

Dungeon S 931

Chapter 931 The Fight in a Cave - Part 1

The first pair of Sui Lions rushed through the cave tunnels, but the rumbling of the cave felt fairly abnormal. Apart from being able to tell his team that they were coming from the front, even Yue Han's senses were unable to pinpoint their exact location.

Only thanks to the light lamps Tanke was holding at the side of his waist did they manage to realise that the incoming Sui Lion on the ground was purposely creating a distraction so that the Pandawans would not pay attention to the second one above him who was actually using the surrounding walls to try and attack them from above.

"Holy shit, they can run upside down as well?! What kind of monster are we facing?! Are we sure they're the same ones as outside and not some kind of Sui Spiders?!" Yue Han complained even as Tanke held on to his shield and prepared to intercept both of them.

However, Bu Dong doubted that both Sui Lions would clash with their Panda Guardian upfront. Given their intelligence, it was far more likely that the one above was aiming at the backlines and even if it wasn't, it would at least backstab Tanke while he would be busy dealing with the one on the ground.

Yue Han was still shocked by the abomination running upside, and Bu Dong's contemplation caused the young Pandawan to act slowly. The only person who reacted in time to this shocking development in their fight was Yue Wen. The young woman aimed her pistol at the charging beasts and started to shoot.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The sound of the shots reverberated throughout the entire cave, and it caused a slight reaction delay to Tanke's actions. Yue Han, with his enhanced senses, was severely harmed by it as he knelt down covering his ears. Bu Dong was also affected, and the eerie ringing within his ears made it hard to fight.

"Sis! What the fuck are you doing?! Shooting so close to us without any warning?!" Yue Han shouted since his ears seemed to have been temporarily crippled by the loud sounds.

To make things worse, none of the shots actually connected and the Sui Lions, although slightly agitated by it, did not stop in their charge. In fact, they further increased their speed after their prey had noticed their failed ambush. This caused Yue Wen to continue shooting, now with two hands, hoping to get a lucky headshot.

However, only the final bullet scrapped the ear of the ground Sui Lion, barely reducing its health bar. Unlike the Elder Pandarens, Bu Dong and the others had not realised that the Sui Lions, and in fact all of the Nian variants were susceptible to loud sound and flashes of light.

The pistols they used were coincidentally doing a great job providing both, especially when in a tunnel cave where the sound reverberation was enhanced, and the relative darkness of the cave caused the flashes to be more poignant.

However, the occasional flashes and bangs of sounds were still not as deadly as a firecracker which had successive loud booming sounds and bright lights, so the Sui Lions were not badly affected.

Nevertheless, amidst Yue Wen's unsuccessful attempts, Archy had used the opportunity to fire a crossbow bolt and hit the front paw of the Sui Lion running on the ceiling.

The pain caused the Sui Lion to lose not only its footing but momentum, forcing the Lion to fall off from its position. Archy did not hesitate to fire yet another bolt as he utilised his skill to reload quickly to fire another shot in succession. By releasing another stun arrow and able to hit with such accuracy on the falling Sui Lion ensured that it would not be able to recover when it touched the ground.

And with some luck on their side, the Sui Lion dropped on its brethren's back, causing them to collide. Tanke took the chance to move a step forward and slammed its Warhammer on both of them. A direct hit on the head caused the Sui Lion to concuss. Thankfully, the Panda Guardian AI was smart enough to hit the Sui Lion that was on the top, causing the one at the bottom to struggle continuously from the dead weight of his fellow stunned brother.

Bu Dong who managed to shake himself off from the shock of the gunfire quickly went forth to slash the struggling Sui Lion's neck. Obviously, the Sui Lion did not allow itself to die like that, and thus, it managed to gather its strength to throw its concussed brother into the Angry Ape cultivator's path as it thought that it had already been killed. Bu Dong was surprised by the Sui Lion's willingness to sacrifice its comrade as the ones outside the cave had not showcased such a behaviour.

"Careful! They could be veteran versions of the Sui Lions we fought!" Tanke warned as he quickly stepped to the side and tried to flank the still active Sui Lion. The Sui Lion did not bother escaping and decided to go for the smaller human since Tanke was blocking their back.

However, with a taunting screech from Tanke, the Sui Lion somehow stopped its track and turned towards the Panda Guardian. "Woah! So an enmity meter really does exist! No wonder Boss Jin insisted on a Tank party member!" Bu Dong relaxed from a defensive stance and quickly switched to the offensive.

"I'm starting to understand a little more about this new dungeon format! Now, this is more interesting!" Bu Dong thought to himself as he lit up his sword with chi.

Fire from his chi started to envelop his sword as he too threatens the provoked Sui Lion. With the darkness of the cave and the support of just some measly lantern light, Bu Dong also believed it would be best to light up the cave a little so that Archy or Yue Wen could be able to see him further and aid with the long range attacks.

However, to Yue Wen's surprise, she saw Archy retract his crossbow and take the time to wrap a few bolts with linen. She now vaguely understood why Archy liked to sit and shoot upon seeing a mini-workshop right in front of her.

The Panda Archer had a small table right in front of him with tools that allowed him to rework his arrows. Upon wrapping the linen, he doused it with some oil and lit it up with a lighter on his mini table. After which he placed a bolt on his crossbow and aimed at the Sui Lion his party members were fighting against.

While waiting for a good shot, Archy passed Yue Wen a few arrows doused with oil in a quiver too. "You need to be a bit careful with those. Longbows are not really suited to be used inside caves. Use them

when you're sure it's safe." Archy advised as his eyes never left the target in front of him. Yue Wen thanked him, and she carried the quiver.

She decided not to interfere as her aim was not as good as Archy's and she was worried that her carelessness could result in a case of literal friendly fire after the frantic firing of her pistol.

Unfortunately, the party appeared to have forgotten about the remaining Sui Lion, which Yue Han had detected previously. With Yue Han still recovering from, the party had placed all its attention on the Sui Lion in front of them, allowing the third Sui Lion to silently stalk the party from the shadows awaiting the right time to strike.

Chapter 932 The Fight in a Cave - Part 2

When Tanke used his flanking position to try and hit the Sui Lion with its Warhammer from the back, the Nian underling worked its hind legs to kick the Panda Guardian away.

Tanke thought that merely blocking would suffice, but surprisingly the Panda Guardian got knocked backwards from the impact and even fell on his back from the attack. The others had also not expected this kind of strength only strengthening their belief that this one must be some veteran version, Sui Lion.

Bu Dong took the opportunity to dash forth and attack its side. However, the Sui Lion once again reacted in time and turned around to use its front paw to block the attack. The fire from Bu Dong's chi technique hurt, yet it was better than getting slashed by the side.

Despite its reaction speed, the Sui Lion was fully occupied with the close quarter combatants missing the incoming fire bolt shot by Archy's crossbow. "Bullseye." Archy proclaimed as he reloaded his weapon. As soon as the coast seemed to be safe Yue Wen proceeded to heal her brother.

"Let's not take any chances!" Bu Dong thought and smashed his fist onto the Sui Lion's face while adjusting himself for a stab at the monster's neck. Tanke rolled on the ground like any Panda would, and while holding on his Warhammer, he used the rolling momentum to stand up. It would probably take too much time to stand up if Tanke did the 'normal' way and even more to cover the same amount of distance. The Panda Guardian then used his newly recovered strength to hurl his Warhammer at the monster's legs, attempting to cripple it so that it would be unable to defend itself any longer.

Despite the struggle of either getting bitten by the Sui Lion or being mawed by its paw, Bu Dong successfully plunged his sword into the Sui Lion's neck. He then tried to block the Sui Lion's mouth with his hand by pushing it away during its attempt to bite, but its giant paw inadvertently swiped hard towards Bu Dong.

"Fuck! His paw attack hurts so fucking bad! URGH!" Bu Dong cursed as he retracted his left arm to block against the paw while ensuring that its claws did not plunge into his flesh. The Angry Ape Cultivator even went sideways to prevent the Sui Lion's series of angry biting.

Meanwhile, Yue Han had healed to a point where he could sit upright, and as soon as he came to his senses, he immediately noticed the third one and shouted out a grim reminder: "THERE ARE THREE OF THEM!!!"

It startled the party for a moment, but not the Sui Lion who had been hiding within the side cave and took this scream as his sign to attack. Yue Wen instinctively reached for the pistol at her side waist, but she recalled that she had yet to reload the near-empty pistol, causing her to hesitate about whether to use the longbow or not.

It was rare for the Pandawans to react so slowly, but the System deduced it was most likely because of the environment and their lack of spatial awareness. Cave fighting was not as easy as one might think, especially for someone without any prior experience in that regard. The Pandawan group had no idea where the cave crevices were and had been unprepared how significant the influence of little light would be in the way they had to fight.

A loud screech was heard, this time from Archy who uncharacteristically stood up from his lazy sitting position and countered the Sui Lion with raw strength. His mini workshop of tools and arrows were flung away along with his crossbow just to intercept the third Sui Lion. Those two animals tussled and grappled furiously while the party members tried to regain their pace in combat.

For the whole trip, this was the first time Archy was seen being so aggressive as it tried to counter pin the Sui Lion but, unlike Tanke, it barely had the strength to match the Sui Lion on equal grounds. However, thanks to his quick and decisive direct interference, Archy saved his other party members from certain death. Seeing how powerless she was, Yue Wen decided to step up her game and ditch her pistol as well as the longbow she borrowed from Archy and reached for her sword crane along her waist.

The Healing Maiden Cultivator initially wanted to help out as a long-range supporter since the group did not want her to get injured when she was the only capable person able to perform emergency heals. But in these circumstances, when their secondary fighter was incapacitated, it was better to work on something she was proficient with.

She pulled her sword crane out and aimed the Sui Lion's neck as it continued to suppress Archy, but when it detected the threat coming towards it, the Sui Lion looked up and roared at her. It did stagger her momentarily, but Yue Wen knew she needed to do something to turn the tide or else Archy's intervention might turn into his sacrifice.

"Take this! Intermediate Sword Art, Maiden's Mirroring Stab!" Yue Wen shouted back as she closed one of her eyes to prevent too much pain and moved forward in a zig-zag motion. At that point, Archy decided to fight back since the Sui Lion was currently not breathing down on him. Despite being pinned down with the beast's claws plunged into his arms, he bit down towards the Sui Lion right shoulder.

The Sui Lion squirmed a little, and that caused its claws to dig deeper into Archy, and in turn, the Panda could not help but release his bite due to the pain. However, that was sufficient time for Yue Wen's attack to proceed without interference as the zig-zag motion caused multiple images of her to appear, and they simultaneously jumped to attack the Sui Lion.

While they might just be mirror images of Yue Wen, her chi energy existed in all of them, providing them 1/3rd of piercing strength of her usual attacks. So, with the mirror images attacking at all sides, the Sui

Lion got injured to the point it let go of the Panda Mercenary. The blinding flashing lights from the mirror images of the Healing Maiden's cultivation style was also troublesome for the Sui Lion, causing it to abandon the fight and retreat.

"Oh no, you are not going anywhere." Yue Han announced as he emerged from the shadows and jumped from the cave's ceiling and stabbed the Lion's head from above. He then used his chi energy to push the blade further down, causing blood and brain matter to be pouring out from the wound.

As for Tanke and Bu Dong, they too had cleared their share of monsters, and they regrouped with the others to heal their wounds. "Damn it, Sis. That was freaking dangerous!" Yue Han complained after he made sure the beast underneath him was killed.

"How could I've known that a pistol would be that deafening loud within a tunnel? I'm sorry about that. I swear I didn't do it on purpose." Yue Wen apologised as she retracted her hands from Archy seeing that the wound had already close. With one of the new life potions, the Panda Archer was able to move again in no time.

"While, I'd like to stay here and complain about our mistakes in the battle, its best we quickly find the hostages before more of them show up and take their food stock back." Bu Dong warned as he impatiently waited for the healing to be done. He suddenly felt his confidence from earlier had been hampered by the previous encounter with these veteran Sui Lions. If they were already that difficult, didn't that mean their Boss would be even more demanding?

"Just give them a little more time. I can't sniff any more of Nian underlings in the cave. Besides, it's better to have a competent party than an injured one." Tanke said as he checked his armour to ensure it was secured properly.

"I am actually more afraid of another possibility. According to what I heard other Pandarens say there's a chance that Nian might appear after each side quest." Bu Dong replied, and Tanke snorted.

"All the more reason for us to be mending our wounds before moving forth." Tanke insisted and calmed Bu Dong down to the best of its AI capabilities.

Chapter 933 Deviants

Jin continued to monitor the various groups going through the Nian Event. Many of them appeared to be like the Pandawans, stuck with their current side questline, which turned out to be more challenging than they had expected.

Some of the Pandaren groups had decided to ignore the side quest line upon seeing some non-spoiler reviews telling them it was optional, so they had searched for the Nian to fight against it. It was not incredibly hard to find the Boss, yet the battle was overwhelming because it was meant to be handled after doing the side quests to weaken it.

Once defeated, those groups diligently started the side quests and they would have discovered that if they were to come back, the Nian Boss would wait for them in the same state before their defeat. This

meant that its hit points did not recover and thus allow them to wear it down bit by bit if they chose the brute route again even though it would cost them.

Thanks to the System filtering the forum posts for special updates, Jin saw that less than an hour ago people started to spread this information in the spoiler sections of the forums.

However, even they were unaware that once a dungeon would be completed by a group, it could be replayed without having to do the side quest lines. Jin had added a mini New Game+ mode that placed one-shot equipment that would directly modify the Nian's health as if they had completed the dungeon at least once. It would allow them to fight Nian as if the side quests were done.

Redoing the side quest lines was also possible and came with its own set of perks. Completing the side quest line again would deal double the damage to the Boss Nian before the final showdown against it.

Not only that, but both normal and Shadow Panda Medals could also be earned from the side quests, increasing the replayability of the quest lines... at least in theory. Only time would tell how many would choose that option as his customers so far have agreed that the side quests were quite standard in terms of storytelling.

Jin himself would admit that most of what he has placed was rather routine stuff such as rescuing the villagers or collecting x amount of items. Yet, none of them really complained too much since the fights to get those were equally tough as fighting against the Nian itself. Not to mention the ones possessing the right equipment like Xia Mao's dragon-slaying scimitar immensely enjoyed the feeling of being overpowered when fighting the right monsters.

In the meantime, there was one group which eventually caught Jin's eyes. It was neither the Elder Pandaren team nor the Pandawans wandering into the cave, but actually a relatively new group of cultivators who had decided to do things a little different from the rest of the parties, pushing the limits of Jin's dungeon instance's AIs and NPCs to the next level in terms of reaction.

After completing a few side quests, they had understood that they could receive more of these firecrackers which Nian was vulnerable to. Only thing was that the group were attempting to steal the firecrackers from the villagers without completing any extra side quests, in order to increase their chances against the Nian and to possibly claim the first clear.

When the System flagged them up as potential deviants, Jin started to listen in on the conversations between the group members. Their plan was to build a large firecracker bomb with the firecrackers they stole and use against Nian.

In case they get caught by the villagers, which they highly doubted since the AIs on NPCs appeared to be dumb, they planned to escape and just lure Nian to the village instead. That way, the group could still try and devise the firecracker bomb amidst the chaos to defeat Nian.

"Huh, the way of doing things is certainly outside the box. Still, I don't think I want to reward such behaviour that much." Jin thought. He felt dissatisfied with the way they wanted to exploit his NPCs.

"System could penalise them by turning down the helpfulness of that particular group's NPC's AI or make them intervene." The System suggested as it would merely need to tweak some parameters for their mercenaries in that particular dungeon instance.

"Possible... But then people might get the wrong idea about the Panda Mercenaries experiencing bugs. We should still have that NPC punishment system active, right?" Jin questioned as he recalled using Captain Hei as the protector of NPCs in a rare few cases when cultivators abused his NPCs by turning them into punching bags in some previous instances.

"Yes, but it is currently outdated. System recommends User to use the opportunity to revamp the NPC punishment system if you wish to use it on that group." The System replied while activating the NPC punishment protocol onto Jin's console.

"Fine, let's continue to use Captain Hei though. I remember one of the 'hidden rules' in that forum section had an addendum not to anger Hei in particular even though he is a reasonably friendly NPC. Perhaps we should use that opportunity to elevate him in rank, and turn him into a sort of Guardian God for the NPCs whenever anyone tries anything such as killing the innocents." Jin suggested as he tweaked Captain Hei's stats even further, making him a force to reckon.

"I will let them have the glory of using their unorthodox method and broadcast it to the other Pandarens. Let's also highlight their record on Pandaflix for the next week at least. This is, after all, what we are pursuing, a limitless degree freedom in completing the Dungeon Instance. If this group manages to steal the firecrackers without hurting any NPCs, I will allow them to proceed with their plan. But if they kill any villagers NPCs, then we shall release the fury of the panda." Jin stated as he started to create an Iron Hulk suit for Captain Hei, just like the dungeon supplier had used in the Giant World in case for high grade cultivators.

In fact, he placed even more weapons and defence resistance into Captain Hei to show off that if you do bad things in the dungeon instances, you would be punished appropriately for it. Once such a video/stream had been broadcast, everyone would know that there would be consequences for killing the NPCs.

However, as Jin creates the all-new almighty NPC, he was contemplating whether he should create a time limit in eradicating any evildoers and ultimately give them a chance for such deviant Pandarens to escape imminent death should they survive the wrath of Captain Hei.

"That could be a possible solution since some Pandarens could accidentally kill the NPCs during a fight, or unknowingly use them as a body shield. However, the code injected within the NPC punishment system will detect that as an anomaly and chase after them. If a time limit were to be placed and they could survive the newly made Captain Hei, it should be worthy of commendation." The System suggested.

"Then we shall do that for now. I will update the code when I have the time. Please put up a reminder for me to adjust them, or else the victims in those accidents might cry foul. At least, this shows that we condone the use of such deviant methods while not limiting the creativity of the Pandarens." Jin nodded and quickly implemented the new Captain Hei.

Now it was just a matter of time to see if the group would succeed or trigger the newly implemented feature.

Chapter 934 Kong Rong's Afterthoughts

Mr Know-It-All, aka Kong Rong had returned to his seat in the movie theatres within the Panda Street Instance. Every regular seemed to know the spot that Kong Rong loves to sit, and they always reserved it for him.

And now that he is in service with Jin, the in house announcers Mr Patsu and Bear Cub One would now officially reserved a seat for him even though it was free seating for everyone. However, none of the regulars complained, and the newcomers believed it was for some VIP.

Also, despite all the alcohol he had consumed with Jin, he actually felt rather lively. The State Agent was not sure whether this was testimony to the high quality of the Bamboozled Bar's goods or the animated conversation he had which had allowed him to learn much about the 'real' Jin.

This knowledge gave him a renewed purpose in his life. His intentions of helping Jin were genuine, yet they were also driven by his desire to change his own family, which was none other than the Royal Dragon Zodiac Clan. Their strict adherence to tradition and the agency's protocol had made him feel like a caged dragon for many years.

When he was younger, he had tried to rebel against his family, unfortunately, a privileged child that he was, the resistance had also quickly died down once he was not allowed access to a lot of things. Not to mention the punishment that had come afterwards had been excruciating enough to periodically haunt him in his nightmares to this day.

He had been forced to stay in an ancient giant cauldron forced to endure varying degrees of temperature which were primarily used to temper chi pills in the past. From drying heat to stinging cold, Kong Rong had suffered it all until his father felt his son had enough and eventually come to put an end to it.

The young Kong Rong had indeed stopped openly defying them, but this did not mean that his ideals had been snuffed out. Kong Rong had bided his time by learning more about the internal structure of his clan.

Unfortunately, he soon realised that a change from the grounds up was next to impossible if he were to attempt it alone. Just like the other Royal Zodiac Clans, they were not inherently bad but rather, the State Agent felt that there was too much internal corruption and politics involved, which made the country's inner workings inefficient.

Alas, even if he ever became the leader of the Royal Dragon Zodiac Clan, there were way too many obstacles which required the approval of many others. The multiple checks and severe red tapes placed within the political system guaranteed that any competent leader who tried to pass something revolutionary or beneficial for the country would take ages. (That was assuming he did not grease anyone's palms with cash and titles.)

Fortunately, when it came to Jin, it felt different. He had watched the dungeon supplier's growth and potential as a person who had often gone against the norm.

Kong Rong knew that there was something special about the last surviving member of the (Royal) Panda Clan, but after seeing it with his own two eyes, he had indeed felt like a frog in the well. Pandapolis city

and the army Jin actually held was something no one in this world would be prepared. And yet, Jin was ...plainly speaking, dull and normal.

Instead of trying to flaunt his assets, he kept quiet and handled national scale situations across worlds. As Kong Rong requested more and more data from the System with regards to Jin's actions, he started to see a leader in the making.

It was not the kind of leader that was cold-hearted, calculative with an iron fist but people who might be willing to follow him. (However, when the State Agent thought about it, he was wondering if the System had any influence on the following.)

If anything, Jin had every right to call himself a powerhouse that could demand to influence the country's path even if the other Royal Zodiac Clans did not like it. And with the dungeon supplier as a part of the Royal Zodiac Panda Clan (even though it was not officiated in public), he had the chance to be in the government and change things.

"Hah! Just imagine if he invoked the old rule of honour and forced the Royal Zodiac clans into a battle for the government positions. Not only that, if Jin wins, he also gets to control the geezers in the parliament via the System. That would be a dictatorship of unparalleled power. A lot of things can be done assuming he does not fall into himself in the grips of greed. The greed for more power." Kong Rong thought to himself.

"I think it is far more likely he would bankrupt the nation's coffer in an attempt to build a better place for the people." Kraft chuckled as he practically popped into existence beside the State Agent. "But rest assured, I am not just his ally, but also his inspector in chief. If he ever diverts his path of righteousness, you can be sure I am there to correct him... harshly."

"How long have you been eavesdropping on my thoughts, you nasty old fox?" Kong Rong was not as surprised as before merely annoyed that his inebriated state had allowed the other party to rummage through his brain without him noticing it (again). "But please, elaborate. Shall I interpret it as you playing a fool is just your way to distress yourself while maintaining vigilance on Jin?"

"Just evaluating our very new Senior Panda Associate. And hmm, you could put it that way if you like. I personally feel that the 'occasional' little bit of mischief allows a person to maintain his ...erm drive to do good. At the same time, challenging his moral compass every so often to check how steadfast his goals are. Oh and as for your idea, you can pretty much forget him taking on any governmental position unless you literally push the responsibility to him. Just some advice from a colleague, that's all." Kraft chuckled while he sat down even more comfortably in the chair next to Kong Rong.

"Besides, I overheard some System chatter that a particular newbie group within the Nian Event has done something to make Jin implement something very fun. I am here to watch it." Kraft had pulled out a small box of popcorn from his coat and extended the offer to Kong Rong.

"If you don't mind, thanks." Kong Rong took a few pieces in one go so he won't have to disturb Kraft for some time. Also, he used his chi to grab more popcorn than anyone would normally do, just so he could annoy the old-timer fox.

"So, what exactly did Jin do? I thought he usually won't interfere with the dungeon instances?" Kong Rong now questioned while crunching the large fluffed popcorns.

"This naughty panda boy has been meddling with this current event. Maybe he too wanted to have fun once in a while since it's the Chinese New Year and the System allowed him to do so within reason." Kraft answered within the System Channel which now made Kong Rong realise why he could never pick up some of the telepathic talks.

"But it will be fun to watch, trust me. Get your pens ready for some good juicy post for the forums." Kraft slurped loudly on his Slurpee and fixed his eyes on the screen.

Chapter 935 NPC Punishment System- Part 1

"We noticed a particular group is attempting to take a vastly different path to achieve victory. Let us all watch and see if their plans unfold as they expect!" Bear Cub One announced in the Cinema Hall as all the theatre screens changed to the Pandaren Weasel, Raccoon and Cockatrice to keep the anonymity of their group.

Jin felt that certain anonymity would be best for the group and the cultivation style each Pandaren used was already much of a giveaway on who was who for those who knew them.

This kind of system had been implemented not long after the introduction of the Half Masks. While the Pandawans had a more prominent stage presence and their names would be repeated occasionally, it was mainly because they all had some sort of minor celebrity status in Jin's dungeon supplier shop. Such a system also allowed some of the Pandarens to shine in one way or the other, allowing people to take notice of them.

The standard Half Masks were nothing unique barring the animal designs, and this is a plus, allowing the Pandarens to customise them in any way they wish it to be. For Pandarens who played anonymously, their masks' simple design also meant that those who had been seen as acting incompetent could just change their mask colour and join another team without having to endure ridicule. As for some, they took this chance to make themselves stand out of the crowd.

It's a double-edged sword as people would tend to flock to more successful cultivators while not wanting to join the 'losers' whenever possible.

Fortunately, it was not much of a big issue in Jin's dungeons at the moment, but who knew how widespread it would be in the future? And in order to curb any hazing, Jin had already reduced the number of failed showings in the cinema theatres to keep the hype up for the dungeon instance watchings, and the announcers focused on the successful teams which could teach the viewers how to beat an instance.

However, he would still put up a compilation of failures with the permission of the Pandarens to ensure that there was a variety in content. Of course, the System was the one to actually curate those as the dungeon supplier already had a limited amount of time on his hands. It rewarded them a few Panda Medals for agreeing to become featured as entertainment but also offered an option of blurring the faces further and tweaking their voices.

It was also only recently that the System had also started offering Panda Medals for successful or highly unusual dungeon plays that could be featured which were meant to encourage the Pandarens to play well. Perhaps the deviant Pandaren group had decided to try out such an aggressive tactic in the hopes of getting featured?

Still, Jin had made up his mind. If they could steal the firecrackers without harming the NPCs he would tolerate them 'cheating' his dungeon. In fact, the System would award them Stealth gameplay points for being successful. However, in the case that they ultimately did harm the NPCs, Jin would not hesitate to let them experience the wrath of Captain Hei.

Both Kong Rong and Kraft had no idea what to expect as everything was an impromptu thing that Jin had created. Even Kraft did not have the full picture because the System had not yet finalised the executable module for the NPC punishment system.

"Oh? That's interesting. They are attempting to steal from the village?" Kong Rong deduced based on the current movement of the cultivators. The Cockatrice Cultivator was in the midst of climbing the highest tree within the vicinity of the Village warehouse, and the Raccoon was stalking as lookout around the back. As for the Weasel, he was proudly sauntering towards the Song Chew Village Guard NPCs at the front of the warehouse they were guarding.

The guards appeared to be strict in their demeanour, but when they saw the Pandaren who had already helped their village by doing their side quest, they lowered their guards and greeted him joyfully.

At this point, the Weasel Cultivator was trying to bribe the NPC guards, hoping that they would just let them pass through without the need for their complicated process to steal the firecrackers. Unfortunately, adamant to their AI code, the village guards declined the Weasel.

They were even willing to close an eye for such an intrusion and forget about the Weasel attempting to bribe them as long as the Pandaren moved along and continued with their quest.

That was when the Weasel pretended to be courteous and apologised for the attempt which the guards gullible took in. Yet the audience in the theatres could already sense his intentions, and they looked forward to what would happen next.

True to their desire to get the large hoard of firecrackers, the Weasel bowed to 'apologise' once more... Yet when he returned into a standing posture, the two guards had already fallen over as their heads were cut off. It was a basic feint move by the Weasel Cultivation Styles which had been executed beautifully and brutally.

That was when the entire audience was shouting at the audacity of the Weasel, and Kong Rong could already predict where this was going.

"This does not seem like a presentation of a new strategy... I assume Boss Jin plans to give us a demonstration of his newest penalty system in this dungeon." Kong Rong deduced as he started to pen down notes.

"What makes you think that way?" A bespectacled Pandaren who was obviously a fan of Mr Know-It-All questioned him directly.

"Boss Jin has never tolerated people bullying his NPCs. He has always made a clear distinction between monsters and NPCs. The former ones can be safely killed if one manages to. But at the same time, they can be charmed and befriended to fight beside you...." Kong Rong explained half way and he realised Jin purposely prepared this particular highlight as if he already knew what those Pandarens were about to do.

Chapter 936 NPC Punishment System - Part 2

"...And for the latter, whenever NPCs appear they are only there to help out the cultivators or to get help from them. Ah! There was this instance which he even used them to teach people some manners. Have you ever heard of the Captain Bai incident?" Kong Rong questioned, and the bespectacled cultivator roughly understood what was going on. He recalled how the Panda Captain roughed up the cultivator for hitting the NPCs.

"So, do you think the Panda Captains will appear again to beat these people up?" Another bespectacled cultivator within the audience questioned, but Kong Rong could only shrug his shoulders hard. However, he knew that Jin would not let such behaviour go unpunished.

As the two guards fell to the ground without their heads attached, the Weasel immediately blew a whistle with his fingers, indicating to his teammates that the coast was clear. The Raccoon returned the whistle, and the Weasel promptly searched for the keys to the warehouse while the Cockatrice jumped to the roof and entered through a secluded half-open window at the end of the building.

"Found it." The Weasel said as he unlocked the doors and checked the surroundings once more before pulling the bodies inside the warehouse. (And their heads by kicking them in)

He hoped that the other villager NPCs would not come by to check on their location anytime soon, else they might notice the blood on the ground. But in any case, the Weasel already prepared a trap at the front door to alert him, if someone else planned to come into the warehouse to check on the mess he left. After all, he needed time to help himself to the stockpile of all the villager's food supplies within.

"How can they be so stingy when it comes to handing out rewards?! They obviously have more than enough to feed the whole village for months!" The Weasel badmouthed them as he began pocketing certain food items for himself. Meanwhile, the Cockatrice had already picked up the scent of the gunpowder and started to point to his pal to where to find it.

"Go search for Panda Medals or other pricey looking stuff! They might have something that could make us rich with medals!" The Raccoon exclaimed, seeing that the Weasel was successful in killing the guards and managed to enter via the back.

"Heh! Don't expect much! This is just a storehouse for their supplies. There is no way they are stupid enough to put money in here. If anything, we are better off trying to steal from the village chief hut, maybe he has something-" the Weasel was suggesting his ideas, but stopped as they heard his trap being activated. A loud snap from the metallic jaws of the bear trap which he placed could be picked up with his astute hearing, as well as the cries of the villager in pain.

"Ah, shit! I forgot to keep the door closed!" The Weasel cursed as he recalled the door was left ajar. No wonder the villagers had managed to find the scene of the crime this quickly.

"God damn it! You had ONE job! Quickly go get the firecrackers. I should be able to hinder them for a moment. I'll see you at the meeting point." The Raccoon ordered as he rushed forward to the main door and silenced the noisy villager with his weapon.

As soon as he managed to deal with the villager caught within the bear trap, one problem leads to another. This time it was the NPCs from the village. Knowing he needed to buy some time for his friends to steal the firecrackers, he started smearing some blood on his hands and even slash himself with his weapon to make it real.

The pain was temporary, but it needed to be obvious enough to be convincing. He was not sure how real those AI's could be but being in Jin's dungeons a few times, he believed that they were advanced enough to take pity on him. And thus, the Raccoon began his fake act in order to show that he was innocent.

"Help! Help!" The Raccoon Pandaren cried out with crocodile tears, as every NPC of the village came out of their homes armed to the teeth to search for the culprit. He then lied to them that it was the work of a Nian underling that came rushing in and had killed the villagers. Despite incurring injuries, he tried to rescue the villager that was dead on his arms and his friends were now chasing after the culprit.

"Oof, that is one terrible lie, and the acting is only satisfactory." Kraft joked as he saw those fake tears going down. "Still, got to give him credit for bringing those tears out. hahaha!"

The villagers started to discuss among each other while the village chief called reinforcements to be sent to secure the perimeter. But just as he thought that he was able to convince them, the aura around the village suddenly turned heavy when one of the guards went to check on the pile of blood at the warehouse's entrance.

At that point, a shake from the guard's head made the mob of villagers hold on to their weapons tightly. Soon, the Raccoon Pandaren realised that they were not buying his lie. All of the villagers had their eyes staring at the Raccoon with disgust as if they had already discerned who had actually killed their fellow member. Nevertheless, the Raccoon tried to push for his 'innocence' further, attempting to justify his lies.

"I am really sorry that I could not save- huh?" Before the Raccoon could say anything else, he suddenly felt that his eyes were blurry and numbness overcame his entire body. Only then, did he notice that a sword had pierced through his chest. All this time, he had a dagger prepared and was aware of his surroundings, but he did not even hear anyone snuck upon him.

"You piece of trash." A low husky voice was heard from behind the Raccoon as the field of view in the theatre slowly turned towards the back.

... And everyone in the theatre cheered loudly.

Chapter 937 NPC Punishment System - Final

When the Raccoon turned his head, he couldn't believe his eyes. Behind him stood Captain Hei in his iconic bulletproof SWAT vest, yet he also had a traditional Chinese robe underneath. The panda made for a strange sight in his get up, but his appearance here signified to the viewers that something important was about to happen.

"Do not think for a moment that you can fool me, the Guardian of Many Islands, Protector of the People. I can smell the stench of your blade in this poor soul's body." Captain Hei berated the trembling cultivator. His heart rate was pumping super fast in the face of incoming death.

The Raccoon's feeble attempts of pulling the sword out only worsened the wound, and Captain Hei's hand went to his gun belt as he unholstered his trusty pistol. "You had no right to kill this innocent man shouting for help! But don't you worry a single bit, you won't be lonely for long, I shall send your friend over as well once I am done with you." Captain Hei promised as he pulled the trigger, and the entire villager crowd resonated with this judgement.

In the meantime, the cinema hall audience clapped loudly to see that the Raccoon had justice done to him except for Kong Rong who thought about what Captain Hei had said. "Hmm, so does that mean he is not going to kill the Cockatrice?" Kong Rong asked Kraft, but the old fox could only shrug his shoulders.

"Technically the Cockatrice was not directly involved with the killing of any NPC, so let's wait and see if Captain Hei will still go after that one," Kraft replied while observing the audience's expression.

"It will be interesting to see if he will get away scot-free for only coming along. There are a lot of complications if the Cockatrice can escape unscathed, assuming he does not touch any other NPCs." Kong Rong commented while writing notes on the new job scope of Captain Hei in this instance.

"How so? Aren't their actions a testimony that they abandoned the sidequests to steal firecrackers and perhaps even Panda Medals? Shouldn't they get punished for circumventing the intended gameplay this much?" The very same bespectacled spectator overheard their conversation and queried about it.

"Well if the Cockatrice comes out alive, it means that this particular dungeon instance allows for a lot more flexibility than one would think a dungeon instance could ever have. People have long since assumed that Boss Jin's Dungeon Instances were somewhat linear when compared with other dungeons."

"Aren't you partly to blame for that? Whenever you publish one of your walkthroughs for the dungeons, your fans speak as if you have 'solved' it. Admittedly, your way is the easiest to follow for the majority of cultivators... still doesn't mean it's the only way." Kraft couldn't help but snarkily remark.

"Ahem, it just shows that as long as people think outside the box, it is possible for them to find alternative routes for the completion of the dungeon." Kong Rong added slightly embarrassed as the audience watched how Panda Hei unceremoniously removed his sword from the Raccoon's corpse and adjusted his black rimmed sunglasses.

At the same in the warehouse, the Weasel was trying his best to hoard as many firecrackers into a haversack. Unfortunately, like real life, the items they stole could not just be inserted into the storage ring because they already belonged to 'someone else' due to a certain RFID mismatch of the items. The

items belonged to the dungeon instance and like in real life, they had a specific code which denied the Weasel from stealing it outright.

"Damn, I heard that the dungeon instances in this shop were supposed to be realistic, but couldn't they have at least made collecting loot a bit more like a game?!" The Weasel complained as he shouted for the Cockatrice to do his portion of the heist.

"You kidding me?! I only accompanied you because you said it would be a sure way to get the first dungeon completion! I did warn you about the NPCs coming, and in case you haven't noticed, Captain Hei came out of nowhere, turned your brother into a shish kebab before he put a bullet into his head!" The Cockatrice shook his head and refused to get any more involved.

Unlike his two companions who had come here today for the first time, the Cockatrice had been an avid watcher of the dungeons in the past. As a regular, he still remembered that one incident with Captain Bai. The cultivator who had tried to shame and abuse the NPC was placed in a hall of shame post for nearly a month before his name had been removed.

"Then all we have to do is kill that panda, right? My brother probably did not notice him. Besides, I'm far stronger than him. I bet I can take out that stupid bear in one hit." The Weasel replied as he tried to zip another large sling bag full of explosive firecrackers while walking hastily towards the backdoor.

"Then try dodging this first!" Suddenly, Captain Hei's paw connected with the Weasel's face from the side of the warehouse, creating a hole with his punch in the process. The impact force was powerful enough to send him flying through the warehouse, breaking all the supplies in between and subsequently out of the storage area and into open space.

The Cockatrice was once again forced to watch his teammate get violently assaulted by the Super NPC. And with one stare from Captain Hei, the Cockatrice immediately had goosebumps and did not hesitate to flee from the warehouse at that instant. He even used his chi techniques to run away from the crime scene in the hopes of not getting implicated any further.

"Clever bird." Kraft snorted at the actions of the scared cultivator, yet it was exactly that cowardice that allowed him to avoid execution by Captain Hei.

Meanwhile, Captain Hei's violent punch had caused smoke and dust to appear, and the angry villagers surrounded the culprit in case he might attempt to escape Captain Hei's wrath.

But there was no need for that.

The Weasel was coughing blood as the dust around him settled down. His legs turned to jelly, and his stomach was severely upset. He felt his vision becoming blank, and his head was pounding hard from all the impact while his ears, bleeding from the aftermath.

"How do you like that?" Captain Hei asked loudly as he placed his foot on the Weasel's chest, causing him to have even more difficulty breathing. (Not to mention his ribs cracked a little further.)

"Let this be a lesson for you. If you ever come back and intend to hurt them, I will find you before you can so much as to touch a strain of the hair of these good people. I will hunt you down like a monster, and I will make sure you will not have the luxury to enjoy the dungeon instance in the future." Captain Hei threatened as he pressed his foot further down while taking his pistol of judgement.

Executed in cold blood, the System believed this act will undoubtedly make the audience to spread the word not to kill any NPCs.

Chapter 938 The Cockatrice

After showcasing the death of the Weasel and Raccoon, there wasn't anything else worthwhile for the spectators to see. Hence Bear Cub One switched the cinema screens to another group attempting Nian's dungeon instance.

The Cockatrice ended up as the only survivor of their particular group and a screen popped up in front of him. He was asked whether he wished to use the 'Emergency Mercenary System'. Jin had inserted that feature for this limited time event since he was aware of how hard the special dungeon was. At the time, it had been designed for those cases where only one person survived a hard fight and not exactly this kind of situation.

Of course, as the name implied, the mercenaries that were sent through this emergency deployment required even more Panda Medals than the ones on the ship, and there were no free Panda Mercenaries to choose from here.

Alternatively, the Cockatrice had the option of soloing whatever side quest he wanted to or even the boss if he thought he would be to handle it. Any kill he managed to make would subsequently be collated as part of his score. Of course, the final option would be to voluntarily abandon the current run and start over with a clean slate. (or run with the same group with the current save state.)

The Cockatrice hesitated whether he should just call it quits for the day. Super NPC Captain Hei had given him quite the scare. Still, he ultimately decided to just spend the Panda Medals as part of his guilt trip, and he ended up hiring the maximum amount of four Panda Mercenaries to protect him.

However, the System never forgets, and the expression on the Mercenaries were not very pleasing either. Nevertheless, since they had been paid the coin for his deployment, the Panda Mercs followed the Cockatrice's orders and continued the dungeon while making their dissatisfaction of working for someone like him audibly known. As for the employer, he could only hope he would earn back some panda medals to cover the extensive amount of medals he spent (and to some extent, money.)

Since the "special" scene had died down and the audience's attention shifting to the new group, Kong Rong finally had some time to think consider the consequences that Jin might have prepared for the two offending cultivators. He even questioned Kraft, but that crafty old Fox merely told him to ask Jin directly.

"You have access to the System Channel now, don't you? You're already working with him, might as well ask, you stupid Senior Associate. Here, let me open it up for you." Kraft said as he instantly opened a telepathic System channel between the trio again.

"Yo, Jin, Mr Walkthrough wants to know what happens to the two dipshits you just punished. Nice one by the way, though you could have made them suffer a bit more for my taste."

"Ah, Jin! Sorry, to bother you. That old Fox seems to like shoving people into slight awkward situations for his amusement, and this is one of them. Anyways, I was actually hoping to write an opinion piece on what happens to the two offenders in the aftermath." Kong Rong apologised for suddenly barging in on him again.

"All the more reason to hear it from the source. That way you can write something better." Kraft grumbled.

"Sometimes, just knowing a little is enough to spark my inquiring mind. Getting told the answer without reaching the conclusion yourself has its perks and cons." Kong Rong answered Kraft's unspoken question about why he didn't go to Jin directly, yet Kraft merely rolled his eyes at the 'inquiring' portion.

"So, do you want me to tell you? Or shall I continue to keep quiet and let the offenders experience it firsthand?" Jin asked as he was a little amused by the two old men interacting with each other.

"Since this Fox already opened the channel, I shall take the opportunity to learn about it. Like I said, knowing has its perks and I personally think it would be best for this new punishing matter to be addressed clearly." The State Agent took his hobby about writing walkthroughs for Jin's dungeon quite seriously.

"You are right. I guess you're the perfect person to inform the masses, even better than me at times. It's actually annoying that some think that I am purposely being cryptic because of the way I write things or even suggest that my words had some underlying meaning in them." Jin rolled his eyes in the Dungeon Maker instance and sipped some water to clear his throat.

"Well, you are the developer of these dungeons. Most people can't take things at face value with the creators, and besides, you always leave a small trail of tidbit to keep the people excited. Not to mention there are times where you just surprise people without any prior warning like with the new raids, especially the emergency ones. I'm already taken aback that quite a number of people do actually come back for those emergency raids. Hmmm, with the revelation of the System, it makes me wonder... have you put us under some unknown ancient suggestion spell so that we always come back for more?"

"Can't you just say that my dungeons are awesome?" Jin moaned a little, hoping for better compliments, especially from someone of such high status in society.

"Your dungeons can be better." Kong Rong chortled with some laughter. Eventually, the talk returned to the new punishment system Jin had placed (in a rather impromptu manner).

For any Pandarens who had been targeted by the Super NPC Captain Hei, the villagers would treat them differently, ranging from slight distrust to mild disgust.

The attitude wasn't the only thing affected, but they would give them fewer tips or guidance and things sold by the NPCs would have their cost increased by 10% for first time offenders. Repeat offenders would get more and more severe penalties. Mercenaries would at times actively ignore their commands, and this could potentially discourage gameplay. They would even have a red skull on their status, to indicate to other players that the person had intentionally killed an NPC in the dungeon instance.

Initially, Kong Rong wondered if these cultivators would even return given the harsh treatment that awaits them, but Jin believed his reasoning was fair and square. He did not need to earn money from

anyone who disrespected his NPCs because he was there to create cohesive and conducive gameplay for everyone. Some rules had to be placed with strict adherence, otherwise, when the time came for Jin to create the Virtual Reality Network, there would be chaos.

Naturally, Jin was looking into other features that could liven the NPCs too and perhaps tweak the NPC punishment system by introducing something like a redemption system. However, for now, Jin preferred being too strict over too lax in regards to the NPC killers.

"Then what about Player killers? I remember there was some form of friendly fire? Like in the Pandapolis Defence Raids, some of the Pandarens were killed accidentally because they could not recognise friend or foe." Kong Rong questioned whether some of the Pandarens were intentionally killed from stray fire.

"Obviously, now you know that they were being situated in another world, you will understand why that was unavoidable. The System did review the friendly fire incidents with its exceptional data collecting and found that most if not all of them were accidental. For my dungeon instances, I put a limit in. Even if a teammate hits you, you only suffer 10% of the actual damage. This is just to give them the reality of being in their teammate's line of fire."

"Hmm, yeah. That might make for some great training, although the military might have a better use for. If Hou Fei comes back, then I would suggest resetting the limit back to 100% because they have handled more serious situations than cultivators." Kong Rong remarked as he closed his notebook and coincidentally the featured dungeon on the cinema screens ended as well. (They died from the ambush in the caves)

"Alright, I have enough information for now, so I shall call it a day. Need to do some visiting the next day too. Dragon Clan duties. Goodbye Jin, have a good new year holiday." Kong Rong sighed a little as he teleported out of the Panda Street Instance. There were too many things to consider on his way back home.

Separately, to Jin's dismay, both the Elder Pandarens and Pandawans had similarly failed to fight against the Nian limited dungeon event. Nevertheless, it was to be expected as a dungeon completion on the night when it launched would put Jin to shame. Aside from that, Jin requested the System to inform him if there were any other significant developments.

Otherwise, Jin was intending to do some hotpot hopping to mingle around with his minions before the sunrise. Now that a few key people already knew that he was alive and kicking, others would also be coming around to kick his 'door' down to find him.

Chapter 939 Teaming Up With A New Group

"Ahh.. here I thought we would have a serious chance against the Nian Boss." Xia Mao yawned as he found himself in one of the beds of the Luxury Recovery Instance. The fluffy pillows and cushy beds were the best and most comforting way to relax after a defeat. (They also made the taste of victory feel even sweeter)

"Come on, let's get going. We should be able to put in one more game before I have to go back to prepare for the new year. Maybe, I too can slip in a short nap when I reach home and hopefully before my children visit me later in the morning." Jing Yu said as she felt revitalised. After her quick shower, she was ready to go for one more round.

"Sorry, but I don't feel like it. That previous one was way too strenuous for my liking. Besides, it's a new dungeon, it will take some time until people find a way to defeat it quickly." Xia Mao grumbled while putting the blanket over his head. Despite already having a grandkid, this grandfather sometimes still acted like one big baby.

"Did you forget that we can resume where we stopped now?" Zi Dan asked as he reentered the room. He had gone out for a moment and came back with a cup of coffee from the vending machine. "By the way, when I was out, I overheard some people talking about Bu Dong being in one of the recovery rooms. I hastily checked his stream on Pandaflix, and his group was defeated before being able to damage the Nian."

"I don't know about the others, but it seems he might be leading the only Pandawan group that is competing in the dungeon right now. It looks like we have the advantage since our group managed to damage the Boss with the boat in the beginning. We even have more of those firecrackers at hand, so if we give it our best shot perhaps we can beat their group to it!" Zi Dan added excitedly.

"I mean, I wouldn't mind getting the first clear, but this bed feels too heavenly. It would be a sin to leave it." Xia Mao yawned loudly. After which he slowly grabbed another pillow from the bottom of the trolley bed like a cat reaching for its toy and pulled it up as if his strength waned with every second away from the bed.

"Hmmm... Actually, he is right, why are we pushing ourselves so much? Didn't we originally come here as part of our retirement exercise? Sure, getting the first dungeon clear would be nice, but we should not strain ourselves that much. Perhaps I should just visit the dungeon supplier store that is close to my house." Knowing their friend long enough, Jing Yu decided to use some psychology tricks on him.

"Heh, the dungeon instances at other places can't hold a candle to Boss Jin's dungeons. They are absolutely boring, unable to design a worthy opponent. I don't think I will patronise them ever again." Xia Mao mentioned as he continued to slack in his bed.

"Then what about the money and Panda Medals you spent getting that Dragon Slaying Scimitar? Don't you want to retrieve what you lost?" Zi Dan joined Jing Yu's attempt to motivate their lazy friend.

"Can't we just try again tomorrow? If it's that important to you, why don't you just team up with Bu Dong? Is Kong Xian there with him?" Xia Mao proposed, and Zi Dan shook his head, telling him that the team consisted of Bu Dong, the Yue siblings and two Panda Mercenaries. The Pandawan Kong Xian which they drank together in the Salamander Lord's Keep Raid was not with him.

"Well, isn't that perfect? I recall Kong Xian mentioning that Bu Dong doesn't mind making new friends, so as long as you tell him we are friends with his friend, it should be alright." Xia Mao elaborated and suddenly, speaking of the Devil himself, Bu Dong came in. He had heard his name coming from the recovery room when he was opposite of their ward buying some Panda Soda via the vending machine.

"Were you guys talking about me?" Bu Dong asked, and his eyes squirmed momentarily. "Wait... aren't you the guys who fought with us at the forefront of the Salamander Lord's Keep? I remember seeing you. You must be the uncles that helped Kong Xian with his part of the fight, right? I personally watched that raid a few times since it was a limited fight. It's a shame Jin hasn't brought it back in its original form. I would have loved to try out your portion of the fight, too."

"I feel you. His first iteration of raids is always completely unique." Zi Dan agreed as he greeted the teenage prodigy. "They might be harder in nature, but it feels satisfying being able to clear it. The toned-down version for the masses just doesn't have the same feel if you know what you're missing. Not to mention, the rewards we've earned from that original emergency raid was way better too."

Bu Dong was quickly welcomed into their recovery room, and they talked a bit in regards to the current Nian Dungeon.

"What?! You can do that? I thought those sea waves were unapproachable, and we had to follow the compass to reach the island safely. But did you really manage to hurt the Boss with it? The Nian seemed pretty tough when we encountered it."

"To be honest, we didn't do it on purpose. For some reason, my handle was spoiled or something. Maybe it had been mishandled or sabotaged, but we had a lucky break because of it, reaching the Boss and damaging it. We've been facing an injured Nian ever since, making it easier to deal with her at the end of our side quests." Jing Yu replied.

"Only it seems that Boss Jin is not planning to let us finish him, I erm mean her quickly. Keep forgetting the lore states that Nian was a mother... Anyways, I think he wants us to go to where the main quest is if we want to face off with her. Despite his injuries, the beast was always healthy enough to run off." Xia Mao added to the discussion from the bed. "Say, my friends here would like to join your team in the dungeon if you plan to continue after resting up that is."

"Oh, eh okay. My pals had to go back home to prepare for the Chinese New Year visit, as such, I am by myself at the moment. So sure, I would love to join you guys. I'd much rather let someone new get the first dungeon clear than letting Xiong Da get another one under his belt." Bu Dong muttered the last sentence and the Elders believed it was some internal competition between the Pandawans. Yet, it was just Bu Dong and Xiong Da's mini face-off.

"We would be honoured to. Let's join forces! It will be easier to fight with Bu Dong around." Zi Dan looked at the rest of the group, but Xia Mao just retracted back under his blanket.

"With the four of us, there won't be enough space for a healer and tank since the recommended party size is five. So count me out and go have fun." Xia Mao argued, but Zi Dan did not want to leave his pal alone. It would be a shame if they actually completed the dungeon and he wouldn't be part of it.

"How about I fill in as the healer? I did learn some basic healing chi techniques when I was younger, and with my cultivation now, it should be equivalent to an advanced chi heal. I can also sponsor the potions for this round!"

"Oh my, so generous? What's gotten into you, Zi Dan? You are usually at odds with Xia Mao, and now you are patronising him." Jing Yu questioned, and the Blind Cheetah merely shook his head.

"I just want to get a first clear of a dungeon once. I mean we finally have a Pandawan with us, won't it be better if we go together and possibly stand a much better chance against Nian?" Zi Dan responded, slightly embarrassed that he is actively trying to coerce the whole group. The others in the room believed it was his desire to earn such an achievement, but Jing Yu was sensing something more. Like Xia Mao, Zi Dan always want to keep things easy and simple. From the dungeon runs, she knew that he was not the kind who likes to do much hard work. Thus, for him wanting to do a dungeon so desperately showed that there was something up. Even Xia Mao also find it very odd but kept quiet for the moment as he let it linger at the back of his mind.

"Urgh, fine, let's do it together. But we take it slow! The last time you rushed, we got swarmed by the monsters. And you take orders from me, little boy!" Xia Mao scratched his head and stretched a little while giving out his conditions to join the raid.

"Hah! In terms of Boss Jin's dungeon experience, I probably know more than you." Bu Dong rose to the challenge, hoping to raise the competitiveness of the group a little. He was previously sulking that he did not have the chance to complete the dungeon since his circle of friends were usually from the Pandawans group.

But seeing that he got lucky to team up with the Pandarens that Kong Xian talked highly about, he believed this group combination might have a chance to win this. (with his help.)

Chapter 940 Save State

Once the Elder Pandarens had teamed up with Bu Dong to give the Dungeon Instance another try, the Pandamonium app questioned them on whether they wished to use their own 'save state' or to use the one of the Pandawan group.

They did not think that the Pandamonium App would take into account their new party member, making it the first time they encountered such a thing, proving that Jin's new dungeon instance provided quite an impressive save system.

Before confirming their choice, the app did warn Bu Dong that by clicking the option of using a different save state, he would lose his previous progress. This new party's composition would be his new save state, and he could only change his party two more times after that.

Jin had chosen to limit the number of party changes to prevent any abuse by other Pandarens who might plan to sell off their progress. Anyone who just wanted to fight only the Nian to clear the dungeon quicker could theoretically do that by joining another team who had already completed all the side quests.

Any player who achieved their personal first clear (not counting the shop wide's first clear) of a dungeon, would get a decent reward. Generally, repeated clears would not provide such an incentive so as to prevent abuse of the dungeons.

While the System was of the opinion that they should curb down on the rewards, Jin insisted that they should stay as they are. With the increasing number of features in the shop, it would be best to have

something to entice the new customers. They require some pull and push factors, or else the customers think that this is entirely a cash grab venture. (Which technically it is, just that Jin needs to make sure they do not feel it's too absurd.)

These free Panda medals the cultivators could earn from their personal first clear would allow them to gear themselves up for new and upcoming raids and provide a sort of enticement for veteran customers to spend on his older dungeons. (Assuming Jin decided to implement the save state into his other dungeons, but for the moment he kept it to the Nian Dungeon as its exclusive all-new feature.)

The more features the cultivators discovered in this limited dungeon instance, the more they started to suspect that this might be the start of an overall quality of life improvement patch and that the new event dungeon might just be the start of it.

Of course, Jin required feedback for each and every feature they encountered. After the Pandarens left the shop, they would receive an email and a notification on the app asking them to help improve the shop by filling out Jin's survey.

As long as they filled it out earnestly, the System would reward them a base amount of 20 Bronze Panda Medals. In cases where it felt the feedback was valid and productive, it would give out an extra bonus. It didn't take long for people to share that information on the forums and learn that their surveys were all being read and judged, some requested to do it again. Obviously, they would not receive the 20 Bronze Panda Medals a second time, but depending on their extensive feedback, the System did pay out the bonus.

After confirming the selection of the Elder Pandarens save state, the tickets were bought and promptly printed out at the Information Counter. Now they only had to wait their turn for the massive ship to bring them to the Nian Island again.

On the way, Bu Dong and the Elders had been talking about the type of Panda Guardian they should bring along for the second dungeon run.

"We should go with Tanke and give him two sets of armour. That could help him withstand the onslaught of Nian Underlings and subsequently the Nian itself. I'm thinking of getting a high-grade pickaxe so I can at least help pierce Nian's armour." Bu Dong reasoned, yet before he could continue, the Hungry Condor Cultivator interrupted him.

"Alright, then we should hurry to get the things we need while we still have time. Let's go buy the stuff while one of us waits in the queue for the ship." Jing Yu suggested, and Xia Mao immediately volunteered himself for it.

"You guys go hit the shops and buy the stuff we need. I will wait here for the ship." Xia Mao yawned once more as he leaned on a railing and chased them away.

"Come, little Bu Dong, climb on my back. I will get you to the main Panda Street Instance in a split second." Zi Dan bent his knees and shamelessly offered Bu Dong a piggyback ride.

"Ehh, Uncle Zi Dan, don't you think I am a bit too old and heavy for this?!" Bu Dong adamantly refused and instead typed furiously on the Pandamonium Chat and sent him a message. (The Angry Ape Cultivator was too embarrassed to ask for a favour after replying to him.)

"You're the fastest of the group, so please get these miscellaneous items first? We might need more than a couple of them. If you don't have enough medals, I can-"

"Ah, no worries! Uncle Zi Dan will purchase it all in a jiffy!" He nodded his head, and before Bu Dong could say anything else, the Bullet Cheetah had already run off.

Jing Yu finally had time alone with Xia Mao to speak on the situation with regards to Zi Dan. "Is it just me, or is he acting a little weird ever since the last dungeon run." She remarked while Xia Mao looked past Zi Dan's afterimage at the corner of his eye.

"You finally noticed it? He does not usually care so much if we clear the dungeon or not as long as we give it our best. For some reason, he desperately wants to get a first clear with us this time. Not to mention, his performance isn't as stellar in the dungeon as it was in the past. He made mistakes that a rookie would not have done... His mind is definitely occupied with something else." Xia Mao commented as he yawned a little, leaning on the railing.

"Do I need to be concerned about this? I... erm mean from a tactical point of view for the dungeon clearing?" Bu Dong knew it was not his business to butt into people's affairs especially when they just met, but he couldn't help but ask.

"Hahaha, don't worry, kid. Thanks for receiving my message and getting him out of the way for us to talk personally. Anyways, my instinct is telling me he has something he wants to get off his chest. After he does, he should be back to normal." Xia Mao said

"I see if I can probe him in any way during the purchases but you know I am not that subtle. So, if I fail, I need to rely on you, Xia Mao." Jing Yu said as she beckoned Bu Dong to follow her to the shops.

Once they were gone, Xia Mao took out his cellphone and started browsing his social media account, hoping he might learn the reason about Zi Dan's sudden change in attitude from it.

The Blind Cat Cultivator did have a hunch, yet he was not completely sure, even though the likelihood was high enough. During their daily breakfast chats, he had often spoken about his son and how well he did. Usually, he and Jing Yu had just shrugged it off as him bragging about his family, but perhaps he had made up his mind this time.

"Oh...? Maybe this is going to be a problem after all...." Xia Mao thought as he looked through Zi Dan's social media account. There were indeed posts of him indicating how he felt regrets in life and wanted to make them up whenever possible. It was as if Zi Dan had gained some enlightenment and pondered about life.

However, Xia Mao knows that was just the tip of the iceberg, so he looked through his comments and found out about a comment he posted onto his son's picture. "That guy... Can't he just say it properly?!" Xia Mao felt a bit frustrated upon seemingly having figured out what Zi Dan was hiding from them.

It seemed as if his dear dungeoneering friend was finally leaving Shenzhen to move to Australia to live with his son and his new family.