

Dungeon S 761

Chapter 761 The Wretched Crown

King Baal was quite disgruntled watching how his troops were failing so terribly. It appeared they had not taken heed of the previous mistakes the Lords and Ladies had made beforehand.

Yet, Baal refused to believe that with their number superiority, this situation wouldn't change. This had always been the way they fought, so as always it was only a matter of time until the defenders would exhaust their resources and their manpower. Archduke Kiva concurred with that particular line of thought, yet Prince Stolas would beg to differ.

"If Moloch has managed to build all these high-end technological gadgets and weapons, he surely must have a way to reproduce them again. Considering the sheer scale of everything, I can only theorise that as long as he has the manpower, his technological edge will definitely pull him through this protracted war." Stolas thought to himself and felt restless.

For some reason, he was beginning to put his hopes into Moloch initiating the counterattack rather than merely holding the defence line. Alas, from a strategic point of view, it was rather evident that this would only bring further losses for him.

How was Stolas supposed to know that on the defenders' side, this was actually the most productive dungeon raid ever for the defenders? Jin had already earned close to 500,000 Yuan in a single day, the highest profit he had ever made from just customers alone.

Though the sales were extraordinarily high, it was mainly because the cultivators were doing repeat runs at discounted prices throughout the day to rake up their points so that they could get better prizes.

Not only that, their purchases from the online Pandamonium store were numerous despite Pandarens knowing that it was expensive. That convenience they enjoyed through paying the extra money was undisputable. Let's not forget that the offline stores were bringing in money as the Pandarens stocked themselves up with weapons, armour, potions and other accessories for the next run.

Also, the Tree Mall itself was earning a ton lot as a whole because of Jin's current dungeon event. Every shop owner was pitching in to promote Jin's dungeon instance and telling their customers that if they bought a dungeon ticket, certain discounts to their shops would be available.

It was the same for Jin's store too as Yun had a list of promos for the customers who had purchased items from the Tree Mall too.

This did create a slew of new customers just to test out the dungeon event that everyone was talking about even though it inadvertently placed a strain on the System's processing capability.

The System had also captured so many demon soldiers that it needed to reorganise its spatial 'inventory space' to keep all those soldiers for processing. If not for the Phantom Soldiers which the Graveyard Core created, it was possible that the System might have an overflow of demons which needed to be sold immediately for the sorely needed space.

Of course, it did inform Jin about the numbers and the Dungeon Supplier was already choosing which demon soldiers to use for conversion by the Graveyard Core, waiting for the right opportunity to mount

a second counterattack to temporarily reduce the numbers in the System and the battlefield. It was all part of Qiu Yue's plan in case the battle got dragged way longer than expected.

It was plainly obvious that sheer brute force was not going to work when Jin's tacticians had already thought of all the various scenarios to counter most of the brute force tactics that King Baal and his other generals were keen to use. However, there was one thing that Moloch feared despite all the planning, and that was actually Archduke Kiva.

After the dogfight between the Wyvern Goblin Knights and the Bat Bottleflies, Moloch was somewhat concerned that the cunning Archduke was going to throw similar platoons out in the field.

Of course, he was confident that Jin's monsters were more than capable of winning against them, but at what cost?

Also, there was the issue of King Baal's high-grade artefact, which Archduke Kiva had 'made' for him. It was also one of the reasons why Moloch had been demoted into a useless lord, covering a dungeon cave that held onto some crappy quality gold ore.

It was the Crown of Beyond Depravity.

The one and only artefact which was created using leftover defunct dungeon cores via some forbidden magical technique. Such a method which even the Church of Afterlife was adamantly condemned publicly about.

However, King Baal had not been using its powers at all as 'humbly' suggested by Kiva since it would create suspicions and might cause the elite agents from the Church of Afterlife to come after him.

Yet King Baal requested for such an artefact to be made solely because of the Harbinger threat as he had never forgotten how it had taken away his parents as well as the lives of uncountable others. Still, it was not until Kiva introduced his family's sacred jewel to complete the crown, making the person who used it, turn into a power-hungry tyrant.

Not many people could handle the 'completed' Crown of Beyond Depravity and for good reason. Those cores had once been the property of other owners, and most of the dungeon cores had been robbed through severe bloodshed.

By not going through the proper method of requisitioning the dungeon cores, those metal balls were haunted by the souls imbued by the previous owners. Without Kiva's family jewel to act as a conduit between the souls and the wearer, it merely acted as an attribute increasing artefact.

The user who wore the crown literally had to pass a 'sanity' check each and every day to assert control on the artefact. Even when Kiva first modified the enhanced Crown of Beyond Depravity, he had troubles controlling it and nearly lost his life permanently from attempting to use its powers as the voices kept telling him to kill himself to appease their grief.

At the time Kiva had actually considered it to be a good way to kill the reigning King and also designed an overtly ridiculous excuse to make him sign a complicated invoice, but in actual fact, it was a contract disguised with a lot of hidden clauses.

Stating vaguely that if King Baal was ever gone, Kiva would take over the Demon Metropolis and Moloch who at the time had been one of the few advisors King Baal actually trusted had managed to notice it.

Unfortunately, it had been a little too late. As when the Minotaur Lord entered the royal chamber, King Baal had already donned the crown before Moloch ever had the chance to caution him against it.

The powers the crown granted immediately captivated Baal's attention, and he treated Moloch's advice as a sign of jealousy. The yearning for strength had made Baal go for a series of reckless conquests and slowly it caused the once logical and fair tempered King to turn for the worse.

Eventually, Moloch saw no other choice but to steal the Crown of Beyond Depravity. He devised a devious plan, hoping that his King would wake up from that unending nightmarish journey for power once it was gone.

Unfortunately, the Minotaur Lord was unaware that the crown had grown into a living parasite, calling out for its master when Moloch thought that he had successfully tricked Baal into releasing the artefact.

And guess where it happened? At the max security prison which Moloch designed specifically to steal the crown away.

Moloch thought that the highly dangerous prisoners he released would have an effect against King Baal, but he later found out that the crown still transmitted power to its master. In a series of unfortunate events, it allowed King Baal to catch Moloch red-handed running away with the crown.

Ironically Archduke Kiva took the chance to remove the most scheming and yet loyal advisor, branding him a traitor for wanting the crown to himself.

The only saving grace was that King Baal's heart was not yet fully corrupted by the Ravenous Lord of Hunger. He was lenient enough to transform and demote Moloch for his act of treason. However, with Moloch out of the picture and forbidden from ever leaving his dungeon, Kiva took the time to pour ideas and deceitful words of hatred in hopes of removing Moloch permanently.

For he knew that the cotton minotaur would one day rise and wake his King up from the bad dream.

Chapter 762 Kiva's Masterplan

As midnight approached, so did the decline of cultivators attending the dungeon instance. They had been wise enough to coincide the event on a weekend which maximised the odds of cultivators justifying spending just a little bit more time there. The youths especially took him up on that godsent opportunity, yet Jin was most surprised at the number of young workers who came in late to blow off some steam.

Yet even with the underestimated customer numbers, which neither Jin nor the System had calculated, there was no doubt that Qiu Yue and Moloch needed to adjust and adapt the strategy for their defences to cope with the current situation.

Up until now, the defenders had managed to hold most of the demon soldiers at bay, but it was inevitable that the demons would notice the defending lines getting thinner before they reported their observation to the higher-ups possibly leading to a mad rush of reinforcement.

Upon learning the weakening of the defence lines, Archduke Kiva immediately requested King Baal to allow his subject to send another batch of his chimaera troops into battle, one which he believed would break through the frontlines and give them the chance to move further in to find Moloch or the Dungeon Core.

"You think one platoon is enough?" King Baal laid his head back and tapped his finger hard on the arm of the 'makeshift' throne chair.

"Ah...Apologies, my Sire, I can only send in one squad at a time. My powers are not as bottomless as yours." Kiva was directly hinting to King Baal to use the crown's powers instead of just using it to acquire strength.

By using the excuse of the deadlock in their battle, Kiva hoped that his King would use the powers to not only eliminate that irritating thorn (or horn) in his skin but also to take the opportunity to attract the attention from the Church of the Afterlife.

That way, upon annihilating Moloch, the agents from the Church of the Afterlife would undoubtedly come after King Baal for using the forbidden powers of the combined Dungeon Cores. Hence, in Kiva's mind, two major scenarios could potentially occur.

One would be the defeat of King Baal by the agents of the Church of the Afterlife. In that case, he would secretly cooperate with their agents to eradicate the Royal Family, banishing them out of Demon Metropolis and reign as King. This might lead to him acting as a puppet of the Church of Afterlife, but he was sure given enough time he could find ways to lessen or outright remove their interference, allowing him to become the true ruler of the place.

The alternate scenario was that King Baal manages to defeat the Church of the Afterlife's agents by using his artefact to further improve his demons, firmly establishing them as a force to be reckoned with.

Admittedly, it would be a difficult fight, but defeating their agents would reveal that the Church was fallible, allowing rebellions to rise and eventually break them apart. Of course, it sounded a bit far fetched especially when they would send even more capable agents.

But if things don't go well, Kiva could simply be a conspirator against his King and assist the agents in removing the King out of his power. Then, he would still be able to reign as King of the Demon Metropolis too. This would be a hard road to walk, but one that he had prepared for. He had long since started gathering data and information about the crown so that he would be able to create a better product which would make others fear him.

Of course no matter the scenario, they all required the death of Moloch first. He needed him and his city to become the sacrificial lamb. So far the disgraced Minotaur Lord had performed exceedingly well. Surely, the unexpectedly tough resistance, as well as the usage of highly technological weapons, came as a bit of surprise. But it still fit into his scheme.

Even better, there was nothing connecting it to him, so his treacherous ideas would not get revealed. He did not know that there were far more factors than he could imagine behind the scenes able to utterly crush his ambition.

After all, Moloch wasn't lazy during his banishment...

"Very well, I see this as a necessary need to win. I shall aid you in your endeavour. So far they have bested our elite troops again and again and it is starting to take a toll on the troops." King Baal opened a small magical portal to retrieve the crown with his bare hands. "As well as pissing me off." He thought to himself, even though his facial expression said it all.

When he took out the Crown of Beyond Depravity publicly, blood was already spilling from his hands as the crown bit into his skin like the flesh-eating parasite it was.

However, the aura it emitted was menacing enough that some of the nearby guards had trouble standing straight without shaking and losing consciousness.

Only a handful like Stolas, Kiva and the Royal Guards were able to barely withstand its frightening aura. Kiva quickly kneeled down and presented a crystal right in front of his liege while keeping his head down. He did not want to admit that the haunts from the dungeon cores could be heard even when he was not holding it.

King Baal raised the crown and the devilish purple jewel affixed at the front shone brightly and shot a beam of energy into the crystal Kiva was holding until the holder urgently requested King Baal to stop.

Once the transmission of energy was done, King Baal immediately placed the crown back into the magical storage portal and closed it up. The terrible aura quickly dissipated from their current location.

Right now, the full energised crystal was gleaming with so much power that even Kiva himself was a little tempted to absorb some of such energy to test it out. Yet, he as a researcher and a person privy of all the crown's knowledge knew that it would be suicide. The bat-faced Archduke thanked his majesty with a graceful bow and hastily called out his squad of chimaera soldiers to appear.

Fused with lions and praying mantis, the Tieflings who were standing right in front of Kiva had magnificent lion manes as if they were wearing a furred scarf. Their Mantis features were kept hidden for the moment since there were no enemies around for them to bare their fangs and blades. They stood in full attention when Kiva ordered them.

With a platoon of 30 Lion Mantis reporting for duty, Kiva changed into his raven face again and started chanting, allowing the crystal's powers to seep into each and every chimaera soldier.

Artha, the leader of the Lion Mantis, was the first to receive the powers and the bulk of it as well. He started to feel strange heart palpitations inside him as if a second heart was being forcefully pushed into him in the midst of the transference of the crown's energy. In an instant, he and his platoon could feel the effects of the crown's powers.

"Happy hunting." Kiva sent them off as he clasped his hands and added a bit of his own unique chant, buffing the chimaera soldiers even further before they spread their insectoid wings and burst straight onto the battlefield.

Chapter 763 Lion Mantis

And just as the Pandarens and monsters were having the time of their life beating the demon soldiers out of the face of this world, everything changed when the Lion Mantises attacked.

Imbued with the crown's energy, they arrived at their destination with insane speed, killing several Pandarens that were hiding in the forested area in one go. The offshoots of Shu fared no better, getting obliterated upon their landing. The Pandarens, as well as Jin's monsters, immediately recognised them for the real threat they posed.

The pairs of Lion Mantises scanned their surroundings to gain a briefing understanding of the situation before commencing with their subsequent assaults. Low-grade cultivators stood no chance of reacting or even fighting against the Lion Mantises.

Even the Orcs who had the towering strength of a giant were cut down effortlessly, without the opportunity to defend themselves properly. Sandy and the rest saw what was happening and eventually stopped their hour-long concert.

Before the Lion Mantises could strike the concert stage, Sandy had already materialised a dome of sand to protect all music members, especially the Zither Mistress. She felt confident that the only person who could subvert this particular situation would be her alone.

Shu who was hiding at the back of the island had also strengthened the sand dome with its own barrier of sentient roots so that Sandy could refine her sand dome and make it even harder for the chimaera soldiers to penetrate. She too did not forget to reinforce the ground to prevent any ambushes from below.

Understanding the current situation, Ke Mi changed her genre of music. It was a drastic shift from pop music to her own magical tunes. Immediately, the Lion Mantises who were on a rampage experienced a sudden decrease in their speed, allowing the Orcs to finally counterattack.

Unfortunately, the Lion Mantises quickly revealed their true weapons, the mantis blades that were grown from their hands and proved their lethality as weapons. With the crown's energy, their blades' sharpness were enhanced multi-fold, allowing them to cut through the Orcs' weapons easily and bisecting them in the process.

With such a gamechanger on the defensive battlefield, Qiu Yue who had been having her dinner in the middle of the night had been alerted by the Goblin telecoms operator to check out the situation. Simultaneously a rough analysis by the System warned the tactician that their current defences were definitely inadequate to hold the line.

"Shit." Qiu Yue, still with a spoon in her mouth, quickly opened the list of monsters available for deployment on the war room table.

"Dread Reaver, Flame Ripper. I believe it's your debut. Currently, Ke Mi is slowing their advances, but there is no guarantee that her music can hold them for long. Even so, its a matter of time the Lion

Mantises overcome and remove the slowness debuff. Be careful, the Orcs which had been equipped with enhanced inscription weapons had their swords and axes sliced through like a hot knife through butter. I entrust the two of you who have unique weapons to be the ones to remove the new intruders from the current equation." Qiu Yue sent them the orders, and the System immediately teleported the two General Goblin's sons onto the battlefield, right above a pair of Lion Mantises.

A chop from the top and a clean slice diagonally removed the Lion heads from the pair of chimaera soldiers, and that act itself were sufficient to catch the attention for the rest of the Lion Mantises.

"Heh, different aura from the normal demons. They've obviously been strengthened way too quickly." Dread Reaver stated as he held his black sword up and pointed at another Lion Mantises.

"Must be the crown that Moloch was talking about." Flame Ripper held his dagger at the ready on his side as he pulled his bow, conjuring a flame arrow. The others including the demon soldiers somehow gave space for the Goblins and Lion Mantises to fight as both sides instinctively knew that interfering or getting too close to them would more or less mean death on their part.

"You all handle those two... odd-looking Goblins. Afterwards, take care of the rest of the group. I shall personally destroy that metal ship." Artha, the leader of the Lion Mantises chimaera platoon, had just received those orders from the Ravenous Archduke.

The demons had made it a priority to handle the Stalingrad as its bombardment had been causing a lot of trouble for the temporary checkpoint. With so much energy whirling inside him, Artha simply wanted to get that power out as soon as possible. (Or maybe, he just wanted to use the power that was raging within.)

As the chimaera Platoon acknowledged their leader, Artha took flight out of the combat zone and headed towards the Stalingrad while the rest rushed towards the two Goblins who currently posed the biggest threat against them.

With Ke Mi's musical aura that caused a slowing debuff on the demons, Dread Reaver held his black sword up high, and illusions of the hooded reaper with long hair came out while the ground got filled with nothing but an abyssal void. Not one but six of them were hovering right above him in all cardinal directions as they simultaneously faced the rushing chimaeras and chopped their heads off into two.

"Death's Domain." Dread Reaver whispered as another Lion Mantises tried to move in furiously with a burst of speed, but the moment he entered the black void zone, his body was cut in half with no other action taken from Dread Reaver.

"Tsk, sometimes, I am jealous of your powers." Flame Ripper complained via the System Channel, so as to not reveal any secrets to the Lion Mantises.

"You do know that I can only use this once a day? Besides, the range is extremely limited. Not to mention the amount of mana it consumes." Dread Reaver argued back as the void faded away when he finished talking and the Goblin of Death sheathed his sword, waiting to fight the next opponent brave or stupid enough to come forth.

"Hah, compared to you, my powers need coercing to come out. Unless Ifrit feel bored enough or the opponent proved to be a challenge, he won't come out." Flame Ripper said as he lit his bow and fired an

arrow. The Lion Mantis who took the shot was confident of its armour, but when the arrow hit it, the chimaera soldier suddenly went into flames and burnt

into crisp, causing the others to be wary.

"I won't pity you on that. Still, these Chimaera soldiers are learning our tactics way too fast for comfort." The Death Knight replied as he attempted to perform a killing blow, but his sword got deflected.

"At least, your initial attack reduced the numbers we are fighting by nearly half." Flame Ripper acknowledged as he took another shot. Surprisingly the Lion Mantises he had been aiming at, had managed to barely dodge. Were it not for Ke Mi's slow debuff, it would have definitely been an easy feat for the Lion Mantises. The Avatar of Ifrit then threw his bow back into his storage ring and lit his daggers on fire.

The two Goblins were sure that speed and finesse would be the crucial factors to win this fight. They were clueless that the chimaera soldiers themselves were beginning a second evolution triggered by their dwindling numbers and the real threat of their entire group being wiped out from existence.

Chapter 764 Artha

Artha did not hesitate to complete his objective, but he had made a mistake by communicating it out loud that he was going for the Stalingrad. The System had also picked up the information, so it ordered Lord Wolte to put up a magical shield.

While Artha might be lying and possibly a deviation tactic, it did not hurt to put a shield up in case the Stalingrad was besieged by the leader of the Lion Mantises.

After the hijacking raid on the Leviathan, the Stalingrad had been pulled back into the open seas and was currently firing a few flammable incendiary rounds to burn the surrounding ships to kingdom come. So, when it received the command, Wolte had no difficulty putting the shields up.

The only downside of the shields was that Wolte had to stop all bombardments to the seas. He would have to put his trust in the Deep Ones to make sure none survived. The only weapons that were still available were the anti-air mini cannons which were already aiming towards Artha when the sea crew spotted a mysterious flying bug coming their way.

Looking back, Lord Wolte was extremely thankful that he did place the shield up as ordered by the System as the leader of Lion Mantises, Artha smashed his entire weight onto it. His flight left a loud shrieking noise, and when Artha struck the shield, the impact felt as if the energy shield was about to burst from it. Ironically, it was Lord Wolte's turn to experience the bombardment as his ship shook violently in the seas from the shockwaves produced by the impact.

Fortunately, the shield was still holding thanks to the living magical battery Lord Wolte was extracting from. If not for Shadow Dagen's magical powers, his protection would already have been shattered at that point of time. (Mr Derpy did complain though since it had taken more than a bit of a toll on him.)

Learning that his straight-up attack had been useless, Artha did not try again. He quickly switched to the best solution in his mind by first releasing a loud roar. The crew noticed interference on the magical shield and assumed that it was some magic desynchronisation ability where Artha would attempt to slip into the shield-like how an atom passes through time and space in quantum physics.

However, that was not the case, and instead, it was something less exciting. Nevertheless, it was pretty much an 'oh shit' kind of situation for both Stalingrad and the sailors onboard.

As Artha roared with all his might, he appeared to grow exponentially larger with each passing second. His two hearts accelerated and pushed the muscles to pump in more blood to make him grow bigger.

With the aid of the crown's energy stored within him, it enabled him to multiply his cells explosively which subsequently turned him as large as a giant. Artha did not know how deep the sea went, but he wasn't going to risk anything. With the help of his now enormous mantis wings buzzing around, they allowed him to hover over the Stalingrad.

King Baal saw the development that was going over the sea and smirked as he watched the Lion Mantis grow in size that put Earl Barbatos to shame. Archduke Kiva was also quite happy with the results of the crown energy and was excitedly staring at it with intense curiosity. The scene of success had been deeply burnt into his brain when he heard Artha's roar getting louder with each interval, and to the point, he was simply a massive version of his former self.

"And in one swoop, that metal ship will be cut into two, and that will solve all our naval problems! Too bad Focalor had to suffer the brunt of its attack. Still, it will be exciting to excavate it after the battle to study its cannons. Ooh, this is so exciting!" Archduke Kiva thought to himself. He knew that no matter how powerfully strong a magical shield was, it would not last without sacrifices and mana.

It was just a matter of time when it comes down, and Kiva deduced that Stalingrad was probably the only naval ship Moloch have on deck even though it magically appeared out of nowhere.

When Lord Wolte saw the transformation in front of him, he knew that even if he tried to shoot the overgrown Lion Mantis, that would be no way Artha would stay still to receive the shot. There was no need to try, as he knew how slowly the cannons moved as compared to the Lion Mantis.

"But one thing is for sure." Lord Wolte swore to himself with a slight glee. (His andromorphous mouth was right under the ship.)

"GODDAMN FINALLY!!! It's time for the appearance of our ultimate product!" Jespa screamed loudly as she raised her can of root beer and the craftsman all cheered in unison when they saw the live System camera shift its video recording deep into the sea.

A pair of red eyes were glowing with carnivorous intent towards its newfound prey as multiple soft glowing ruby lights behind those eyes continued to light up in succession. For the prey's cry had awakened the predator from the deep.

With unmatched confidence, the Colossal Artha believed that using his Mantis Blade was sufficient to deliver a swift execution to the people on the metal ship and later move back to the defensive platform to finish the rest of the job with his chimaera soldiers.

However, as he was about to swing his Mantis Blade, he caught a glimpse of bubbles emerging from the side of the ship. Suddenly, a blast of intense red energy beam was aimed directly towards Artha, destroying his Mantis Blade in the process as he barely dodged the rest of the attack.

Lord Wolte didn't hesitate to take this opportunity to fire his triple barrel cannons at Artha as assistance. However, doing so made him lowered his shields in the process.

Artha was unaware about what was hiding under the sea or whether this had been a special attack part of the Metal Ship. It did not matter as the shields were down and the Stalingrad was completely vulnerable because of this.

"How stupidly foolish but your attempt had not been in vain," Artha said as he readjusted his body and pushed himself to destroy the ship before it could do any damage to him again.

Yet, when the Colossal Lion Mantis came too close to the Stalingrad, an enormous shadow emerged out of the waters and managed to bite on to Artha's leg. The Lion Mantis was shocked and reactively tried to cut the thing that bit his leg with his remaining Mantis Blade. To his surprise, the blade got stuck, and in return, two paws appeared, grabbing Artha's waist and pulling him into the waters.

By bringing the Lion Mantis to his territory, the newly emerged predator had secured his home field advantage while the prey lost his aerial capabilities.

Artha tried hard to struggle by attempting to claw the monstrous 'cute' face since his final Mantis Blade remained stuck. He even tried to blow purplish fire which still had an effect despite him plunged into the deep sea. Yet, the predator did not flinch a single bit as his fin plates started to light up with an eerie reddish glow for the second time.

Pandjilla was merciless.

Chapter 765 Pandjilla Reborn

Artha could not believe it.

Bestowed with the powers from the King himself and given personally through the Archduke of the Demon Metropolis, there was no greater honour for a demon soldier.

However, even if Artha wanted to serve the King and Archduke, he was now feebly powerless against a monster that was slightly smaller in build than him. It was an utter disgrace to them and to his platoon should he not be able to get out of this situation.

But when Artha saw the eerie reddish fins behind the Pandjilla, he could already sense that he had to act quickly to free himself out of the stranglehold he was currently in. Alas, with the increasing pressure of the sea and Pandjilla's grapple, there was really nothing he could do. The giant chimaera had never been designed to fight in underwater battles.

His next move would essentially be a do-or-die kind of manoeuvre as he grabbed the mantis blade that was stuck on Pandjilla's rock hard shoulder and sliced himself into two. While this might have looked like

a suicidal move, it allowed Artha to get out of the grapple hold and escape the incoming beam of death that was spat out from Pandjilla's mouth.

Despite his self inflicted fatal injuries, Artha continued to ascend further up by flapping his wings intensely to get a breath of air as surviving was his number one priority right now.

At first, the Pandjilla thought that he had successfully killed his prey. He had already looked forward to devouring it, but upon noticing that he was only holding half the body, his 'brain' internalised the information, and the Pandjilla turned furious. For his own meal to cut itself into two in order to escape from his energy beam was unacceptable for the Clay Panda-Fish Abomination since he was aiming to get a good wholly crunch on the insect-fused beast.

To have such a basic instinct for food was not a coincidence resulting from the multitude of runes placed within him, but instead, the Pandjilla had finally gained a proper brain.

When activated by Qiu Yue, the Pandjilla had simply been a lump of water-resistant clay holding itself together, waiting for the next command to be given to him, especially with the chip installed along with his runes. However, the boredom of waiting for it to be called for an assault brought the clay Pandjilla to be in the same situation as Mr Derpy.

Thus as mentioned, Mr Derpy had ordered his minions to feed Pandjilla with demon bodies to power him up. Never did the Shadow Fish God realise that it was actually feeding him magically enhanced sailors from the Demon Fleet Leviathan. Those sailors affected by the Fog that Steals had undead attributes in them, hence causing Pandjilla to actually gain some 'life' from it.

Learning that the Panda-Fish abomination that Jin requested the goblin craftsman to create for the fun of having a panda-themed Godzilla, the System could not have predicted that the runes, chips and eventually the undead essence would evolve the Pandjilla to become something more alive. Naturally curious, the System decided to try and see how much further it could go by setting up an experiment. It had asked Mr Derpy to hand over the Dungeon Core that had been within Flashy for Pandjilla to consume.

Shadow Dagen thought that it was an order rather than a request, and in the hopes of gaining more favours with the System, preferably in the form of piggy (porkcupine) nuggets, it obediently allowed Pandjilla to consume it. The System, as well as Mr Derpy and the Deep Ones around the beast, were all equally surprised when they saw the Dungeon Core being attracted to Pandjilla and subsequently assimilate itself into the lump of the clay.

Only through Moloch's insight did the System learn that this Dungeon Core was like a parasite kind of core that leeches on giant monsters. With Flashy the flying turtle becoming just another stress eating meal for Mr Derpy, its option had been limited to leech on the Shadow Dagen. But the power the Dungeon Core offered had been so minuscule in comparison to the living shadow of a mighty Fish God, Mr Derpy naturally rejected it. (He had no idea that the Dungeon Core even had such a condition.)

Thus, when it came in contact with the Clay Pandjilla, the undead essence it had consumed made the sentient core believe that the Giant Monster was suitable and weak enough for it to become its new host. (Compared to Mr Derpy, it was definitely a better choice.) So, when it assimilated within the

Pandjilla, it actually became the heart of the panda-themed monster and gave it something the clay monster had sorely lacked before.

Intelligence.

A brain had been manifested along with the chip and the dozens of layers of runes, allowing it to be sentient enough to make its own decisions. Thus, when Qiu Yue wanted to give a command to the Clay Pandjilla, she noticed that it was already moving on its own to counter the threat that the Stalingrad was facing. And its actions to bring the chimaera soldier down was evidence that in time, it would become a fearsome monster to be reckoned with.

Artha tried to move as fast as he could, but his wings weren't flappers, and his arms could only aid him that much on his attempt to reach the surface of the sea. However, for the time being, the poor soul was still in the home ground of the newly reborn Pandjilla.

In a moment's notice, the Panda Godjilla had already caught up to the bleeding chimaera soldier. However, it was apparent that he was already recovering his torso thanks to the Crown's immense power.

And the Pandjilla meant business when it set its mind to eat the Colossal Lion Mantis as his next meal. So, he quickly grabbed onto the healing torso and tried to bite through it. That was when Artha counterattacked knowing that all Pandjilla wanted was him. So he threw his Mantis Blade into its mouth, hoping it would penetrate his throat and kill him in the process.

Unfortunately, the Lion Mantis did not know that the new Sea Guardian of Pandapolis was made out of premium clay which was incapable of bleeding. In addition, the Dungeon Core utilised the undead essence it had previously collected and used alongside the recovery runes to regenerate the simple clay structure.

Compared to humans, demons and other living beings, the parasitic Dungeon believed it had found the most comfortable host to live in because of its simplistic 'DNA' structure. The System allowed it to do as it pleased for the time being before it would enforce the second seal of loyalty on it.

The Pandjilla continued to ignore the Mantis Blade within its mouth and bit Artha with his might. This time, there was nowhere else, nothing he could do to escape. Artha was once again facing the eerie reddish glow of his fin indicating that he would be toast meat within the next few seconds.

"I am sorry, my lord, for disappointing you." Artha apologised with his lungs filled with saltwater and his end torso, feeling the burn emanating from beneath. He had accepted that no matter how much he tried, it was useless to struggle this time around.

Long live Pandjilla. Long live the newest Sea Guardian of Pandapolis.

Chapter 766 Infected Energy

"Gosh! How many surprises can they keep?" Kiva wondered as he shook his head at the loss of the Lion Mantises. There was still some crown energy left within the crystal, and his mana had recovered, so he decided to order the next batch of Lion Mantises onto the scene.

"Artha Two, it looks like your good pal Artha One has disappointed me greatly. I strongly suggest that you take up the slack by eliminating the current threat on the defensive island platforms. Or else, do not ever think of reviving back." Kiva said as he sent the remaining crown energy mixed with his own magic into the next batch of Lion Mantises.

"Understood, my Liege. My soldiers and I will clear the shame of the 1st Lion Mantis Platoon." Artha Two hastily replied as he kneeled down to receive the remaining King's 'blessing' from Kiva. He felt the same kind of power pulsating in his veins as his predecessor. Yet his portion was not potent enough to enable him to grow into a colossal form like how Artha One had been able to.

Kiva could have shamelessly asked for more, but he wanted to achieve some results first, before requesting the second dose of crown energy into his crystal...even though he suspected by now, the King would give it to him without much thought.

"How many of those abominations do you have?" Stolas folded his arms as he watched Kiva turn his Raven Head back to a Bat head once again.

"Not very princely of you to eavesdrop on my conversation with my subjects." Kiva made double meaning pun to poke fun at Stolas.

"But since I am in a rather happy mood... maybe another 300 more? Perhaps by the end of this year, I will have a total of 600...ish? The Dungeon Core that I was given by King Baal can only do so much. " Kiva flaunted his power openly towards Stolas, knowing he could do nothing about it.

"But perhaps, Moloch's core could be a great supplement to my research lab. I should consider that." He thought to himself, and now, he started to feel Stolas's presence to be a little more than an annoyance.

"With your curiosity appeased, I suggest you stay in your tent, or better yet, you should return back to the Demon Metropolis. Who knows how long his Majesty's patience will last with you snooping around?" Kiva taunted Stolas, knowing full well that retreating back to their city would be a disgrace. The Prince kept quiet as sometimes doing nothing would be best.

The Lion Mantises took their leave by bursting into the skies, going for the defensive platform. However, Qiu Yue and Moloch had learnt their lesson about keeping the skies a little too empty.

Though the Clay Dragon was still around to clear some minor aerial threats, it was definitely not fast enough to catch up to each individual Lion Mantis if they split up. Thus, Que Er's Crows were used to fill the gaps while the medics and healers were busy patching the Wyvern Goblin Knights and their rides in the floating military platform.

Since the crows were not able to catch up to them, they got placed at specific areas, so that they could at least become a nuisance to the Lion Mantises. It did slow them down a little, but the time bought was still not enough for Dread Reaver and Flame Ripper to catch up.

The existing Lion Mantises that had survived the culling, transformed right in front of the two goblin heroes. Some of them grew a pair of arms, giving them four Mantis Blades per Lion Mantis while others

grew a new pair of wings, allowing them to be more agile in their fight. The Goblin Heroes also noticed that their carapace armour seemed much sturdier and their bulging muscles had grown two-fold.

With Dread Reaver unable to use the same skill again, the Lion Mantises' caution wore off, and they began to start preying on the two Goblins as well as their surrounding allies. Even the Avatar of Ifrit who was supposed to have one of the most prominent speed attributes compared to the rest of the monsters in Jin's army was barely able to keep up with the newly transformed dual-winged Lion Mantises.

The Orcs and cultivators worked together to fight against this new menace, but their efforts proved to be futile. Their swords were not cutting them deep enough, or they were too slow to react despite Ke Mi's slow debuff music.

Everyone believed that if not for the Zither Mistress, they would have lost their lives in the blink of an eye, perhaps even without realising how. Yet, the two Goblin heroes were doing their best to prevent as much loss as possible. Unfortunately, the two of them were experiencing difficulties against the newly transformed Lion Mantises.

As for Dread Reaver, he nearly lost his arm when fighting against two four-bladed Lion Mantises at once and eventually his head. An Orc had come to interfere against a third one who had nearly succeeded in ambushing. Too bad the brave Orc lost his life in the process.

"How dare you!" Dread Reaver shouted as he twisted his sword, bringing it into a gridlock against the Lion Mantis who killed the Orc and placed his palm on the Lion's head. "HOW DARE YOU!" Dread Reaver shouted from his deathly looking mask and in his rage, he had forgotten the other two Lion Mantises just right beside him.

Eight Mantis Blades pierced through Dread Reaver's armour, and yet it did not stop the life and rage burning inside the Death Knight. Flame Ripper had seen what was happening, but there was no way he could help his pal right now. He was too busy trying not to meet the same fate.

The third Lion Mantis was able to get out of the gridlock, but the moment he did that, he suddenly felt that he lost his grip on the blades even though they were attached to him. At this point, the other two Lion Mantises saw what was happening that made the third one feel so restless. The Death Knight was pulling the soul essence of the third Lion Mantis manually out of his body.

At the same time, he was consuming it and ignoring the other two.

That, of course, prompted the two Lion Mantises to retract their blades and go for a second wave of stabbing, however at that point, Dread Reaver was able to parry the other two's attacks with his sword.

"Did no one teach you not to disturb somebody during their meal?!" The Death Knight bellowed, his eyes were burning red with anger while his helmet moved as if it was crunching on the soul of the Lion Mantis. He felt his pain from the stabs he received was dulling as he consumed more of the soul. The Lion Mantis, which got his soul taken out now became an empty husk and started to decay right in front of them.

Now Dread Reaver understood why the Lion Mantises could be moving so quickly or hold four blades. He got a taste of the crown's energy that was embedded in the soul of that Lion Mantis he had absorbed and the energy pulsating through him was intoxicating.

"Alert! The System has detected major interference with Death Knight Dread Reaver's sanity. Urging Death Knight to stop consuming the infected soul." The System kept popping up in front of Dread Reaver as well as the multiple alerts.

"Shut up! I know what I am getting into. I just need more power right now." Dread Reaver waved the annoying message away. Then he pointed his sword at the two Lion Mantises, and his black blade was shimmering with murderous energy.

"System will provide souls to Death Knight Dread Reaver for free in this current battle, in exchange for him stopping the infected soul consumption. Failure to comply will result in the System imprisoning the Death Knight." The System stated with a severe warning.

"Tsk, and here I thought I can feast on the rest of the Lion Mantises here. Fine, I accept your proposal. You better serve me enough souls to stop the endless slaughter of our allies." Dread Reaver replied in the System Channel as he discarded the last bit of the soul and took the initiative to strike.

"Understood." The System agreed but did not stop at that. Because of the sudden change which the System did not understand, it did a quick analysis of Dread Reaver. Only then did it learn that the interference signature was similar to the energy pulse from the Dungeon Core.

Thus, it could only conclude that those chimaera soldiers had been infected by the rumoured Crown of Beyond Depravity. Suddenly, a mission appeared on Jin's phone, which took him by surprise. It had been a long time since the System had created a task for him.

"Destroy the Crown of Beyond Depravity at all cost. Rewards: Dungeon Supplier Rank Up to 5." Jin read and realised it was a nearly a two rank upgrade from his current Dungeon Supplier Rank. He vaguely recalled certain permissions were lifted when he reached rank 3 but had no idea what was waiting for him at Rank 5.

"Why the sudden mission?" Jin asked, and the System was direct.

"Bring the remains to the System for isolation, containment and subsequent conversion to aid with increasing the processing capabilities. It should be usable as an alternative to the Titan Brain." The System stated, but only in hindsight did Jin realise this was a tall order to accomplish.

Chapter 767 Counterattack Discussion

Jin could see where this was going and understood where the System was coming from. Though he was surprised that the System issued an impromptu mission, the System explained how it had been closely monitoring the artefact since its activation when King Baal had taken it out in the Dungeon City.

It also stated how the Crown's energy had nearly corrupted Death Knight's sanity. "Although a thorough analysis would be recommended, the System had classified the wielder of the Crown, Demon King Baal, and the artefact itself as extremely dangerous. Both needed to be taken down as soon as possible. Otherwise, the losses that User stands to face might be sufficient to not only negate the profits earned over the day but put us even more in the red."

"He really must be damn powerful if it is as you said. It makes more sense moneywise to end it sooner rather than later." Jin guessed, and the System naturally concurred.

The Crown had always been anticipated as a highly variable factor which could change the tide, but the System did not expect it to be this disruptive for Jin's dungeon raid. If the cultivators were killed easily, it would definitely discourage them from coming back, especially when the amount they paid for more valuable tickets were relatively high compared to the usual dungeon instance ticket.

Jin and the System had already put their plan into action to give the cultivators a second shot at the dungeon raid, mainly known as the redemption ticket, but they could not do this too many times, else they would lose the cultivators' trust.

There needed to be a balance like the Escape City Instance. It was tough, to the point that anyone has yet to actually complete it, but that did not mean the dungeon was overly punishing. Jin still gave them sufficient rewards for their hard work too. This was true as a blanket statement, especially in regards to the younger generation since Jin himself, knew that they were too reliant on incentives and gifts to prompt them to cultivate further.

"In addition, Original Bellator Kraft and his team of Bellators had been sent to infiltrate the location given by Lord Moloch in an attempt to retrieve the enemy's Dungeon Core. System has calculated that this would be the best time for a counterattack instead of just defending." The System stated and listed the possible options for Jin to consider. Upon reading the options, he believed it would be best to look for a second opinion and went to the Pandapolis War Room for some advice.

He was surprised to see that Hou Fei was with Moloch, both of them were having a late dinner together. On the other hand, Qiu Yue was busy arranging the troops and cultivators, sending them orders to comply so they would not be too overwhelmed by the second wave of Lion Mantises that had come in.

"I suggest you not to disturb her as she is in her zone right now," Moloch whispered as he took a sip from a straw while his man puppet held a coffee cup high for him to drink.

"It's fine, I have things to discuss with you instead," Jin explained how the System had issued him an impromptu mission and showed them that the Lion Mantises were actually enhanced by the Crown's energy.

"I see, no wonder Dread Reaver and Flame Ripper were having trouble holding them at bay. Still, sending in more of our minions might only increase the aggressiveness of the Lion Mantises. We've seen how they managed to adapt to the situation a bit too quickly for my comfort. Sending another comrade might only complicate things." Moloch said that this was the reason why Qiu Yue was so flustered, moving all the troops around. She wanted to give some ranged support to distract the Lion Mantises while at the same time, giving the two Goblin Heroes some room to breathe.

"In any case, you will need to lure King Baal out of the safe zone permanently if you want to challenge him and destroy the crown." Hou Fei added as he had learned how the safe zone worked through Moloch's teachings.

All defender's magic would have half the effectiveness within the safe zone while the attackers have their effectiveness doubled within the radius. If the attackers' magical projectile was shot out of the safe zone, it would return back to its original effectiveness.

Vice versa for the defenders as well so because of this dungeon cave rule, the defenders would never dare to go into the safe zone to fight as they knew that it would be a significant disadvantage against them. It was also the reason why the demons had not expected the initial bombardment to be so devastating. After all, who in the Dungeon World had heard about projectiles being so deadly without being infused with magic?

"You will need to prove your worth if you wish to make him come out of it. That or you will have to lure him with a good enough bait." Hou Fei said and used his head to point at Moloch. Even the cotton minotaur lord understood that he was the best bait to get King Baal to act.

"Still, having a good bait is useless if you do not know how to reel the fish into your hands. Don't forget once the fish bites into the hook, it still has enough strength to fight and run away with it. In this scenario, the satisfaction of destroying Moloch and causing the rights of the Dungeon Core to return to him."

"Not exactly the case, since our core is jointly ruled with two users. The System and Me. So even if I fall, King Baal will have to remove the existence of the System from the city first before the city can be captured." Moloch said, and the others were a little perplexed. How could one defeat the System? Does that mean the whole city had to be incinerated first, removing all traces that had System's interference for it to cease its existence?

"Heh, looking at your faces, I can already see what you guys are thinking. So yes, it will be very difficult for an ordinary fighter to remove the System away from the Dungeon Core. However, the latest impromptu mission that was given by the System sheds a different light in this particular case. It is now scared. Very scared of the crown-." Moloch was saying but as there seemed to be a sudden onset of heaviness in the air he stopped.

"System, stop it! If you want us to help you, you should cooperate with us fully just this once." Jin complained as he knew how the System did not like to get challenged, preferring to keep up the facade of not showing any weaknesses. The air returned back to normal, and the guys could rest easy, but for Qiu Yue, she merely took a deep breath in before returning to handle the war table.

"I will assist in this endeavour as well." Hou Fei said and started to lay his plan out for the other two to hear. "We need to attract the King's attention and Jin, I suggest you take some monsters or cultivators and charge down the Sky Bridge, making your presence known."

"When that happens, I believe Kiva will send in some soldiers to stop you, probably of the same calibre as the Lion Mantis or maybe even higher. Allocate some troops to stop them and then continue pushing forward." Moloch added, and Hou Fei agreed to it.

"I assume you still have the Graveyard Core active for you, right?" Hou Fei asked, and Jin nodded his head. "Great, once you have fully descended to the ground, command your phantom soldiers to clear the demon horde that is stationed there."

"You sure know as much as Moloch in this matter." Jin passed a casual remark which Hou Fei laughed at.

"I have to know everything to plan my soldiers' actions properly. Information is key in any war." The Royal Snake General said, and Moloch chimed with regards to the counterattack.

"Hmm, if that's the case, I will liaise with the Artillery Orcs and the Stalingrad to give you support if you can force the mages to lower their shields." Moloch suggested, and Jin was listening intently to what the tacticians were telling him. They gave him the overall picture but warned him that things might not go as planned, especially with Kiva around.

"Do not worry. I know what to do. Besides, I am your master, got to show my face once in a while. Can't let my minions do all the work, right?" Jin asked, and suddenly the System pinged an alert to Jin.

"System shall aid in your endeavour for this particular mission by sending User the following rewards for completing a particular task weeks ago." A box appeared in front of the three guys, and Jin did not waste any time to open it.

"Is this..." Moloch's eyes were wide open for a long time as he saw the present bestowed by the System. When Jin saw the item's description on his phone, he could not help but laughed.

"Shit, this is a really long time. I never expected it to be ready when our scientists are all constantly working overtime."

"Take it as the System's initiative to balance the odds against King Baal." The System reported with much pride in the amount of effort within the present.

"Great, then let's do the counterattack, but we should coordinate it with the Foxes, so they can perform theirs too," Jin said as he placed the gift into his storage watch and proceeded outside with the System's teleportation.

Chapter 768 Fun Ride

"What a weird place to put a maximum security prison," Kiyu stated. She, like the rest of the skulk, was in their fox forms surrounding Kraft as the only 'human' to stakeout right outside the 'prison'. With Kraft using his abilities, no one should be able to see them before they acted. Still, it was effective enough to not catch any attention from the tower guards around the prison.

"Only Moloch could think of such a ridiculous place to put a maximum security prison." Pei shook her head as she looked over the railings and surveyed the surroundings. It looked as if it was at the busiest street intersection of the Demon Metropolis and only a fair distance away from the Royal Palace. Guards were everywhere, and it served as a warning to the others who would dare commit crimes in the Demon Metropolis. At the same time, it was also a testament to Moloch's intricate design and the portrayed image of the prison being unbreakable.

Even if someone dared to try and break out, or yet even crazier, try to break in, the Royal Palace was on the watch, and many in the Royal Guards were dying to prove their worth so they could get promoted into the inner Royal Guards to serve the Demon King directly. Even if not for the Royal Guards, the demon adventurers themselves wished to prove their strength and hopefully gain some recognition to be a noble.

The prison enticed people to catch the prisoners as if it had tremendous rewards to do so, but they did not know it was a ploy by the royalty and King Baal only gave such exemplary rewards twice. Still, that was enough for propaganda services to take effect.

"I think it's meant to attract this huge crowd so that people can see what the Demon King was doing when Moloch executed his long term plan. Sadly, that cotton minotaur couldn't have predicted that his plan would potentially backfire this badly when he tried to prove to everyone King Baal was going insane." Evon commented, and the rest felt a tinge of pity for Moloch.

"To be honest, I find that Moloch you guys are talking about, rather refreshing. In my opinion, its advantages of his construction outweigh the disadvantages by a lot, especially when you take into consideration how the demons can resurrect after a certain time frame, just by paying some money. If there was ever a prison break, there are too many witnesses around to catch the prisoners in action. Police in the vicinity is able to come and reinforce in time. Remember how hard it was to capture that one Weasel Cultivator back in the day because we enclosed him deep in the mountains, thinking he would not break out from his prison cage created by...Zhou Lin?" Rex took some difficulty to say the last name but nevertheless did so without any emotion.

"Ah, that rascal weasel cultivator...He really was a major pain in the ass." Tsu reminisced as he climbed up onto Kraft's head for a better view of the area. "If we are going the brute force way, I suggest we do it swiftly or else, the Royal Palace guards will come storming in less than twenty minutes."

"So, we got to be out in less than twenty? Sounds eas-" Suddenly a large paper fan flew onto Kraft's face and stopped him from talking. Pei held the paper fan with her mouth since she too was in fox form and subsequently took it out to shout at Kraft.

"DO. NOT. CURSE. OUR. RUN!" Pei practically screamed each word with such ferocity that she really meant business and the others would not even dare to oppose her on that. Because of that unlucky running mouth of Kraft, things were bound to happen in the opposite way, and they had to work extra hard to overcome those unexpected adversities. Worst of all, they all knew Kraft was doing it intentionally, craving the extra chaos as it made things 'interesting' as he would justify his actions.

"I think his curse had already been activated." Itori pointed with her paw at the roadside beside the maximum security prison. An entourage of carriages with bright exquisite designs indicative of 'Royalty' had been spotted right beside the gate of the prison.

"Come to think of it, Moloch did say that only a small part of the Royal Family actually appeared on the battlefield. There were Prince Stolas and Princess Gaap with the latter being dead. Probably a few more siblings who had not answered the call for arms or perhaps they've been stationed here on standby?" Ixa queried, and suddenly a message was pinged on Kraft's phone.

"Oooh! Looks like there's some interesting development. Jin is going for a counter-attack, and the System wants us to create a ruckus so the King will go after the ruckus to clear the raid to protect his Dungeon Core."

"So...we are not caring about the royalty that came by?" Ixa asked once more since she had been ignored by the whole skulk.

"What are you talking about sis? Of course, we care! We always care about the royalties!" Ixel answered in a sarcastic way, and Itori caught wind that her brother was implying on the Royal Zodiac clans.

"Then, what are we waiting for?" Rex turned into a human and gave an upward nod along with a grin which everyone followed suit. Ixel placed his leg on the railing and using it as a support, he jumped up to

the skies and looked down at the maximum security prison. Suddenly, Ixel landed on something in mid-air proving Kraft's hypothesis to be true. There was yet another invisible energy shield that was protecting the prison, and the moment he stepped on it, the entire prison went on alert.

Bells rang loudly, and deafening sirens were blaring throughout the whole prison. Spotlights started to illuminate, and Ixel continued to climb upwards despite the spherical curvature of the energy shield. The spotlights managed to gather on him, given that they used magic to direct the coordinates of the intrusion. With a few sprints, Ixel reached the pinnacle of the energy shield and jumped up once more.

Separately, the guards quickly strengthened the shield to the maximum concentrating on the top part and started to sortie a few aerial sentry Dragonlites to the scene in order to stop the threat. The Royal Entourage that came to visit the prison hastened their steps into the prison, assuming command of the entire area.

Currently, they did not know what the objectives of the intruder were but seeing that there only seemed to be one person, they assumed it could either be an accomplice trying to break out their friend out of prison or someone insane enough not to get captured by the toughest police in the city. Whatever the case, they would find out once they caught him.

Kraft chuckled as he saw Ixel soar up to the sky and the feeble resistance meant to stop him. He saw the cultivation of the large Grizzly bear appearing above Ixel.

"Oh, it will be a fun ride. A very fun ride, indeed!"

Chapter 769 Yawn of the Hibernated Bear

As Ixel jumped to the top, he was surprised that there was so little space for him within the dungeon cave provided by the Demon Metropolis. Hence he had to stop short before he crashed into the ceiling of the dungeon cave.

With more than sufficient strength, Ixel clawed and stuck himself to the ceiling and placed one hand downwards, facing the maximum security prison. The Dragonlite sentries were a bit wary when they saw this attempted lawbreaker manage to reach the top of the Demon Metropolis without even breaking a sweat. For some reason, the strange stature and the fact that he was up there gave them a very bad feeling.

The air pressure was getting thinner the higher they went up, and one of the Dragonlites already felt faint when they were approaching where Ixel had positioned himself.

"Sorry guys, it's nothing personal. Just business and pleasure." Ixel muttered as a ball of energy spiraled and generated around his palm. As one of the more promising Clan Head candidates of the Grizzly Bear Clan, Ixel had improved and mastered an Epic Grade Technique which already bordered on the Legendary Grade. It was the "Yawn of the Hibernated Bear."

As the name suggested, it was similar to Jin's Panda Yawning Chi Beam, and if anyone saw the two in action, it would be crystal clear that Ming had used this technique from the Grizzly Bear Clan as his inspiration.

However, unlike Panda Yawning which could be activated almost in an instant, the 'Yawn of the Hibernated Bear' required at least five seconds to charge even at the Epic Grade. (At Basic Grade, that

particular technique required 20 seconds to charge.) Hence, the reason why Ixel had decided to jump upwards was to begin preparing for that spell.

Comparatively, the technique Yawn of the Hibernated Bear, possessed an immense amount of power unless Jin decided to fully utilise his version by yawning longer. Ixel brought the miniature ball of spiral energy near his mouth so he could consume it and subsequently began to yawn naturally.

To the Dragonlite sentries, there was a disturbance in the air, but they did not notice anything thinking it could be the air pressure, and when a beam of bright yellowish energy suddenly flew downwards, it came as a surprise. Ixel's yawn burnt them into leaving nothing behind, not even ashes as the raging beam continued to descend towards the maximum security prison.

Through Ixel's visor, he noticed that the System had already adjusted his aim for him and automatically focused his beam so that he could concentrate on maintaining the output of the beam to the maximum. The rest of the skulk saw the beam moving rapidly down the skies and hitting the tip of the spherical energy shield.

Even with enhanced layers being inserted to reinforce it, the shield barely held for a second, causing it to shatter completely. The seemingly unstoppable beam then drilled its way through the multiple levels of the maximum prison.

All those metal, wood, concrete and special alloys melted as soon as they came in contact with Ixel's beam and it the beam did not seem to have any intentions of stopping for quite some time. First, it reached the tenth floor, then it pierced through the twentieth floor, subsequently the fiftieth floor and only when it reached the ninety-eighth floor, did the beam finally lose enough power on the way to go on.

Prince Paimon, the Second Prince to the throne, was flabbergasted. For a prison invader to do this much damage, just by himself, has been unheard of. He had never seen a magical attack this devastating that could penetrate these many floors in his life. One shouldn't forget that each floor was more reinforced the lower one went, yet Ixel's technique couldn't care less about all the expensive materials the demons' had used for construction.

The Guards were in a dire pinch. There was nothing in their handbook that described such an unexpected situation to occur. Usually, prison invaders would be apprehended long before they could even pass the tenth floor, but this time around, the level of damage was just too outrageous. The poor guards even peered through the burnt hole to see how far it went, but all they could make out was darkness.

However, as the half quoted saying went, curiosity killed the cat. Only in this instance, the ones killing the guards were the rest of the foxes when they took the opportunity to jump into the hole, biting off the heads of any poor onlookers. Except for Kraft, he had decidedly chosen to kick down the main door and was having his share of fun by eliminating any guards that he encountered. (The System was unsure whether to be happy or unhappy by this sudden influx of more souls)

After his magnificent gate crashing performance, Ixel enjoyed the descent down into the depths as he returned back to a fox form and skydived to the 98th floor to meet with the rest of the skulk. Alas, by the time he reached there, all the demon guards and prisoners lay in a comatose state. They had all

been bested by Evon who had long since released his psychedelic drugs into the surrounding atmosphere.

The killing ensued so there was no resistance in their path to search for the staircase down and to not miss out any survivors who were mentally awake enough to see the skulk of foxes scurrying around to find the exit.

Of course, with the blueprints uploaded into the System, it was only a matter of time before they found the door for Ixa to bash it through with a body slam. So they descended to the 99th where they repeated this process before eventually arriving at 100th floor. The guards were definitely more armed, but no one could escape the handle the strength of Evon's drugs, making him think his initial plan could have worked. (Still, he decided to keep quiet, not wanting to incur the same kind of jinx that Kraft had.)

"I believe it's the elevator similar to what was drawn on the blueprint," Kai said as he saw the elevator gates open widely with no guards handling them.

"Now, here comes the real challenge. The last nine floors are what Moloch described as the 9 levels to hell." Pei reminded them of the minotaur's warning stated in Kraft's memo, but she could see that it did nothing in the eyes of those battle-hungry foxes. All of them were already dying to have a proper fight that. Even Ixel who had just fired a death beam complained that it had merely been a warm-up for him.

"You guys definitely have to give me the first boss, I am itching for some proper combat!" Rex demanded out loud as they all stepped into the elevator despite his initial claim to take the last floor but the entire skulk gave their objection simultaneously.

"Why?! If I kill the first boss, you guys can go on ahead and handle the rest. I will catch up soon." Rex defended himself, but Kiyu spoke out.

"No! If we allow you to do that, there won't be anyone left for us to fight with!"

"What are you talking about? If I fight the first...oh. You guys think that I will one-shot the first and continue with the rest as I descend down?" Rex gave a tease of his theory why they were objecting him so adamantly, and to his (not so) surprise, the entire skulk nodded their heads in unison. Even Pei who did not wish to fight that much felt it would be unfair.

"Fineeeee. I will take the last level boss as usual. Just gather the keys to unlock the corridor to the dungeon core." The newly joined Panda Remnant reluctantly gave them the go-ahead with their plans. The elevator had brought them down to the 101st floor, and Pei walked out of the lift.

"Since I am the weakest. I will take this." Pei decided, and no one disagreed. After all, she was the doctor, and it was best she cleared something easy so she could assist the others later on. As Pei waved goodbye to the skulk, blue flames lit up the corridor, directing her to the 'boss 'room. She decided to stay in her fox form and continued to walk with her senses heightened, ensuring there weren't any traps around.

"There is nothing to fear." She encouraged herself as she continued forward.

Chapter 770 Paradiso

As she walked into the corridor, the blue flames flickered slowly and suddenly became brighter, revealing the extent of the corridor hallway. Pei, still in her fox form, did not walk through the centre of the pathway and instead quietly ran through from one pillar to another of the extended corridor hallway.

At the same time, she marvelled at the artwork along the corridor. It depicted a queue of cloaked humans cuffed by their chains awaiting the judgement of the executioner right at the end of the painting.

"Heh. I wonder if Moloch is aware that he seems to have copied the Divine Comedy, Dante's Inferno into his maximum security prison. Could it be that the writer was possibly a demon from Moloch's time as well? Nah, that seems too far fetched. It would be more likely that the writer had just come in contact with a demon... Hmm." Pei thought to herself as she used her tail to shift the fox mask onto her face and take another look at the prison blueprints.

Whether the first 100 floors had anything or anyone special to pit against the foxes, it would not have mattered since Ixel managed to break through with his technique. However, the final nine floors were 'special' and the reason Kraft had assembled them all before venturing forth.

Moloch's blueprints indicated that the final floors were meant to create the true meaning of hell for the demons, humans or even half breeds who had committed sins in the Demon Metropolis.

Unlike Jin's world which required resources and money to revive, the Church of Afterlife who held onto the souls of the fallen was able to give anyone who had died a choice to resurrect again even if they did not have the money to pay for it. When they returned back to the living, they would then have to pay for the procedure with interest attached to it. (In essence, they worked like a bank, or maybe one might liken them to loan sharks.)

Given their infinite lifespan, it was not really an issue but more of a meddlesome affair that would stick. The only problem with that was the Church of the Afterlife would not allow someone to die permanently. Whoever had agreed to the deal, they would be revived again and again, as many times as necessary, forced to work off the entire debt, no matter how long it would take.

That was where Moloch's infamous prison came into the picture. The Demon Metropolis did not gain its fame, power and riches because of the wise rule of King Baal nor the accumulation of efforts by the previous generations of Demons. Instead, the city only bloomed after the creation of such prisons like Moloch had built as the Church of the Afterlife suggested cooperation to regain their debts.

Those who died while they were still indebted without the financial ability to pay back the Church of the Afterlife, were sent to these prisons for reforms. They would toll their lives in the hundred floors to make goods and products which would subsequently be sold and the proceeds, after the demons took their cut, were used to repay their debtors.

It was a win-win situation for the Church. They would not have to bother with every creditor who owed them money, but every debt would be paid regardless of the methods. Even if the prisoners escaped, it was no longer the Church's problem to deal with, since the responsibility would fall on the guards the Demon Metropolis had employed. All the Church had to do was pay enough taxes and money to the Demon Metropolis to make their problems go away.

Hence, the rulers of these final floors were the prison supervisors, reformers and guards, which enforced the punishment to the prisoners who escaped. Though these 'prisons' could be found in almost every major metropolis nowadays, none could compare to the unique design Moloch had used for the first of its kind, the maximum-security prison Paradiso. (It was #17 on the list of must-see tourist spots of the Dungeon World!)

However, Paradiso hadn't always been designed to work off the debtors of the Church. Initially, it was only made to imprison the worst of the worst offenders of the Demon Metropolis. Moloch would also be the only one to be crazy/ingenious enough to put the Demon Metropolis's Dungeon Core at the last hidden sub room on the 109th floor of Paradiso.

This was mainly because Moloch had created a so-called pity system for the prisoners in Paradiso. If they could win or kill the supervisors of the last nine floors, they would be replaced as the new reigning supervisors until their jail terms ended.

Luxurious food, a place to stay, a flow of steady income as well as the lust of power, had effectively satisfied those criminals to live while upholding the status quo. In years, Paradiso's final nine floors had seen so many challengers that the essence of the dead resulted in forming Dungeon Cores for each level.

These Dungeon Cores then evolved to become the Dungeon World's first prison cores and allowed those who lost to be shackled onto the core until a new owner came along. Whether the new reigning owner wished to unleash all the tormented souls or kept them for their dungeon would be up to them to decide.

Thus, Moloch used these new concept cores to protect the keys used to unlock the room which housed the Metropolis' Dungeon Core as part of the Metropolis defence against invaders. Only the absolute royalty like King Baal had access to the room without the need of those keys, and that was the authority of the owner of the Dungeon Core. Else, the invaders had to fight each and every level to get the keys to open the deadliest of defenders to acquire the dungeon core.

It was, however, a trap made by Moloch and King Baal since no one had ever beaten all nine floors altogether. And even if they did, King Baal would have been notified as soon as the first one fell into the wrong hands, which would give him ample time to protect his Dungeon Core.

Because of the achievement of creating such a wonderful defence system against invaders and his service to the throne, King Baal did not send Moloch into prison even after he betrayed him for taking his crown away.

... After all, he was still sane at that point and understood what Moloch had been talking about. King Baal wanted to take action by sending Moloch to a secluded place and hoped he could create a countermeasure of the crown he was wearing. Moloch knew the King wanted to keep such power in his hands (and in check), but through the years, things changed.

The crown had overpowered his mental will, and there were days he lost his 'sanity' check, causing him to crumble and suffer through the pain until the next sanity check where the crown would leave him alone should he pass. Kiva had slowly taken over him and further imbued the crown with his own magic whenever possible.

It was only a year after Moloch's betrayal that Kiva took over Paradiso as the overall supervisor in charge and introduced such an insane recommendation to put not only the Church of Afterlife debtors inside, but anyone breaking the law for the smallest infringement since most of the cells had been empty and unused.

By now, Baal had lost all reason to listen to sensible logic, allowing Kiva to do whatever he wished. Though it inadvertently became a moneymaker for the Metropolis, Paradiso turned into a defence system with capitalistic intentions, corrupting the very purpose of what the prison had once been created for.

Yet Kiva thought nothing of it. He believed no one would be such an idiot to invade Paradiso or more so, the Demon Metropolis. Thus, it eventually became a thing of the past, and only fools and debtors who wished to get out of the prison attempted this new 'myth' of Paradiso prison.

However, the Ravenous Lord had totally overlooked that the Guard supervisors were still serving their King and city. Money and food were also sent based on a cut from Baal's personal treasury. Even the King, throughout the years, had neglected this trivial issue because it had all been previously arranged by Moloch.

Speaking of Moloch, over the years the Minotaur Lord tried to come up with various plans in his seclusion, but they all had too many variables, and the more promising ones would need an amount of strength neither he nor his minotaurs had possessed.

That was why when Kraft proposed on getting the Dungeon Core, Moloch took some time to think about it. And the more he pondered about the idea, it made sense for Kraft and his skulk to capture the demon city.

By taking the Dungeon Core away from King Baal, he would lose his stat bonuses as King of the Metropolis. That should weaken him enough for the rest of Jin's group to defeat him and bring him to the System's side, regaining his former self.

Hence with this, he agreed to Kraft's strike plan and gave him the details of Paradiso to the best of his knowledge. From blueprints to the possible weakest points of the prison, he put it into memory stick with the System's help and that was why Kraft was busy typing away on his laptop during the entirety of the first invasion phase.

He might have sworn allegiance to Jin, but in his heart, the wish to help King Baal return to his former self, had never faded.