

## Dungeon S 541

### Chapter 541 Extra: The Hamster, Frog and Salamander

Hamatarou slammed the Salamander down to the ground, pushing his claws further into it as he arrived into an enclosed empty room. He looked around for a moment and only then realised that there was something slimy in his mouth.

Hamatarou quickly spits it out, and the frog swordsman rolled on the floor, gasping for air. Despite all the saliva that stained his entire body (and his clothes), Gaeru struggled to stand up as he directed his sword towards Hamatarou.

"Is this how you treat your saviour?" The Hamster Prince turned back into a large hamster as he removed his hand and stepped on the wound of the Salamander underneath his claw.

"...You...you are the saviour? The one who gave us the Totem of Atem?" Gaeru lowered his sword for a moment as Hamatarou proudly nodded his head. However, announcing his true identity made the Salamander struggled even more under Hamatarou.

But instead of lowering his sword, Gaeru changed into a stance where Hamatarou felt an intent to kill coming right towards him. His sword had reached a position that would be optimal for an upper slash cut against enemies larger than Gaeru.

"Wait, wait! I am not your enemy! You are mistaken! I really did save you from that mess-"

"You are no saviour! You did not come to aid us in our time of peril!" The frog swordsman began to leap toward Hamatarou, and he was too slow to act against the attack.

But suddenly a mysterious figure entered Gaeru's path and intercepted the attack by parrying his sword away. "Is this an enemy as well? The Frog?" Qiu Yue, who had finished talking with Jin, happened to see that the room was immediately occupied by a large furry hamster and two other creatures.

The System allowed her to observe for a moment until she noticed things were not going as planned. The young woman decided to enter and protect Hamatarou. Before the Salamander could even speak properly, Qiu Yue plunged her sword into its head, and the Salamander died.

"Why- Why did you kill it? I was hoping to interrogate it!" Hamatarou complained as he saw the Frog, relentless in his attitude, picking up his sword again and aiming to kill Qiu Yue in front of it.

"How is this possible? You are not of any of the tribes I've known. I do not know what exactly you are, but if you are trying to defend him, then I can only consider you an enemy!" Gaeru shouted as he charged in once again only to have its attack easily deflected by the Red Panda cultivator.

"While I am not one to criticise, but your sword strike is not true. You obviously have reservations in your eyes despite your comments." Qiu Yue then proceed to break the sword with one strike with the usage of her cultivation powers.

Gaeru stepped back and drew out a short dagger he kept as a last resort. Both Hamatarou and Qiu Yue sighed at his unyielding behaviour.

"Sub System User Qiu Yue. Killing should prove to be the most efficient method of dealing with this nuisance." The System stated, and Qiu Yue agreed to it immediately.

"Wait- What? Hold on a moment. How is killing the most efficient metho-" Before Hamatarou finished talking, Qiu Yue already sprinted towards Gaeru and chopped him into half.

Nonetheless, she was surprised that he had managed to aim for her carotid artery as a last ditch effort while she was not looking. The aim was correct, but the cut was very shallow mainly because his dagger was equally blunt too.

"I see, so that little Frog had some skills too." Qiu Yue praised the deceased as she took out a chi regeneration potion and drank it on the spot. In the meantime, Hamatarou was absolutely speechless and furious to see the two dead bodies on the ground.

"... I can perhaps excuse you killing the Salamander Guard, as he would likely not have known too much and we could easily kidnap another one. But did you have to kill the frog?!" Hamatarou had no idea what was going on in the Red Panda's head.

"You are, without a doubt, capable of incapacitating him without the need for lethal force. We could have learned what happened to his village! If you kill the person I saved and the one I intended to capture, then what is the point of my actions?!" Hamatarou folded his tiny arms and reprimanded Qiu Yue heavily.

"Relax. Didn't I tell you, our magic and technology is way more advanced than what you could have imagined?" Qiu Yue replied and told Hamatarou to look around. The bodies disappeared, and instead, he saw an intact Salamander Guard and frog swordsman kneeling in front of Qiu Yue.

"This. This is the power of my Boss's magic." Qiu Yue announced as she requested the System to get them a table and chairs to sit and talk.

Eventually, Hamatarou learned more about the System which he was contracted too and the two that became minions for Jin. The Hamster Prince could not believe such a convenient...magical entity not only existed but was so readily available to be used by them.

"Now I sort of understand why you asked me to bring the suspects in." Hamatarou looked at the Salamander Guard who introduced himself the grandson of the great Edwardio. Hamatarou lied by saying that he vaguely remembered that his father had a royal guard with such a name. (To preserve their family's past honour, his father named him as Edwardio II. But ever since the passing of his father, he kept his name short instead.)

It had been around a century or maybe more (who could tell how many winters had passed, when surviving tomorrow was always a persistent problem) since he last faced his father who had not cared for his fate.

That was the reason why Hamatarou had assumed Qiu Yue and Lynn to be members of an entirely new species. He had personally confirmed that no humans existed in the current Giant World (at least not on their continent).

"I am honoured you remember my grandfather's name, Prince Hama. It has been years since his death." Edwardio seemed elated, and Hamatarou with a slightly guilty face told him to drop the title and to refer to him as Hamatarou, especially since the Druids had baptised him with this new name.

"I too apologise for my rash behaviour. I knew that you alone could not have prevented the inevitable death of my fellow village mates." Gaeru formally knelt and begged for forgiveness. Hamatarou quickly accepted and demanded him to stand. That was when he took his broken sword and pointed at the uncaring Salamander.

"However, I cannot forgive myself that I have to sit at the same table of my enemy. I wish to kill myself, knowing that I will have to work with one of those murderers in the future." Gaeru sounded enraged and sent the other party a deathly stare.

Qiu Yue figured that the Frog Swordsman behaved very much like the samurais of the past days where's one's principle was so rigid that they died fighting for their country or cause. She was entertaining the thought of whether to introduce him to Zeru or Lynn first. (She did think about Kraft too, but he was way too good at brainwashing...)

Oddly enough, the Salamander was experienced enough not to fall for such an obvious taunt. Edwardio ignored not only Gaeru, but his petty insult towards the Salamanders had no effect on him.

Ever since he was resurrected by the System, Edwardio could already feel that he had cut all allegiance to his fellow Salamanders. No one acted upon Gaeru's insult as well, making him slightly embarrassed by the many stares. After which, Gaeru croaked to break the silence, and he quietly placed his broken sword down while slowing moving his seat to the opposite end of the table.

Regardless, the Hamster Prince felt it was a good start and began to ask the table several questions. "Now that we have introduced ourselves perhaps we can finally talk about why the hell the Salamanders are acting this way," Hamatarou suggested with eyes looking at Salamander Guard Edwardio who coughed to clear his throat.

"Prince's orders. Hmm to be precise...The New King's Orders." Edwardio answered truthfully without any prompt from the System.

## **Chapter 542 Improved Half Masks**

"Please pull the red angled pulley at the side of your parachute pack in five, four, three..." Shi Zuo was instructed by the half mask he got at the start of this special mission.

Similar to the envisioned Mooogle Glasses, the mask was a visor filled with tons of information as if he was wearing an augmented reality headset. Shi Zuo felt like it was virtual reality, but it really wasn't.

They knew the dimensional instance was real and not a mere illusion. It was a pocket of time and space that separated itself from the 'real world'. If one were to stay in the dimensional instance, there would be no significant difference except the perception of time.

Of all the information portrayed, the most important segment Shi Zuo needed to take note off was the estimated health of his shown at the top right corner of the visor. The health of the Squad Members was also indicated right below of the cultivator's health bar.

Also, the bottom left corner had multiple icons which would light up when Shi Zuo glanced at it. The half mask was equipped with vision tracking and a voice recognition unit that enabled the cultivators to communicate with the visor in order to receive the information they needed at a moment's notice.

As of now, the half mask was instructing Shi Zuo on how to open his parachute. It even highlighted the part which needed to be pulled to get the parachute working. Of course, this half mask could not be operated without Yun in the vicinity. Removing the System out of the equation and the visor was as useful as a radio without reception.

Aside from the Squad function, the System was simultaneously learning and gathering information on the visors through this 'experimental' instance as well. Jin figured he might as well try the things that needed to be done while assisting his minions on Farming World.

Still, even though the information was presented all around the visors, it also had the feature to dim the HUD (Heads Up Display) interface and allow the cultivators to fight without obstruction on their current peripheral vision.

Jin did not want the cultivators to lose because they could not see their enemy due to the interference of the HUD interface. Other than that, the upgraded half mask was a welcome addition to the other cultivators going into battle.

Shi Zuo's parachute opened, and he managed to steer his parachute towards somewhere safe alongside his squad mates. Luo Bo was right behind him by about 40 metres or so, but the trouble came when the Demon Rats saw Xiong Da and Ruo Ying's descent.

The ranged Demon Rats immediately directed their weapons towards them and shot indiscriminately. There was no way Shi Zuo or Luo Bo could help them and communication were not possible since they were too far apart. (Thankfully, they had yet to encounter the Steam Tech copters the goblins saw during their scouting missions.)

"Control, can I communicate with Xiong Da or Ruo Ying?!" Shi Zuo asked in a panic, but the half mask was unable to do so without the aid of the magpies. (The visors introduced themselves initially as Control Supports which was why Shi Zuo and the rest called them as such too.)

"Damn, if we only had the magpies!" Shi Zuo sighed, but there was no time for him to be concerned about the other couple as he and Luo Bo had also been noticed by the Demon Rats. Luo Bo went in front of him and immediately shot an arrow at them.

The rabbit cultivator did not waste time with a regular arrow shot. Instead, it was one infused with tremendous chi which Luo Bo had been storing ever since she descended from the plane.

"Intermediate Bow Art! Lightning Rabbit Dashing Arrow!." The arrow sped through the open fields like a burst of lightning, and upon hitting one of the Demon Rats, it zigzagged through the opponents. Like a rabbit dashing through the grasslands to evade its predators, the arrows struck the rats who never seen such a magical attack before.

Not only the demon rats electrocuted by the attack, but the steam tech they were using, explodes from the overcharge. Most were minor explosions except for those who were carrying Steam Tech that had a larger piece of Litoride on them. Those unlucky ones Demon Rats exploded into smithereens, creating an impact large enough that took out their surrounding Demon Rats.

The series of explosions gave Shi Zuo and Luo Bo enough time to dash with their chi infused boots as they created some distance for safety. They then noticed a winged dark knight flying towards them. Shi Zuo almost attacked him when he got nearer, but Luo Bo ordered him to not harm it, indicating that he was the allies that Yun talked about.

"Are you the reinforcement our master sent?" The Dark Templar asked as he gracefully landed right beside them, and they nodded their heads when they saw his wings spread and protected them from some stray projectiles from the Demon Rats.

"While meagre in quantity, you guys sure pack a punch." The Dark Templar introduced himself as Mou, one of the lieutenants working under Commander Zieg. "We are temporarily moving out for a retreat. We've done enough damage for the day. If you wish to come with us, we can formulate a battle strategy together."

"What?" Luo Bo said as she stretched herself a little with a new arrow in hand. "Retreat? I am just getting started."

"... I see. Full of energy. Go on then. We will reorganise ourselves, and if luck has it, we might meet on the battlefield within the same day." The Dark Templar bowed as a slight tremor could be felt from where they were at.

Unable to defend himself in midair, Xiong Da ripped off his damaged parachute and went to perform the improved version of his Grand Slam Fissure, which he had finally mastered throughout the months of training in Jin's dungeons. Previously it was a Hippo style, but now, Xiong Da managed to combine it with his Warclub, making it more deadly as it was now considered as a Weapon Arts.

He and his Warclub were like a raging meteor that slammed into the ground, producing a shockwave deadly enough for pieces of the ground to fly up and kill dozens of Demon Rats that had been shooting at him. Although Ruo Ying's parachute was thankfully not too damaged by the ranged attacks, she was nearly blown away by the impact of Xiong Da's Grand Slam Fissure.

Thus, she had no choice but to execute her Intermediate Chain Arts, Descending Chains of the Egret to grab onto an Ogre Demon Rat. Her newly bought chains extended like there would be no end to thanks to one of Octofussy's newest inscription creations.

As the chains wrapped around the Ogre Demon Rat, the chains shrunk and reduced in length, allowing Ruo Ying to fly towards the Ogre Demon Rat and give it a kick towards its face. It caused a critical neck fracture but also enabled Ruo Ying to land safely. Their squadmates, on the other hand, landed right beside her without much aid from the parachutes.

"Time for some pest extermination." Ruo Ying pushed her half Egret mask up a little as she saw the Demon Rats trying to surround her and Xiong Da due to their flashy entrance.

## Chapter 543 Modular Gearbox Attachments

The modified gearbox proved to be a tremendous boon for the Tiger Princess. She actually devised a way to land quickly and swiftly to the ground. One of her attachments was similar to a wingsuit in case she needed to jump from one building to the next. (Did she perhaps want to compensate for not being able to do this feat on her own?)

Thus, a gliding attachment mechanism had been inserted into the gearbox suit right before she jumped out. After achieving terminal velocity, Yang Ling released the gliding wingsuit, not bothering with the parachute and glided away from the current battlefield towards an open grassland (presumably a farm field).

Oddly enough, her own main objective was less taking part in the fight but rather to adjust her gearbox attachments for the fight. Yang Ling did not particularly care which one of those two couples won the plushie, no, the thing she came here for was much needed data for her attachments but she could not get it if she were dropped in the midst of battle.

Not to mention, the current iteration of her wingsuit had a minute design flaw. It was like an escape tool attached to the gearbox, rendering her useless for at least a good full minute unless she decides to use her psychic powers instead. Still, her mental capabilities were meant to manipulate a single individual rather than controlling a massive crowd.

The Tiger Princess removed the Wingsuit attachment and replaced it with combat capable items. Modular in nature, most of the accessories weren't hard to set up. It felt a bit like a plug and play, so it was easy enough to change them up for battle.

Once Yang Ling felt ready for the battle, she took a deep breath and proceeded forward. The second attachment she was trying out was what she called the 'Ostrich Legs Attachment'. As the Tiger Princess ran, her gearbox attachment module slowly spread out and increased in length, giving her the form of an ostrich running.

With the tremendous strides it was making, Yang Ling did not have to run hard and fast as the attachment already took care of this. The empty grasslands were suitable for letting her test its top speed, and Yang Ling wanted to learn how durable it would be in combat.

Surprisingly, her half mask had tools of measurement that allowed her to record her experiments making her job ten times easier. Yang Ling had been worried that she would have to take out all the recording instruments she brought along in her ring. She even conjured up the ridiculous idea of using her battle squad mates to take down the results for her.

"I really have to ask Jin how he got his hands on such an advanced piece of equipment and without selling it in the real world!" Yang Ling noted to herself as she noticed that her visor was already measuring her current speed exceeding 90 kilometres per hour.

"I will have to send the researchers a bonus, it met the expected optimal value without any issues... Time to bring it up a notch." Yang Ling bent down a little and widened her strides more although she started to feel the strain from her back due to her previous handicap.

"Warning, Cultivator Yang Ling. Do not overstrain yourself." The Visor advised as it also indicated that her 'health' bar was diminishing slowly due to her pushing the limits.

"Just a bit further and we will be able to kick one of the Demon Rats with top speed force." Yang Ling smiled as she dismissed her visor's advice. True enough, she inserted a mix of chi and mana to focus her strides, which caused the Demon Rats to think that an abomination or demon was rushing towards them.

"As if I do not have enough disruptions in a day!" One of the Demon Rat Officers complained as he called out the human slaves to intercept the attack. But before he could make an announcement, he felt a slight tug at the side of his head and soon after, his body was left standing while his head disappeared completely.

The impact kick of the Ostrich Leg Attachment had caused the Demon Rat officer's head to dissipate into nothing but blood splat all over his soldiers. Yang Ling immediately jumped up as she kept the Ostrich Leg Attachments and switched it to Tiger Leg Attachment. Her other parts of the body had also equipped similar attachments pertaining to the Tiger.

With her half mask on, she looked like a human superhero in a tiger armoured suit. Her gauntlet attachments were like claws protruding out of a large shield from both sides of her. There was even a tail attachment near her coccyx, and Yang Ling crouched while analysing the Demon Rats that were stunned momentarily at the absurdity of the situation.

Suddenly, one of the Demon Rats recklessly charged forward and without moving, Yang Ling beheaded it even before it could use its Steam Tech weapon on her. It was a new psychic technique which she learnt how to utilise alongside the cultivation of the Royal Zodiac Tiger.

By infusing her telekinesis powers with her killer chi, it enabled Yang Ling to create a sort of wind slash with her mind. However, it could only be used within two metres of her and yet that kill alone had scared the Demon Rats out of their wits until another officer who was oblivious to the current situation, ordered them to rush towards her.

He used his Steam Tech to send the command to all of his rats, and at the same time utilising the powers of amplifying strength via his steam Tech with the aid of Litoride. Yang Ling could sense that the aura around her became more toxic and the Tiger Princess believed that she had to kill that particular Demon Rat Officer to stop the amplification of strength.

Hence, she jumped up to have a more unobstructed view of the Demon Rat Officer, and in midair, her legs attachment boosted her once towards the Demon Rat Officer.

Yet, that officer smirked.

It was not a ruse at all as an Ogre Demon Rat suddenly emerged from the ground protecting the Demon Rat Officer by throwing a punch towards the flying tiger princess. Yang Ling reactively curled herself up, and the shields on both her arms and legs blocked the attack, but it caused her to fly out of the Demon Rat crowd.

The rank and files did not hesitate, knowing that it was the best opportunity to kill her when she seemed incapacitated by the recent attack from the Ogre Demon Rat. "Gearbox has taken considerable damage.

10 seconds required to reboot the system." The visor warned as there was a percentage bar in the middle of her HUD interface.

"Fuck! No! I –" Yang Ling closed her eyes to avoid seeing the rushing spears that were seconds away from here.

\*Clang~!\*

The noise of a broad metal shield clashed against the sounds of dozens of spears hitting it. "Lady Yang Ling, sorry we could not catch up with you on time." A manly figure said as he tried his best to hold back against the multiple attacks at one go. Suddenly the rattling of a machine gun went off, and it lightened the load of the man holding the shield.

Only then did Yang Ling realise that she still had a Squad with her and that these forgotten AI squad mates had just saved her skin.

## **Chapter 544 White Knight, Black Panda**

After his hopefully final meeting of the day, Jin returned mentally exhausted to the Dungeon Maker. Not wanting to go out to somehow ending up in yet another lengthy discussion with anybody else, he checked up on the status of the experiment he placed his cultivators in.

"How are the visors working for them?" Jin asked as he brought up personal monitors on all of the cultivators in that region. The System was busy analysing all the meaningful information they were gathering via this method, so it took a bit longer for it to answer Jin's question.

After calculating the amount of resources gained by killing the rats, his customers were currently inflicting more kills than his dark templars.

"That shouldn't be too much of a surprise. Normally, those Dark Templars could possibly take down the Demon Rats in a ratio of 1:6 based on their estimated stats. For them to hit and run around the clock, as well as the surviving these quick strikes, I am more than happy that it works out." Jin said while running the statistics for the predicted number of kills required for his new Dark Templars to increase their abilities or 'levels' as the System dubbed them.

Jin simply referred them as Grades since he was able to relate to that better. At the moment, the Dark Templars were averaging around Grade 2 with their leader being at Grade 2 Peak, reaching towards Grade 3. Having gained a strong base followers as his foundation with the aid of Dark Templar Commander Zieg, Lord Wolte's current power level reached to Grade 5.

If not for subordinating Baphomet, Lord Wolte would never have attained Grade 5 this easily. And with an increase in power, it seemed that he had another form which he had yet to use when the Metal Slug Tank was fighting against the Demon Rats.

The Dungeon Supplier knew about it since the monster's stats and abilities were all detailed within Jin's Monster App on his phone. Jin just did not have time to read it properly and only recently found it useful to go through the nearly non exhaustive list of his ever increasing and evolving monster base.



There were not only combat details but surprisingly there was a fondness level in it as well. The System stated that the more time Jin spent with particular monsters and granted their desires, the better their abilities could be strengthened too.

However, when the dungeon supplier asked how exactly it was being strengthened, the System was unable to answer it. He did not know whether it was a work in progress feature by the System or something it just couldn't or wouldn't explain in detail.

But one thing was for sure, he believed it was hilarious. "Something like the power of Friendship? Did you forget that we kind of chained them up and made them work for us? If anything wouldn't Stockholm-Syndrome be the more appropriate term?" Jin asked the System, and the almighty entity did not reply immediately.

"Regardless, it is imperative for User to study more about his monsters, so you have the chance to utilise your monsters in a fight with higher efficiency." The System countered as Jin was gearing himself for the instance portal jump.

Instead of using the Squad feature he introduced to the customers, Jin decided to experiment with the Black Goo matter he had accumulated within these few weeks and shaped them into Pandas. Besides, Jin had no need for Squad mates for he already has an army worth of monsters under his command. (Thankfully, he was not some evil dungeon master, or his world could possibly be in some serious trouble down the line.)

The System also informed Jin that his phone was now able to create a temporary dimensional instance after the System had made a few impromptu tweaks.

"The radius of the phone generated Dimensional Instance is considered inadequate, approximately 200 metres at most. However, the instance is mobile, and you are able to move around with the dimensional instance. User should be able to make use of monsters' clones in the future wherever he goes. An additional increase to the range requires the Living Brain of the Mechanical Titan in the Mecha World." The System replied with emphasis on the Living Brain and Jin nodded his head with a little annoyance.

Once Jin was ready, the System called on Yun to open a portal, allowing him to enter and meet her on the far end of the grasslands where they were hundreds of metres away from the main fight. Jin could see that his cultivators were already getting tired from the constant fighting.

If not for their squadmates, it was very likely that they would have been defeated a long time ago.

"Xiong Da's team have totalled 250+ kills while Luo Bo's team have yet to rea- Correction Cultivator Shi Zuo has just killed the 200th Demon Rat. Both groups were initially hunting apart from each other, but with time and fatigue setting in, all teams gradually started to fall back and stick together near each other." Yun reported to Jin as she yawned a little from all the observing.

"How about Yang Ling?" Jin was concerned that the Tiger Princess was nowhere to be seen.

"She retreated not too long ago. I don't believe she really cares about the competition for the plushie. Instead, she's been fighting solo. After an amazing display of skills at the start, she took a bad hit which nearly got her killed."

"I took the liberty of controlling her squadmates and managed to rescue her at the last moment. (Without her knowing of course.) The state of the Gearbox has been deteriorating ever since, and it looks like a mess now. " Yun complained as she took her phone out, projecting a hologram that showed video of what the System had recorded on her.

"I doubt the princess can push it any further. Still considering she was fighting by herself, her kill score was topping close to 170 kills. After her near death experience, she showcased great talent and utilised her squad better than the other four, even switching their weapons on the go." Yun gave her observation to Jin.

"Thank you for your actions, you spared her the embarrassment of getting killed first. Then I guess it's up to me now to help the tiger princess a little." Jin smiled as he climbed on top of one of his Black Sludge Pandas.

Surprisingly, they were not sticky. If anything, it had already been moulded into a Panda. It's breathing, the feel of its fur, everything was nearly the same except for its colour.

With a group of Pandas running behind him, Jin suddenly thought of deploying mounts in the future but wondered how hard it would be to accommodate every single cultivator. Unless they used their 'mini' pets that were floating with them in the Store Instance.

"Oh, hmm. That could actually be quite useful. If I remember correctly Qiu Yue's report mentioned that the hamster prince's Totem of Atem could also enlarge himself. If we use that method on the pets, it shouldn't cost us that much." Jin thought to himself and then realised he could also ask Octofussy to create a temporary inscription charm to enlarge the pets.

"Then I can put a price on a permanent enlargement inscription charm and shrinking inscription charm. Or perhaps made them into a card! Oh!! Racing Service Instance! Why did I not think of that sooner?!" Jin suddenly had the urge to jump back to the Dungeon Maker yet when he saw from afar the poor condition Yang Ling was in defending herself against a skilled Demon Rats with Steam Tech Gauntlets he couldn't leave her there.

"The White Knight on a Black ...Panda coming forth!" Jin shouted loudly, attracting the attention of the Demon Rats as well as the Tiger Princess and her squad.

## **Chapter 545 Black Sludge Panda**

"...White Knight....Black Panda... WHAT?" Yang Ling looked at the side and suddenly saw dust rifling up in the distance. Unfortunately, she was in no position to get too distracted with the opponent in front of her being one of the strongest Demon Rat she had fought up till now.

The Demon Rat in front of her did not waste any breath. Instead, he let his fists do the talking. Yang Ling somehow managed to block it with her Tiger Shield Claw Attachments, but it seemed its durability had almost reached its limit.

Right now, the Tiger Princess could only hope that she did not mishear the Panda word since there could only be one cultivator Yang Ling knew that would appear here and spew that animal name out.

Seeing that the Tiger Princess was in a major pinch, he quickly opened his mouth, and a mixture of black and white Maqi flew out, annihilating the Demon Rats that were waiting for the chance to pounce on her.

Jin did not realise how stupidly strong his Panda Yawning had become ever since he had unlocked the Maqi in him. With such a high amount of devastation caused by one Yawning beam, the Demon Rats had directed their animosity towards the new challenger. Suddenly, a new variant of Demon Rats appeared with two Steam Tech shoulder cannons on their shoulders as they were ordered to aim towards Jin.

The dungeon supplier reacted by sending his other Black Sludge Pandas right in front of him in order to counter against the cannon projectiles. With each volley of fire, the Steam Tech Cannons roared at such a volume even Xiong Da and gang were wondering what was happening at the other battlefield.

It was then the Black Sludge Pandas performed as instructed. Each one of them jumped to counter the flying projectiles. With Jin's Pandaromic Eyes and his enhanced manipulation of Maqi, he was able to move the Black Sludge Pandas to the predicted path of the projectiles, and they swallowed the shells into their sludge bodies.

"Have a taste of your own medicine." Jin smiled as he fiddled with his fingers in the air and commanded his Black Sludge Pandas to return the metal shells back to the Demon Rats. (With, of course, some additional surprise.)

When the shells were in the Black Sludge Pandas, Jin rotated them viciously within their bodies via Maqi. He believed that when the shells were spewed out, they would be flying back at around twice or thrice the speed they were fired at from the Demon Rat's cannons.

True enough, some of the shells flew too fast and too high that they ended up missing the Demon Rats' army and hit somewhere further down the grasslands.

Luckily the rest of the shells were more or less a direct hit (Considering the number of rats gathered), killing multiple Demon Rats including those who had the Shoulder Cannons on. Jin also noticed that when the Litoride powered shells exploded against those Steam Tech equipment, it caused a chain explosion to happen.

"So...Litoride against Litoride explodes even harder?" Jin asked himself and Peppers suddenly stood behind him and observed the explosion.

"Looks like it! Maybe we can conduct some experiment back in the labs with all the Steam Tech we've collected!" Peppers suggested, but when Jin turned his head, she had disappeared into thin air.

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"I thought she wanted to see more of the explosions rather than the synergy of the litoride." Jin spoke to himself, which made Peppers openly complain in the System channel.

"Well, duh! Those explosions don't even reach a 0.05 score on my Explosion scale of perfect 10." Peppers replied and told Jin to prepare something more beautiful for her to watch.

"How about no?" Jin countered as he saw that his attacks had been sufficient for Yang Ling to fall back.

"You are no fun at all! I miss the old Jin. He loved lots of explosions." Peppers commented.

"What old Jin?! I am still the same!" The Panda charged towards the Demon Rat Brawler and bit into his arm, tearing it off his body while Jin waved awkwardly at Yang Ling.

"Pfft! You'll see what you get if you ignore me further!" Peppers pouted in the background while Jin apologised for his tardiness.

"These black bears are your squadmates?" Yang Ling scoffed at the colour of the bear even though it was obviously shaped like a Panda. Meanwhile, the brawler was screaming considering his arm was bitten off by a weird large black bear.

Yet, Yang Ling didn't show any mercy and stabbed him through the guts with her Tiger Shield Claw attachment as she sent some chi and mana, causing the Claw to vibrate violently and cut the brawler into multiple pieces.

"I certainly had enough of killing Demon Rats for today." Yang Ling sounded exhausted as they saw the Demon Rats coming through the smoke of the attacks which Jin returned to them. They did not care about their dead and instead moved forward, wanting to kill the humans right in front of them no matter what.

"You sure? It doesn't seem like they had enough of us." Jin joked as he raised his hand out from his Black Sludge Panda Mount. Yang Ling did not hesitate to grab it and climbed on the Panda. The moment Yang Ling was behind him, her fatigue caused her to not waste any time in putting her head onto his back and clasped her hands over his torso.

Jin did not expect that but kept mum about it for now as he commanded his Pandas to move towards Xiong Da and Luo Bo. The rest of Yang Ling's Squad also retreated on top of the other Black Sludge Pandas as they ran towards the Pandawans.

When Luo Bo saw Boss Jin coming towards her, she felt as if that more or less signified that they are approaching the end of the challenge. "In that case, just one last shot to go all out." Luo Bo thought. She quickly unplugged the cap of a chi regeneration potion and gulped it down in two mouthfuls before throwing it towards an incoming Demon Rat to slow it down.

"Shield! Protect me! Staff, further enhance my chi output! Wand, do as much distraction as you can!" Luo Bo shouted at her squadmates. The rabbit cultivator hadn't put in much coming up with their names and referred to them by the weapons they were using.

The squadmate with two shields equipped slammed down in front of Luo Bo as if to protect her from ranged attacks while he went bare fist against the Demon Rats that came near her. The double staff squadmate, on the other hand, slammed both of his staff down and started to gather the surrounding magic and turn it into chi for Luo Bo to use.

Oh and the dual wand squad member? She was shooting her magic arrows like a gunman on drugs. (Whether they hit or not was another matter.) In fact, Luo Bo loved the craziness in the wand wielding squad member as she helped to distract the rats from their incoming doom.

Luo Bo's new advanced weapon technique.

#### **Chapter 546 Rabbit Geyser Blasting Arrow**

No one would be able to doubt that the Rabbit Cultivator had trained hard not only in Jin's Dungeons but outside of it too when Luo Bo's Cultivation Grade 6 was displayed brilliantly above. (One which even made Xiong Da very surprised at her cultivation grade since the others were still Grade 5 at best, and him at Grade 4.)

The rabbit silhouettes were not just jumping around her head but instead, pulling the bowstring in unison as two long rabbit ears appeared right on top of the bow's handles.

"Advanced Bow Art! Rabbit Geyser Blasting Arrow!"

The moment she released her bowstring, the arrow flew straight into the crowd of Demon Rats amassing themselves to defend against the immensely shiny projectile heading their way. However, they soon realised that the magically charged arrow flew over their heads and the rats thought the worst was over. It then flew further until the chi energy within it dissipated, and it became a regular arrow, which one of the Demon Rat was able to block with ease.

"Hah! What an archer!" One of the Demon Rats commented sarcastically as they continued to move forward to finish off the archer and her friends especially now when they looked thoroughly exhausted. Unfortunately, what they did not know was that the attack was far from over.

A few seconds later, the ground atop the arrow's pathway started to glow a little. And when the Demon Rats finally noticed the shimmer underneath, it was already too late. Rainbow coloured geyser like explosions emerged from the ground, instantly killing any Demon Rats within the vicinity of the Geysers.

While it lasted only for seconds, that particularly advanced bow art technique had successfully annihilated a reasonably good number of Demon Rats which made Xiong Da worry that he might have been overtaken by Luo Bo.

Thus, he too was going to give it his all against the Demon Rats, but Jin tapped him on his shoulders and spoke two words out. "Time's up."

Within the blink of an eye, the Hippo Cultivator could visually see that he had returned to the conference room instance with his weapon missing from his hand. Xiong Da then looked up and around to see his weapon was on Jin's hand.

"Oh, come on!" Xiong Da sighed as he regretted not taking the opportunity like Luo Bo had done. Regardless, all the cultivators who went to the Farming World were dead beat. They could hardly stand properly, and the moment they took a sit on those comfy chairs in the Conference Room instance, their legs gave way immediately.

"Any of you guys need to hit up the luxury recovery instance? ... I can also call for a Panda Nurse to check on you?" Jin offered as he was looking at his phone, seemingly tabulating the scores for their special challenge.

"Hmm...that's quite a surprise." Jin looked startled when he saw the total scores on his screen. "Yun, are we counting the officers as additional points or standard one point for each rat killed?"

"Does it really matter?" Yun asked uninterested as she was sitting down with her head staring at the ceiling for no particular reason.

"In a way... Yeah." Jin answered as he shrugged his shoulders towards Yun.

"Then just pick a coin or something and let it decide. No use thinking too much about it. It's a silly challenge anyways." Yun decided casually, but suddenly two strong proponents yelled towards Jin.

"Hey! You are saying you plan to let a coin decide the fate of that plushie?! Don't let me go to you and bash your skull into pieces!" Xiong Da threatened, but he was currently glued to his chair, obviously too tired to move an inch away from comfort.

"Too bad for you it's my challenge, and I can change things on a whim too. Jin stuck his tongue out playfully at his customers which made them whined loudly from their chairs.

"Boooossssssss!!! Don't do this to us! I worked hard, you know! Really really hard!" Luo Bo was wailing until Jin could see that she was on the verge of tearing. (However, Shi Zuo was signalling from the back, warning Jin not to take pity on her.)

"Okay. I hear you guys. Coin toss then." And the entire room was filled with more groaning. (Except for Yang Ling who was giggling at the close knitted interaction between Jin and his regulars.)

"Heads and the Demon Rat Officers will have additional points. Tails and each Demon Rat earns you guys just one point." Jin announced as he closed his eyes and flipped the coin up high. He would let the coin drop on the table to ensure he didn't manipulate it in any way.

They followed the coin with their eyes as it flew high up and accidentally hit the ceiling. ... It got stuck in the middle of the intersection of two fake ceiling covers. Jin was kinda speechless while Yun placed her palm to her temple.

"Unbelievably stupid," Yun said as she took out another gold coin from her storage ring and threw it towards the stuck coin. (As her coin was somehow older, it was easy to make the distinction based on the wear and tear.) After which, she decided to leave the room to make herself a cup of coffee, not wanting to stay to watch the results.

That coin finally dropped to the table as it bounced a little before spinning for a while longer and landed on Heads. For some reason, all the cultivators demanded a new rethrow, but Jin did not accede to their demands and went straight to declaring the winner of the special challenge.

"Not much of a surprise here but the winner is....Yang Ling!" Jin had waited for a second to let them suffer the anticipation, but the result made both couples drop their jaw to the ground. Even Yang Ling, who had been enjoying her spectating position, got startled by the fact.

"Eh? Me?" Yang Ling asked for a confirmation and Jin nodded his head while he placed the results on a simple excel sheet (which was projected on the screen) for everyone to see. It took them a while to digest the facts. As soon she recovered from the shock, Luo Bo called foul play.

"IS SHE YOUR NEW GIRLFRIEND?! ARE YOU TRYING TO IMPRESS HER?!" Luo Bo shouted at the top of her voice despite her posture in the chair.

"Wait, what?! No! I was just doing this as a jo-"

"You!!! This despicable Boss! I know you want to impress your new date, but you can't use us as mere collaterals! I demand compensation!" Ruo Ying who had been relatively neutral up until now had begun to complain about how unfair this whole challenge turned out to be.

"I AM SUING YOU! Xiong Da, please make this case a pro bono for me." Luo Bo asked her plushie rival, and Xiong Da readily agreed to team up against Jin.

"With much pleasure. Besides, the Tigers have a lot of money. Let's make sure we go back rich." The hippo lawyer promised with a smirk on his face as he eyed Jin with unwarranted hatred.

### **Chapter 547 Results of the Special Challenge**

"Alright! Alright! Relax I was merely joking. It was super fun and scary at the same time to joke with you guys!" Jin switched out the excel sheet for the one with proper scoring.

"THE PLUSHIE IS NOT A JOKE!" Both Xiong Da and Luo Bo managed to gather their strength to stand up and shouted simultaneously... before dropping back to their seats.

"Obviously I underestimated both of your desires for Giant Plushies," Jin told them to calm down and started explaining the stats obtained by the System to the cultivators.

"If we go by the number of kills, Xiong Da, Ruo Ying and their squadmates combined killed a total of 314 Demon Rats. On the other hand, Luo Bo's team had a final kill count of 286 Demon Rats. Without that final attack, you would have been hovering at around 250 Demon Rats or so." Jin summarised, and Xiong Da seems very satisfied by the final score.

"However, since we decided that those Demon Rat officers matter, Luo Bo would have killed an equivalent of 406 Demon Rats while Xiong Da's new score reaches barely 350. That is assuming one Demon Rat Officer is worth about twenty Demon Rats, and higher ranks are worth more." Jin explicitly showed the type and kind of Demon Rat Officers they each killed.

"Oh...so you mean that my Bow Arts managed to kill those leaders?" Luo Bo asked, and Jin nodded his head.

"Xiong Da had been mainly dealing with the rank and files as they were swarming him and his squad non stop." Jin replied and also broke down the number of Demon Rats each of their squadmates killed.

"Like I said, this is still experimental, so the squad mate's teamwork is still not up to par... at least not to my expectations." Jin reminded them, but Yang Ling raised her hand and objected to this.

"For a level one Squad, I think it's more than enough. If you tweak it too well, you may start hurting the cultivator more instead of helping." Yang Ling said, and Jin understood what she was talking about.

"I see. I will look through the data thoroughly and take your opinion into consideration." Jin agreed.

"Sooooooooooooo whaaaaatt isssss the verdiccctttt?" Luo Bo asked impatiently, and Jin sighed as he told them to wait a minute to get their plushies. With a snap of a finger, he disappeared from the conference room instance giving the two couples a chance for a round of rapid fire questions towards Yang Ling. It was as if their energy returned when it came to Boss Jin's romance life.

"You dating Boss?" Xiong Da raised his hand and asked Yang Ling, but she was speechless for a moment.

"Nope. She wants to date Boss." The Love Expert Luo Bo immediately saw through her weakness.

"But Boss does not want to date her?" Shi Zuo started to query.

"Though I feel Boss has at least some obligations with her." Ruo Ying started to pitch into the discussion.

"Haiss, I bet Boss is too focused on his work that he feels that a relationship is not his main priority right now." Luo Bo shook her head as it slowly drops to the table. She felt disappointed that Jin was missing out on something good.

All this time, Yang Ling couldn't even say a word despite the fact that the discussion was all about her. It was as if she was muted by her ...guilt? Or were her desires so plain for them to see through? Shi Zuo suddenly noticed that Yang Ling was quite uncomfortable about the situation, and told Luo Bo to stop.

Yet, that little nosy rabbit was not stopping at all. After playing Cupid for her good old friend Bin Yong, the Beetle Cultivator and Jia Le, the Bellflower Cultivator and later aiding in Xiong Da's affairs, Luo Bo felt confident she was able to give a helping hand to the Tiger Princess.

However, unlike the other two, Luo Bo gave a disclaimer. "I don't know how much he is willing to invest in romance... honestly, sometimes I think that his head is filled with ideas of expansions. Especially now when he has a whole freaking town mall."

"Come to think of it, Boss really does expand rather quickly. I mean, for him to have the funds to create all of this within a few months. It's kind of respectable in a way too. It feels like ages ago when he was just a small dungeon supplier store with just a couple of instances, even though it's just been months. " Shi Zuo noted which made everyone nod their head.

"I think that -" Before Yang Ling was able to tell them about her thoughts, Jin returned. This time all of the cultivators' eyes brightened up, and their energy levels peaked to the maximum.

PLUSHIES!!!

"Everyone will be getting one plushie each. It's a thank you for all the efforts in participating in this special experiment. The data you helped gather will work wonders to improve on the concept." Jin smiled as he first passed a giant rabbit plushie to Luo Bo.

The Rabbit Cultivator squealed in excitement as she thanked Boss Jin profusely for the price. The giant fluffy rabbit plushie was at least 1.5 times taller than her, and when she hugged it tightly, it felt as if the rabbit plushie curled up towards her.

Like a mother hugging her little child.



As for Xiong Da, he had already received a custom plushie, so instead, he got the Fox Giant Plushie whereas Ruo Ying got the Snake Plushie. (She did not mind at all, as it felt extremely comfortable when held it like a bolster.)

"I haven't forgotten about you, Shi Zuo. Here is a customised monkey plushie, but its erm toy size. I did not have the time to really make a large one." Jin apologised as he passed a toy monkey plushie which was the size of a baby. The moment Shi Zuo held on it, he could feel that the ache on his shoulders was released.

"YOU MADE THESE?" Luo Bo and Xiong Da exclaimed at once, and Jin stared at them for a moment.

"Erm...I did contract someone to make this, just that I figured in some way or another...you guys would be vying for more." Jin tried to make up an excuse on the spot, yet both of those plushie maniacs could sniff that particular lie out of him. They then stared at him for a long time until the dungeon supplier gave up and used his last resort.

"TRADE SECRET!"

## **Chapter 548 Reward For Yang Ling**

By using that dreaded excuse, the cultivators gave up on their questioning. They all knew that it was impossible to get anything more out of Jin whenever he resorted to his 'Trade Secrets' and were ready to leave the instance until the Rabbit cultivator noticed something amiss.

"We all helped you with your little challenge, so how come the Tiger Princess didn't get one?" Luo Bo asked loudly, and Jin bitterly laughed in return. Yang Ling blushed a little and said she did not need the plushie. (Although Luo Bo could see that she wanted the same as the rest of the cultivators too. Who doesn't want a customised plushie from Jin's store!? They probably have yet to know the magic it contains.)

"All I wanted was some battle data for my prototype suit. It's fine even if I don't get the plushie." Yang Ling insisted, but Luo Bo ...persuasion skills were scarier. (To the point, Jin asked System to create a mental note not to provide such plushie challenges again with Luo Bo in the participation pool.)

"Boss, you do have it, don't you?" Luo Bo stared at Jin for a moment, and before he could reply, Shi Zuo dragged his girlfriend by the ear and out of the instance. Xiong Da, who could read the situation understood immediately, thanked Jin for his challenge before also hurrying away.

Once everyone was gone, leaving only Jin and Yang Ling in the room, a period of awkward silence settled between them.

"Sigh... alright I do have something for you. It's not a plushie, but I suppose you might prefer this over it." Jin was the first to speak, and he took out a large metal suitcase placing it on the table. Yang Ling came forth and watched Jin click it opened.

Only to reveal a brand new Gearbox suit.

"I hope you'll like it. As you might recall when you initially asked me to help out with your demonstration we were kinda short on time, so the one I gave you was a rushed model... Anyway, my researchers had a lot of fun creating it, and in the meantime, they also started modifying it." Jin explained as he looked at the nearly busted Gearbox suit that Yang Ling was wearing. Yet instead of trying out his the gearbox suit, the tiger princess went straight to the specification sheet manual.

"I see..." Yang Ling noticed a significant increase in the power output and a better metal composition which she did not believe to be possible with such innovative methods. When she picked a piece up, Yang Ling realised how light it was compared to the one she was using.

However was it also durable? She was unsure about that as she threw one of the pieces with all of her might and it startled Jin for a while. The piece cracked the wall panels, and Yang Ling went forward to pick it up. "Not bad. It is rather solid for something this light."

"You could have given me an advance warning that you were going to do that..." Jin grimaced and Yang Ling bit back at his sentence.

"Same to you too. You didn't give me any warning that you were going to give me such a pleasant present." Yang Ling said as she retrieved the piece and put it back into the suitcase.

"You sure you want to give this to me? It must be rather expensive making it? I mean, with all your expenses. Wait...UNLESS YOU-" Yang Ling's face turned rather black as she gasped as the possibility. "YOU DIDN'T! ...did you?!"

"No! I swear, apart from you and me not a single human on Earth possesses any of these custom made Gearbox products!" Jin gulped his saliva as he spoke the truth.

"Not a single human on Earth, you say?" Yang Ling was a little suspicious on his rather strange choice of words, but she could sense an aura of truth through the use of the psychic powers. She noticed it was getting harder to read Jin each time they met.

Though she was diligently training her powers in that regard, it seemed that the dungeon supplier was also keeping pace with his own training to not get affected by it and she could not really fault him for that.(... If only she knew, that it was mostly Pei protecting him although its the System that doing her work right now. If she were present right now, she'd probably tell Jin 'You owe me one.')

It was easier for her to read other people. Luo Bo, for example, was sincere in wanting to help Yang Ling in her endeavour to get into Jin's pants whereas rest was merely joining for the fun of it. Yet, the Tiger Princess did not say a single word at all about it.

Also, was it because she could not read Jin that she felt this way about him? She didn't have an answer for this yet.

However, what Luo Bo mentioned wasn't exactly wrong. Jin was indeed not looking to have any romantic relationship at the moment, and Yang Ling also had her own agendas. After Yang Ling discovered that she could walk again, it didn't take long for her father to learn of this as well.

The Tiger Lord began giving her more responsibilities than her two elder brothers because of their narrow mindedness in wanting to become the next Tiger Head.

"Then I assume this is a bribe?" Yang Ling curled her lips as if wanting to trap Jin in another awkward situation. As expected, Jin sighed and nodded his head.

"... I at least hope you can believe that I didn't intend for it to become one. Your dad came by just now, and he wanted to proceed ahead with the combined military and police training exercise for the monster horde simulation. I am totally on board for it, but it's just that he pushed the deadline way too near for comfort." Jin tried not making himself sound too whiny, and Yang Ling stopped him.

"You want to know why he's pressing you for the exercise, right? I believe I do know the answer. What did he say about Northern Shenzhen status?" Yang Ling questioned.

"He told me everything is all fine in the northern forests and mountains for now. He seemed to be more worried about a coastal attack." He replied, though a bit confused as he saw Yang Ling started to ponder over something.

"Really? Hmm. That information kind of contradicts what I learned..." Yang Ling murmured to herself before she looked at Jin with a serious look.

"What I am telling you will be confidential and can't leave this room." She said as she had accepted the improved customised prototype Gearbox and stored it in her ring.

"Monsters are getting more rampant in the northern forests, but the Border Guards are still able to keep them under control so far. Still, there were times where the monster remains got possessed by demons. We do not know if it is a deliberate act, especially since demons do not appear as often until recently." Yang Ling revealed to him though it made Jin frown hard. If this was true, then it meant that the JODE organisation had purposely avoided sharing this information with him.

He did not like to be blindsided, and it was one thing to let him create the centre and work it for them, but it was another issue if they were using him to disguise some ulterior motive. Furthermore, assuming Grandma Yuan was in it too, Jin believed that a certain kind of trust had already been broken before he even started.

"Should I confront JODE about this directly?" Jin asked for Yang Ling's opinion. She was surprised as this was the first time she had seen the usually relaxed Jin with burning eyes. Only later did she connect the dots and realised that Jin must have been furious of being used to create the centre.

"I do not know what you are thinking, but one thing's for sure. The creation of a Shenzhen operation and training centre had always been the goal for JODE. If not you, they might have gone with somebody else. Reason being that it was nearer to the APAC (Asia Pacific) for collaboration purposes. Not just Demon Exorcists from China but from other APAC countries as well." Yang Ling tried to reason it out, and upon listening, Jin seemed to cool down a little.

"... I see. I might have read too much into it." Jin then forced a smile out.

"Still, no harm asking your elder about it. She might have some clue about these occurrences. Especially when you are now a Demon Exorcist and a soon to be Branch Manager, this information should be privy to you." Yang Ling relaxed her stance a little when she saw Jin returning to normal.

"Alright, thanks for the information. Oh, and please make sure to go back early. Your dad made it pretty clear that he would personally hold me responsible if you came back late." Jin said, and Yang Ling rolled her eyes up for a moment.

"I bet he just wants to give me more work. I swear he's enjoying the free time he's getting by making me do that stuff for him. ... still, I wouldn't want him to come and bite your head off." Yang Ling joked before she waved goodbye to Jin. The tiger princess then reunited with her guards, and they went back together.

As for Jin, he had some pressing matters to settle.

## **Chapter 549 Demon Rat Analysis**

Jin returned to the Dungeon Maker not to check on the squads' details nor the data he received from the improved Half Mask visors. He was there to analyse the Demon Rats and their abilities.

With a cup of Blue Mountain coffee by his side, Jin started to compare the replay of the earlier fight to the notes and reports that his minions had given him. With today being the first time he had actively met the Demon Rats, they still continued to be something of a mystery to Jin.

Unlike Gold's initial description, there appeared to be many variants that Jin did not know how to categorise, and the reports he received were even messier especially as they seemed to show biases based on his minions' attack power.

The Goblins were able to annihilate and obliterate the town guards with ease, but when it came to the incoming army that marched to take back the towns, the Dark Templars' group portrayed a different picture. (Yet, the Dark Templars did report that killing the Town Guards was much easier than handling the army.)

While there could be outside factors such as equipment, experience and sheer numbers, there ought to be a baseline to measure the Demon Rats strength. Fortunately, with the creation of the temporary dimensional instance by Yun, the System had been able to measure each and every one of them systematically and group them based on their characteristics.

The most apparent evidence was that the army had each and every Demon Rat equipped with a steam tech weapon regardless of rank, making them more dangerous than the Town Guards who did not have the same loadout. Jin could only conclude that the North and South Scholars ensured that their armies were at least equipped with the basic weaponry.

By retrieving the steam tech as well as the materials the Demon Rats turned to, it had notified Jin that both weapons and armour were way superior to the previous iteration. Even the materials gained seemed to be of a higher quality than the town guards.

However, what surprised the System the most was their numbers. Within the Dimensional Instance itself, the System tabulated that there had been at least 5000 within the region.

If not for the cultivators' constant use of weapon arts and techniques, they would have been quickly overwhelmed by the sheer number. Yet, what was most concerning was that even though Demon Rat vermintide had the advantage to pin its numbers against the cultivators, they chose not to do so.

Rather, the Demon Rats had been cautious enough to first learn about the new type of enemies that had suddenly appeared in the region. This proved that they were at least intelligent enough to know that these particular new enemies were a menace to them.

However, given the System's analysis, as soon as they had realised that they could defeat the cultivators, they had pressed their attacks relentlessly. The replay video on Yang Ling demonstrated this very well.

As soon as they noticed her attack weakening, and her power mostly stemming from her Gearbox, they had utilised their superior fighters to take her down.

Despite their numbers, one might think they had low levels of constitution until the System found out that the advanced Steam Tech armour they wore had some sort of healing capability for them. While, the armour they wore may have been incomplete, for example just the helmets or the pair of boots, many of the rats who were mildly injured had the ability to recover themselves.

As for the officers, they were better equipped and those with a complete set of armour, their healing capabilities were off the charts which lead to believe that the amount of armour and the quality of it, increased their healing factor by at least two folds. Since some of the officers were killed, the armour was also placed into the Laboratory instance for sorting and reverse engineering.

When the System queried the creator of Steam Tech, Weslie noted that most of the items she saw had been the improvements of what she had previously designed. There were some of the Steam Tech items that she had not seen before and iterated that the North and South Scholars had never given her any feedback on the performance of those items.

Weslie could only deduce that the North and South Scholars must have had their own research team improving the technology that she had invented. Still, with the resources System had provided her (including the whole new level of knowledge in Engineering from Jin's world), the Scholar believed she could reverse engineering the Steam Tech and learn how to counter them.

The only thing that she required was more Litoride. Pure ones that were freshly mined from the Earth for research purposes. Thus, Jin had tasked the Mousefolks (many who had been miners before) via Gold to search for Litoride veins. As for the rest of the Mousefolks, they were continuing their assaults on towns with Meomi.

Also, what was worth noting were the variants and types of Demon Rats that the System was able to encounter from the battle skirmish it had hosted. While Xiong Da and Luo Bo mainly fought with rank and file Demon Rats, Yang Ling had the bad luck of encountering several Specialists (like the Demon Rat Brawler.)

But instead of finishing her off at once, the specialist took the opportunity to test their abilities on her.

It wasn't until Jin came that those who were watching quickly ran away to learn more about the dungeon supplier on his black sludge mounts. Jin was concerned with how incredibly sneaky these Demon Rats were and that they were more than troublesome than the Orcs.

"It's as if I am fighting a human army. They are retreating when necessary to observe and learn more about us... I know that we are doing basically the same, but it sucks when it's used against one." Jin complained, fully aware of his hypocrisy, as he examined the various kinds of Demon Rats that the System had categorised.

"User had been lucky that the Orcs had been more objective oriented and willing to sacrifice everything and anything for victory in one sweep. The Demon Rats are not invading, as they have already taken root in the Farming World, and can, therefore, take their time with retaliation. It pains System to see that they are more cunning and shrewd despite the fact that they could have been ideal workers."

"Sigh, and they have yet to come out the big guns. Remember how the scouting party reported tanks and other heavy pieces of machinery? None of those appeared in the skirmish. Only foot soldiers and human slaves. Even their transports are non existential." Jin said as he noticed that the human slaves were used to drag their cargo and supplies.

"I can only infer that this is just the cheapest subjugation battalion that the Demon Rats are willing to afford to retake those towns. They have yet to show us any more of their trump cards." Jin looked at how large their armies were with a holographic map that the System had created. With reports of caves and mountains that hid their training facilities, it painted a gloomier picture for Jin to win against them.

The only thing he could do was to possibly kill off the head of the snake (North and South Scholars) and slowly handle the rest of the body later. However, that would make the common townsfolk suffer since their food and trade would be significantly affected by the protracted war.

"So is User going ahead to create another Raid instance to delay the attacks on the subjugation army?" The System asked as it predicted that the invading army would take another week or so by foot to reach the nearest town that was liberated.

"Not sure, we do not have any leaders at the moment for the resistance movement. Unless Gold or Weslie personally reveals themselves to the public, and entice the townsfolk to move out of their homes, there is not much we can do." Jin contemplated for a while before he decided to collect all the data, store them safely in the System's database and return back to his home for dinner.

If he could not think up a good solution right now, this didn't mean that others would be in the same predicament. After all, that was one of the reasons he had insisted on the whole mandatory group dinner, and it had been days since Jin got his fill of Lynn's cooking.

## **Chapter 550 Dinner Time**

Jin returned to his home, and the first thing he saw was Lynn already preparing the meal for the table. "Ah, Jin?" Lynn did not seem too surprised to see Jin finally back at home. For the past few days, all he had taken were snacks and coffee, so she figured that he probably craved some delicious food as part of the celebration for opening the Tree Mall.

Even Jin was kind of startled by the amount of food that was placed on the table. It sorta felt like some welcoming back feast. (Well thinking about it he did kind of lock himself up in the dungeon maker for ages.)

Qiu Yue was at the side of the table nearly drooling at the sight of Lynn's creations, along with Milk and Peppers waiting patiently for Lynn to finish cooking up the last few final dishes. Jin kind of figured the occasion and sat at the far end of the table. (None of them dared to try and 'help out'. Lynn had made it painfully clear that only her and her Peggies were allowed to do so.)

Yet, it didn't take long for the Penguin Chef to have all the dishes placed on the table. Some of which looked so good in the presentation that both Qiu Yue and Jin believed themselves to be in some five star restaurant.

Before partaking the food, whenever Milk was present, she would ask Jin for permission to say Grace for the lord. Even though Jin was never much of a believer in religion, (especially after learning about gods, demons and other fantasies he was exposed to) he permitted Milk to lead the whole group for a small little prayer of thanks.

"Thank you Lord, for the food and bless this small family of ours to survive the trials set by Lord thyself. May we get stronger through the hurdles of life and always support each other in times of need. And as I pray, Father, keep me in your presence. Amen," As Milk finished speaking they could feel a light enveloped the food, and the first to open their eyes was Peppers.

"Let's DIG IN!!!" Peppers shouted enthusiastically. She immediately grabbed the grilled chicken drumstick at the centre of the table. The rest shook their heads at the childish behaviour of little Peppers and began to pick the savoury food on the table in a more civilised manner.

Jin enjoyed the two new dishes that were on the table and Lynn told him that those came were part of the latest spoils from the Giant World. Specifically, the Horned Chicken and the Four Clawed Scorpion they killed. "My Sub System had given me recipes on how to create Horned Grilled Chicken which used the horn as a spice condiment... Though I had to grind the horn to obtain it."

"Ohh so that's where the slightly spicy but at the same time peppery kind of taste comes from?" Jin asked, and Lynn nodded her head.

"As for the Four Clawed Sautéed Meat, it comes primarily from the claws themselves rather than the body. Hence I left the part of the large claws as part of the presentation decoration for the dish." Lynn described as she introduced the dishes.

"I loved it a lot! It tasted a little beefy, and its juicy parts are very satisfying, it's guaranteed to be a hit." Qiu Yue commented, and suddenly a teleport appeared right in front of them. Kraft sauntered through the portal and greeted Jin with a dish as well.

"Whew~! Just in time for dinner! Lucky me. I have something for all of you, take it as apologies for not being around for quite some time. Being a...leader in the underworld sure has been trying." Kraft half smiled as he placed the dish on the table and opened the lid for them to smell.

"It's rare for you to be so busy with a task, that you even sent a message not to be disturbed. What exactly have you been up to?" Jin asked as he stood up for a while to peer through the new dish that was on the table.

It looked like a mish mash of vegetables in the pot together. The soup was piping warm, and Kraft also figured that Jin would at least come down for dinner with the whole gang after the opening ceremony.

"Oh, you know nothing too special. Checked out the other gangs, infiltrated some of their headquarters and branch location, just to see what we were up against. But more importantly, I've been making friends with the Drows."

"They are a surprisingly close knitted community. Had a very warm welcome and I never expect for such an isolated village to be so hospitable. We could learn a thing or two from the dark elves." Kraft replied and explained that the vegetable soup was a traditional delicacy of theirs, promoting vitality and rich in antioxidants.

Lynn took a sip of it and found it delightfully light and pleasant that she asked if Kraft could scoop a bowl for her to drink.

"With pleasure, Chef Lynn. I can even do you one better as I've brought along the recipe and the vegetables needed if you wish to recreate or improve on it. Here you go! I never wish to miss any of your meals if possible. To be able to serve you with some good quality food for a change is my honour." Kraft smile rather genuinely for a change and subsequently helped the rest to get a portion of the soup. After which, he too had started digging in the sumptuous feast.

As Kraft was about to start, he spoke out that Zeru seemed to be missing...only to coincide his findings with another Portal appearing from the backyard. Zeru came back with a large bag alongside him. It was not some luggage bag but a body bag...with someone still screaming inside.

When the portal closed, Zeru went to the side of the bag and used his hand to knock the person unconscious, causing the muffled screaming to be reduced to silence. He then opened the bag and left him at the backyard for a moment.

"Erm... Welcome back, Zeru." Jin greeted his master, who also had something else on his hands. It was Japanese Takoyaki.

"Mixed flavours. There's octopus, chicken, squid and cheese. It's slightly late but congratulations to you Jin for successfully opening the Tree Mall." Zeru said as he took out the delicious smelling meatballs on the table.

"Please dig in," Jin said even though he was worried about the unconscious human that was placed in the body bag. He figured that if that human had incurred any injuries, Zeru would have asked Milk to do something about it.

"Sorry about the unwarranted visitor, the System told me that you came for dinner, so I had to improvise a little," Zeru said as he thanked Lynn for the food.

"Good thing I made extra. Please enjoy!" Lynn said casually as they started to discuss the things they needed to address while enjoying their meal as one big family. And yeah, the first thing on the agenda was the elephant in the room.



That body bag.