchanted the first ten parties with his ice magic, making their armour stronger and sturdier.

Goblin King Sol did the same by enchanting their weapons with his Light magic, making them sharper and emitting a small shining light, allowing for an easier time in the dungeon without the need for torches.

To the adventurer's surprise, the first floor was brightly lit with various lighting that did not seem to originate from lanterns or torches. They saw miniscule wires along the cave tunnels and at every five to ten metres interval, there was a small bulb like object that shone brighter than any torches they had ever seen.

Most orc villages were too poor to afford any lightings, and even in some of the smaller towns, it was a bit rare. Except for the capitals and the major towns, the orc villagers in the first party had never seen such stuff before. The goblins, on the other hand, were not as surprised with most of their cities powered by electricity.

As they would eventually find out these lightning privileges were only available on the first ten floors. On the eleventh floor onwards, the System was programmed to place torches at irregular intervals. They would need to steal the torches to proceed forward or learn to bring in their own lighting source to compensate for it.

Jin had designed the whole Dungeon Cave experience similar to an MMORPG. He wanted to make things easy and approachable, providing everyone with an authentic taste for adventuring. The first ten floors were intended to act like a tutorial. The first time an adventurer cleared a level would result in a guaranteed chance of a random weapon and armour pieces that consisted of chest plate, boots, helmets, gloves and perhaps shields.

Any subsequent visit to an already cleared floor would yield lesser rewards, most often in the form of materials, but it would not be impossible for parties to try and make a living by not risking their lives.

The first floor was filled with copies of the Wyrms. The System had disabled their elemental properties for the first floor, only activating them on the second. That itself had already proven to be a challenge since the parties never seen such a monster before.

They assumed those wyrms were just a variant of an Ant but most of them were dead wrong when they came charging towards them without any regards for their life. However, the Wyrms were not stupid and did retreat whenever it sense that it was in a trap, giving its prey a chance to chase after it too.

Starting with the third floor onwards, Zombies began to appear as requested by Half Ghoul Lord Derek. Derek felt that his zombies were not getting much love in the Great Wall of China Instance as they used too.

He wanted them to practice more, but after the introduction of the Raid Instance, the zombies had seemingly been forgotten by most of the cultivators. This particular dungeon was an excellent way for his zombies to gain more experiences and hopefully grow stronger in the process.

Their progression was similar to the wyrms with the third floor holding regular zombies and the fourth level of the Dungeon Cave adding elemental zombies. Only unlike the wyrms, the adventurers would have to contend with various kinds of elements like poison, sleep, paralysis and stun as compared to the wyrms who had fire and frostbite.

While some parties managed to power through the particular floor by tolerating the ailments, this notion did not hold true for all of them. Thus, they would be forced to return to the base camp where the merchants were selling antidotes and even potions against specific ailment resistances.

The merchants knew that selling these various antidotes and ailment resistance potions would generate a relatively reasonable sum of profit at the start, but these miscellaneous recovery items were all needed to lead up to the sale of the more potent remedy that could increase resistance to ailments.

An all resistant potion.

Of course, the merchants employed by the System were not stupid. By pricing the various antidotes fairly cheaply, they could jack the price of a minor 'all resist' potion by at least three to four times the price even though the System bought all these potions for nearly the same cost.

Besides, the potions were selling like hotcakes when the adventurers pieced the information together at the makeshift adventurer guild headed by someone who Jin felt that she was working out of her normal scope of work.

Zhi Nu.

She felt wanted to contribute more towards Jin when she saw Niu Lang working hard in the Star Cross Industries. The Weaver Girl knew nuts about machines, but she had learnt a fair bit about management when she was being schooled back in her world's Heaven's academy. That was why Zhi Nu wanted to help Niu Lang by first establishing and learning the ropes from the beginning by being in this particular adventurer guild.

Zhi Nu would tell the other merchants about the gathered information she overheard while handling the farming humans through the System Channel. This gave the merchants a heads up to perform their tricks as well preparing sufficient stock for sale.

Thus, the adventurer's guild and the Merchants had long coordinated among each other even though they were all busy handling their customers and 'compete' against each other (They all had a quote to fulfil after all).

Meanwhile, some adventures who were too poor to afford those potions had decided to fight more cautiously, and others had decided to return to take on jobs that were in the vicinity. What jobs one might ask?

The dungeon supplier had told both Kings that he had already created an opportunity for the two races to work together. The rest was up to them, but Jin 'leisurely hinted' that a small village could be useful and fortunately, there was an abandoned town in the vicinity.

Thus, the two kings had signed a royal decree and pooled money together to create the village. Any adventurer's who did not mind this back breaking labour could earn some additional cash by helping clear the abandoned village and aid with the construction of it. Qiu Yue also chimed in by providing improved schematics by Jin's researchers to improve the quality of life of the adventurers. (At a cost too)

That was how Jin pushed his self driven economy and started to take the share of this Goblin World's money pie to eat. With the tasty food by the (half masked) penguins, the constant avenue to earn some

revenue and a possible permanent place to stay when they built the site up, the opportunistic goblins and orcs began to see that there was hope. And it was this hope propelled them as a united front.

In the subsequent days, the Human Kingdom had sent emissaries to visit both the Goblin Kingdom and the Orc Kingdom proposing that the Humans take part in the village building endeavour as well. They were farsighted enough to see that the cooperation of the Goblins and Orcs could threaten their own existence if they decided to stay their hand on this particular matter.

Frost Echo and Sol had both agreed to the human's participation on the condition that they who had come in late invested the same amount both Kings had already paid into this village. Unable to decline, they accepted and the humans sent out their own entourage of adventurers as well as the paraphernalia support needed for the construction of the village (Not to mention more gold.)

As expected, budding alchemists, mages and healers had decided to come in and try to make a quick buck when they heard how the dungeons could not be coped with brute force alone.

Unfortunately for them, the merchants who were present offered a wide variety of options so that those support adventurers who arrived eventually ended up paying for more to enhance their own supportive roles by providing their value added services to join the adventurers.

As the days went by, some of the adventurers managed to hit Dungeon level five where Jin had placed Shu's Praying Mantis as their first boss that they would be fighting against. There were no tunnels, no tight spaces but a spacious hall with the praying mantis munching on some meat. Jin purposely placed the Praying Mantis there as a definitive test of the adventurer's teamwork.

It was by no means an easy fight, but it gave many of the adventurers the feel of adrenaline with the Orcs undoubtedly excited to be fighting against such a terrifying monster.

Eventually, after a full day had passed without any team able to defeat it, the first three adventure groups who had managed to reach that floor had met up and discussed possible ways to overcome this challenge.

In the end, they not only succeeded in defeating it, but their names had appeared under the Panda Statue as the first few parties to succeed leading to the most other adventure teams following their example by making use of each race's natural talent.

The Orcs took pride in their sturdy build, enabling them to take and dash out a lot of beatings, so most parties had them act as the tank of the party or their offensive tank. The goblins were generally nimble due to their size, and most of them took on the role of sub attacker, by providing ranged support or surprising the enemies from behind. Lastly, the humans took the positions of support or finishers where they were either healers or mages.

Nevertheless, there was a considerable number of exceptions, turning party matching in the adventurer guild almost a bloodbath. In these moments, Cross and Gladios' security regiment came in to break the fight.

Many of the Orcs tried to challenge the famed Sword Goblin General after the war, and those who lasted for more than ten exchanges could be counted with less than one hand. Meanwhile, Cross was so agile that the battle ended even before it could start.

This showed that the presence of security and the response of security teams was equally important even in this (relatively) small adventurer base camp. So that brought in the question of how?

Let's start with Qiu Yue previously pressurising the two kings to succumb to her demands by allowing her to buy the land at the middle of their borders at a very cheap price. (Jin tried to stop her, he really did, but in the end, he was powerless to stop her too.)

So, although it was stated that the dungeon cave was in between the borders of two kingdoms and was still under their authority, the land actually belonged to the humanoids.

With that in mind, the System had full control over that area and had placed various magic eyes to keep track of the place. As the land owner, the Red Panda Cultivator rented the place out to both kings at a rate that they were both satisfied paying. (Considering how much they owed her, they believed it was a reasonable thing to do while the kings seemingly forgot that they were pretty much controlled by her.)

Thus, Cross was sent out via the System's commands to catch those lawbreakers and explicitly showed that the laws of their kingdoms were applied strictly. It was not a pleasant sight, but it reminded people that while this might be a new haven, big daddies were still watching among the people.

However, the heartening thing was that all three major races despite their differences and the usual racist remarks towards each other could still put aside their long standing grudge in just a few days to work together and fight against a common enemy.

The kings while still cautious of the optimistic early results, were delighted to see such a scene and had pledged to aid the place even more to ensure it would stay this way.

Even though a whole Earth day had passed, the profits that Jin had earned from this particular endeavour were increasing by the (Earth) hour. The dungeon supplier now hoped that more of this profit would continue to roll in the coming days giving him more assurance in terms of money flow for he had started to focus more on the Tiangong Shopping District.

"With only 12 days away from Christmas, let's hope that I can finish in time, so there is at least a week of sales for the owners." Jin thought as he prepared a bottle of Blue Mountain Coffee right beside him. Going through all nighters was one thing, but communication with the rest of the store owners was another nightmare he had to brace himself for.

Though right now, he was going to build the most unique and iconic feature Shenzhen would ever have. One it would be remembered for in the future.

Chapter 499 New Tiangong Shopping District?

"Hey Old Fu, did you also get the message from Boss Jin?" He Rong called Lai Fu, who was scratching his head and yawning since he had woken up only seconds before.

"...huh? What message are you talking about? Do you know what time it is?!" Lai Fu complained as he looked at the alarm clock showing it was roughly 6.30am. Even his wife was mildly irritated by the early call as she turned to the other side of the bed and continued snuggling on her bolster.

"You would have done the same in my shoes! ...Something drastic has happened to Tiangong Shopping District. Just look outside and take a look for yourself!" He Rong hurried his friend as he could not believe his own eyes. The Toyz Connection store owner lived approximately a few blocks away the same as most of his peers from the shopping district, including Lai Fu.

"Calm down, you are not making any sense. What exactly happened? I thought Jin was still in the midst of removing the debris so that we could renovate or rebuild our shops. You can't mean...is it another Ruby Rat ambush?" Lai Fu sat up almost immediately and started to dress his shirt over his singlet as he rushed over to the main hall of his apartment.

At that moment, Lai Fu was slightly stunned and nearly dropped his phone as he opened the curtains to overlook the state of Tiangong Shopping District from afar. (His apartment was on top of the hills, further away from the shopping district and nearer the edge of Tiangong District.)

"Are my eyes playing tricks on me? Is...is that a tree?" The Fresh Price General Store store owner rubbed his eyes a few times and pinched himself to see if he was really awake. A large gigantic tree had appeared right smack at the centre of Tiangong Shopping District. And it was not an ordinary tree if Lai Fu could see it clear enough at kilometres away from his house.

"That's all you got to say?! You are kidding me, right? From my perspective, that is a HUGE ASS FUCKING TREE. Like how the hell did Boss Jin even manage to import a tree this big?!" He Rong asked rhetorically.

Outside his apartment, some people who went out for work were pointing at the anomaly. Even though the acoustic construction barriers were still up, He Rong could see many of residents near the Tiangong Shopping District taking pictures of the enormous tree and theorising how Jin had accomplished such a feat.

From what he could overhear, some claimed that he employed a group of western mages to spur the growth of this tree while some others seemed to have taken inspiration from the tale of Jack and the giant beanstalk wondering if Boss Jin had bought or created some magical beans to create this tree overnight.

Some nastier opinions pointed out that the dungeon supplier was lucky the tree did not grow to the heavens, else it would be disrupting the air traffic in the vicinity.

However, despite all the mindless chattering, there was no doubt that the colossal tree was as high as the apartments in the area and had become the talk of the morning.

Some residents recalled how Jin had initially created his shop in less than a night, and people were eager to learn what kind of construction company could create such miracles unless it was prefabricated buildings.

Though this rumour has long since been debunked. Some construction specialists had heard about it, had come to check Jin's shop out in the early days. After some personal inspections (out of their own interest), they swore it was definitely not prefabricated in their eyes but solid groundwork. They could not fathom which construction company managed to do this overnight without the help of a crapload of western mages.

The same thing could be said about this colossal tree right in front of them, but the gossipers believed that even those well versed in nature magic would not boast about being able to perform such a feat. To put it frankly, if there were a few who could perform such a brilliant display of magic, the amazon forest would not be threatened in any way.

"Ah yes, you should check your phone. Boss Jin had messaged us through the Pandamonium App asking us to meet him and gather as many, possibly all of the store owners in by today. Si Fang has already messaged and strongly emphasised to everyone to come at all cost in our Mechat Group." He Rong was glad that Jin had pushed Si Fang to get all the store owners to at least verify the insurance claim by yesterday.

He believed that if Jin created such a tree amid all the damaged stores, there would be no way to verify and assess the extent of damage those Ruby Rats had done.

"Hmm..if he is rushing, there can only be one thing..." Lai Fu pondered at his balcony as he was still in awe with the colossal tree right in front of him. "He might want us to reopen the stores by Christmas or maybe a few days before Christmas."

"He cannot be that considerate, can he? The expenses he needs to fork out are already tremendous just to accomplish the recovery of the shopping district!" He Rong could not buy that particular reason though at the same time he was hoping that it was true.

The pending insurance coverage was adequate to get by, and this made most of the store owners resign to the fate that they would lose business for Christmas at best and at worst the Chinese New Year period as well.

"No use wondering, we will know for sure once we meet with Boss Jin." Lai Fu replied as he started to make his own breakfast. He briefly looked through the store owner's chat group, yet Jin himself was not included there. In fact, none of them knew his phone number or Mechat account and realised they had been communicating with him exclusively via the Pandamonium App.

The store owners who saw He Rong's picture in the group chat were all scratching their heads at how Jin was going to handle the reconstruction of their stores. Some even worried that the new landlord was going to break the promise and kick a few shops out of the shopping district with the new sightseeing feature.

However, Si Fang did what he could to relieve the anxiety among the store owners who reacted that way. He too understood what the owners were going through as they could foresee the colossal tree becoming the future main attraction for Tiangong Shopping District.

The shopping committee head could not comprehend how the shops would be placed if the tree was at the centre of the district. Thus, he could only assure them that their new landlord would have their answers ready.

Ironically not shortly after everyone had been calmed down, Jin sent out another message to store owners in the Pandamonium chat group. An ultimatum which he asked Si Fang to copy paste into their group chat.

He demanded with the vested power as the new landlord to all store owners to attend the meeting he was set up in his Dungeons and Pandas store at 12 o'clock or else there was a high chance he would not entertain their request to remain part of the district any longer.

True enough, not all of the store owners had arrived at the allocated meeting time at the Dungeons and Pandas, but Si Fang asked Jin to give him some time to contact them.

The dungeon supplier was aware that some store owners had decided to close their shop permanently after the incident as they believed the shopping district had to be cursed with the episodes of the pachinko fire and now the Ruby Rat.

However, after some convincing on Si Fang's part, Jin eventually decided to give the latecomers some leeway before he brought the other store owners to the meeting room instance where everyone was surprised by the atmosphere of the office environment.

A replica model of the tree was right in front of the conference table as well as the design of the layout outside of the tree that occupied the shopping district.

"Thanks for waiting, I managed to reach all five of them, and everyone refused to enter this new phase of the Tiangong Shopping District." Si Fang entered the conference room last with the aid of Yun.

Three of them did not believe in Jin as the new landlord and instead assuming he was crazy to pull a stunt like that, while the last two had reached their retirement age and had decided to let their business die off with the new renovation of Tiangong Shopping District.

"I see, then we shall get started." Jin, who looked more presentably for the occasion with a set of formal shirt and pants, had begun his presentation. Only instead of a standard presentation, the dungeon supplier used the Tiangong Shopping District model right in front as the prop for discussion.

"This will be the new phase of Tiangong Shopping District. I assume all of you have seen the giant tree right outside the store, considering it is a bit hard to miss, that will be our new mall." Jin started with a joke, earning some polite chuckles before he became more serious.

He went forth to the middle of the conference table and removed half of the tree replica right in front of them, showing the anatomy or the intersection of what was inside the tree.

The store owners immediately understood the purpose of that tree.

Instead of the typical modernistic style of new malls, Jin had chosen to go for the opposite route in this concrete jungle city.

As Jin had mentioned, the tree was indeed like a mall with a number of floors that could accommodate more than the number of occupants that were sitting in this room. The stores would be situated around the circumference of the tree, with the centre carved out be empty in order to insert a gigantic copper Panda statue which resembled one of the highest ranking deities in heaven, Tian Gong.

More commonly known as The Jade Emperor.

Kraft found it extremely hilarious that Jin had decided to use the Jade Emperor, the past nemesis of the System at the epicentre of his shopping district. However, not in the image of him directly but the very symbol of the Panda clan.

"A direct insult to him!! I am loving this district already!" Kraft was rolling on the floor laughing at the sight of the copper Panda statue. It was draped in the design of royalty clothes as well as the crown in a separate instance within the Dungeon Maker as the System was continuously refining the said statue.

Jin dubbed it the Panda Tian Gong Statue which he would use as advertisement for the district so that the panda statue would gather love and popularity from the visitors.

It was also a subtle move to gain support for the lost Panda Clan and the System approved of it so much that it had decided to use the highest quality of copper and gold to create the statue. At the same time, it also employed the goblin craftsmen to refine the details, ensuring it would be lifelike despite the type of material they used. (Copper can be considered everlasting, since it does not rust, and very easy to mould into shape.)

But back to the issue at hand, the store owners realised that though numerous there was not much space in each of the individual stores with the largest not even sufficient to house He Rong's old store. That was when Jin looked at them with disbelief.

"Are you kidding me, guys? You all still cannot figure out why I haven't put that much space for the storefronts? Do I need to remind you how I earn my bread and butter?" Jin asked them somewhat impatiently, and Lai Fu and the others suddenly felt very stupid, which led to a series of laughter.

"You are not joking, right? You are for real that you are going to do that?! Because if that's the case, I am going to send in an absurd number of requests for you to fulfil it." Lai Fu questioned Jin seriously, and the dungeon supplier returned with a smirk.

"Trust me anything is possible... for a price of course." Jin smirked at him, and slowly, the store owners came to understand the ramifications of Jin's claim.

Jin was going to make a dungeon instance for all of their stores. And each one of them could have it designed anyway they wanted. (as long as they were willing to pay for it)

"Don't worry I won't nickel and dime you guys. The charity fund that I have created will be split among you guys after I sent some recompense to all the victims that were involved in the fight. I am giving it out equally to everyone, and all these funds would be accounted in the Pandamonium Charity Report. I want each one of you to start as soon as possible in this critical period of time. That was why I urged all of you guys to be here for this meeting" Jin reiterated, and the store owners understood Jin's reasoning for not revealing everything up front.

He only wished for those to remain who genuinely cared for the district, who attended this meeting with concern and not greed in mind.

"There are some things that came out from my pocket, like the subsequent decorations and the Panda Tian Gong Statue. However, the rest can be seen in the report if you download the Pandamonium App." Jin stated as he opened the report right in front of them at the projected screen on the wall, detailing the approximate amount all of them would be receiving as recompense.

He was planning to make this whole tree mall 'instance friendly' so, Jin required all store owners to individually install a (slightly modified) Pandamonium app into their phones to fully utilise the dungeon instance making process.

Each and every store owners were extremely excited as they were given a chance to make their dream shop a possible reality.

Chapter 500 The Beginning of a Brand New Star

Even though the amount in the charity funds appeared quite substantial at first glance, it would have to be divided between numerous victims.

Jin knew how much a dimensional instance would cost based on the System's requirements and the store owners currently allocated cut of the funds alone was not sufficient.

If possible, Jin would have preferred not to use the fat cheque which Xiong Da had handed him, but in order to create the ideal version of the Tiangong Shopping District he envisioned and more importantly do so in time before the upcoming Christmas, he had to spend that money to earn more money.

When Jin had offered the store owners his services for instance making, and the System had promptly jacked up the prices accordingly. This would allow him to earn some of the cash back, but he quickly asked the System to ease up with the prices for this first batch of tenants.

Subsequent tenants wouldn't be let off the hook merely because he would have proven that paying his prices would be worth it at that point.

The dungeon supplier explained that the owners did not need to worry about electrical or water fees. Instead, they would be charged a standard maintenance fee each month along with the rent which he had decided to lower to 50% of the original price.

Jin understood that losing business during a festive period was extremely devastating and offered some help to the store owners. He had sworn a pledge to aid the store owners when he was fighting against the Ruby Rats and Jin intended to keep it.

Until they managed to get back up on their feet, he would not touch the rent pricing because if they prospered, he would prosper too. (Definitely way more than what he spends right now.)

The store owners were very surprised that Jin was willing to lend them so much help. Those prospective tenants he had not interacted with, will wonder whether the kid even knew how to be a proper landlord or if he was just too rich for his own good. Yet Lai Fu casually reminded them that it was his business sense that allowed the old Tiangong Shopping District to pick up some slack after the pachinko accident.

That was when the store owners clearly misunderstood Jin's kindness and probably with a tinge of shrewdness for his portrayed stupidity, and many unconsciously swore to aid his cause if things ever were to go south again.

Jin at that point then asked this first batch of tenants to start writing or draw how they wanted their new stores to be. Even if they could create their dream store, it was the dungeon supplier who would be the one to create the instance for them.

Thus, he needed them to accurately visualise and articulate what they wanted in their stores.

It was a fairly simple procedure considering all of them were experienced business owners, and many started by listing their demands prioritising the practical stuff such as cash registers or specific appliances for the various stores like coffee makers, stoves and fridges.

Going through their requests, Jin realised many of those things he could provide at a fraction of the cost compared to buying it wholesale as well at a superior quality too. (However, he kept quiet and retained the pricing as per Earth's market price to earn some profit. At the very least, those machines will definitely be more of a higher quality.)

Upon glancing through the request list, there were even some things that Jin believed the System could improve. For example, it should be easy to overhaul cash registers and the need for computers to do their accounts.

Jin felt with Kraft's help, he could create a simplified program that could link the System's powers to the computers that they had, allowing them to easily manage their accounts while he could keep track of the amount of money that they earned. (For analytical purposes too. If he knew everyone was earning decently, Jin could subtly increase the maintenance fees and rent without too much of a complaint.)

After receiving the wish lists of items and their own depiction of their dream stores, he sat them down in the conference room and spent some time getting to know them better. (As if he was Santa Claus in the room, addressing the kids about their toy wishlist.)

Since they would all be working under his umbrella, Jin did not wish for them to compete against each other, but rather earn the customer's money as a collective group. That was one of the few ways how Tiangong Shopping District could survive the harsh 'winter' that was coming.

To his surprise, most of the store owners had already specialised long before he opened his store and there were not much of repeat in terms of stores. Lai Fu had his General Store, selling everyday goods and other sundries, Si Fang was the only café store in the shopping district. He Rong was no different, dealing toy merchandises for hobbyists while Ke Ru had the only fast food restaurant in the neighbourhood.

Qian Qian owned a bakery, and her bread had won her several die hard fans, especially among the workers going to the subway station. Man Tang was the only karaoke entertainment owner within a five kilometre radius, and her establishment was considered the bigger few within the shopping district. She could be on par in size with Lai Fu or perhaps even more substantial than his.

Bai Wan and Bai Xin were a pair of twins, brother and sister, who had taken the opportunity of the dungeon supplier store and revamped their stores in facilitating the sales of weapons and armoury. However, because of the Ruby Rat attack, they also suffered the most due to the triad members being raiding their place first and had picked their store clean from the attack.

Jin knew that their insurance was surely insufficient to cover, especially when their two connecting stores had been from their parent's generation, and they hadn't had much to cover such expenses. (That also gave Jin the perfect opportunity to help them.)

Yu Xiang, handled her parents' Chinese medicinal store before the destruction of Tiangong Shopping District but she also possessed her knowledge of western medicine and a graduate certificate in pharmacy had given her the license to operate a western pharmacy corner in the shop too.

There were some disagreements with her parents, but ultimately, they knew that not everyone believed in Chinese medicine and their daughter's knowledge in western medicine hopefully would augment their store's profit and reputation.

Unfortunately, the loss of their shop made them lose a lot of valuable medicine, and the insurance coverage was also not sufficient to cover for their losses. Yu Xiang only came because her parents were not able to make it, as they went to attempted to source for other medicinal suppliers hoping it would be cheaper.

Thankfully, all hope was not gone for this family store nor for the Bai Twins. Jin saw a lot of potential in aiding Yu Xiang as his chi generating potions had been mainly derived from Chinese medicinal herbs and he believed she could sell his potions and potentially...improve them further.

The last one but definitely not the least of them all, had made quite the impression on Jin. Yong De was the store owner who owed an arcade in the shopping district. Initially, he wanted to sell all the different mini games to He Rong but seeing Yong De mentioned how he sold not just arcade and UFO machines, but even hosted card tournaments it made him the perfect person to deal with. If those two store owners worked together, there was a possibility that they could push the mini games Jin created to a higher level.

There were others that sold food too, and Jin was not very interested in them since he had Lynn, who was clearly superior to them in terms of food. He did not wish to brag nor did he want to simply remove those choices, so he had instead decided to open a food court to cater their food. However, that did not stop him from wanting to sell ingredients to them because of Lynn's request.

Even the chef working under the Dungeon Supplier welcomed the competition when Jin had previously discussed about aiding the store owners. Lynn claimed that only through competition was she able to excel among others. Of course, in terms of ingredients, Jin would be selling only what could be found on Earth although they were still thoroughly enhanced in quality by Ke Mi's and Shu's aid in the farming aspect.

Juicy, tastier and nutritionally more valuable than the ones Jin bought in Lai Fu's general store, not to mention no insecticides or pesticides used at all because of the strict growing environment that the System had regulated.

It was truly the wonder vegetables that Jin would be selling at a higher cost price. But he was not stupid to sell it immediately and rather planned to give out a few as a sample for the store owners to try.

As Jin got to know them personally while learning about their requests, the other store owners began to network with each other by brainstorming what their instances would going to be like. They were hoping that all of them had a different theme, so it would be an assortment of experiences for the customers.

It was the food store owners that believed that they had picked the short straw among the rest of them since Jin announced that they would be placed together.

Some were disappointed for not receiving the same treatment as the rest but that was when Lynn entered the conference room. Accompanied by a few of her penguins they brought in some refreshments for the group, and it was none other than Lynn's speciality, Black Pepper Pork Buns. Along

with cans of bamboo juice, the drinks and food did perk the store owners' mood up a little as they continued with their brainstorming session.

That was also when Jin had a breather and decided to face the entire group of food store owners in order to address their issues. While the store owner's complaints were valid, the dungeon supplier replied that he was aiming to catch the attention of the surrounding neighbourhood by providing this collective food court concept.

"Your maintenance fees as a collective will be significantly lesser as a group, and there was a reason why I am putting you guys together. By aiming to attract a large crowd, a crowd larger than what you all were used to handle. See those penguins over there? Because you are in an instance, these penguin NPCs will be able to help you cook your food too." Jin said as he asked the penguins to come forth and let the store owners feel them.

Some of the store owners who had never been to a dungeon supplier were shocked to see how real these penguins felt but still questioned their abilities. As if on cue, Lynn took out a portable stove from her storage ring for her peggies to demonstrate.

The store owners knew that these mobile stoves can be used as efficiently as the ones in kitchens since many of the street vendors used them as well. Most did not remember that not too long ago, Lynn had been a street peddler selling her famous Black Pepper Pork Buns.

Jin humbly asked the store owners to move to the side of the room while his chef brought out a mobile sink and plugged in a five litre tank of pressurised water so the penguins in the area could prepare the simplest and yet one of the most demanding dishes in Chinese cuisine.

Egg Fried Rice.

While Jin was amazed by Lynn's preparedness of cooking supplies, Si Fang said that it was actually quite a standard set of items in a chef's storage ring and the food store owners nodded their heads.

They also had these portable stoves and sinks as an emergency backup (though not all as modern as Lynn's) in case an appliance suddenly went faulty in their stores, or when they needed extra manpower to cook, the store owners could provide their temporary workers without using up much space.

The penguins immediately started by first cracking the eggs smoothly, beating them up in a rather fast pace and the store owners could see that the actions were not dramatised and instead efficient.

Lynn left and came back into the room quickly with some cooked rice that was stored in a fridge with a steady temperature of 23-24 degrees Celsius. This was because everyone in the room knows that half of the secret of making fried rice is to have the cooked rice be at an appropriate humidity. The amount of moisture locked in the rice would prove to be one of the essential properties in preparing a good quality egg fried rice.

The penguins took the fairly large bowl of cold cooked rice and threw them in the wok to stir fry, ensuring that the chunks of rice were gradually separated because any chunk of rice will spoil the taste of it.

The food store owners themselves saw how the penguins had the strength and delicacy in stir frying the rice. Only when the penguins deemed appropriate, they poured the egg mixture into the rice and did a quick stir fry.

At that point, the store owners could see a slight amount of chi power being emitted out into the wok, and it was coming from the penguins themselves. They realised that the penguins were controlling the wok as if it was an uphill battle to get the egg liquid to slowly but surely wrap each and every grain.

With a slight pinch of salt, and one last shake of the wok, the penguins began to place the Egg Fried Rice on the plates while adding the final touch, chopped minute pieces of green onion on the top of the fried rice.

"Please, enjoy." The penguins said as they could see the mouths of the store owners were salivating non stop just by the smell and sight alone. Like a horde of camels who saw a miraculous oasis at the centre of the desert, each and every the store owners shamelessly went ahead to have a taste of the fried rice only to be rendered speechless by its taste.

These were the first time that some of the food store owners had tried the food in dungeon supplier's store, and they could not believe that the egg fried rice could be this incredible. Si Fang was then curious why Lynn did not sell this as part of her main dishes. She was guaranteed to earn a ton from it.

"This is due to the fact that the supplier we have contracted is still growing the supplies for the eggs and rice. To ensure they are of top quality and of sufficient quantity, they temporarily delayed their shipment." Lynn had begun advertising their 'food supplier' to the rest of the store owners.

While listening to the dungeon supplier's main chef, the food store owners began to eat with more focus and realised that the rice was so much juicier and the egg that was wrapped around it made very succulent. They had no doubt that the quality of the food plays a part.

"As we are the supplier's exclusive customer, we can sell you a portion of our food supplies which is not cheap at all and the option of renting you our penguins as part of the food court instance to reduce your overall monthly expenses. These penguins can learn and become part of your store, so you do not have to worry about manpower." Jin pointed out the advantages and Si Fang and Ke Ru had already shown signs of wanting to rent those penguins.

They saw how skilful those penguins were in an instant and if they would be able to serve a bigger crowd, these penguins definitely could play a pivotal role in their stores. While some did not like the idea of artificial intelligence in taking over cooking assistants, they kept quiet knowing that they were no doubt superior.

Lai Fu then asked if he could have these penguins to help with his store as well, but Jin said those were mainly for food specialities. However, the dungeon supplier said he could recommend other monsters to serve with Lai Fu's workload.

"Now! That sure is helpful! Recently kids these days just want high pay, more rights and less hours. If these...NPCs is it? Yeah these monsters can help us, and we just pay a portion as part of the maintenance fee, that would be a huge help." Lai Fu commented and unknowingly helped Jin to strengthen his sales pitch.

Eventually, the food store owners were pacified that they had something unique other than the shared food court instance and decided to stay on board with Jin. Hence, Jin spent all of his time for the rest of the day in helping his tenants to shape their dream instances while the System prepared the materials needed and crunched the estimate amount they need to spend.

A lot of them, in fact, all of them were astonished by the astronomical amount, and many felt like jumping off the ship upon seeing the numbers. Jin then reassured them that they could pay in instalments and told them that this was already the discount price and it was a once in a lifetime opportunity for them.

"All of my dungeons are this expensive, if not, how do you think they can become so strangely close to reality? Because of this striking resemblance to reality, the high number of people coming to my dungeon allowed me to earn more while maintaining if not, pushing the quality of the dungeons even further." Jin commented in front of them.

"It takes money to earn money." Si Fang gritted his teeth as he repeated what all of them knew. He sighed but was the first to go forward and sign the contract with Jin thus setting an example.

Jin nodded his head sincerely as a thanks for his support. The store owners saw how the most conservative and most level headed person among all of them had decided to bet everything on this chance, they all felt that they should trust Jin a little more.

"We all will be hounding you for refunds if there's no profit to be made!" One of the food store owners shouted, and everyone laughed at that moment. Jin subsequently promised them and reinforced that they would not regret it.

As the meeting was finally adjourned, Jin laid back at his chair in the conference room and sighed heavily. "I guess it's a win today..." he wondered to himself as he stared at the ceiling for a moment.

This was barely the prelude of the battle. The worst had yet to come as Jin promised to get everything sorted out with all of his might in the next few days. "Time to call out the maximum number of Another Jins to start cracking with the work."

For a new Tiangong Shopping District and a brand new start for everyone.