

Dungeon S 911

Chapter 911 Beach Landing

The System noted an anomaly within one of the Nian Dungeon Instance and immediately checked up on the Elder Pandarens. It discovered that they happened to be the first group to encounter the Nian Boss despite many of the others still struggling to find it in their own dungeon instance.

"System wishes to query. Is that anomaly User's way of helping the Pandarens promote into Pandawans?" The System asked blatantly.

"You wanted them to rise, right?" Jin smirked as if he did not do much to their dungeons. "Obviously, I cannot do anything too direct since people are watching the live streams in the Cinema theatre shophouse. So I figured I'd just give their motorboat engine a nice little boost."

"Too bad that the axle to turn the handle was a little faulty because of seawater, you know? Probably the reason why it broke when the speed became too immense, leaving them no other choice but to move straight or wherever the boat brought them. Fortunately, their NPC was clever enough to put up a barrier, not bad for an AI, eh System." Jin narrated the event as he knew that it was not the usual protocol for the AIs to be creative enough and handle environmental objects. (Or at least not yet.)

A look into their settings had revealed to Jin that the Artificial Intelligences for those two individuals had been tweaked so that they would be more aware of the scenario they were in. (Was a certain crafty fox's behaviour be rubbing off on the two?)

While the three Elder Pandarens found themselves in direct confrontation with the boss of the dungeon, other cultivators were still fighting against the mini-bosses and minions within this Nian Dungeon Instance. The story of this particular dungeon instance was surprisingly simple when compared to the rest of Jin's dungeon instances. Following the compass, the cultivators should have reached an island village ravaged by Nian and its underlings.

On arrival, they would have to fend off the current attack against the village's remaining guards. Afterwards, the surviving guards would offer them side quests which would help them take on the main quest provided by the Village Leader which revolved around killing the Nian. This was the first even for dungeon instances as cultivators and dungeon suppliers knew how hard it was to create a main questline within an instance.

Much less the expectations of side quests accompanying the main questline.

However, Jin had the System taking care of the heavy work, so with his accumulated experience in creating dungeons, he was finally able to create the very first set of side quests. It entailed a fairly interesting story that would also explain the origins of Nian itself. And if the cultivators managed to pass the side quests, they had the chance to fight the Nian during these occasions, allowing them to injure the New Year Beast a little, before they would have a final showdown.

This would be the proper way one was expected to clear the dungeon instance though The Elder Trio had been 'guided by the hand of fate' and was rushed straight to the big finale. However, Jin and the System did not leave them in a lurch. Their 'combi' cheating allowed the motorboat to move at fast speeds and it was possible to damage it significantly right from the start.

As long as they managed to crash it against Nian head-on with their boat which Jin believe that would be their current course of action, the damage they raked in on the boss would be comparable to the average amount of damage done in that series of side quests.

While Jing Yu was not privy of such understanding about the situation, she and her friends also understood that letting their boat crash into Nian might be their safest and best chance to score the first strike. After all, if they were to be left entrenched on the shore, the Nian might take the opportunity to hit them first when they were not even in a basic formation at all.

Still, if their plan succeeded, they might even have a chance to spread out and follow up on the attack. Nevertheless, it was a gamble as they had no idea of. The Pandarens had thoughts running through their head such as the NPC Guardian having problems fighting Nian on the unstable footing of the washed up beach. And it would be even worse if they were to lose any one of their members before the dungeon actually started.

Thus, with quick thinking, the Hungry Condor cultivator used her blades that were tied with high-quality fabrics. Those fabrics were capable of withstanding the strength of dozens of cultivators by utilising her chi. She then threw them towards Nian, but instead of flying straight towards it, they appeared to each miss their mark. However, just like a boomerang those cloth tied blades ended up returning, allowing Tanke and Zi Dan to grab hold of them.

The NPC Panda Guardian used its mouth to hold onto the cloth firmly while Zi Dan stabbed the blade into the boat. "No matter what! This boat is going to smash into you- You little fat ugly cat!" Xia Mao taunted it. The trio could see that Nian tried to remove the cloth that had surrounded its torso while being dragged closer to the shoreline.

Just like the Devil Santa, the Nian was a Boss monster designed with the capability of learning. When the cultivators would inevitably find one tactic and try to abuse it, it would only take a matter of time until the Nian would adapt to it forcing the cultivators to think of something else if they wanted a relatively ease clear. On the flip side, it meant that thinking out of the box would help the cultivators immensely.

The Nian had no concept of the physics of the boat speeding towards it. In fact, the Demon Lion mistook it for something similar to a living thing flying towards it skirting on the water's surface at top speeds.

Jing Yu's cloth continued to shrink in size, preventing the Nian from dodging out of the vehicle's path. Nian kept on roaring and producing soundwaves that would interrupt the dungeoneers' sense of hearing, but the boat continued to approach it like some sort of homing missile.

Although the trio was distraught by the deafening attack, they continued to hold until the boat finally got out of the sea and onto the beach. Now, Jing Yu pulled the cloth that wrapped around Nian towards her. She did not care if it broke during the process. As long as it could buy them a few precious seconds so that the boat could have a direct impact against Nian, it would be worth it.

BAM!

Not just the pointed edge, but the entire length of the boat smashed into Nian as it tried to escape from the wrapped cloth around it. At that point, Zi Dan, who was sent flying out of the boat, unsheathed his chain ball mace and used his chi to send it flying, aiming for one of its eyes.

After the boat had smashed onto Nian, it flinched for a moment, causing it to lower its guard and that allowed Zi Dan's attack to critically hit. The loss of an eye bought the rest of the team some additional time as they were sent flying all around the beachhead to regroup.

"Stay behind me! I will taunt the beast!" Tanke announced as he took his shield from his back and started to screech at Nian while banging his shield with a one-handed warhammer.

The beast was furious after the injury it had just received and was out for revenge, but with a successful first hit, the trio picked themselves up and readied their weapons once more for the next part of the battle.

Chapter 912 Tanke, The Panda Guardian

When Tanke said he would taunt the infamous beast, the cultivators did not expect him to do it in such a stunning manner. The Panda Guardian never hesitated despite fighting against a beast of such a large stature as he rushed onto the stumbling Nian with a shield charge.

Tanke's chi accumulated towards his shield, staring down the Nian and with each step, he shouted to attract as much as possible. Even as Nian tried to stabilise itself, it knew that the Panda Guardian was racing towards it and thus remained in a defensive position. However, it did not anticipate Tanke to shift his body weight and performed an uppercut with his shield, utilising the opening the Pandarens created to strike.

The Demon Lion Beast being slammed on its face head on, subconsciously stepped backwards as it still needed some time to recover from the blunt smash on its chin and get used to its loss of vision. Yet, the Elder Pandarens had no intentions of giving it such an opportunity. Jing Yu aimed for the limbs while Xia Mao went for its sides. Zi Dan, with his cultivation managed to move towards the back of Nian to attack it. He nimbly sped through the sides (although he nearly fall because of the beach sand) and zoomed towards its butt.

Despite the three-pronged attack, the Nian was still powerful enough to retaliate whereas their damage was sharply negated. The scales on the body were absorbing the damage rather well and Jing Yu's stabs could only reveal a crack on Nian's dragon-like scales while the torso slash was not much more effective. Even Zi Dan's back attack had been instinctively repelled by Nian's tail.

The same could not be said about the counterattack by Nian nearly which nearly obliterated Jing Yu when she tried to repeat the attack for the second time. Its battled honed reflexes went for the blades as if it learnt how those blades moved and subsequently went forward to strike the 'caster'. Thankfully, Tanke's reaction as a Guardian was fast enough to block the attack by putting himself at the middle to intervene the strike. But this partially caused him and Jing Yu to fly backwards.

Nian himself was an altered monster boss based on the Burning Lion's data, one of Weslie's Four Cardinal Guardians who had protected the Farming World. Jin had experimented on making it a little more predictable while creating new moves for the monster so there would be exciting mechanics for the cultivators to weather through.

There was actually a threat meter that had been implemented by Jin yet it was not visible for the cultivators for now. The purpose of the tank in the party was to maintain the highest threat meter so that their offensive players could continue to dish out damage.

That was why those Guardian type NPCs were programmed in such a way to generate as much of the threat meter as possible. Without any prior explanations about this concept, it was mostly the younger generation parties who utilised their knowledge from games.

After everything Jin had done to give this team an advantage over his other customers, he still felt that they might not be able to clear the dungeon instance if they did not catch on to the passive mechanics of the Holy Trinity.

"Are you alright?" Heala asked as she rushed towards Jing Yu and Tanke with her staff shining with magical powers.

"Heal our tank first! He took the brunt of the damage!" The Hungry

Condor Cultivator told their healer as she grabbed a potion from her side waist pouch and drank it.

"This is way harder than I had expected!" Zi Dan sighed as he stood up, trying to shake off the experience of the tail whacking him.

"That must be why Boss Jin insisted that we would need a dedicated guardian and healer to go into this dungeon instance. There's got to be an underlying meaning to his actions!" Xia Mao thought out loud as he picked his scimitars up.

"Anyone else has the feeling that the Nian is still pulling its punches? You saw how it managed to control the tide waves when we tried to sail towards it."

"Are you suggesting we should try to lure it away from the beach and go further inland before we enter into a more difficult phase?" Xiao Mao asked as he could see Nian had already recovered from the stun and was observing the prey that had pissed it off so much.

"Damn, this monster is intelligent as well!" Zi Dan could feel the menacing gaze from Nian as he tried to move a step forward.

"Have no fear! TANKE WILL PROTECT YOU!" The Panda Guardian shouted as he bashed his warhammer on his circular shield like a gong attracting Nian's attention. Given that there were no orders from the Pandarens, Tanke proceeded with his initial setting, which was to taunt the Demon Beast away from them, so the cultivators could attempt to attack.

Xia Mao was observing the fight and contemplated their options. Staying at the shores might prove to be a dangerous endeavour to fight the monstrous Nian. The beach was open with no covers to take advantage of, and its manipulation of the tidal waves might prove to be a hassle for the group later on.

Then again going inland might not be much better either. He had no idea what awaited them, but after participating in many of Jin's dungeons, he expected that there should at least be something inside that could change the balance of the battle.

Still, things could go south if this wasn't the actual Boss and more appeared inland, but it also meant that there might be some good spots they could utilise to fight such a monster. Perhaps if they were lucky, they could chance upon a few extra weapons to help them overcome it.

"Surely we can buy some instant items from the shop to get a bonus rocket launcher, but damn, I'm not rich to that extent!" Xia Mao thought to himself as he even considered trying to overcome the situation by pouring more money into the current problem.

"Stupid! That is only for raid instances! Remember how we try to buy a few items and they only gave us a box of potions?!" Zi Dan shouted, forcing Xia Mao to recall that Boss Jin had previously promised to only allow such a brute force method for his raids.

"So team leader, what is your plan?!" Zi Dan asked as the Nian was getting only more difficult to fight.

"Fuck it! Let's run further in. It is definitely better than staying stuck here with the unstable ground because of the sand." Xia Mao decided as the current situation didn't look good. Without Heala, their Panda Guardian would have long since been totally overwhelmed.

"Understood!" Jing Yu said as she conjured even more blades from her storage ring. She agreed to the choice as Heala definitely could use the break. If she ran out of mana, it would not take long for their Panda Guardian to fall and subsequently the rest of the team.

With the manipulation of the blades via her long strips of cloth, it allowed Tanke to move while holding Nian's attention. In the meantime, Zi Dan, with his speedy cultivation, moved further into the island to scout for a safe place to fight.

They might not be aware that the current dungeon doubled as their proving grounds to get the Pandawan Status, but as always, they would give it their best shot to win. For this was their hobby, and the thrill of the hunt had never been better than what they were feeling right now.

Chapter 913 Bad Scouting

Moving further inland, Zi Dan quickly realised that Xia Mao's decision was not as great as they hoped it to be. There was indeed a small forested area, but as he went further in, he found that the place was mostly filled with nothing but swamps.

"Shit! Shit! This is worse than the beach!" Zi Dan cursed to himself when he accidentally stepped into a seemingly stable ground, only to find himself stuck in between the mud and water. He quickly used his chain ball mace to grab onto a branch and pulled himself up.

His current direction was a no go, but the party members were already pulling Nian towards the swamp. Even worse, he felt other creatures were lurking within the swamp after spreading his chi around to check on the surroundings.

While Nian might be enough to scare them off away for a while, he would not count on that happening since this was a dungeon instance. It was far more likely that the party would be ambushed while they were fighting Nian. And if the monsters were to attack now, they might be caught in a bad predicament.

Either way, it was a lose-lose situation for the entire group, and Zi Dan had to make the decision fast. Allow his team to slow fight their way back to the sparsely forested area for the showdown or continue pushing into the swampy areas and hope to find some better grounds further into the island.

With Zi Dan leaving the party to scout, the pressure on the Nian had lessened, enabling the monster to start bullying the party members by picking on Jing Yu or Xia Mao as they fled further inland. Heala was shooting crossbow bolts at regular intervals to distract the monster as her healing would require her to stand still, which was impossible at the moment.

The mercenary healer did have instant cast spells for emergency heals, yet those were precious and limited in number. After all, Jin had designed Heala similar to their world's mages way of healing instead of how Peppers or other mage minions he had in possession. That way, the cultivators and subsequently mages of his world could get used to the dungeon raids if they were to be together. (Especially with his dream of going worldwide.)

"Damn it! Our mobility will be limited if we cross this swamp area without some proper strategy, and this fight is proving to be way harder than we thought!" Zi Dan thought to himself as he could see the rest of his group approaching fast with the Demon Beast right behind their backs.

The forested area, however, gave Jing Yu the opportunity to hit Nian unexpectedly, just that her blades were still not strong enough to pierce it no matter how much she hit it. Xia Mao was the same as he tried to backstab Nian with the trees as his support and for some reason, Nian was perceptive enough to escape the ambush strikes and could even counter-attack with its paws the moment Xia Mao entered its field of vision. (The only fortunate thing was that they could at least still see its health being chipped downwards though it was marginal in terms of progress.)

The Blind Cat cultivator might have been able to hide its actions from the Demon Beast for a while, but it was not enough when his strikes were not decisive enough or lacked the speed to counter its perception. Not to mention, they were on the move, and Xia Mao had to adjust accordingly by moving further into the forested area to create such an ambush.

The most troubling thing was that their formation lacked their Panda Guardian who had been scattered from the group. Tanke had the endurance to hold down the Demon Beast, but because of its armour, the Panda Guardian did not have enough stamina to catch up with the party's main offensive attackers.

Furthermore, Nian had been aiming at Tanke so much that their injured mercenary was not moving fast enough, which caused Xia Mao and Jing Yu to take the matter into their hands and thus their current situation. If they lose Tanke while finding a more suitable ground to fight Nian, there is a possibility they would fail the dungeon instance because of the loss of their Guardian.

That was why the Pandarens spammed their offensive skills to attract Nian and the more they did that, the more they had to move continuously so they could evade while dishing out attacks. With the Nian approaching fast towards Zi Dan and fast losing of options to stay alive, he suddenly remembered that the Panda Sailors had given them some souvenirs before their departure.

The Firecrackers.

"He should be scared of these loud sounds, right? Please don't tell me the firecrackers are just for fun! We need the legends to be true now!" Zi Dan prayed as he took his portion of firecrackers out and started to light them with a lighter.

"What the heck are you doing!?!?" Jing Yu screamed towards Zi Dan when she saw him standing still, attempting to light a few firecrackers. The Bullet Cheetah Cultivator ignored the shout as he already had a hard time keeping his hands from shaking violently with the incoming Nian racing through the forested areas and towards him. (He literally felt the stare emanated towards him.)

Zi Dan's eyes widened as he saw the fuse light up, but when he looked up the Nian was merely a metre away and already pouncing towards him. With all the training and experience within his body, Zi Dan instinctively squatted and performed a low jump so that he would glide in the opposite direction from where Nian pounced.

His brain was not thinking, and the only thing that reacted were his muscles and the chi he emanated naturally allowed him to flee from his current position and away from danger.

"As expected from the Bullet Cheetah!" Xia Mao heaved a momentary sigh of relief when he saw how Zi Dan dashed out of trouble and not only that, he took that opportunity to hook the firecracker on Nian's tail.

"Run back to the forest!" Zi Dan cried as he manoeuvred his body to throw his chain ball mace towards Nian's face violently hitting the beast's nose.

At that moment, the fuse for the firecrackers had reached its end, and the fire had ignited the explosives, causing it to produce a tremendous amount of noise which inadvertently scared Nian out of its wit.

All that 'in-game' aggression against the party had disappeared as the Demon Beast fled east towards the mountainous area of the island with the popping noise right behind its tail.

"Wow, okay that is some quick thinking there, my friend." Jing Yu tried to catch her breath as her ears were ringing. She never had such an experience being chased by something so ominous. Usually, she's the one doing the hunting and not the other way round.

"I guess the Visual HUD interface wasn't kidding when it wrote that it was the boss. I thought it was some monster attempting to disguise itself as it is." Xia Mao said as he saw Tanke finally catching up to them. Seeing how the threat was gone for now, the Panda Guardian was so tired from running that it decided to lie and roll slowly instead.

"Let's take a breather and take a look at the island. Boss Jin wouldn't have designed a dungeon so straightforward. We should be able to find something that should prove as helpful as that firecracker move at the least." Jing Yu commented.

"Or maybe just more firecrackers. Hahahaha..." Zi Dan looked into the swamp area where he last saw his chain ball mace after it hit Nian's nose.

"Should I even attempt to search for it...?"

Chapter 914 Dragon Slaying Sword

"Seems like, despite the handicap I provided them, they were unable to defeat the Nian. And here I thought I could hope for a miracle fight but perhaps I am overestimating them a little too much. I guess when it comes to them, they err on the side of caution as compared to the brash young Pandawans. But at least they are alive in all one piece." Jin mumbled as he checked on the progress of other groups besides the Elder Trio.

Some had already completed a few side quests and tried to advance by fighting Nian. While he also saw Bu Dong and a few other Pandawans coming in a little later for the dungeon instance, he believed the Elder Pandarens could be able to catch up.

"User should have known that the Nian Boss cannot be defeated with brute force alone. The System has collected adequate data to ensure that the final Boss would pose a sufficient challenge based on the cultivators' grade. Unlike the previous dungeon instances, the System finally achieved a formula that takes into consideration the offensive and defensive capabilities of the cultivators." The System stated.

"I understand that you might have sufficient data on repeating customers like but how can you do that for newcomers? How can you know it will end up useful instead of detrimental if you do not have information on them?" Jin queried.

"This new formula takes into account both old and new customers. It may be possible for anomalies to appear, like the one User caused, but the System is able to detect and change the Monster's ability to suit them." The System replied with confidence.

"So you mean to say that there will be no heroes in this dungeon supplier store?" Jin sniggered at the System's reply.

"Never! For the System is forever monitoring the dungeons. That is the Dungeon Supplier's main job, and so it will be for the System." The System said.

"Not even when someone who could possibly isekai like Rei, our dear engineer from the Mecha World? And maybe the next time we meet such a person, he or she could possibly possess some absurdly crazy powers?" Jin fancied such a thought to the System.

"User is underestimating the System. If System had managed to put Panda Remnant Rex into submission, there is nothing the System cannot do."

"Strange, I somehow recall that it was Kraft who beat Rex. And isn't Kraft running around causing havoc whenever he pleases without you ever doing anything about it?" Jin returned with a poignant point which caused the System to flinch a little in its reply, a rare reaction which Jin got to see.

"System merely refuses to deal with Original Bellator Kraft since he has not harmed the System ever since. System has therefore allowed him to do as he pleases and tolerates such behaviour."

"I might not have an ability allowing me to sniff out lies, but that was a little too obvious." Jin teased the System which was obviously trying to keep its pride.

"System only wishes to reinforce to User that System can be relied on." The System reinforced before pointing out that the Elder Pandarens were moving out after their rest.

"In any case, the former anomaly will be treated as if the Elder Pandarens have fought the Nian after finishing a side quest and all damage will be kept. The village starting scenario for them will have to be adjusted. Does User wish to provide some navigation for the Elder Pandarens?" The System showed concern and Jin understood why.

They were currently in this particular situation because of the Dungeon Supplier's meddling. And now that the Elder Pandarens had failed to use their first opportunity to fulfil his expectations for defeating Nian quickly, Jin should at least be responsible for the situation they were in.

"I suppose that is fair," Jin replied as he immediately installed a navigation module within Heala and Tanke so they could bring the three Pandarens back to the island's village where they would have more information on defeating the Demon Beast.

"Follow me, I've been through this island a couple of times so I recognise the scent of their village," Heala commented when they were done discussing on where to go next.

"I believe that is the best course of action. We should visit that village since they most probably know more about that beast and how to defeat those hard dragon scales." Tanke added.

"I should have brought a demon-slaying scimitar...or at least a dragon-slaying scimitar. BUT ARGGGH they were freaking expensive!" Xia Mao complained, and the rest giggled.

"Probably because other people are more cautious than you and have already invested in those weapons before the price hike due to high demand and limited supply. Imagine what the prices will be like by noon." Zi Dan chuckled and made Xia Mao's regrets even worse.

"You never know. It might not even work even though the forums are suggesting it. Nian is after all a chimaera of beasts fused into one." Jing Yu interjected as they followed the two NPCs walking at the outskirts of the swamp area.

"At least it should hurt the dragon scales, right? Even though it could be ineffective against other parts of the body." Xia Mao tried to justify the reason for buying a dragon-slaying sword even though he did not get one prior to the dungeon.

"Hmm, you could try looking at the spoilers part of the forum and see if it works." Zi Dan suggested since there was no use arguing now. Xia Mao could still get one now via the Pandamonium Shop Interface although it would be priced significantly higher even if he was out of combat. Zi Dan continued to coerce Xia Mao to get it, stating that the prices would be worse.

"You know we can't get into the spoiler part of the forums until after we have attempted one dungeon run. You want me to spoil my chance here and now just to see if it's worth buying a dragon-slaying sword?!" Xia Mao argued, and both of his friends merely shrugged their shoulders.

"No matter how we see it, it seemed that you still want to buy that sword." Zi Dan replied.

In the meantime, Jin was listening in on their conversation and contemplated if he should tell them not to buy it. Mainly because they were going back to the village and there were quests that would specifically help them defeat Nian.

Jin understood that if Xia Mao bought the sword with Dragon Slaying properties, he could still earn some money from them. This was after all a business and not some charity dungeon instance. Thus, Jin kept his mouth shut and let Xia Mao's friends influence his decision.

Ultimately, the Blind Cat Cultivator ended up caving in, mainly because they happened to encounter Mini Nians but with more of a dragon looking appearance. Upon hearing their conversation, the System simply tweaked the navigation a little for them to cover a stretch of land where it would be faster to reach the village.

However, there's a catch as the Pandarens would have a high chance of encountering mob monsters, which should not have been the case if they had stuck to Jin's route.

But hey, it's just business.

Chapter 915 Side Quest Line

That one slash from Xia Mao's latest Dragon Slaying Scimitar was enough to bring each and every single Dragon Headed Nian down when they ambushed them. Though in Zi Dan and Jing Yu's perspective, it was quite a bit of exaggeration. Unfortunately, it was indeed something like this when the scene replayed through Xia Mao's head.

Heala had buffed Xia Mao before the start of the battle, giving him speed comparable to Zi Dan even though it lasted for less than half a minute. The boost in speed gave the Blind Cat Cultivator a significant rush of adrenaline, allowing him to pick off the Dragon Headed Nians as many as possible before the boost dissipated into nothingness.

While the feeling of immense satisfaction drunk his mind to cloud nine, Xia Mao also felt the pain emanating from his digital wallet. The number of Panda Medals he had left was close to zero. Yet, they made quick work of this variant of the Nian, the small Dragon Headed Nians since the original one they had fought had a lion head instead.

"I suggest we bring back these bodies to the village. The last time I was here, they offered some reward for these." Tanke advised as he tied two of the dead ones together and carried them over his shoulder.

Obviously, this was part of the dungeon side quest line, and the System was using the opportunity to cheat Xia Mao while allowing them to clear the quest lines quicker. It explicitly wanted the Elder Pandarens to be among the few who stay in line and get the first clear since the System knew Pandawans like Bu Dong and his friends were already prepping for the limited dungeon instance.

"Let's try putting them inside our storage rings." Zi Dan suggested as he tried to register them as items, but the storage ring refused to take them in.

"You probably need a monster storage ring like those people who go hunting." Jing Yu pointed out as she too used her cloth to tie three of them together and carried them behind her backs. While it seemed like an amazing sight, their cultivation grades allowed them to move such heavy creatures with ease.

For this very same reason and a side note, Jin wanted to expand the Pandafull delivery service because he knew that the longer-serving employees that were with the 'company' since the start had gathered enough cultivation strength and stamina to do more tedious deliveries.

"I can't allow myself to be outmatched by Lady Jing Yu!" Tanke announced as he tied yet another two more dead Nians and placed it on his shield while he dragged it with a rope. This way, his shield acted like a metal plate that kept the Nian monsters intact while transporting them.

"Aren't you afraid that your shield will be damaged from the friction and all that pulling?" Zi Dan asked as he too tied four of those Nians and carried it behind him.

"If the shield breaks because of some simple dragging, then it's a useless shield in the first place. Hahahah! But don't you worry. This shield has been with me since birth, and it has protected me for as long as I can remember. A bit of transportation won't hurt it." Tanke answered with pride as he started to pull the load of Nians forward.

"The village should not be far from here! Just over the rocks and we will be able to see a clearing!" Heala cheered the others on while carrying just two Nians on her back and she started to walk on fours for better support.

Soon, the entire party managed to reach their destination without any problems, and the villagers were surprised to see a cultivator group bringing corpses of their dreaded enemy.

"Pandarens! I thought you would not be arriving when I saw the storm brewing at the far end of the island. And when there were no signs of you people, we feared the worse!" The oldest and wisest man came to greet them. "Ah, apologies for my poor manners! Song Erming, Chief of Song Chew Village at your service!"

"Such good kills..." Another elder came forth to check the goods that the cultivators had bought. "Most of them were killed with a single stab from the back, leaving quite a lot of the meat and organs intact!"

"Ah! Yiming, you should thank the heavens that the cultivators have managed to eliminate Nian's babies before they feast on ours!" Erming said, and his older brother nodded his head.

"Yes, yes. Thank you, cultivators. May I have your names?" Yiming later introduced himself as the Head Hunter for the village and told them the predicament that they were in.

Similar to the stories and legends of Nian in real life, what the Elder Pandarens heard was identical with a twist. The Boss Nian they had faced turned out to be the Mother Nian who had led her children on this island for feeding.

The 'attacks' were supposed to be triggered when the cultivators arrived in Song Chew Village, but because of the change Jin had secretly forced upon them, they literally changed how the usual events were triggered.

Mr Know-It-All, who happened to be in the cinema theatres, had witnessed the change and was documenting everything in his forum posts. (Does that guy ever sleep?)

That alone already alerted Jin that he was around and questioned the System why he was not informed of his presence.

"Why is User so surprised? System clearly stated that Mr Know-It-All has been behaving as if it was his personal hideout. There was no need for the System to report anything because nothing has changed and he continues to await User meeting him." The System said, and Jin smiled bitterly.

"The fact that I have changed the shop instance and he was here waiting patiently only proves his tenacity, I guess?" Jin commented, but the System denied such a statement.

"No, Mr Know-It-All has been staying here as if it was his working hours. Only today, he decided to stay here through the night. System believes that he might have predicted User would release your new dungeon instance. However, as System does not read the minds of the customers, User will have to ask Mr Know-It-All yourself."

"Fine, fine. I shall pay him a visit then. Please tell me when the Elder Pandarens have finished their side quests and are ready to fight the Boss battle. It doesn't seem like their contenders have too high of a chance of clearing the dungeon on their current attempt ...well except for Bu Dong, so I would like to personally watch their fight when it is their turn. That way I can at least commend them if they received their new title." Jin said as he started to pick his phone up and got ready to enter the Panda Street Instance to check on Mr Know-It-All.

He felt as if the post was basically meant to tell Jin 'Hey I'm around, come find me, you stupid boss! I have been patiently waiting for a heck of a long time.' (At least that was the way Jin interpreted it.)

True enough, when Jin teleported into the cinema theatre where a number of cultivators were happily watching the cultivators trying their beast, Mr Know-It-All yawned and tapped on the seat beside him, beckoning Jin to sit with him.

Chapter 916 Being Elusive

"Jin! Nice to see that you are alive and well! From what I heard from Yun, your injuries seemed to be quite severe to the point that you had to take some time off from everyone. And here I thought you were a superman or something after seeing that stunt of yours to remove the Loopa Ooofpa."

Mr Know-It-All said, and Jin got a little conscious when he heard it.

He quickly looked around to check if anyone was listening into their conversation then immediately gave Mr Know-It-All a nod to follow him.

"Wow, you seriously do not want to take credit for something you did tremendously for the country? People would be vying to get glory." Mr Know-It-All said as he saw Jin continue to keep quiet and lead the way.

Being ignored to such a point, Special Agent K understood the message as he kept his notebook and packed up his items. Only then did people start to notice that the 'Walkthrough Master' had decided to leave halfway.

They wondered if he had gathered enough information or just needed to take a toilet break. However, it did not bother them that much as they continued to watch the show for they knew Mr Know-It-All would post a guide to help the others as somehow he was the only one who could post in the spoiler section of the forums without entering the dungeon instance even once.

Jin waited for Mr Know-It-All for a moment at the main entrance of the cinema theatre before they quietly walked along the noisy Panda Street instances and took the Restaurant Train. But unlike the other times where Jin would reserve a private cabin where he discussed business with whoever was involved with him, he sat at the economic class of the Restaurant Train.

Agent K sat beside him, but neither of them spoke a single word even after the train departed from the Panda Street Stop.

Mr Know-It-All browsed around the economic class cabin and noticed there were people around chatting happily while taking videos of the new Shop Instance when the train started to move. This was obviously not the best place to make a serious conversation, and with Jin looking outside of the train without care, Mr Know-It-All predicted that he was bringing him to a place to talk privately.

While Mr Know-It-All knew that Jin was the master of the dungeon instance, he could have directly brought him to a quiet room for their conversation. Yet, it appeared like Jin had another agenda in taking this particular train ride, so the State Agent continued to keep calm and waited for Jin to open his mouth. He had already patiently waited for 2 weeks, what was another hour of silence? (Although he did feel a bit disturbed that he had to come out of the cinema theatres. Fortunately, there was always the Pandaflix where he could rewatch the fights and create the guide for Jin's customers.)

After a few stops, the Restaurant Train gave out an announcement saying that they were reaching the next stop, the Bamboo Forest Trail. That was where Jin turned towards Mr Know-It-All and told him that they were getting off here.

Mr Know-It-All complied and found himself in another part of the Shop Instance where he marvelled at the beauty of the tall overarching bamboo covering the skies. If there was anything special, it was how precisely each and every Bamboo tree was separated. This was nothing but perfection especially for couple Pandarens in the evening and night when the walkway would be lit up by mini bamboo lamps and benches far apart enough for the couples to have their own time.

"I hope you haven't brought me here for some time on those benches?" Mr Know-It-All joked, hoping to get some reaction from Jin and to his surprise, the dungeon supplier finally reacted by shaking his head with a smile.

"No worries, we just have to pass through here so I can show you something even more fantastic," Jin explained as he picked his pace up.

Naturally, Mr Know-It-All was able to keep up with him easily and soon, they had left the Bamboo Forest Trail and gone into a sidepath that was barely visible. The more they ventured, the denser the forest of

bamboo became. Large Rocks were seen as if they were some sort of guiding marks where Jin would tap them and a faint light symbol would appear on the rocks.

Soon, they reached a dead-end where there was a vertical wall of high rocks blocking the path. Jin then beckoned Mr Know-It-All to continue on, and it was only then that the State Agent realised that the wall was an illusion they could walk through them.

On the other side was a bar setting where he discovered the infamous Bar Island which Jin had used since the inception of his shop. There was an extraordinary large Panda that was acting as the bartender, sitting down cleaning the glasses. It noticed Jin and greeted him as the Boss just as every other NPCs would.

"This is the hidden bar which I kept as a secret for now. I would ask you to not reveal its location until you have seen what the new dungeon rewards are. If my customers turn out to be adventurous enough, they should be able to find it in due time." Jin requested as he welcomed Mr Know-It-All to the Bamboozled Bar Instance.

While the ceilings and walls were covered with a smooth kind of rock surface, the tables and chairs were separated by well-placed bamboo trees so that there was some privacy. There was a Red Panda who instantly came out from a small hole via the rocks and went to the piano and started to play a lovely soothing tune. A few Baby Pandas came along as well and picked up the instruments.

Imagine three Baby Pandas trying to get the cello upright while one stood at the top to play the strings and the other moved the cello bow. That was happening to the other instruments too. The saxophone was held on the ground but the Baby Panda blowing it was playing with such 'ungracefulness' that it was way too cute even for Mr Know-It-All.

"Whiskey on the rocks, please. Also, some chicken wings. My mouth feels a little pecky." Mr Know-It-All ordered after Jin assured him that he had locked this bar instance so no one else would come and interfere with him.

Now it's time for them to have a much-awaited conversation.

Chapter 917 Agent K's Offer

The big Panda Bartender brought in their drinks, and Mr Know-It-All put a few silver Panda Medals on the table. Then he took out a bottle from his leather suitcase and uncapped it. The smell of oolong tea was evidently strong, and he poured that mild lukewarm oolong tea into the whiskey.

"Oh, I'm sorry, I hope you don't mind?" Mr Know-It-All recalled that this was not the same bar he had frequented.

"You paid for the drink even though I was ready to treat you, so why would I complain about it? I just wonder if it actually tastes any good. Won't the warm oolong tea dilute the whiskey even further or possibly spoil the taste?" Jin asked as the combination seemed a little bit weird.

"Hmm, I can't claim that it is something everyone might enjoy, but it tastes nice to me no matter what." Mr Know-It-All replied before he took a little sip and judging by his expression, he greatly enjoyed the taste. The mild bittersweet taste along with the slight dryness after sipping the whiskey was fantastic.

"Ah... Boss Jin, your whiskey is definitely top-notch. Very few bottles of quality whiskey are able to bring out the hidden taste of my wife's oolong tea, and yours was considerably good! Have you brought me here to make me a regular at this Bamboozled Bar?" Mr Know-It-All jested as he thought about how his friend would feel if he stopped coming to his bar. (Probably elated given his status and the company he usually brings in.)

"Now let's get down to business. First of all, I want to sign a blood pact with you. What I'm about to reveal to you might turn you into a potential threat to national security." Mr Know-It-All started their real conversation as he took another sip while he smelled the wonderful odour of the fried chicken wings at the back of the bar.

"I feel honoured to have the full trust of a State Agent such as yourself, but if it's really that important, perhaps I shouldn't hear it. I might not look like it, but I have enough on my platter as is. My actions should have proven that I am not any sort of threat to national security, right?" Jin really did not want to get dragged into another sort of problem if it was avoidable, yet somehow they always found a way to haunt him, even in his own world. It felt like the problems had a scent detector that would allow them to always go for Jin to solve them.

"That is true, and I was prepared to say something like that. However, I'm aware that you were trying to find out more about Ryuli so if you accept the blood pact, I'm willing to answer any questions you might have about her. Likewise, it will guarantee that any secrets you accidentally may reveal to me won't be leaked out, too." Mr Know-It-All said, and suddenly both of them heard a clinking sound of the ice hitting a glass cup from the far end of the bar.

"Geez, Boss. I am extremely disheartened that you did not tell me about this meeting. Did you know that you are seeing one of the strongest and arguably the second most influential State Agent in this nation and you left me in that boring meeting room." Kraft complained as his footsteps echoed through the bar with his drink in hand. "Well, granted I love to see those 'associates' of yours bickered and take notes of their quirks so I can use them against them, but this is more interesting!"

"If I brought you here on my own, do you think he would tell me anything? You don't exactly exude a trustworthy aura with your trenchcoat!" Jin retorted as he was talking about being upfront honest. Kraft merely smirked at that comment, and with a snap of his fingers, his outfit changed to a neat black business suit.

Tailor made to the centimetre detail, the suit's quality was exquisitely brilliant. The use of silk, leather and even some animal fabric hinted that it was one damn expensive set of clothes. His buttons and cuffs were also custom made to the point, he was emanating the embodiment of stylishly formal. And the watch Kraft wore was a piece of beauty too which made Agent K slightly jealous since he knew a solid watch piece from afar. However, for once, the crafty fox did not even bother to hide his gunbelt even though he still kept No Mercy and Just Business holstered.

"He is trained to speak half lies and has been doing it so naturally that it might trick even spiritual judges overlooking the blood pact. Face it, he's way out of your league, and you need me to back you up." Kraft

insisted as he shamelessly yanked a chicken wing from the Panda Bartender before he could even serve it.

To the three men's collective surprise, the Panda didn't even hesitate as he bashed Kraft's head when he tried to take a bite and forcefully placed the wings on his side of Kraft's table. "Customer, please wait for a little while for a new batch of wings." The Panda Bartender said nonchalantly, and even he apologised for the rude behaviour of Kraft before he returned to the kitchen.

"Wow, Boss. So much for the customer being king. That's a harsh bartender." Kraft looked a little stunned from the paw swipe, but without a care, he bit on the wing.

"So shall I assume you've gathered information privy about me that might render me useless in this particular trade of secrets?" Mr Know-It-All's calm expression slowly turned slightly serious.

"In a way, yes. Don't underestimate the power of information gathering from little ol' me. In fact, why don't I share the secrets here and now? That way Jin gets to hear it, and you get to verify it? Any objections, Long Kong Rong." Kraft pronounced his name word by word, as slowly as possible as if to irritate him to the maximum.

"Well, I would LOVE to learn more about you too, Mr Fox." Kong Rong said as his eyes were quietly burning with a challenge to the point that his chi aura was leaking out to show his superiority. Kraft merely grinned as if he was about to do the same thing until...

"Kraft!" Jin banged the bartender table, and suddenly the concentration between the two broke.

"I planted a sort of information gathering bug on him. It transferred quite a lot of information about him and Ryuli. You honestly do not have to do this with him." Kraft told him via the System Channel.

The Foxy Version 2 that Kraft secretly passed to them had been able to infiltrate their headquarters when the State Agent was trying to find out more about Jin. However, in doing so, he allowed Kraft to retrieve a bountiful load of classified information. Compared to the first Foxy Virus, the 2nd iteration was a nano bug courtesy of Rei's expertise that allowed them to hack into the database with Kong Rong's credentials intact. (Of course, it took some time for Kraft to execute it but the Foxy Virus was able to work.)

Once connected to their computers, the nano bug physical form dissipated and the V2 virus took way less time for Kraft to find what he needed compared to V1 where it was constantly trying to run away from the firewall.

"It's your call, so you should know that he isn't a threat as you might expect."

"That's great and all, but the most important thing I need to know is whether he knows about the System!" Jin asked via the System channel while Kraft continued to put on a performance.

Kraft merely shook his head, while looking straight at Kong Rong who had noticed that they were using some sort of high-level telepathy communication. He had tried to listen in on it, but he quickly realised that there was no way to break into it. It was rare for him to be unable to do so, but he had briefly forgotten who he was dealing with.

"Fine, I do not need a blood pact, but I will at least need your word, that nothing can get out of this room no matter what." Kong Rong sighed in defeat as he received the chicken wings from the Panda Bartender. As for the Panda, he went out of the island bar with a bottle of apple wine and walked his way to a corner of the bar with headphones on.

His NPC's actions somehow further strengthened his faith in Jin while Kong Rong took another sip of his whiskey once more as if he wanted the drink to be responsible for him leaking out the information. Especially since to learn more, one had to give something in return.

"I've come here today to learn what the last heir of the supposed Royal Panda Clan plans for the future."

Chapter 918 Dragon Ley Lines

Jin was unsure if he should feel relieved about the State Agent's ignorance on the matter, but he decided to play along to learn the extent of how much Kong Rong actually knew. Perhaps, he might not know of the existence of the System at all, and that itself would be a great relief for Jin.

"I did not expect the Royal Zodiacs or even the Ministry of State Security to even know- hmm no, you surely know of our existence. More like wasting resources and allocating manpower to track our existence, if what Kraft said is true about you. We are basically dead in your eyes since we have no strength nor power to fight you guys. Why do you bother to look us -erm me up?" Jin queried even though he initially wanted to play dumb.

Yet, knowing Kong Rong, it was useless to do so and might actually be counterproductive. Thus, Jin decided to acknowledge the fact that he was indeed part of the rumoured Royal Panda Clan.

"Hah! You useless? Have you forgotten you have single handedly brought down an aberration of horror that no one actually knew how to kill aside from Senior Demon Exorcists Instructor Yuan? And in retrospective, even our records were proven to be useless otherwise." Kong Rong retorted.

"You do know that those records had been edited by the Banned Emperor faction, right?" Kraft asked as a casual question.

"Well, yes and no. We did not know of their meddling until this particular incident happened especially after Instructor Yuan vouched that those reports had been edited by showing us her own copy which she had kept. Since then, we had started to trace these moles, especially in the defence sector, and we are in the works to do a massive raid in each and every department, including other sectors." Kong Rong responded cautiously.

"Still, the Royal Panda Clan has always been an elusive group of members, one that I could not help but wonder why history had not acknowledged them. No matter which library or database I look upon, there were traces of information erased about them. The only place where I could find evidence of this clan was the Royal Zodiac Archives. But more importantly, I wanted to learn why my grandmother constantly considered them traitors when everyone had forgotten about them. Most if not everyone I know, do not recognise the existence of such a clan. They all believed it was just folklore similar to how

those Banned Emperor terrorists got their name from it." Kong Rong stated his reason for being here to learn more about the Royal Panda Clan.

"Your grandmother?" Jin asked with curiosity as he bent over the island bar and picked up the whiskey left by the Panda Bartender to refill Kong Rong's bottle. Kong Rong thanked him as this time, he decided to drink the shot without adding any of his wife's oolong tea.

"Indeed, I am the grandson of the Lead Royal Zodiac Archivist. She's the only one in the country, heck maybe in the whole world that has the power to tap into the Dragon Ley lines." Kong Rong revealed, but Jin merely gave him a blank look when he heard about the dragon ley lines.

Kraft decided to step in so he could fill in some knowledge for his master and at the same time flaunted his expertise in front of Kong Rong. "It isn't too surprising that a modern person like you would not have any ideas about them unless you studied the occult or cared much about ancient history. The concept of these Dragon Ley lines stems from the belief that the Earth is a giant living organism and would have something resembling the chi and mana circuits in one's body. The Dragon Ley lines are the most prominent for humans to observe and thus taken advantage of."

"According to rumours, they are currently dormant since many cultivators of old travelled far and wide to find these Ley lines. There are records of those cultivators stating how they were blessed by the Heavens... a nice way to refer to exploiting them for their own purposes. Absorbing the Earth's spiritual energy allowed them to jump cultivation grades. Of course, those were mainly rumours since I believe those people who jumped grade just needed that extra push from their current state. But still, there were many who tried finding them for the sake of power, but only very few succeeded." Kraft explained as he felt peckish and stole another chicken wing since the Panda Bartender was not there to stop him. Jin shook his head and actually revealed another plate that the Panda Bartender had been hiding it when he took the whiskey bottle out.

With his mouth filled with tender, juicy meat, Kraft added that the ultimate price of this treasure hunt was actually Dragon Ley lines crossing each other, which are called Dragon Ley Nodes. In those places, the power spirals so intensely that it becomes a massive vortex of spiritual energy. This was not discovered only by the cultivators but mages too. One such place is in Old England where at least twelve Dragon Ley lines intersected before diverging into the core of the Earth.

That was one of the reasons why the Stonehenge was erected to contain its power after a mage stumbled upon the excessive spiritual energy which spilt out as a method for Earth to stabilise itself. Those monolithic stones have been put up not only to hold the spiritual power but also as a method to transfer said spiritual energy into a person.

Stonehenge has basically become the coveted prize for most mages to attain possible perfection. To avoid such a power falling into the wrong hands, the government protects it so fiercely since its inception. But to everyone's surprise, even the founding mage did not attain a perfect Grade 20 in their supposed magic levels.

Some even thought that the only Grade 20 Cultivator, Guan Yu, had found one, if not more of these Dragon Ley Nodes that allowed him to reach his godly attainment. Some even deduced that he had walked and visited every possible Ley Node in the world and even discovered some hidden Ley Nodes underground that enabled him to hit that Grade 20.

However, as modernisation set in, so did the disappearance of these Dragon Ley lines. This was mainly because when Guan Yu changed the laws of nature, more people were able to fight against the domain monsters usually lurking around the Ley lines. The laws of nature might have changed, but humanity's greedy nature has not. Many exploited the Ley lines to the point that various governments had to step in because of the unexpected consequences of taking in this spiritual energy too frequently.

Earth was supposed to release spiritual energy periodically to stabilise oneself, but the constant exploitation caused spiritual energy to be sucked out of Earth itself instead of naturally releasing excess energy.

This inadvertently created natural disasters of massive scale due to the imbalance in the spiritual energy which the researchers at the time were unable to explain as anything but Heaven's Wrath.

Ironically, the one to propose the theory that by extracting spiritual energy from the surface Dragon Ley lines, it interrupted the entire meridian system within Earth, causing the imbalance of spiritual energy to certain parts of the world and thus these natural disasters, had been branded a heretic.

"Most attributed it to the change in the laws of nature. It must have been convenient to just pin the blame on someone else. In the end, only decades later did a joint team of mages and cultivators manage to find the reason why all these were happening, led by one of the successors of that 'heretic's' idea. They were the first to become known as China's Royal Zodiac Archivists." Kraft munched happily on his chicken wings as he showed a peace sign towards Kong Rong.

"As expected from a person of your sinister calibre." Kong Rong sighed after listening to the explanations from Kraft. Surprisingly he learnt quite a few things that he had not been taught by his grandmother— especially the natural disasters portion.

The State Agent tried again to use his chi enhanced senses to check if Kraft was lying, but there was no scent of lies, no unusual panic aversion of his eyes and the body language was too relaxed. If Kraft was a con artist, he was extremely good at his job.

"Tsk, so much having your grandmother being the 'archive' and protector of history," Kraft noted sarcastically while grabbing the whiskey bottle and pouring himself a drink. Jin knew this thousand year fox could not be beaten if you compete him with history lessons.

At the same time, all those explanations caused Jin to wonder about the state of the Farming World's condition. From Kraft's impromptu history lesson, Litoride, the precious miracle ore responsible for the rats' Steampunk technology, sounded quite similar to the concept of Dragon Ley lines.

"Could it be, that they are digging so many caves and hideouts under the ground because..." Jin considered the possibility that the underground network of the Demon Rats might be far more dangerous than anticipated. It might actually be because they were digging deeper for a better quality Litoride...

Or maybe something more sinister.

Chapter 919 Digging For Freedom

"System, please get Peppers to do a deep scan of the northern region! I want her to repeat it until we have a clear picture to see to the core of the Farming World." Jin ordered as he remembered that the scan Peppers made were only a few dozen metres into the ground. He was initially unsure if it was the limitation of her scan, especially since they were only looking for activities of the Demon Rats.

"What's with the sudden concern?" The System asked as Jin picked his phone up and told them he had an urgent phone call to make. After which Kraft quickly placed his hand over Kong Rong's shoulder to distract him and hustled him for another drink.

"A phone call this early in the morning around?" Kong Rong thought to himself, and he felt like Kraft was buying him some time. Just one sentence on the revelations of him being the last member of the Panda Clan had made him so anxious? However, if that was true, he would have been startled when Kong Rong revealed the fact. But Jin was calm and collected and even admitted that he was indeed part of the Panda Clan.

"Nah, it seems that my explanation just now suddenly triggered an idea about something that needs to be done." Kraft saw through the facial expression on Kong Rong and immediately said it out as if to calm him down.

"Ah... I deduce as much. Is he thinking of getting to a Dragon Ley Node by himself? Hahahah!" Kong Rong replied, but to the State Agent, it seemed as if it was a direct challenge as Kraft could read his nonverbal expressions easily and had grasped his train of thought.

Unaware that he had been seen through, Jin continued to pretend he was on the phone while relaying information with the System. In reality, he shared his concerns that it might be possible that they had been taking a certain matter a little too lightly.

"Remember how fast the Scholars ran away after their castle ambush had failed? I am starting to believe that attack was not just some simple failure. In actual fact, I think that their 'Plan B' was to use it as potential bait for us." Jin explained as he felt that it was not the rats underestimating them, but they were the ones looking down at the rats.

"I read the reports briefly, Weslie and some of the researchers had concluded that the castle mechanics were done in a haphazard way. It was as if they just wanted to get this done as soon as possible and throw the attack on us. But at the same time, you saw how sturdy the Demon Rats' armour has become. Compared to the older models, Weslie pointed out there were improvements made getting rid of the most severe weak point." Jin continued and went behind the Panda Bartender, who was quietly drinking his apple wine to lean on him. (A privilege of being his master)

Even though the Panda Bartender was being controlled by the System, its AI knew that it did not want ears to be prying into the conversation even though Kraft was keeping Kong Rong busy. Thus, he shifted himself a little and eyed at the little Pandas to play something more upbeat. Once their song ended, the tunes became more jazz oriented, and when possible, they purposely directed their instruments towards Kong Rong. This would not only catch his attention but also divert it away from Jin now that he was out of his sight.

"On the other hand, Weslie pointed out the offensive laser cannon was working as intended and to some extent, she felt the rats or maybe the Scholars had managed to improve on it a lot on her previous design. Yet, she felt it was lacking something... Argh, what was it in her report...?" Jin suddenly forgot the wording in her report and starting snapping his fingers while unconsciously rubbing his head behind the Panda Bartender's back. (It was incredibly soft and fluffy though!)

"It was initially part of a device before it was used in this castle superstructure. As if it was actually meant to be for a piece of heavy machinery compared to just being used as an offensive weapon." The System literally quoted word by word from Weslie's analysis report.

"Yes! That's it! The laser cannon was being retrofitted last minute, and its condition seemed worn out aside from the damage taken from our attacks." Jin's memory finally clicked after the System's prompting.

"User's point being?" While the System had already begun calculating and predicting the type of answers Jin could have contemplated, the System allowed him to finish his sudden epiphany.

"What I am saying is that we might be focusing on the wrong objective. We seem to be very sure that they are regrouping and holding their fort in the Northern Region's capital but... They might actually be running away." Jin said as if his hunch on it would definitely hit the nail on the head.

"Assuming they do not have portal magic, they are actually doing their best to run away from this Northern Region. However, I suspect it's neither by sea nor by air... but by digging!" Jin said with emphasis that even the Panda Bartender raised his eyebrow and turned his head a little before returning to being nonchalant.

"Peppers showed that they had multiple caverns to dig for Litoride to fuel their military might. But what if they are digging deeper for better quality of Litoride and also a way out of the Northern Region?"

"In that case, the use of heavy machinery would make a ton of sense! Dig big and deep to create not just an underground city but to connect them to possibly other regions and take them by surprise. Ultimately they have the last laugh because they might not have just one undercity but a real one somewhere else!"

"As long as they block the entrances to their real undercity, those Demon Rats could live in seclusion for the ultimate takeover when everyone is living seemingly in peace and thinking that the threat was all over," Jin stressed as he could not believe he did not realise this sooner.

"Fair point of contention." The System agreed.

"And we are also assuming the rats are going underground only. However, what if they have developed the idea and technology to make submarines? Fortress submarines and diving suits with oxygen? We have already seen them come up with the idea for aircraft, so who is to say they might not have found a way to accomplish underwater travel. Damn it, speculating like that makes me want to have them as part of my team." Jin sighed as he felt the rats were way too cunning. Maybe that was why the dungeon supplier felt they only sent a small company of Demon Rats to the Bulwark Port to review its resistance.

Though thankfully, the System also ensured all of them were killed to prevent any reports from being sent back but could the System be sure that the Scholars had not attached them with high level magical seeing spells?

If Kiva had managed to bide his time to change the kingdom so that the crown would be under his control, Jin would also believe that the rats under the scheming Scholars could do the same.

"User's worries are warranted, System will assist Bellator Peppers with the scan." The System replied, now satisfied with such an analysis. While it had thought of it before previously, the Super Entity had not believed the Rats were capable of doing such a feat. In fact, Weslie had allowed the System to do a thorough scan of her memories, giving it an idea about how capable the Demon Rats were supposed to be.

Yet, the new incoming reports from salvaging the castle ruins had already proven that she might have been mistaken about their capabilities and ignorant to their intellectual growth. Armed with substantial facts from its host, the System finally bumped the priority to eradicate the rats up to one of its highest importance.

It was mainly because of the Farming World's extensive potential to provide Jin and his subsequent virtual network a limitless quantity of high-quality goods that lead the System to allow more than some compromise.

"But not today, let Pepps enjoy her day off tonight." Jin requested as he stopped pretending to whisper on the phone. (Even though the System had already erected an acoustic barrier using the Panda Bartender as a proxy from the start.)

"Would User rather risk to fight the Rats outside the Northern Region for the sake of the peace of his bellator?" The System questioned since every second, every minute still mattered as they meant progress for the Demon Rats. In the meantime, the System was already formulating plans within its processing unit and simultaneously creating recommendations on the minion's new revised strategies so as to improve the next raid on the Farming World.

"If they are already that far along in their plans, then I doubt a couple of hours will make that much of a difference. And even if it does, it will just mean that it is our loss for not realising it sooner. I rather have a rested army with high morale than an army who felt that the master's promises was empty and hollow." Jin apologised as he closed his phone and stood up.

Only to see the smiling duo at the bar table been fighting without words nor physical contact. (And to Jin, that was downright scary.)

Chapter 920 Chi Execution Promise

"Settled your stuff already?" Kong Rong asked and Jin nodded his head, but he knew he was still waiting for Jin to either confirm or deny his earlier statement.

"My bad, I erm... Don't you laugh at me! I just thought of something about ley lines explanation and needed to record some of my thoughts quickly. I thought I can perhaps use that as part of my plans for a new 'dungeon raid' if you get my drift. hahahah!" Jin replied, adding that he was too embarrassed to be seen recording his sudden pangs of inspiration as weird, so he decided to go around a corner and record his plans.

However, Jin was never great at lying, and Kong Rong could immediately pick up that the Dungeon Supplier was not telling the entire truth. But decided not to bother to pursue. At the very least, based on the State Agent's experience, Jin was not lying straight at his face, and that still retained the respect he had for the little Royal Panda Clan Member.

"As for my plans... Well, you can see it for yourself. I have quite the unique dungeon supplier store. And I wish to grow it out at a national and then international scale. It would be a lie that I would not want to have the Panda Clan to regain its old former glory, but right now, I would rather focus on my shop. If the clan growth comes in the same direction as my shop's expansion, then I will gladly embrace it." Jin truthfully admitted and Kong Rong finally gave a relaxed smile.

"Then all your crazy dungeon instances finally make some sense. It would definitely be a pity for you to stay in Shenzhen and not spread your wings or in this case, dungeon instances to the rest of the country. And if possible internationally." Kong Rong happily replied as he cleaned his fingers from all the leftover chicken wing oil. He noticed that Jin had left out the word 'Royal' indicating that he saw the Panda Clan as something else.

"However, I must ask. Have you ever hated the name Royal Panda Clan? Or do you feel resentful that being born in such a clan?" The State Agent questions were out of the norm for Jin but the dungeon supplier understood where he was coming from. History had always been written by the strongest and unlike the Royal Zodiacs, Jin had the whole story from the bitter old System. So, instead of bitterness and anger that was expected from the last surviving Royal Panda Clan member, Kong Rong sensed something much more.

"It's more like it just sounds so odd to me. Heck, I only found out recently after the death of my Grandpa that I apparently belonged to a Clan with ancient roots which no one ever knew about. Growing up, he never revealed those things to me, and he just left me his inheritance, assuming that I would like to take it as it is. He just shoved that kind of deadweight responsibility to me, telling me to get revenge for our ancestors." Jin replied as he sat beside the duo and poured himself a shot from the bottle of whiskey too.

Even though he never liked the taste nor the notion of drinking, Jin picked the cup up and drank it with all his might. The bitterness and dryness of the alcohol were terrible as if he was putting cardboard into his mouth and swallowing it whole.

"I do not wish to speak ill of the dead, but he's an idiot," Jin said out, but both men could still see the clarity in his eyes when he proclaimed that. In fact, those pair of eyes got even more decisive when Jin opened his mouth.

"Following the footsteps of my grandfather or the ancestors that came before me... it just sounds unnecessary. I don't plan to fight them if that is what you were worried about. Instead, I plan to honour my heritage by creating a Panda Clan that is worthy of my respect and that of the public. So, if you plan

to treat me as an enemy of the state on that grounds, you better prepare because I will fight against you with all my might!" Jin firmly declared, and Kong Rong understood why he took that shot of whiskey.

Doing so must have just been to ease his nerves, so he could send the declaration of challenge to him, a Lawman of the Country, a respected person standing at the top with power, privilege and money. Thereafter, Jin already poured himself another shot of whiskey and downed it in order to hide the shame of uttering something normally so out of character for him.

"Hahahah!" Kong Rong loosened his shoulders and just laughed. "You kidding me? Do you really think you have the power to take on the Royal Zodiacs? Have you forgotten what happened to your grandfather?" Kong Rong's words had confirmed that there was indeed someone who actually remembered the actions of Ming despite the System's time reversal.

"Looks like the Royal Archivist can manage to retain her memory after all..." Jin mumbled as his resigned look changed to that of a cornered animal. Ironically this time it was Kraft who broke the tension, by 'accidentally' using too much force when he downed his whiskey shot, breaking the glass. He broke out in laughter over his clumsiness and excused himself as he went to get a replacement.

"To manipulate time and space, storing historical information was vital in order to make sure that the caster could retain her sanity. Thus, the System believes, the Royal Archivist must have stored her memories in a secured position within the Dragon Ley Lines or a Dragon Ley Node so that in case of any change in time, she would be able to retrieve her memories from the original timeline. But that's to say the original timeline..." As the System attempted to babble on in an attempt to calm Jin further down, Kong Rong raised his hand and showed his palm towards the Panda Cultivator, as if signalling him to halt his actions.

"I assume that was the sort of reaction you have expected from me, right? However, I believe that you are someone worthy of my trust, so I wish to help you." Kong Rong told him, and Jin was unable to sense any malice from him.

At that moment, that palm immediately turned to the ceiling while he pointed upwards. Suddenly chi was gathered within his index finger while he drew an imaginary circle with his chi. That was when Jin realised that Kong Rong was about to do something unthinkable, there was no way he could believe it.

"As these two gentlemen my witness, I hereby invoke the oath that my actions, be they direct or indirect, will ultimately not harm Jin's livelihood and his way of living." Kong Rong spoke as Kraft gritted his teeth for he too understood what the State Agent was doing.

"That's an Oath that invoked the Heavenly Five Element Tribulations." Jin thought to himself. He knew the implications of the Heavenly Five Element Tribulations, and so did Kraft. Yet, both knew that those Element tribulations would only be effective on 'average' ordinary folks.

To people like Kong Rong, who was a State Agent, he probably went through torture both physical and mentally that would put him way above average citizens. However, Kong Rong suddenly changed his oath invocation a little which was new to both the Panda and Fox. The Royal Dragon Zodiac Cultivator put his other hand out, and it started forming a dragon silhouette in front of him.

The bloody dragon silhouette circled around Kong Rong as it bit him on his neck causing more blood to emerge and forming even more dragon silhouettes which continued to encircle him and bite at every

portion of his body. Just when Jin worried that Kong Rong might die of blood loss the oath invocation was suddenly over, and Kong Rong sat on the high chair with wounds all over him.

Jin immediately took out a potion and quietly offered it to Kong Rong, yet the State Agent refused and told him that he would be fine after a quick breather. True enough, his wounds suddenly healed by itself and Kong Rong appeared fine and dandy, as if nothing had happened. Jin then noticed that there were no bloodstains on the ground nor on his clothes.

"You... Did you just strengthen Heavenly Five Element Tribulation Oath with a Chi Execution Promise?" Kraft asked with a grim face.

"Heh. For you to even know this taboo oath making, you are definitely not someone I should underestimate." Kong Rong answered Kraft's query with a smirk.

"Now you wish to revise your impression of me? That is a little tad too late, isn't it?" Kraft replied solemnly. Still, the reason for making such a Taboo Oath boggled Jin's mind whereas Kraft already had his own thoughts on the matter.