

## **Dungeon S 631**

### **Chapter 631 Valg Parasite**

Usually, such unnatural beings required a sacrifice for them to be summoned, and Maeve was no exception to the rule. She had undoubtedly killed the Salamander King despite its pledge of utmost loyalty to her.

But because of her Fey powers, she was able to reduce the amount of sacrifice needed to call upon her beloved type of unnatural beings, the Valgs.

Besides, the Salamander King was solely seen as a mere pawn in her eyes. Maeve had never really needed him in the first place, and his entire Salamander Family acted as a sort of vacation home for her to fool around while escaping from her actual duties given by Queen Mab, the Queen of Winter Court.

With just one sacrifice, she managed to open the metaphysical realm to call upon the hordes of Valgs as her plaything against the incoming foes. She never knew how Gaeru managed to get reinforcements, much less humans when they were supposed to be extinct or at least turned by her mother's curse.

But since there were playthings around, Maeve obviously would like to have some fun. Yet, it would be equally dull if those humans dash straight towards her. Thus, she provided them with obstacles like the Valgs to test their strength so she would fight against the few who were worthy.

As for the Valgs, they were a sort of parasite which latches onto beings, feeding them off their vitality and subsequently killing them. That was how they usually gain form and eventually terrorise people with it. Be it a corpse or a living person, as long as they have something to feast upon, they will grow in size.

There were few instances in the Giant World's forgotten history of these valgs plaguing their lands. But the most recent and devastating event was actually the Giantism virus in action. The virus was supposedly a rare variant type of the Valgs which the Queen Mab decided to play with when she was younger. Instead of the Valg leeching mana or life from the host, it did the reverse.

By taking magic particles from the surrounding atmosphere and feeding its host with mana. It injects so much mana into the host body that it surpassed the body's limit and thus explodes. During such explosion, the variant Valg parasite as a method of dispersal so that it could latch on something.

The only problem was that humans cannot see them, and they quickly die off if there are no bodies to infect in the surrounding. So, like every being who strived to survive in the harshest of conditions, it adapted and evolve. Eventually, it was able to infect the surrounding environment and other creatures as well.

The giantism virus which everyone feared was no doubt a metaphysical parasite which still exist up to this day and this type of parasite managed to leave a strain of their DNA and infused with the current nature of Hamatarou's world.

Hence, everything turned big and filled with mana and life. Ironically, when the actual Valgs invaded the Giant World, all they had to do was to leech the mana and life from the world itself for them to manifest physically.

In short, what Queen Mab did previously against Hamatarou's supposed killer as part of her fun in the contract loophole, eventually infected the entire human population became an unintentional playground for Maeve to use. The daughter of the Winter Court Queen knew for sure that her mother did not plan to make the world a place for the Valgs to manifest and survive with a proper physical body.

However, it was a surprise that the cultivators did not get infected by, and it was mainly because they have yet to evolve to infect humans from other worlds. (And oddly enough, the use of chi deterred the parasites.) The System had also previously noticed such anonymous elements ledged in Qiu Yue and Lynn as well but did not know what it was and had decided to eliminate it in the name of safety when they returned back to their world. (They also thought it was a simple decontamination shower just in case. Besides, they stink so badly from the adventure, they gladly took the shower.)

Now with a number of valgs manifesting under its radar, there was a striking similarity in the elements the System previously detected. Hence, it already prompted the System to immediately take precautions against these parasites the moment the cultivators returned to the luxury recovery instance.

It even contacted Hamatarou who was busy with improving Masamune for the spells that changed the humans into animal people for analysis as part of a countermeasure. If the Valgs never appear, the System would not have known about a possible parasitic infiltration into their current ecosystem. To the System, it was a blessing in disguise for them to fight against Maeve. (Naturally, the System kept quiet and let Jin focus on the current raid.)

The Valg parasites that appeared in the castle grew the moment they came in contact with this world. All sorts of monstrous features one could think of, the Valg parasites were able to grow as such. From insectoid forms to even human shapes, they rushed out from the portal gate created from the body of the Salamander King and helter skelter into the depths of the castle.

Gaeru saw the abomination of an unnatural being right in front of it, dying to use its claws and fangs against him and Jing Yu. As for the elderly lady, it seemed as if she had seen her fair share of monsters and was not afraid to face it.

She summoned her cultivation out, and a series of Condor vultures appeared right above her. Without hesitation, she went for the first strike by extending her arms out. In an instant, two swords flew from the scabbards that were attached to her waist and went towards the direction of Valg.

Attached to the swords were pieces of cloth which were identical to the black Hanfu outfit that she was wearing. Her cultivation, the Hungry Condor Style was a cultivation style that placed great emphasis on the control of chi as compared to swordplay. It was to the point that Jin once thought that this was the few older styles that might have spark the fusion of eastern and western styles together.

The smoothness of controlling the swords from a distance via the cloth that attached to it made it looked like advanced telekinesis, but it was all about the precise control of using chi. As the swords flew towards the Valg, it tried to block the incoming projectiles with its claws, but Jing Yu easily moved the swords away from its swing trajectory and attack it from another angle.

Gaeru now partially understood why the old lady decided to wear a Hanfu clothing. It was to hide how she controlled the swords via the cloth that was attached to it so that the enemy could not predict her

movements. He was amazed by the Condor Cultivator and only until an impromptu shout from Jing Yu awoken him from the daze looking at the elegant beauty of sword control.

The frog swordsman quickly shook his head as he leapt forth and gave a straight stab towards the Valg. While it seemed like a suicide attack from Jing Yu's point of view, especially since it looked like a straight, sincere strike, she had underestimated the frog's flexibility.

Like her swords, the frog was able to turn mid air evading the Valg's swipe while he cut the hand down with his new sword and used the momentum from spinning to give an extra impact to the strike right in the middle of its torso. Unfortunately, the attack seemed like it was not enough to kill it and Gaeru hastily used his tongue to stick to the ceiling and pulled himself away from the Valg.

Now Jing Yu began to understand the unnatural being in front of her. It was a monster with a high constitution and perhaps a considerable amount of strength, but agility is definitely not its strength.

With that in mind, the Condor Cultivator pushed in more chi into her swords to made them hit harder while maintaining the grace of movement.

However, little she did know that not all Valgs were the same as the one that preyed on Zi Dan and Xia Mao was of a direct opposite. It was to the point that the two had to use the kitchen appliances as part of their defences.

It was extremely unsightly to see two old men desperately trying to dodge the Speedy Valg, but they were genuinely doing all they can to survive.

### **Chapter 632 Six Legged Valg**

"If only we have Jing Yu, here!" Zi Dan panted as he used a pot to block a strike from the six legged Valg before retracting back to the ceiling and using the entire kitchen to its advantage.

"Don't joke around already! You are technically the fastest between the three of us!" Xia Mao said when he hid from a spitting poison projectile from the Valg. He assumed it was some sort of poison since it corroded the large wooden table he was hiding behind. (He could not understand why only the appliances were human-sized while the rest of the furniture around the castle were large by default.)

"You want me to use my cultivation techniques at the start of the raid? Come! Take over my body and feel how painful it is when the aftereffects set in!" Zi Dan yelled at Xia Mao from a distance, and that attracted the Valg's attention, prompting it to chase after Zi Dan. "Shit! It's like a freaking spider waiting to entrap us!

"Do you mean toying with us? Besides! That freaking monster only has six legs, not eight!!"

"I do not think some minor differences in technicalities actually matter right now!" Zi Dan took his chain ball mace and infused it with enough chi to block the incoming projectile. Sadly, that was not the end as the Valg had learnt how those pesky humans were avoiding its attacks.

Thus, it sprung forth towards Zi Dan, hoping to grab him before he could run into safety again.

"Shit!" Zi Dan saw the incoming mass of hands (or legs?) waiting to grab him, and that scene alone had already paralysed him with much fear. Yet, Xia Mao was not going to let his teammate to be killed by the hideous monster even before reaching to the main boss. (Although that seemed to be the case for the both of them most of the time.)

Xia Mao shot a projectile in the shape of a cat's head from his crossbow, and it miraculously hit the Valg. That one shot was sufficient to push the monster away from hitting Zi Dan, and the sight of the cat's head smashing itself directly on the Valg violently awoke Zi Dan, allowing him to move towards Xia Mao as quickly as possible.

"What were you doing, freezing up right in front of the monster?!" Xia Mao scolded Zi Dan, and he hit him back on the head!

"It's not my fault! For some reason, I was paralysed the moment I saw its eye on one of its palms.. or legs or whatever!! When that cat projectile of yours hit the monster, it broke its eye contact with me, and I was able to move again!" Zi Dan explained as they ran to another hiding place to rebuttal against each other.

"And holy shit! You still using those cathead arrows? I thought you swear not to use them anymore!" Zi Dan asked as the arrow that Xia Mao was using had a literal cat head arrow that continuously gnaws when infused with chi.

"Hahahah! That excuse was to simmer your anger, besides it saved you this time around! This cat head arrow is a marvellous work of mechatronics! More advanced than you think! Instead of piercing the enemy, it bites the enemy until I detonate it (to explode) after that!" Xia Mao saw no fault in the quiver full of such arrowheads that looked like a cat.

"Well, just because you had some lessons from Jin's NPC blacksmith to make your own arrowheads doesn't mean you can do this kind of crazy stuff! It's equally scary and had been annoying me up till to this day!" Zi Dan argued back before they realised a hand emerged from the side of the wall with an eye looking at Xia Mao. True enough, the immediate eye contact had instantly froze Xia Mao, unable for him to react.

As Zi Dan was facing towards Xia Mao during their heated arguments, he knew that fancying another look at the eye was too much a risk. Thus, he infused more chi into his chain ball mace and swung it sideways. He did not care if it hit or not, as long as the eye breaks contact with Xia Mao, they could run away safely. Too bad for him, the attack missed but it hit the side of the wall, causing debris to fly all over the place, causing the Valg to retract his hand and broke the paralysis on Xia Mao.

Xia Mao retaliated the moment he could move to shoot out of its cat head arrows at the hand, and he did not stop just there. A button on his crossbow allowed him to activate a one time inscription charm meant to power boost his shot should he need it. That inscription infused the cat head arrow with an exceeding amount of chi, and when the projectile flew, the cat head was enlarged to five times its size.

Zi Dan saw the size of the cat head, instinctively realised they are too close to the blast radius and he had activated his cultivation, the Bullet Cheetah. He grabbed Xia Mao by the waist and with a burst of speed, he sprinted 100 metres away from the place they were hiding. This also allowed Xia Mao to confidently detonate his cat head arrow, hoping it would deal some damage to the monster.

Ironically, the Valg thought that the big size cat head arrow was alive with its seemingly real facial features. So, it decided to lift four of its palms towards the cat head arrow to make eye contact with it. The monster did not know that it merely quickening its death and soon the Valg exploded into several pieces. Its impact sent most of the body parts flying before it was burnt into crisp from the attack.

"Arsehole! Did you not notice that we are so close to the target?!" Zi Dan shouted at Xia Mao after seeing a blueish explosion from the corner of the eye.

"Heh Heh! I had confidence you will bring me out of the blast radius." Xia Mao said in a shaky voice, and Zi Dan sighed at his blatant bluffing. The Valg continued to shriek at its demise, allowing the other two to think that would be the end of it.

Or so they wished.

The desperate howling from the dying Valg was, in fact, a cry for help and the rest of the Valgs which were lurking around the castle began to proceed towards the castle's kitchen with the two not knowing how their impending doom was developing behind the scenes.

Until then, Xia Mao and Zi Dan revised what they had in their inventory seriously. While the two elderly cultivators did not know what other horrors of unnatural beings were stalking this area, they knew the previous fight would not be the last. With their combined experience more than a hundred years, they had the same premonition that more of those Valgs were rushing towards them.

And that was where one of the new features that Jin spent the time perfecting it before releasing the raid to the public came into play.

## **Chapter 633 Pit Stop**

It was none other than the use of a battle store via the Pandamonium app.

Through this battle store, cultivators can now buy food, potions, weapons, inscriptions and even accessories to aid them during their raid.

It was part of Jin's plan to improve the services he provided for a better dungeon experience. This would also allow him to create harder dungeons since the cultivators now had access to an online store in the midst of battle.

While it might be seen as a break in the traditional way of dungeons, Jin saw it as an opportunity that had yet to be fully utilised (or in some sense exploited). He was sure some dungeon suppliers might offer such feature before, but the System guaranteed that Jin's store app's user interface and services will be maintained top notch quality.

Thus, Jin named the Battle Store sub application within the Pandamonium - 'Pit Stop'.

The sub application would automatically be placed as the top options when the cultivators entered the dungeon, or it could be used via the half mask they were wearing. Via eye tracking movement or voice

control, the store would then display items of the most relevance which the AI predicts what the customer might need during the battle.

Hence, a cultivator well versed in the use of Pit Stop could potentially purchase an item in the heat of the moment to change the tide of battle almost instantaneously.

However, all the items and even the delivery of those goods were all monetised by Jin. He knew the store might not be well received since it was literally a pay-to-win kind of method and Jin understood the implications of giving the rich cultivators an edge over the other players.

So, he forbade the use of Pit Stop should he ever create a formal cultivator versus cultivator kind of arena but against monsters and raids? He believed it was a fair game for everyone except for the first clear rewards. If the cultivators wished to have their names on the board, they had to do it without any restocking from Pit Stop.

Also, the items were priced at least 10% higher than the standard base prices that were sold in his shops. And to compensate that, there were weekly discounts on selected items in the Dungeon Store Instances, to make them attractive and viable for cultivators to continue to look into them.

That was unless they were using Pit Stop to browse the contents of the stores outside the dungeon instances.

While adjusting the features, Jin had also implemented a cart option, and this further improved the purchase experience within the Pandamonium App. Previously, the shop option in the Pandamonium acting as a catalogue or a wishlist for them to take note if there were any discounts. With the new implementation, cultivators were now able to buy and browse items they wished to get before coming to the store itself for the dungeon experience.

This new update would also allow cultivators to take advantage of the sales even when they are not in the store physically. The System also believed this long awaited marketing gimmick will increase the store's sales by another 80% since people fancied buying items from the net, not to mention at a discounted rate. (Don't worry, Jin was still making a profit from everything.)

As for the delivery of goods into the dungeon instance, Jin took the chance to make even more money. For the first delivery of each dungeon instance, Jin had implemented it in such a way that all goods ordered would be sent to their customers immediately. Only subsequent orders would be via a timed postal delivery. If the cultivators wished to have the second round of supplies to enter the dungeon instance quickly, they have to pay for additional delivery fees.

Thus, for Xia Mao and Zi Dan who had accumulated a fair bit of panda medals, they had already started choosing items on the Pit Stop to aid them further. Despite their rich dungeoneering experience, this elderly duo knew that no matter how much they had prepared before entering Jin's dungeon instances, it would never be enough. This particular pitstop was indeed a long needed new feature.

With the inclusion of the System's AI into part of the Pit Stop algorithm, it immediately recommended ammunition for Xia Mao. For the Bullet Cheetah Cultivator, the AI suggested an adrenaline booster inscription charm to further increase his speed as well as other support restorative items which they always lacked no matter how many bottles they carried.

The trusty chi restoration drink in a large panda bottle. (Jin even featured XL bottles for heavy chuggers like Xiong Da.)

There was even an intergroup mask communicator which Pit Stop was selling an exorbitant price and stated it was a Pit Stop exclusive item. "THAT BOSS JIN! HE IS DOING THIS ON PURPOSE! Extortion! Extortion! If I am back as a businessman, I am going to hire someone like him to bleed Jin dry!" Xia Mao shouted as he saw the ridiculous price of the intergroup mask communicator which unlock the team speak module in their mask. He believed it was essential since it would allow them to communicate with Jing Yu.

"Hey, at least it is currently on discount right? And come on! The last time you boasted that your investment is making you lots of money and you have no place to spend them! Now it is the time!" Zi Dan added that he should buy for the whole group as well, hinting Xia Mao to buy for him as well. "Besides, the one time use team speak module cost like five bronze panda medals only. What are you waiting for?"

"I am not waiting for the one time! I am talking about the lifetime module! That's 999 Panda Medals per person! If there is no discount, its 2000 Panda medals! Just to speak with each other from a distance! How is that fair?!" Xia Mao said, and when he pressed on it, a pop up window with explanation appeared and then he kept awfully quiet.

"What's the matter? The Valgs are here?" Zi Dan asked as he scanned the area via his mask and there was no presence of any Valgs around.

"No, I think I mistakenly blamed Jin. You are right, its a good investment. I will buy it." Xia Mao mumbled and quietly bought the set for himself and later also gifted an intergroup communicator module to Zi Dan and Jing Yu as well.

Zi Dan did not expect that stingy at times Cat Cultivator would really buy a lifetime module for him. What the other two cultivators did not know was that the 999 Panda Medal package was a secret package which only appeared in Xia Mao's screen because of his exceeding large purchase. Zi Dan did not have that option presented to him since his purchase from the Pit Stop was the bare essentials.

That 999 Panda Medal Package combo provided team speak modules for 5 friends and a limited Christmas Panda Plushie which Xia Mao had been eyeing for a long time and could not get it from the Krampus Christmas Raid instance.

The size was smaller than the ones redeemable from the store, but it was something which his grandchildren would definitely like. Upon reading, he realised that a lifetime team speak module would usually cost 200 Panda Medals, and thus Xia Mao quickly bought it.

That was why when he immediately kept quiet, Zi Dan began to suspect something odd, so Xia Mao continued to grumble and gave an excuse instead.

"I remembered I did not give you guys any Christmas present. This is a belated one. I got two more, and the group can do a lucky draw to see who get it later." Xia Mao tried to evade Zi Dan's suspicion, and somehow his 'charisma roll' succeeded.

"No wonder you are so quiet, feeling guilty eh?" Zi Dan laughed as he saw a Santa panda animation appeared on his screen, presenting him with a gift box. He accepted with glee and the gift box popped open, revealing to him a team speak module.

Without any need to tinker, the module programme was immediately unlocked in his mask, and he quickly called out to Jing Yu.

"Hey, Jing Yu. Can you hear us? If you do, open your Pandamonium app, we have gifted you a team speak module, courtesy of our grumpy Santa Mao Mao." Zi Dan said with tongue in cheek. However, before they could have a reply, their masks are detecting multiple signatures at least 500 metres away from their current location.

"Shit, I guess we better check out the physical items and get the purchases as soon as possible." Zi Dan said as he pressed his orders and a portal appeared. Out came a Panda in a light blue postman attire carrying a crate of items for Zi Dan and Xia Mao.

"A little something extra for your good faith in our new service and for spending more than a thousand panda medals in one go." The Postman Panda said as he placed two long rectangular suitcases in front of them.

Xia Mao opened it with curiosity which subsequently made both his and Zi Dan's jaw dropped simultaneously.

Lo and behold.

The spear of death modernised to rip its enemies. The item which Peppers called a cheap imitation of her explosive magic. And yet its the envy for anyone who wields it in the battlefield, for its appearance only beckon the reaper to arrive sooner.

It's a triple barrel RPG launcher.

## **Chapter 634 A Change In Direction**

Jin monitored the volatile situation in the Giant World, but he could help to feel frustrated and useless. As it was merely morning, the number of cultivators were still somewhat limited, and at least they were making some progress against Maeve's Valgs.

The System predicted that for the cultivators to reach towards the throne hall where Maeve would be situated at, they would probably need additional manpower considering the threat the cultivators were facing. In the meantime, the System suggested Jin to either work on something more useful or at the very least prepare countermeasures against Maeve.

"You mean to prepare an army to assault her the moment the cultivators find her?" Jin asked if that was the System's intention. He had initially wanted to rush in at the very last moment to aid the cultivators but eventually decided to not do so. At first, he was afraid that Maeve's magic would teleport him away the moment he teleported into the Giant's World.



However, the Postman Panda delivery had alleviated his fears when it managed to portal right beside Zi Dan and Xia Mao to pass their purchases to them. So, Jin theorised that it could be the entrances and exits of the castle that were affected by the random teleportation magic. If they managed to teleport within the castle's interior, there should not be a problem.

Unfortunately, that leads to another problem. Upon learning that the cultivators should be able to portal safely via the castle's interior, Jin requested the System to do as such for his minions to attack but it denied and fully objected to Jin's demands.

The System was afraid that Maeve might take that opportunity to locate the System's portal and either send her or a Valg portal to the System's premise. At the moment, those little Panda postmen was not an issue because the magical signature was minute. That could not be said to be the same if the System was teleporting either a portion of Jin's minions or the cultivators into the castle itself.

While it might not be as a problem considering that the System had created a containment premise, the System did not wish to put itself at risk unnecessarily. To the collective of wills, it had already determined that the risk was not worth it and the cultivators should continue to go via the front door.

Besides, what Maeve was doing had unknowingly created a complex enough dungeon raid experience for the cultivators. It saw no qualms breaking that experience for the cultivators.

But for Jin, the System later compromised to provide a one shot portal which subsequently led Jin to wonder if it was a good idea after the System had expressed its concerns.

"What if the extent of her powers is more than we estimated? We might potentially incur more losses than predicted, and I have an awfully terrible feeling that Queen Mab may step into the picture to protect her kid from dying."

"Then do just that? Why worry so much?" Kraft questioned as he emerged from nowhere once more. He sat at Jin's chair and ate what seemed to be an open bag of chips. (If Jin was not mistaken, Kraft probably stole it from Peppers since he remembered getting such chips for her.)

"The System had a point, we still need to conserve resources like souls for the Mechanical Titan attack since it would be hard for us to transport any cultivators to space without any proper space suits," Jin replied.

"What if the cultivators failed without Queen Mab coming in? What do we do? Don't know? That is precisely what the System wants you to plan. " Kraft reminded Jin of his duties.

"Never forget the loyalty and eagerness of your monsters. Although it's true that the cultivators are a source of your income and, to a certain degree, your fighting force, you have to remember not to rely too much on external help. That applies to business partners too."

"But didn't you suggested earlier to use cultivators?" Jin furrowed his eyebrows as he talked to Kraft.

"Doesn't mean you have to listen to everything I said, right? Did I accidentally lose my thinking master somewhere along the way? Or the person in front of me became a puppet of the System again? Do you want me to throw you back to that dark room once more? I can do that with a snap of a finger." Kraft warned Jin without facing him before heaving out a sigh.

He knew that Jin was not himself when his master heard the 'business proposal' from the Police Captain, even though it clearly sounded more like extortion.

"Don't let these small minor setbacks crawl all over your head. You had been marginally successful thus far, but it was not without luck. Even if Lady Luck is not at your side, doesn't mean you cannot work around the problem. Remember that your long term goal differs from everyone and you should not let these setbacks take control of you." Kraft finished what he needed to say. He then disappeared after using the Dungeon Maker console to check on a few queries that he had before disappearing from the Dungeon Maker.

Jin took a deep breath in and took a step backwards.

Kraft was right, the System and the others had been holding his hand from time to time. They could only help him to a certain extent, and as for the rest, Jin had to grow some balls and take the situation by its throat.

The Dungeon Supplier had always been worrying about the wrong things, and the only thing he should worry about is his own future, not some business deal or blackmail.

Maeve, the Mechanical Titan or even the Farming World were also just temporary obstacles to enhance his life in the future. Thus, he should not see these events with dread and instead with glimmering opportunity.

And there was indeed a silver lining in this particular circumstance.

"Hamatarou, are you done with the enhancement of Masamune?" Jin spoke through the System Channel.

"More or less, I think Vulcan understood my requirements, I should be available in a minute or two if you need me. What is the matter, Master? Do you want me to interrogate the Salamanders to find out why the Salamander King is acting that way? Or their connection with Maeve?"

"Nope, I do not want any of those. The Raid is up against Maeve, and I think this is the best time to get the other animal people. You said you have some way of contacting everyone right? For that ehh massive migration thingy." Jin vaguely remembered the details.

"Yeap, that something is similar to your flare gun, I shoot a magical flare from my hideout, and it will provide a signal to all the usable Totem of Atems to activate a hidden compartment. It contains a map various checkpoints for me to meet them for the mass migration. But we would still be in a sort of cat and mouse chase since giants are prowling the area." Hamatarou said.

"No worries about that, tell the System when you are ready to return to your tree hideout and prepare the stuff. I will contact you again when I have actionable details for you to proceed with the flare." Jin hung up and requested Peppers via the System Channel.

"Boom Boom time?" Peppers eagerly arrived at the Dungeon Maker despite taking the call from the System.

"In a way," Jin replied, and Peppers frowned before her master could finish his sentence.

"That won't do. I did you a service already, I am not going to do some useless scan to see the number of monsters in that pathetic castle. You should have enough information to go by." Peppers interrupted and was ready to return while still chewing on the candy that Jin had gotten for her earlier in the morning.

Jin quickly grabbed by her shoulders and pushed her to the dungeon maker console. The System also assisted by blocking her teleport until she listened to Jin's request.

"No. Peppers, look here. I have a very important job for you, one that requires your utmost ability as well. It might not be as fun as burning the whole Giant kingdom down, but I need you to provide aerial artillery support." Jin then emphasised on the next sentence.

"In short, an awful lot of Boom Boom."

## **Chapter 635 Preparations For The Rescue Operation**

"Now, I am listening." Peppers eyes lit up like the lights of a Christmas tree, all twinkling and shining within the midst of her dark ruby eyes.

"The current plan is that we get you to fly up high on Que Er's magpies, Wyrstiker's wyvern or maybe even Mr Derpy himself and from there, you will provide numerous bombardment artillery against the Giants," Jin told Peppers that those giants would be specifically targeting the animal people that Jin wished to rescue and recruit.

The idea was to get them out of hiding immediately with the flare which Hamatarou would be firing. After which, find out where they were located and send the Penguin Ninjas to escort the animal people back to the Sanctum of World's guest instance.

During the mass transfer, the Giants might be a hindrance, and that was where Peppers would come in to remove them out of the equation.

"So, you want me to use Scan and explosions at the same time?" Peppers realised the task ahead of her might be out of her league especially when she knew how much mana the scan could take. Even if the little bellator could scan kingdom wide, she would not be able to differentiate who was friend or foe.

"Yes, that is why I am sending Ayse with you. I recalled reading a little on her recent report about you. She had prepared some contraption that would aid you in regulating your mana. Besides, she had been training you for quite some time, I doubt you will faint as much as you used to. Have some faith in yourself." Jin was encouraging Peppers more positively than the way Kraft did to him, but the essence of the message felt like it was a grim reminder way too soon.

"Alright, but I demand more sweets and candies! Especially ones from Big Sis Lynn! Else!" Peppers attempted to take advantage of Jin, and he nodded his head slightly as a sign of agreement.

After which, Jin had passed the message to Derpy as he imagined the support from Ayse would need some space to bolster Peppers' magic powers. That big fellow was so excited to go into action and even

asked if Jin needed the Deep Ones to assist with the expedition. Jin humbly turned down his offer and told him that only he could do the job, which made him even more elated.

With Peppers' aid, Jin had his very own improvised Search and Destroy satellite of destruction. (Just that this particular 'satellite' isn't as reliable as he wanted it to be. Still, it was better than nothing.) To have air support was something that Jin desperately needed but always overlooked.

So, with Derpy acting as the floating platform, Peppers, Ayse and Que Er would be providing the much needed aerial support. Peppers would supply the bombardment strikes as Que Er used her newfound powers to reinforce the operation. She had her murder of blood explosion crows to be hovering all around the Kingdom to keep an eye for the animal people as well as distracting the Giants long enough for Peppers' bombardment strike to work.

Jin had also contacted Lynn, and she had graciously lent more Penguin Ninjas along with Kido to aid Jin with his rescue mission while the raid was ongoing. She knew how important it was for the penguins to aid their fellow animal people since they knew what it was like to live through day by day in horror.

The Dungeon Supplier also figured that if they could not defeat Maeve, they should at least complete the grand objective of saving the animal people as quickly as possible and leave the area. While having Maeve will definitely be a bonus, it's not their main priority. At the very most, Jin would cut short the cultivator's raid and reward those who had fought valiantly in the fight.

However, that did not mean Jin was going to stop short. He knew that Maeve will definitely be a fantastic addition to his roster (and so did the System) and even he did not say it out loud, the desire was plain and clear for everyone to see. (Well technically, only the System was around...)

Yet, the only ability she had shown was to summon the Valgs, so she should not be underestimated if they were to fight face to face.

That was where Jin had decided to take heed in Kraft's request.

"Kraft, You say to rely on you guys right? How about you loan me your Dark Elves? I heard they were trained to be your elite adventuring force. Thought I can see them in action." Jin asked through the System Channel.

"Ehhhh? They will cost you." Kraft thought this would be an opportune time to take advantage of Jin.

"I will provide additional funds to revamp your Tavern base. How about that?" Jin knew that Kraft would want more but the dungeon supplier had something up his sleeves.

"How about giving me an extra-"

"No, then the deal is off. I will find other monsters to take over." Jin then shut the System Channel and began to look at the directory of monsters.

Perhaps, he could field the Orcs as part of training for the upcoming fight against Demon King Baal. Meanwhile, he was hoping Kraft will take Jin's bait mainly because he knew that even though Kraft was a bellator with some authority, he did not have rights to acquire additional funding for his personal use. Besides, if he did not appear to take Jin's request on, it meant that Devilman was shooting himself in the foot for telling his master a lie that he should rely on his monsters as well.

It was the first time, Jin had the upper hand on the issue against Kraft and that Original Bellator knew that too.

In less than five minutes, Kraft did appear in front of Jin, and with a twisted face of agony, he reluctantly agreed to it. "I should remind myself not to encourage you too positively in the future," Kraft said slowly, and Jin shrugged his shoulders with a slight smirk expression. (If the Dark Elves ever knew that Kraft was defeated by Jin due to a logic loop, they would be praising their 'actual' master to no end.)

Regardless, the Dark Elves were eventually scheduled to be the first responders against Maeve if the cultivators failed badly. The dungeon supplier had also decided to send a few fighter dark elves with the cultivators so they could find out any weakness against the Valgs.

When the Dark Elves heard of the opportunity to go into battle, their elder suggested setting up a few ambush sites when they fight against Maeve in case she wished to escape or bring the fight out of the throne hall. Jin did not understand why and the elder explained that it was solely because they would be fighting against a Fey.

"We have previous encounters against fairies in the Goblin World as well. They were a rare sight even to Elves, and not all were friendly. The first we reached out, nearly killed us with her words. And because of that, my elders had made countermeasures against such malevolent creatures. ...though I am not sure how effective it would be against this Maeve." The Dark Elf Elder said, and suddenly he felt a death stare coming from the Devilman himself. Oh, but the Dark Elf Elder was smirking widely back at him. Very widely.

Kraft did not bother to check their memories when he first captured them which was why he did not know that they had countermeasures against Feys. The fox bellator did not think it was worth the time and effort.

But now, even though he could forcefully enter their minds to check what they had seen, Kraft rather not waste his energy breaking the barriers he had 'painstakingly' trained them to create. After all, they were his minions and obliged to tell him anything he wished to know.

"You could have told me that earlier! Ah, but I did not really release information on the situation in the Giant World out..." Jin wondered if he should keep his minions notified about the current situation so that they might provide help if they were able to.

After all, the System did not possess full knowledge of all their abilities and memories unless the monsters voluntarily decided to release that information.

But with that new information in mind, Jin had already begun sending out the Dark Elves to be paired with the cultivators to scout for the ambush sites while he prepped the rescue operation.

## **Chapter 636 'David Vs Goliath'**

Xia Mao and Zi Dan not only made decent progress against the incoming Valgs, but they had also finally connected through to Jing Yu via the team speak module.

Apparently, Jing Yu was previously in a bind with Gaeru as the Valgs were explicitly targeting the frog swordsman, which was why she did not accept the gift when it first went through. Jing Yu did her best to protect the main objective of the raid, and that was evident through the number of points she was gaining.

Eventually, the young male elders had made it to the first floor of the castle and met up with an exhausted Jing Yu while the Froggie was still pumping full of adrenaline. "This stupid frog is way too much of a hassle to take care in tight spaces. The length of his sword made it hard for him to fight in narrow corridors." Jing Yu complaint while she dragged the frog with her cloth, acting as a leash to make sure he was not out of her sight.

"My condolences. But hey! From what you describe, those valgs were the slow moving ones. We have a shit ton of speedy Valgs itching to have our heads removed if we ever place our guards down." Xia Mao said as he could feel his money being drained from all the ammunition that he used.

Even though the Cat Head arrow was a customised item he made from scratch, Xiao Mao did not know that his design could be stored within the Pit Stop and be replicated from within. He believed that it was a nifty feature, but because it was reproduced for him without Xia Mao personally crafting them, it cost nearly two times more.

For this, he did not grumble because he remembered how much time and effort to create those Cat Head Arrows and the ones he used were of acceptable quality as well. Xia Mao even wondered if Jin could allow customised made items to be sold in his shop instances in the future. That way, he could earn a minor commission to further supplement his retirement activities.

While Xia Mao was actually glad to pay double the price for an instant duplication of those arrows for him to use, that was not the only item he created when he attended the Blacksmith NPC workshop.

As he was a cat cultivator and a lover of cats himself, Xia Mao had his weapons adorned with cat designs to the point that Zi Dan felt it was absurd. His crossbow had an ornate head of a Sphynx cat, and his crossbow stock was crafted with a silhouette of Persian cats lazing at the corner.

Nonetheless, his fellow Cheetah Cultivator could not deny the effectiveness of his items despite the absurdity of it such as the Cat Head Arrows. Xia Mao also declared that if there was a Cat Suit Cosmetic Inscription, he would definitely wear it for every battle.

Separately, Jing Yu had no knowledge about the Pit Stop feature as she was too busy fending for her life, nor did she read the updates to the raid. Thus, they decided to move to a corner of a giant room where the other two cultivators kept guard while she tried to restock her items.

"Oh and DO NOT let that frog out of your side. He is always impatient, like a child so fixated on his path and ignored almost everything around him." Jing Yu said as she grabbed on to wrapped up Gaeru and told Zi Dan to hold it tightly. The Cheetah Cultivator was somewhat surprised that Gaeru's skin was rather smooth instead of it being slimy and rough to touch.

"Honourable Gentlemen! We should head for the throne hall as soon as possible! Our nemesis is there!" Gaeru not knowing that the Salamander King was dead, continued to struggle in Zi Dan's arm.

"Easy there Froggie, as soon as our teammate finished restocking, we will head in there! I know you are dying to exterminate the king who killed your tribe, but it's better to be fully prepared." Zi Dan replied as he struggled to keep the frog still. Now he understood why Jing Yu warned about this feisty swordsman.

"No! Every second wasted means more time for him to grow stronger. We must reach there, posthaste!" Gaeru expressed his concerns of the Salamander King getting stronger with the aid of Maeve, but he had also promised Jin not to leak any of the raid details to the cultivators unless they pressed really hard for it.

"How about this? You tell us one good reason why you should rush in there along without us?" Xia Mao questioned, and suddenly the frog became motionless, he did not continue to put up a struggle against Zi Dan's grab.

"Because I did not want to think about it. I feel that fighting was the only way to divert my attention from the truth that I had abandoned my village when they needed me most... While they would never have expected me to aid them in their time of desperate need, it's still my responsibility...my solemn duty. And I had failed to protect them." The frog whispered slowly as if he spoke it out from the depths of his heart.

Zi Dan did not know why but if this was seriously part of the raid's backstory, the frog emotions was almost too real to be true. Xia Mao who was standing guard with his pal could not fathom such an emotional response from a dungeon instance as well and wondered if this emergency raid was a story long-planned by Jin.

The only qualms that the duo had were the giant sized environment they were in. There had to be some sort of background history with regards to the place's culture or giant size buildings, but for now, Xia Mao would not waste his brain cells to relate any of those. He was not the kind who search for lore in a dungeon instance as compared to those nerds in the Pandamonium Forum, so it did not matter too much to him.

Ever since Gaeru gave his reasons, the whole group remained silent until Jing Yu was well restocked. Instantly, the very same Panda Postman appeared and passed her the items as well as a parting gift too - a pack of incendiary grenades.

And as they were about to depart, the team heard a series of horrid screams echoing from the hallway down from where they were hiding. A quick zoom via the Mask UI had revealed that four other cultivators were attempting to disengage in a fight against an enormous looking Valg which the team had never encountered. That could only mean that they were getting closer to the Salamander Lord.

Without hesitation, Gaeru quickly broke free from Zi Dan's grapple and sped towards the Giant Valg to save the team of escaping cultivators (It was more like he was dying to get into battle.)

Upon closer inspection by the older cultivators, they noticed that the Valg had distinct features similar to a Salamander. The only differences were its haunted expression, giant size and fists that were half the size of the pillars in the castle.

It was not something a handful of cultivators and a frog could attempt to fight against. They were akin to ants when facing this particular giant Salamander Valg.

"Shit! Even the RPG launcher and grenades that Jin gave us as gifts would not be sufficient to bring this monster down!" Zi Dan said as he held on to his ball chain mace with creeping dread.

"But it is in our way, and I don't think we can outrun it no matter how fast we go! I think even that Giant Salamander Valg will outpace Zi Dan running at his top speed ." Xia Mao commented as he checked the number of Cat Head Arrows he left.

"Either we fight to the death against this or we last until the reinforcements enter the fray. Surely, we can use our team speak module to send an SOS, right?" Jing Yu queried as she opened her storage ring and placed an additional ten swords on the floor. Out from her Hanfu outfit, ten pieces of cloth flew out to attach themselves to the swords.

Yet when the cultivators were thinking of ways to defeat the Giant Valg, the little frog charged forth recklessly with his heart steeled with nothing but absolute determination.

From the shop instance's screens, it was indeed similar to a reenactment of David versus Goliath.

## **Chapter 637 Reinforcements En Route**

"That idiot Jin! Why does he always do this kind of nonsense!" Xiong Da was already on his way to the Tree Mall via taxi. If not for the fact that he had to take on the call of nature at 5 am in the morning, he would have totally snooze off the vibration notification from his phone.

Though he loved to get Ruo Ying, his girlfriend and personal secretary up for the emergency dungeon raid, she had been awake an hour ago entertaining a few friends of hers that came from abroad.

Thus, Xiong Da decided to go alone, hoping that Ruo Ying was able to get some quality sleep. (He too knew that he could snore too loud for comfort and sometimes, she had to bear with it.) At most, he will buy breakfast from the Tree Mall and surprise her with it.

Upon consoling his conscience, the Hippo Cultivator attempted to message in the Pandawan group chat to see if anyone's awake for Emergency Raid instance.

Ironically, the only person who answered was Bu Dong. While he was preparing to rest for the night after a series of online video game session with his friend Kong Xian, the Towering Tortoise Cultivator, the Emergency Raid Instance came about. Since it was the weekend, they had decided to sneak out of the house to go to the Tree Mall.

Kong Xian initially rejected since he had spent enough on his girlfriend and any more would put a strain on his January's budget. But when he heard that his generous friend Bu Dong would be hailing a cab for him as well as treating him breakfast after the raid, Kong Xian had agreed to go. (Some friend he was...)

As Xiong Da reached to the Tree Mall, he noticed that only the Panda Tiangong Statue with a Santa Hat was lit up. At the same time, he also heard a series of shouting echoing at the higher levels of the mall and observed that it could be Jin's Emergency Raid working.



Unlike Jin's store which continued to open 24 hours, the rest of the place remained empty, and even the power to the escalators was down till the next morning. Hence, Xiong Da used his cultivation powers to jump up the top floor. He treated it as part of a warm up exercise and teleported into Jin's store instance upon reaching the top level.

"Yo, Xiong Da. I thought you will reach here first." Bu Dong said as Kong Xian was already yawning away. "I checked the forums a bit, and apparently it's rumoured to be as tough as the Christmas Raid. The only difference is that its a community raid, so everyone gonna participates until the instance itself is full."

"And Boss Jin had also added a few new features. Apparently, the improved mask UI feature you talked about? He implemented it into this particular raid, and people were saying that there's store app we can access inside the dungeon." Kong Xian added, and Xiong Da's eyes widen.

"Well, its about time! No matter how much I prepared, Boss Jin's dungeons would always bleed me dry of potions! This time around, I am just going to spam the store app when we are in the dungeon. He owed me that much anyway, hahahah!" Xiong Da said, and suddenly someone within the auditoriums was shouting for everyone to come to take a look.

Although the number of people visiting Jin's store increased, there was still more than enough space for people to squeeze through the auditorium to check what was on the screen. They witnessed the Giant Salamander Valg slamming randomly within the castle interior, and the magic eye would zoom towards the frog swordsman fighting against it. The fight was increasingly intense, and it became evident that the raid required more help.

A few other cultivators were fighting against the Giant Salamander Valg as well, but it seemed like this raid was already pushing them to the limits. Mr Patsu urged the rest to hurry into the raid instance and aid the cultivators that were still standing strong.

"I am all ready, been optimising my stuff on my taxi trip here and must say, it's amazing that the new store function would allow me to buy items on the fly." Xiong Da said as he took his phone out and pressed the 'send purchase' option. The little Panda Postman appeared once again, tipping his cap towards Xiong Da as he dragged a crate two times bigger than him out of the portal.

The bystanders had mixed reactions to the Panda Postman. Some were commenting on how cute the Panda was in trying to get the crate out of the portal though others felt that the Postman was rather pitiful, doing a task which they deemed it was overwhelming even for the little guy. Xiong Da felt terrible too upon seeing the Panda Postman struggling, but the latter stopped him from coming any nearer.

"I have a job to do, and I will finish it no matter what." The Panda Postman said, and the female cultivators were already posting pictures on how cute the little Panda Postman was in showing his determination to complete the job. (Even though most of them knew that it was all part of the gimmick.)

Bu Dong and Kong Xian shrugged their shoudlers and told Xiong Da that they were ready to depart whenever he was ready. The three eventually entered the raid when Xiong Da filled his storage rings with the items he ordered. To him, it seemed like this community raid could be as exciting as the Goblin Raid instances.

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"Shit! This is no joke!" Xia Mao said as he barely dodged the pillar looking fist of the Giant Salamander Valg. If not for Jing Yu's quick assistance by using her cloth to pull Xia Mao closer, he would have lost his life in an instant.

"Stop fooling around already and use your cultivation properly!" Jing Yu knew that that crossbow and Cat Head arrows were not even a proper substitution for his actual cultivation.

"You want me to activate my cultivation against this big guy? Are you nuts!?" Xia Mao said as he unwrapped the cloth around him, but somehow it got stuck. He then realised that Jing Yu was already pointing her sword while further tightening the cloth which was wrapped around that Cat Cultivator.

"Arghhh. Fine! I am not as nimble as I am now! DO NOT expect much from me!" Xia Mao grumbled as he shot the Cat Head arrow before keeping his crossbow in his storage ring and took out a scimitar.

Immediately, he revealed his cultivation above him, and it was a series of cats with blindfolds on them.

"Activate Blind Cat Stance, Shadow!" Xia Mao said out loud, and suddenly his body sparkled with chi before half of his body became translucent while the other half was filled with void like shadows.

"Grab on to my sword, I will send you flying so that you can assist that dumb frog who is jumping around like an annoying fly." Jing Yu said, and Xia Mao held on to the cloth that was wrapped around him.

Jing Yu then slowly rolled her eyes as that was not what she meant. She knew that the sword was connected to the cloth, but Jing Yu needed him to hold her floating weapon to have her technique be executed correctly.

And since Xia Mao wanted to tease and joke during this tense situation, she did not care anymore and sent a burst of chi through that wrapped cloth. With a blink of an eye, the white fabric intensely rolled towards the Giant Valg, and Xia Mao was literally flying off like a spinning top.

However, with his Blind Cat Stance, he managed to balance himself midair and twirled once more before moving like an arrow towards the Giant Valg's face. The monster noticed something was flying towards him, and he decided to open his mouth to release a blast of ...Valg corpses.

But as luck would have it, Gaeru was perceptive enough to preempt the projectile attack. When the Giant Salamander Valg was about to make a move, the Frog Swordsman decided to counter attack by jumping towards its neck and stabbing it on the side. While Jin might not be there to handle Boo efficiently, the sword itself was still capable of inflicting a decent amount of damage by penetrating through the Valg's thick skin.

The quick stab was successful as the impact pushed that the Giant Salamander Valg to the side, causing the blast of corpses to be diverted a by few degrees. Still, Gaeru discerned that it was not enough since part of it would definitely hit Xia Mao. Even the other cultivators in the area who were witnessing the attack thought that Xia Mao would be a goner.

But presently, only the Blind Cat Cultivator Xia Mao knew that the attack would be rendered useless with his ability.

## Chapter 638 Blind Cat Stance: Shadow

Because of his Blind Cat Stance: Shadow, Xia Mao was temporarily in an ethereal state which he passed through objects with ease. However, that stance consumed chi like flowing water from the tap, and it meant that Xia Mao only had one shot at making it right.

But the Blind Cat Cultivator was not an assault based cultivation style and more of a support type cultivation. That was also the reason why he adopted the use of Mechatronics and infused it with chi (i.e. His Cat Head Arrows) to fight against the Valgs. Xia Mao had shamelessly admitted to his dungeon group that when he was younger, he did use his cultivation knowledge to break into secure locations or big companies to pick their company safes.

If not for his Blind Cat Cultivation, he would have gone to jail more than just once. For his imprisonment, the police had to specially create an anti magic barrier along with inscription charms designed to absorb Xia Mao's chi. He recalled that the prison was meant to have the bare minimum amount of chi to survive. This was all to make sure that his blind cat cultivation would not be activated in prison.

Fortunately (Or unfortunately), it was due to people like Xia Mao, the government became wary of such cultivations and begun upgrading prison security and even tried to ban the Blind prefixes in cultivation styles. (Xia Mao tried to boast that he was the few that made the government revamp the prison system, but no one ever believes him.) No doubt there were protests, but the country's culture still made it easy to implement those bans as compared to other nations.

Thus, most of the existing 'Blind' cultivation types were either altered to suit the government ban (Such as Yue Han's Blind Bat Cultivation) or those who used the original blind cultivation types were hidden in plain sight.

The rest who were still active? Try the underworld society.

It is uncommon to know a Blind cultivation type user in the underworld, but surprisingly, the Triads had also limited the number of blind cultivation types one could employ. All of the Royal Zodiac Triads obliged to it strictly without any question. (If Royal Zodiac Triad spies ever find out that a triad had more than what was considered acceptable, a shadow civil war between the Triads.)

Despite the enforcement from the Royal Zodiac Triads, they were only a fraction part of the underworld society. And if one were to give a moral alignment to them, they were already considered to be lawfully evil.

Why? Simple.

It's the society of shadows.

Previously when Kraft travelled into the Abyss Web, it was not solely just for Foxy. As part of an unwritten rule with the System, he was there to scout and gather information.

One portion of such information was regarding black sites and servers filled with contractable hitmen. The System needed data on those hitmen in case those people ever had the blind cultivation types and infiltrate the shop in order to take out Jin. While nothing can escape the eyes of the System when they are in the shop instance premises, it would still be useful to have the preemptive information on them. (And so, Kraft could strike them back hard too.)

Even though most of the information was hard to obtain and such sites had the counter hackers to protect the identities of their hitmen, Kraft and the System never fail to break their security and decipher them during their spare (processing) time. And once they had access to their servers, Kraft kept a separate watchlist to take note of those men.

In the meantime, the Devilman tried not to use Foxy spyware if possible since he wanted to keep its appearance as low as possible to reduce overexposure if counter hackers stumble on to it. Thus, it was solely his skills and his ability to break into the black servers. (If he ever fails, he would take it as a lesson to be learnt and come back with a better cracking procedure.)

As for Xia Mao, because of his previous offence, he had to wear a mini monitoring device on his leg for 20 years after a year of jail. (Due to the intense and isolated nature of his imprisonment, the judge sentenced had reduced it only a year upon revision. Besides, the prosecution could not find any further pieces of evidence for his previous thefts except for the one he was caught for.)

During that period, he atoned and worked (somewhat) honestly to become a successful businessman in the field of mechanical engineering with the money he had stolen. (Of course, he used it sparingly to avoid suspicion.) There were times Xia Mao had the urge to commit crimes again for the thrills but technology advances made it too risky for him, especially after being caught once.

Through the years, he did attempt many dungeon instances from various dungeon suppliers, but they never gave him the kick he always wanted until now. Xia Mao never felt the battles to be this exhilarating in Jin's store, and the use of his cultivation had become beneficial for the dungeon group he joined. (For example, he used his Blind Cat cultivation to retrieve the cosmetic inscriptions in the Deep One Dungeon.)

That was why he never failed to miss a group dungeon meeting ever since he found Jin's store.

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"Hey, Frog! Catch this!" Xia Mao said as he threw the scimitar towards Gaeru. The moment the frog swordsman caught it; the scimitar turned bright green like the colour of his skin. Apparently, what Xia Mao had used was something similar to a technique in Yue Wen's Healing Maiden Cultivation.

The Healing Maiden employed a technique that permitted the transference of chi through the physical touch of the body, but for the Blind Cat cultivation, Xia Mao transferred his chi using the scimitar as a medium of transport.

That was also how he could never get caught until that fateful day. Xia Mao was able to make an item dissipate as chi, causing it to vanish without a trace.

Well, actually almost.

His technique enabled him to break the item down into dust, but those dust still contained traces of his chi, which was why he was caught with the advancement of forensic technology.

Gaeru, who was barely familiar with the chi concept, only knows that the bright green light he was holding on to, was some form of energy which could be utilised to boost his strength. So, the frog swordsman held the glowing scimitar tight alongside with Boo, finally enabling Jin's sword to change into a shape which Gaeru had desired.

A larger version of Masamune. (What else could he think about?)

But unlike the standard Masamune, Boo, now enchanted with a voluminous amount of chi, allowed Gaeru to feel like he was merely holding a feather despite its size. Without any doubts or hesitation, Gaeru casually took a swing against the Giant Valg, and the impact from the enlarged Boo caused it to fall to the ground almost instantaneously.

The Giant Salamander Valg had no idea that the frog was able to wield such a weapon and was indeed taken by surprise. If not for the Giant Valg's fists of pillars to block the swing, it would have been cut into two.

By this time, some of the cultivators who came to reinforce were flabbergasted to comprehend a frog holding a sword hundred times its size. A few nearly assumed he was part of the monster horde they had to fight until their mask interface indicated that he was a friendly.

"Stop staring and start killing the Giant! Do not give it a chance to stand up!" Jing Yu's shout broke the mood of shock and awe as she channelled a bulk of her chi into her swords.

Zi Dan, who was also in a daze, swiftly got out of it and release the triple barrel RPG launcher from his storage ring. The Mask's user interface immediately booted up a screen that enabled Zi Dan to lock Valg into his target.

To his amazement, the RPG missiles were programmed to follow the target locking mechanism provided by the Mask interface which allowed the Bullet Cheetah cultivator to fire without any training. With a click, three missiles were mercilessly shot out from their barrels, and they roared towards the Giant Salamander Valg's head.

Xia Mao who managed to ledge himself on top of a castle pillar after the previous stunt unleashed his Triple barrel RPG launcher at the direction of the Valg's head as well. When all six missiles exploded, Jing Yu did not hesitate to follow up the attack by sending her swords forth. The only difference was that all six swords were attached with the incendiary grenades which the Pit Stop shop app had gifted her.

Similar to Zi Dan, her incendiary grenades could be rigged for remote explosions via the Mask's user interface, and that gave her more control with those grenades since she too had no experience in handling them.

Somehow, Gaeru felt that those puny attacks were not sufficient against such a large Valg, as if they were merely scratching the surface.

Thus, in order to finish this Giant Salamander once and for all, the frog continuously jumped up the walls and pillars, dragging that huge sword right beside him.

Using the momentum of his jumps, he backflipped the moment he reached to the top of the ceiling and plummeted his sword down into the Valg's torso. That giant monster screeched due to the wound he recieved, and his violent reaction to it was noticeable for everyone.

It was evident Gaeru had struck a vital blow against the Giant Salamander Valg.

Needless to say, that fabulous one-hit strike significantly boosted the morale for the rest of the cultivators as they rushed in, hoping to finish the Giant Valg before it was able to get up.

And their efforts were not in vain.

### **Chapter 639 Taking A Breather**

"...I think we are a bit late to the party." Xiong Da and his party members were panting heavily, running from a secluded part of the castle to the main lobby where the Giant Valg event concluded minutes after.

"I presume we are already the lucky few, able to charge through the Valgs to reach the main lobby in record time. "Bu Dong laughed as he catches his breath. It was all thanks to Xiong Da even though the Angry Ape Cultivator did not say it directly.

Xiong Da in his black suit cosmetic inscription, which most of the Pandawans had obtained from the Deep Ones dungeon instance, took a long look at the aftermath of the Giant Valg, hoping to grasp the situation. Some of the cultivators wondered why he was well dressed, and his main reason was that he did not want people to know how decked out he was.

Beneath that cosmetic inscription, he had equipped the highest grade of armour inscriptions, allowing him able to smash through most of the Valgs on his way to the first level of the castle. Especially when those Grade 5 inscriptions were as flashy as disco lights when they were activated. Xiong Da felt that it was not necessary and possibly a hindrance if monsters were attracted to him because of the strobing lights from the activation of his inscription charms.

Kong Xian, the supposed tank of the group, was amazed by Xiong Da's dedication to Boss Jin's dungeon instances. While one could say that he was slightly envious of the Hungry Hippo Cultivator, Kong Xian clearly knew his limits of being a student with little to no budget.

However, he checked and saw that the redeemable rewards from this Emergency Dungeon Raid were alluring for him to work hard. With enough raid points, he might get those Grade 5 inscription charms as well at a fraction of a price.

At the scene of the fallen Giant Valg, the remaining cultivators including the elders were taking a breather from the fight even though they knew this was not the end of the raid. Most were already exhausted fighting the Giant Valg, and they could already hear more of those critters are coming for them.

"At this rate, we will never be able to finish the raid. Should we surrender?" Zi Dan asked his group members as he recognised his partners were already at their limits.

"Looks like there is fresh blood coming in, and it's none other than the few famous Pandawans. We might be able to fight at the sidelines while reaping the rewards of the raid completion." Xia Mao joked around, hinting that he could still go on even though it was evident that he barely had much strength to stand up after that battle.

"Honourable Cultivators, I thank you for aiding me up to this point. If needed, I will go forth alone into the darkness to defeat the source of all evil. The Salamander K-" Jing Yu tied the babbling frog with her

cloth once more, not allowing him to escape. As the chi within Boo had more or less dissipated after the attack, there was no way Gaeru was as capable as before.

In addition, Jing Yu knew that the frog would not hurt them since he was likely bound by honour from the way he speaks. "Hey, you. That Hippo Pandawan." Jing Yu called out from afar.

Xiong Da reacted and searched the room for the person who was shouting for him. When they had eye contact, Xiong Da hastily walked towards Jing Yu when she beckoned the group to come.

"This is the NPC that you have to take care of in order to make sure the raid is a success." Jing Yu waved her hand a little, and the cloth gently moved Gaeru towards Xiong Da. Initially, the frog swordsman would attempt various means and ways to get out of the bind, but right now, he was obediently waiting for the chance to be released since he already knew that those cultivators meant no harm to him.

"Just charge into the throne hall, we will clear the Valgs for you, providing you with rear support." Xia Mao said, and most of the cultivators who were resting concurred with that suggestion.

Except for Zi Dan.

"Don't mind me, but I wish to see the boss myself. Have not been conserving energy so that you young chaps can clear the dungeon raid all by yourself." Zi Dan cracked his knuckles and ready to kick some Salamander King's ass.

He was the only few cultivators which the System had observed to have regularly paced themselves in fights.

The others always gave their best in every battle but not for Zi Dan because he knew that the dungeon would not end until the final boss was defeated. It might sound selfish, but it was part of his nature to always find not just the right opportunity but the best one.

Xiong Da took the 'package' from Jing Yu and shouted at the group right in front of him. "If anyone is still well and able, follow us! Or else, stay in the rear and provide support as we rush to the boss room. Remember, this is a community raid, and it means that we need to help one another to achieve the win for this raid!"

Xiong Da words echoed through the lobby, leaving behind a trail of resounding yes from the cultivators. Many had decided to stay in the rear support, knowing their fighting limits. They accepted that going to the frontline would ultimately be more than a hindrance for the capable group pitting against the final boss.

Besides, the reward system on this community raid was substantially different from the one in the goblin raid, allowing less competent cultivators to take a step back.

While the Goblin Raid Reward system awarded cultivators points for killing an orc, Jin made this particular raid's reward system more dynamic in nature.

With the new mask user interface, vast amounts of data were being taken from each individual cultivator and consistently analysed by the System. From kill counts to assisting in kills or even by providing a supportive role, the System gave points based on how much the cultivator had contributed.

To satisfy the cultivator's drive for accomplishments, there was a mini counter at the top right hand corner of the Mask UI interface which showed the number of points they had been awarded, prompting them to repeat or do more of those actions.

Jin also gave mini achievements and bonuses as their raid points racked up. For example, hitting 500 raid points would award them a mini feat called the 'Frog's Acquaintance', and 50 bonus raid points to spend in the redemption counter. In contrast, higher levels granted better bonuses such more raid points, gifting of essential recovery items or even panda medals.

"You better hurry. The Valgs are waiting to pounce at us from various directions, and their numbers are getting bigger." Jing Yu said to Xiong Da as he was still awaiting more cultivators to arrive at the mess she and her friends made out of the dead Giant Salamander Valg.

In the meantime, Xiong Da unknowingly observed that there was an increasing number of cultivators with their hoods and masks on in their midst.

The problem was that their masks were not of any animal shape and instead a simple semi-circle shaped mask covered in sheer blackness. Nevertheless, Xiong Da's user interface indicated that they were friendlies, and no other information was provided.

The Hippo cultivator was a bit disturbed by the masks and hoped they were not disguised as friendlies as part of the raid. However, he had coincidentally overheard from a few casual talks by the cultivators who just arrived that those Hooded Dark Mask cultivators had superior fighting powers, saving not only their lives but allowing them to reach this meeting point.

"Then I guess, I just keep an eye on them for now." Xiong Da thought to himself as he blew a loud whistling sound to indicate that it was time to hit the throne.

Spearheading the lead was Xiong Da with 30 over cultivators with him while Bu Dong and Kong Xian had ten cultivators covering his flanks.

True to her words, Jing Yu maintained the rear along with another group of cultivators, including Xia Mao.

At the same time, Zi Dan stayed in the centre group, which had at least twenty cultivators, and they would provide reinforcement to any groups whenever needed.

With the sounds of the Valgs roaring, heading to the supposed Salamander King was a do or die situation, but soon the cultivators would find out that the opponent they would be facing, enjoyed killing as much as she created the chaos.

## **Chapter 640 Peppery Tantrum**

"All Systems online. How are you feeling Peppers?" Ayse, who was making the final adjustments on her portable console, checked on her friend.



"I feel disgusted with this metal vest attached to me. Not to mention all these wires that are protruding around the vest itself. I feel like I am some prisoner!" Peppers screeched as she shook the vest around because of how stuffy the vest was becoming.

"Hey, at least you are able to move about despite your 'prisoner' status, I am ordered by Master to stay put. Floating. Hovering. Not to move unless ordered to. I am the one that should be called prisoner!" Mr Derpy argued back right beneath them, and Ayse's pieces of machinery shook as he moved his mouth.

"Do not talk! Whenever you move your mouth, your entire body vibrates as well! My equipment is sensitive to such movement! You do not want things exploding on top of you, right? So, stay still! Please!" Ayse ran to hold on to her equipment in case they were toppled over.

Mr Derpy sighed wearily as he rolled his eyes backwards and fell into a state of deep hibernation before abiding by Ayse's requests to remain motionlessly.

For once, Mr Derpy obliged the request of his master.

Similar to a deal with the devil, the replica of Lord Dagen was promised to an all you can eat buffet of the fattest Porkcupines by Jin. Requirements? To act as a floating platform for Ayse's equipment.

Mr Derpy accepted it in a jiffy since it was his opportunity to get out of his home instance and breathe in some fresh air. It was better to be doing something rather than be stuck in the Sanctum of Worlds doing nothing. Upon seeing his underlings working hectically for the Farming World and Goblin World's finances, Mr Derpy also wished to contribute to his master.

In addition, Shadow Dagen had been feeling restless ever since he heard the announcement of the new Open Dungeon Instance during the Christmas Feast. The notion of lurking freely and swimming under the ocean once more was so enticing that he was willing to do anything to get it as soon as possible. Jin never knew that Mr Derpy had such desires for the Open Dungeon Instance until the Deep Ones reported their concerns to him.

Although a portion of Jin's minions were already moving their belongings to the new island home instances, Jin had yet to transfer the Deep One Home Instance to the new Open Dungeon instance. This was mainly because he needed the upgrade from the Mechanical Titan before he was able to kickstart the Open Dungeon's ecosystem up.

Furthermore, it was meant to be a long term endeavour, and Jin did not want to screw the open dungeon instance by hastening the process unless he knew that it was working as intended.

Despite Shadow Dagen's insistence of his master to grant his wish, he was surprisingly cooperative to ensure that such a reality would come true earlier. But as a fragment of the almighty Fish God Dagen, he too had his pride and always acted unwillingly even though his intentions were obvious even for Jin.

"Okay, the readings from the machines are good...- HEY! Why did you take the vest out?!" Ayse shouted at Peppers who was frantically plugging out the wires from the vest and removing it.

"I do not need to wear this stupid thing! It's cramping my style as the infamous Demonic Queen Sage!!" Peppers said as she threw the vest back to Ayse.

"But according to my analysis, you will not be able to do more than two Legendary Grade Scan Spells of this scale and do I have to mention the necessity to fire off those explosions spells whenever needed? Don't be a spoiled girl now and wear the vest!" Ayse scolded Peppers, but instead of listening, the Mage Bellator aimed her staff towards the Orc Head Researcher.

"I am not as weak as you think I am." Pepper threatened to blow Ayse off the floating platform if she was being forced to wear the experimental vest once more. However, before Peppers could even cast her spells via her wooden staff, a large raven swoop right in front of her face. It scared her momentarily, allowing the other raven to forcefully grab the staff away from her.

"As much as I like to believe you, we cannot risk failing the whole operation when other lives are at stake." Que Er suddenly appeared onto the platform and intervened between them.

"So, be a good girl now and wear the vest. In return, I'll get Zhi Nu to make you a new combat outfit which should increase your magical powers." Que Er smiled as she swung the staff skilfully like a rhythmic gymnast before returning it to Peppers.

"Heh! You won't be able to create a good outfit without my analytical data!" Ayse wanted a comeback from the conversation since losing was not really her style. (Especially when she should be the one understanding Peppers' attitude.)

Regardless, she was secretly thankful that Que Er was able to coerce some sense into the stubborn Peppers.

Being the older one between the three of them, Que Er took a step back and agreed to Ayse's argument. "Then, I shall see Zhi Nu consult your data before she starts creating Peppers new outfit." Que Er said as she absorbed the beautiful scenery around her. After all, the view from Mr Derpy was indeed breathtaking.

"Fly now, my birds. Take this portion of the sky as your playground." Que Er said as she used Muninn and Huginn to open a purplish portal right in front of her. A murder of crows continuously flew out of the portal, making it looked like a swarm of bees from afar before they were spread out into the open.

While Ayse was fixing back the experimental vest onto Peppers, the little mage Bellator realised that there was something different with the wooden staff when Que Er returned it to her. She then noticed that there were minor bird emblems meekly glowing in blue on her staff's shaft.

Peppers then remembered that Que Er was a manipulator of the magical arts as well. Those minor bird emblems could potentially offload the burden she might incur from the continuous casting of spells.

Thus, the Mage Bellator comprehended that what Que Er said was truly sincere. The Magpie Queen really wanted this operation to go well for some reason even though Peppers did not really know her intentions, nor did she wish to find out more.

Because to the Demonic Sage Queen, her only concern right now was that this particular task that would definitely hurt her.

Physically and mentally.