

BloodLine 401

Chapter 401 Meeting The Exploration Team

(From MC's perspective)

Tier-7 Baguva City,

Time passed,

Thornton learnt what had happened inside the discussion hall from Arthur. He was shocked to know about the new city lord.

As he had expected earlier, the new city lord Alex is showing his interest in their competition.

But he doesn't know the exact reason behind this.

"SIGH"

He sighed inwardly. This is something he can find only when he returns. Right now, he should focus on the exploration team.

Earlier, he thought that the trunulesia forest is going to be tough for Zack. But now he realised there is some internal friction exists in the team itself.

But he has full confidence in his friend. No one dares to offend the elite warrior. So the team members will be mindful of him.

Then he saw the time, there is still a few hours left before Compton arrives. Until then he decided to take a rest.

Time went by,

A big air car slowly descended on the ground. When the air car touched the land, I walked out of the car. Then Elder Thornton and Elder Compton stepped out of the car.

I have taken enough rest but still, I can't get over the feeling of uneasiness.

The next second, Elder Compton led us to the building. The building looked like a normal apartment. But he has his office on one of the floors.

After entering the building, soon we reached his office. I wasn't expecting this. I thought there will be lots of books and maps spread around the table.

But there is nothing here as in my imagination.

The first thing that came into my view was the empty cabin. Seeing that I wrinkled my eyebrows in confusion.

Then I looked at Elder Thornton. Because he wasn't looked surprised by this empty room.

I asked, "Elder, why the room is empty?"

Before Elder Thornton could answer anything, Compton answered, "We already packed things two days ago. After doing that, we waited for your arrival."

I nodded in understanding after hearing that. So which means the trip is delayed because of me.

Next, Compton walked into the adjacent room after opening the door. Seeing that, we both followed him.

Fortunately, this new room is a proper discussion or meeting room. Unlike the previous one, this room has chairs, tables and bookshelves.

There is also a large circular couch placed in the middle of the room.

"You guys can sit, my teammates are on the way here," Elder Compton uttered while checking his sci-fi watch.

I sat beside Elder Thornton and waited for the exploration team members to arrive.

Time went by,

After one hour, 5 people walked into the discussion room one by one.

Seeing that, I stopped my conversation with Elder Thornton.

"This?" I was startled by feeling the powerful auras.

When my mind was blank, I heard Elder Compton's laughter, "Ha...Ha...Ha..." But instead of looking at him, my gaze fixed on these five people.

Five of them immediately sat on the nearby chair one by one. Two female warriors and three male warriors including that annoying person, Eric Lloyd.

What amazed me was that. all of them are giving me off similar pressure. If my assumption is correct, then maybe 5 of them are at Peak Trainee Level.

In one way, it is a really good thing for me.

On the other hand, Compton saw their reaction of Zack. He found Zack is not giving him any attention at all.

Seeing that, he said, "Zack Lockwood, Let me give you a formal introduction of our team. Previously, you had met with another member. Including me, all five of us are part of the exploration team."

Elder Compton's words sounded very stern and serious. Hearing that I retracted my thoughts and looked at him.

"First I'm the leader of this team, Ricardo Compton. Mid-Elite, Fire elemental warrior,"

"Second, Valerie Lyons. She is the vice leader of the team. Peak Trainee, Water Elemental warrior."

"Erik Lloyd. Third in command. Peak Trainee, Earth elemental warrior."

"Terrell Boyd. Fourth in command. Peak Trainee, Wind elemental warrior."

"Garrett Marsh. Fifth in command. Peak Trainee, Metal elemental warrior."

"And Kara Robles, Sixth in command. Peak Trainee. Fire elemental warrior."

Hearing that, my eyes gleamed with a twinkle. Five of them are not easy. all the common elements of this world can be seen in this one team.

This team also have a metal elemental warrior. I know how rare is it. Last time, I fought someone having the same element at the insect forest.

I'm also surprised to see wind element warrior. Most of the warriors, I had met with usually had Earth or Fire elements in them. And very few are water element warriors.

So Metal and wind elements piqued my curiosity. I'm happy to be a part of such a diverse team.

On the other hand, after saying that, Compton glanced at five of his team members before turning towards Zack.

"Guys, he is our new addition to the team. His name is Zack Lockwood," Ricardo Compton said with a smile.

"And that old guy beside him is my old friend, Thornton," He added further.

When he finished his words, I found their gazes on me. I don't know whether to laugh or cry. When they entered the room no one took a glance at me.

Now they are doing it after Elder Compton's words. Then feeling their gazes I politely nodded in response.

What's making me more hesitant is that all of them are seniors. None of them is in their twenties, forget about my age group.

On the other hand, Thornton felt something wrong with the atmosphere. He saw Erik Lloyd smirking. Like he had preplanned something.

Suddenly, Garrett Marsh said in a mocking tone, "Boss, why are we letting a young kid join our team?"

Erik Lloyd beside him revealed a sly smile on his face. He had already spoken with his teammates about this. Erik wants his relative kid back on the team.

So he asked for others' help. Though not all of them agreed to help him. Vice leader Valerie was against him because she supports the leader, Compton.

Karla denied his request because she don't want to offend the leader.

Only two male members of the team were on his side. And they are not helping him for free, because he had made a deal with them.

So right now, Erik couldn't wait to hear leader Compton's response. He was confident that the leader won't be able to support his arguments.

Because he doesn't think that a young man named Zack is Peak Trainee Warrior. He has seen this level only from the descendants of Top families residing in Tier-7 cities.

Unfortunately, he couldn't able to know anything about Zack Lockwood. Something blocked his sense from probing the strength of Zack Lockwood. And leader Compton shields the kid Zack from him.

Harumph, Erik Lloyd snorted coldly inside.

The reactions of the rest of the members were different. Terrell Boyd, another male member of the team is watching everything in silence. He didn't even plan to condemn Garrett.

Only Valerie and Kara were displeased. Kara is worried that the team will be divided because of this. While Valerie thought of a whole new picture. She understands that leader Compton is not stupid.

If he is doing something like this, then there must be a solid reason behind it. But unfortunately, other members are not looking at the big picture.

On the other hand, Thornton slightly began to regret it. Because the team is looking toxic. He feels more than Trunulesia forest, Zack needs to stay away from these people.

"SIGH"

I couldn't help but sigh in my heart. Because I realise dealing with monsters is easier than dealing with people around you. This conversation is going to destroy everyone's mood.

The atmosphere quieted down for a moment. Because no one spoke. Everyone is looking at Elder Compton for some kind of explanation.

But I know from our earlier conversation. Elder Compton is pissed right now.

On the other hand, Compton spoke after some silence.

He asked, "Garrett, do you got any problem with my decision?" The next second, his fiery gaze lands on Erik Llyod sitting right next to him.

He knew Erik won't remain silent and he will cause problems later. But he hasn't expected him to start right away before their departure to Trunulesia forest.

Erik Llyod stopped smiling and looked at Garrett Marsh.

"Boss, we are going to explore the ruins. It is the most dangerous place out there. So what is the need of taking this kid with us?" Garrett replied.

He felt his thinking was reasonable.

Hearing that, Compton decided to clear some things first. He doesn't want to hear the same conversation again in Trunulesia forest.

"Look, I'm going to make one thing clear."

"I'm allowing him to work with me as my assistant. It's my own decision. There is no need for you to interfere in it," Compton said.

"Secondly, Zack is not going to involve in research. He is joining the team to gain some experience in the outside world. So you guys don't have to worry about anything. The exploration will continue as usual with him or without him."

Chapter 402 Different Views

Tier-7 Baguva City,

Five members left right away after the meeting. They didn't even think about having a small chat with Zack and Elder Thornton.

Seeing their attitude, Compton felt helpless. Nothing can be changed in one day. On top of it, he felt its best for them to leave this place right now.

Otherwise, who knows? what will happen? if Erik decides to do something. After they left, Compton talked with Zack and Thornton.

The exploration team will leave tomorrow officially. Compton doesn't want to waste any more time by delaying the trip.

Fortunately, there are multiple routes to Trunulesia Forest from Baguva city. If there is no incident occurs, they will pick up the short route to travel.

The journey will take at least one week on normal days. if everything goes right, the team will reach the forest after one week.

After explaining certain things to both, he led them back to the villa.

The following day,

The exploration team left early for the trip. Elder Thornton went together to the train station to send off Zack. Last night, he reminded Zack to stay away from the team members as much as possible.

Because he is going there to gain experience. Not to explore the ruins. So now his worries were lessened.

When the train departed from the city, Thornton also decided to return. There is no use in staying here. Because his mind is now occupied with Hansen Institute.

One hour later,

Thornton boarded the train back to Red Stone City. It will take a couple of days for him to get back. But he decided to assist Arthur from time to time.

Time went by,

Four days later,

Thornton came to know about the recent happenings from Arthur. The registration process is going on smoothly. All the talented young warriors from the city were keenly registering their names for this competition.

Especially, Thornton realised that the local media houses were covering extensively about the competition. He was surprised by such a smooth process. But somewhere in his heart, there is a shadow of a doubt.

After Arthur came from the City Lord Mansion, there are no other actions taken from the City lord Alex Fuller. Which puzzled him more. He was expecting some kind of measure from the city lord.

To think none happened. He doesn't know how to take it. But he feels everything will be clear once he returns.

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City Lord Mansion - Red Stone City,

Discussion Hall,

"Walter, where are they?" the city lord Alex Fuller asked. A clear frown can be seen on his face.

Manager Walter replied, "Lord, they are not willing to come here."

"Harumph," Alex Fuller snorted.

Yesterday, a team of five from the Crimson Hall organisation entered this city. Alex Fuller wanted them to have a meeting with Frazier Clan's head.

But these people were ignoring his orders. He felt helpless, he can't force them to come here. All he can do was inform their headmaster wells.

Maybe Mr Wells might instruct them to meet me.

"SIGH," He let out a small sigh. Making a deal with Crimson Hall is not easy. To get resources, he needs to put up with their actions and behaviours.

He then asked, "How is the registration is going?"

Manager Walter replied, "Lord, a lot of young warriors from our city were registering for this competition."

"Hmmm," Alex Fuller furrowed his eyebrows. He feels this city is not bad as he imagined considering there is a good number of talented warriors in this city.

Then again he feels he needs to make a quick arrangement before the registration closes up.

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Red Stone City,

At the same time, two female warriors were wandering around several streets and shops. They were none other than Ella Downs and Sallie Mills.

Currently, both walked out of one of the shops.

Sallie thought of something and asked, "Should we go and take a look at Hansen Institute?"

Hearing that Ella halted her footsteps. A trace of apprehension can be seen on her face. Both were not interested in this competition at all.

It's because of the mission order, they have to obey it. On top of it, she couldn't understand the crimson hall's enmity against Zack Lockwood.

Even their headmaster didn't say it openly. But they can understand, five of them are ultimately here for Zack Lockwood. Last time, Zack defeated everyone at the Star Tower trials by taking first place.

The trial of the star tower is such that no one can see what taking place inside the tower. So warrior's battle was blocked from viewing. Which made them wonder about Zack.

No one could easily access his combat strength. She feels that their organisation might send them because of this reason.

Seeing Ella spacing out in the middle of the street, she said, "Ella?"

Hearing that, Ella retracted her thoughts. She replied, "Okay" she knows this place is quite close to the Hansen Institute. So there is no problem in checking out the place.

Then both changed their destination to the Hansen Institute. On the way, both of their minds are occupied with different thoughts. Ella is thinking about the small competition.

Where Sallie is thinking about the city lord. She saw the inbox is filled with manager Walter's message. Seeing that, she had black lines on her forehead.

"Ella, Did you receive the message?" Sallie asked.

Ella nodded and replied, "I just blocked his contact number." Ella knows that she is talking about the manager Walter from the city lord mansion.

Because he is the one who is sending these text messages ever since they entered this city. Retracting these thoughts both then continued to walk.

5 minutes later,

Ella and Sallie arrived in front of the Hansen Institute. Surprisingly, they are many people in front of this small building. Both Sallie and Ella found this building nowhere at the level of their Crimson Hall.

This building may be huge compared to nearby buildings, but Sallie and Ella are not awed by the infrastructure.

"Harrumph, to think Zack Lockwood was from this garbage institute," ridicule and contempt-filled voice reached their ears.

Sallie and Ella found this voice very familiar. Both turned towards the direction where the voice came from.

"Bob?" Sallie said.

Both saw Bob Williamson coming toward them.

Seeing that, Ella furrowed her eyebrows. She knows among the five of them, Bob is more interested in this mission.

After seeing him both remained silent, Bob already noticed the presence of these two. That's why he commented.

Seeing that there is no response to his words, Bob revealed a sly smile. He knows unlike him, these two have good opinions about Zack.

But it's unfortunate for Zack because their organisation is already decided to take him out. No one can save his life anymore.

After taking a glance at these two, Bob walked past them. He wants to see what the crowd were doing.

When he disappeared, both Sallie and Ella sighed in relief. Sallie immediately answered, "This guy won't give up even if our organisation decide to let go of Zack."

Ella nodded. Not only, Bob, She knows the other two members have similar thoughts. For resources, both will do anything. Then after spending a few more minutes here, Sallie and Ella both left the place.

On the other hand, Bob Williamson is standing there among the crowds. Before coming here Bob had asked his family to collect some Intel.

Interestingly, he found that Zack Lockwood was rarely seen after the star trial. Apart from a few appearances near the Hansen Institute, no one has seen him.

Bob Williamson was intrigued by the news. He has already thought of some clues. He feels that Hansen Institute might have sent Zack far away for special training.

Then retracting his thoughts, he continued to observe the campus for a few more minutes before leaving.

A few minutes later, Austin Boyer and Bradley Reese came to look at the Hansen Institute. Looking at the building, Austin Boyer commented, "It's hard to believe Zack Lockwood comes from this small institute."

Austin Boyer was impressed. He had heard about Zack's background before. But this is the first time for everyone to see the institute.

A quick flash into Bradley's eyes as he recalls the start tower ranking.

He asked, "What do you think about Zack's strength?"

Austin was quiet for a moment. Because he hadn't thought about this before. All of them are quite confident because of the Peak Special Trainee Cultivation base. They are one step away from touching the Trainee Warrior level.

So he thinks that Zack is not up to their level. Especially, the warriors around here are Trainee Apprentice. This shows that the talent of this region is very low. Only Zack was exceptional.

"What are you thinking about?" Bradley asked.

Hearing that, Austin retracted his thoughts and replied, "I think Zack is Mid-level Special Trainee Warrior."

Bradley nodded, he to thinks this might be the case. If their assumption is true then they can easily get their revenge.

Chapter 403 Alex Fuller's Anger

(From MC's perspective)

This highly fortified train is moving towards the destination at full speed. Unfortunately, it's impossible to appreciate the outside view. Because the windows are covered up due to safety issues.

I feel tense because of this. On normal days, I can divert my mind by watching the outside views. But here I can only shut my eyes and pretend asleep.

Right now, there is one more reason to pretend.

Elder Compton is sitting right next to me.

Opposite me, the vice leader of the team, Valerie Lyons is reading a book. Right next to her, Kara Robles is watching something on her watch. I don't whether she is sleeping or not.

This seating arrangement was done by Elder Compton. Which alone shows the existing friction in the team.

From time to time, I feel hostile gazes on me. But I know exactly where it is coming from. It was none other than Erik Lloyd. I have a vague feeling that he is hatching some plan.

I couldn't help but furrow my eyebrows when I think about it. It's not that I can't take him down. I fear I will face more trouble after killing him. So there is no good in going against him.

It's best to stick to Elder Compton. Only he can make him calm down. After retracting the thoughts, I closed my eyes.

On the other hand, a quick glint flashed into Compton's eyes. He looked in Erik Lloyd's direction before retracting his gaze. He also noticed some malicious intentions from Erik Lloyd.

Which is not at all good for everyone including himself in the team. Ever since he had got a hint from his good friend. Compton already made up his mind to protect Zack.

Even he readied himself to go to a certain length. "I hope Erik won't cross the line. Otherwise, I have to kill him myself," Compton thought to himself.

The exploration team members have different thoughts about the new team member. No one is willing to babysit a new team member.

Especially, in places like Trunulesia forest. It's hard to keep their own life alive.

Time passes in a blink of an eye

After a couple of days, Elder Thornton reached the Red Stone city. After getting into Hansen Institute, he was soon involved in their upcoming fighting competition work.

When Thornton came back, Arthur felt half of his pressure reduced. He soon recounted the things that happened inside the discussion hall.

But in the end, both failed to guess the city lord's mind. The city lord Alex Fuller's unclear intentions made them act carefully. Elder Thornton feels that nothing serious will take place.

Because the competition is only for their city's young warriors. He believes that there won't be any calculation behind it.

Even if some force tries to calculate, he does not worry about it. Because apart from Zack, there are no other important person's studies here.

Since Zack is away from the city, Thornton is acting without any worry.

Coincidentally, on the same day,

An important meeting is taking place inside the discussion hall of the city lord's mansion.

The city lord mansion,

The City Lord Alex Fuller is keenly observing the five people in front of him. These five talented warriors were sent by Crimson Hall a couple of days ago.

After carefully roaming around the city, now they got enough time on their hands to visit him. His heart is boiling in anger. But he kept his outward expression calm as possible.

These people's behaviour spoiled a lot of his plans. Including the meeting with the Frazier clan head. Which is also getting postponed because of them.

Unfortunately, the Frazier clan's head is out of this city at this time. He would have solved the problem if he was available.

SIGH

He couldn't help but sigh thinking about it.

"Lord," Manager Walter stepped forward to inquire. He knows the lord is frustrated because of these young people. But this can't be helped. They can't afford to offend the Crimson Hall organisation.

On the other hand, Bob Williamson smirked watching the overall situation. This is the first time he has seen Tier-8 city's city lord in person.

But he feels that everyone went overboard this time. Otherwise, their headmaster wells won't urge them to visit the city lord as soon as possible.

Bob was puzzled, usually, their headmaster won't put tier-8 cities in his eyes. Including the government forces and organisations. But this time he was serious.

Then retracting his thoughts, he waited for the meeting to take place.

Ella Downs, Sallie Mills, Austin Boyer and Bradley Reese also has different thoughts in their mind. But one thing is common, all of them wanted this meeting to end as soon as possible.

"Cough"

Alex Fuller coughed to break the awkward atmosphere. "The Frazier Clan's head is not available right now. So the meeting is not going to take place. Once he comes back, I'll inform you," he said in a calm tone.

Hearing that five of them were bewildered. That's it! Bob wrinkled his eyebrows. It's not that five of them don't know what to do. Their headmaster had already briefed them about this.

But still, if they want to know to implement the plan they need the presence of the Frazier clan's head. Realizing this Bob's gave becomes ugly.

"So we are wasting our time here, " Bob mumbled under his breath.

Hearing that, Alex and Bradley nodded their head. Ella and Sallie don't know what to say. But both thought, Bob should keep his mouth shut.

Bob Williamson's words were not so loud. But it was heard by Alex Fuller. Veins begin to pop up from his forehead. For the first time, he felt he shouldn't have contacted the crimson hall. These arrogant brats are too much for him to handle.

Before he could utter anything, he heard a question from the same brat.

"Lord, do you know the whereabouts of Zack Lockwood?" Bob Williamson asked. When he asked that there is a tinge of expectation in his heart.

He believes that it's normal for any city lord to know about certain crucial information. Especially, the current number one rank in star tower's leader board ranking is local to this city.

Bob believes that City Lord has information about Zack Lockwood.

The atmosphere has become pin drop silence.

Sallie laughed in her heart, seeing that Bob is not giving a face at all to the city lord. For this city lord, Sallie has absolute disgust in her heart.

To gain personal interest, he is ready to sacrifice the local force. For such a person she doesn't have any respect.

It is the same with Ella Downs, her beautiful eyebrows furrowed in displeasure. She wants to leave the place, but Bob started a conversation all of a sudden.

But this question Bob, she wants to hear the answer as well.

Austin Boyer and Bradley Reese looked at each other with helpless smiles on their face. Because Bob is started to act on his own. They don't know what will happen next.

On the other hand, Alex Fuller was stunned. He didn't expect such a question at this moment. But his mood becomes complicated. Because the same question was inquired by many people before including their First Elder and the headmaster.

That kid Zack Lockwood seemed to disappear into thin air. There is no news about him. Nowadays, he has felt that Zack Lockwood might have died somewhere.

But he can't say his opinion loud. Because people need evidence to verify the news. He has tried many ways to contact the Hansen Institute's chairman.

Unfortunately, there is no response from the other side.

Then he answered, "I don't know about it."

Hearing that, Bob's face turned solemn. There is only one question in his mind. How?

"Is he dead?" He asked.

A quick glint flashed in Ella's eyes. She doesn't want to think like that. But if the person is missing for so long, she won't know how to describe it.

On the other hand, Alex Fuller smiled. He had the same thought as the young man. But things are not that simple.

He answered, "He is most likely alive. Because if he is dead, his institute and the star tower won't remain silent."

"They would have published the news," he added further.

Hearing that Bob nodded in understanding. Especially, about the star tower, he feels the city lord is right. So far there are no changes taking place in the city lord ranking. This means Zack Lockwood is alive.

On the other hand, Ella also felt peace in her heart. She also thinks about how absurd her previous assumptions were.

Seeing that there is one asking questions anymore, Alex Fuller asked them to leave. Manager Walter guided them outside.

Seeing their disappearing sight, Alex muttered to himself, "I don't know if my actions were good or bad" Because he feels if crimson hall can't able to find the whereabouts of that kid.

How can they expect a small city lord like him to answer? Then he thought about his next action. He feels he needs to visit the Hansen Institute in person.

Chapter 404 Deserted Station

(From MC's perspective)

Time went by,

After a couple of days, the train reached the Trunulesia station. When the train came to halt, all the passengers got alarmed. Everyone knows about this terrible place. Usually, the train won't halt at this place.

So everyone inside the train seemed to be confused.

On the other hand, after seeing the terrified face of everyone. My face turned a bit solemn. I don't know whether everyone is overreacting or genuinely terrified.

Suddenly, I heard a small chuckle beside me. He is none other than Elder Compton. A moment later, he said, "Let's go."

Hearing that, five of us got from our seats and prepared to leave.

On the other hand, the passengers in this particular compartment seemed to realise that people were leaving. Shock and disbelief were written on their face.

But no one dared to say anything. Because people who go this place were strong warriors. So nobody wants to offend.

Only after seeing the disappearing back of the last person, the passengers sighed in relief. In a few seconds, the train began to leave.

At the same time, after stepping out of the train. I looked around me. This train station, I don't how to describe. Because there is not even a single person can be seen.

Apart from breezing wind, not a single person. This entire place is completely deserted. At this moment, the image of mountain Liz flashed before my eyes.

I sighed thinking about it. Even that remote place had one or two people walking around. It is also the same case with insect forests. Many warriors entered the insect forest after knowing how dangerous is it.

But after seeing this place my mood has become dull.

"Don't be discouraged," at this time, I heard a voice behind me.

Seeing that, I saw it was coming from Elder Compton.

In response, I nodded at him.

But suddenly I heard another mocking voice.

"This why I had urged not to bring unnecessary burdens with us," Erik Lloyd said in a mocking tone.

He doesn't care presence of Compton. He began to mock boldly.

Garrett Marsh stood beside him for support. He also wore a wide grin on his face. Like he is enjoying the situation.

A cold glint flashes into my eyes after hearing his words. This guy is making me think twice. Earlier, I had decided to stay low-key.

But looking at this ongoing situation. I feel I need to think of some backup plans.

Suddenly, Compton coughed to break the atmosphere.

The next second, Compton's face turned serious as he thinks about the next plan.

"Alright, We need to cross this trunulesia forest before dawn," Compton said in a solemn tone.

When he brought up the topic, everyone's face becomes serious.

On the other hand, I began to recall the information about the forest. Usually, during the daytime, there is no monster activity recorded. At day time, the trunulesia forest is peaceful and calm.

But at night time, the situation will change drastically. There will be many monsters.

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Compton saw everyone is listening to him. He nodded and continued to say, "Everyone knows that the current trunulesia forest is not what used to be. There are some changes. So even in the daytime, we should not let down our guard."

"Don't worry leader, we will be cautious," the vice leader, Valerie Lyons replied.

After that one by one echoed their opinion. Even Erik also voices his opinion.

On the other hand, I saw Elder Compton turn towards me.

He said, "Zack, you will stay in middle. Erik and Garrett will take care of the rear"

"I will lead from the front."

"And the rest of them will provide support to the team."

Hearing that, Valerie, Karla and Terrell nodded their heads in understanding.

Though Valerie is the vice leader of the team, she can't take care of the front attack. Because she is a water element warrior.

So Compton decided to take care of that. On the other hand, Erik as an earth elemental warrior will provide defensive support. At the same time, Garrett can also provide both offensive and defensive support.

Overall, it's a rare combination of teams. After giving instructions, Compton led everyone towards their old base.

The entire trunulesia forest is covered with weird energy due to mutation. So they need to wear full body gear before entering the forest.

While walking, Erik Llyod couldn't help but look at the back of the young man. He is deeply pondering about something. Seeing his state, his friend who is walking beside him decided to ask.

Garrett asked, "What are you thinking about?"

Hearing that, Erik Llyod replied with a smile, "I'm wondering, how to kill that brat."

Garrett wasn't surprised by the answer. He knows about Erik, Erik will take revenge for even small things.

But Garrett doesn't care about his behaviour. Because Erik had given numerous resources multiple times. So Garrett knows if he takes care of that kid, Erik will give him some resources.

His eyes gleamed with a twinkle as he thought about it.

Garrett said in a husky voice, "Don't worry, everything will be over during nighttime."

A quick glint flashed into Erik's eyes as he realised something. The nighttime is the best time for killing. Especially in this trunulesia forest.

But Erik found some trouble in this plan. Leader Compton already made things clear. He wants everyone to cross the forest before dawn.

So if this goes on, killing that kid would be impossible. Because Compton said that kid will not enter the ruins. If he wants to bury that kid, the only suitable place is trunulesia forest.

Also, he needs to do it during night time. Either before entering the ruins or after entering the ruins. Erik also knows that delaying their current schedule will offend Compton.

So he can only think about removing that brat after they explored the ruin. Right now, he doesn't have any choice but to wait further.

Soon, everyone reached their old base. Which is located near the train station. The base is none other than the large-sized wooden building which was built a decade ago.

There are more than 6 rooms inside the building.

After entering the building, everyone began to wear full body armour in their respective rooms.

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Inside one of the six rooms,

I dropped the brand new full-body gear on the bed. My eyes gleamed with twinkle whenever I observed that things. This model of full-body gear is very costly.

I heard Elder Compton has bought the same model for everyone. To think he has so much passion for the ruins. He went on to buy the same model for everyone.

But I also realised, Elder Compton is Elite Warrior. So his wealth is something which I cannot fathom.

Then I began to wear the full body armour. After wearing it, I instantly felt a terrible weight. Like a small mountain weighing on me. Fortunately, I'm also a body cultivator. I can manage it somehow despite my low cultivation base.

My entire body is now covered with body armour. To allow visibility, the face helmet has a shield in front of my eyes. I can view them. The face helmet has a full face open and close function.

I couldn't help but sigh after seeing such a function. Suddenly, I thought about Crimson Hall's competition.

I don't know whether this armour will be allowed to use in that competition. If it is then it will be terrible, every rich kid from Tier-7 city will buy this for sure.

Then warriors from Tier-8 cities will face terrible challenges. I hope this thing will not be allowed. Then I thought about one more thing, I want to check my lightning element.

When I extend my palms, the armour opened up a little. I can see my palm. In the next second, a small purple colour arc formed in my palms.

Seeing that, there is no problem. Then I tried to walk inside the room. This takes me back to memory lane where I trained inside the gravity chamber. So my current situation is not worse.

My normal movements were wasn't affected. But things will be trickier when it comes to fighting. A strong determination rose in my heart. I will take this as a new training method.

Then after making sure everything is ready, I walked out of the room casually.

On the other hand, the rest of them were waiting for Zack. When they saw him walking out casually, surprise-filled everyone's faces.

Garrett Marsh twitched, and he said, "This brat is a trainee warrior." Not only the rest of them also misunderstood, including Compton.

Erik Llyod frowned after seeing this." is he from Tier-7 city?" He thought to himself.

The reason for their misunderstanding was only warriors with trainee warrior cultivation base and above can move around effortlessly wearing that armour.

After realizing this, Compton sighed in relief. He doesn't have to worry about Zack's safety anymore. Zack can easily take care of mutated monsters of Class-3 level.

Right now he has only one problem. He hopes Erik won't cause an unnecessary problem during their journey.

Chapter 405 Mutated Monster

Trunulesia Forest,

(From MC's perspective)

Erik Lloyd's eyes gleamed with a twinkle when he misunderstood Zack's cultivation base as Trainee Warrior. Not only he, everyone else thinks like that. Because of this, no one looked at Zack with contempt and ridicule anymore.

Since Zack is strong, there is no need to give him the cold shoulder. Especially, Valerie Lyons is glad that Zack is not oil battle. She looked at leader Compton with admitting gaze. "No wonder that he was calm and composed," She thought to herself.

On the other hand, Ricardo Compton decided to move from the spot. He led the exploration towards the trunulesia forest. Which is a walkable distance from the train station.

Everyone moved according to the formation.

At the same time, after feeling the shift in attitude from everyone, "I sighed inwardly."

I vaguely heard their conversation. They think I'm a trainee warrior. But only I know the truth. I'm seemingly operating after wearing the full body gear because of my body strength.

Then dispelling the thoughts, I continued to follow along with the formation. While walking, I felt a cold stare from behind. No doubt, it's Erik Lloyd. I have a vague feeling that he still hasn't given up his thoughts.

So I decided to keep an eye on him.

Time went by,

After twenty minutes, we arrived at the entrance of the trunulesia forest. Seeing the dark gloomy forest ahead in the daytime. I don't why a sense of uneasiness filled my heart.

Not only me, I saw my fellow team members stop their movements.

On the other hand, a trace of apprehension appeared in Elder Compton's eyes. He found the forest has visible changes compared to last time. This time he can visibly see the dark clouds above the forest.

Which then entirely shrouds the whole forest in a dark atmosphere. Fortunately, the mutated monsters will only appear at night time. So they got plenty of time clear the forest.

Before continuing, he looked at everyone and instructed, "You can see that the forest has some changes. So keep your guard up all the time."

Hearing that everyone nodded their head including me. The demeanour of the exploration team has completely changed. They are not cold and arrogant anymore. I can feel the air of nervousness.

Which in turn made me wrinkle my eyebrows. Everyone is worried in presence of a Mid-elite warrior like Elder Compton. I don't know how to describe this feeling.

Then slowly we walked towards the entrance. It's daytime, so the area is visible. But the problem lies in the dark clouds.

When everyone reached the entrance, Compton turned again to observe the team. Before going inside, he wants to make sure that everyone is fully equipped and covered their head.

Because once they go deep into the woods. The weird mists will envelop them. If the weird mists come to contact will any exposed skin parts, then death will be the only result.

After checking out, everyone entered the forest in formation.

Right now, I'm more concerned about the dangers lurking inside the forest than Erik Lloyd. Because the uneasiness in my heart is getting increasing.

We walked along the narrow path. This route may probably formed by the researchers who visit this place often. Then suddenly, I recalled the ruins.

Earlier, Elder Compton had briefed everyone about the trunulesia forest. Since I'm new, he explained it in more detail.

Unlike the monster zones, this trunulesia forest is quite different. From the map, I recalled this forest was stretched like a canyon. I don't where its border ends on both sides.

But the location of the ruins was quite clear. It was located in opposite direction. Once we crossed this forest. We will soon reach the north end where the ruin is located.

Now we are entering the forest from the southern direction. Where the train station is located. After recalling the complex structure of the forest, I couldn't help but sigh inside.

If someone runs in the direction east or west end, they will be dead for sure. Because there is no end in both directions.

After realising that, I decided to have some sense of direction.

From time to time, Compton turned around to check up on the team. Since everyone wore full body armour, it was impossible to see their facial expression.

But Compton never failed to strike up a conversation. Then he looked at Zack and said, "Zack, relax. We are not in danger right now."

Hearing that, I revealed a bitter smile. But still, I nodded at him. He says there is no danger. But why do I feel something wrong?

On the other hand, Compton shook his head after seeing the slow response.

Time went by,

After one hour, the exploration team already is getting closer to the centre. If they continue at the same pace, they will cross the trunulesia forest after four hours.

Suddenly, Compton halted his footsteps. Seeing that everyone stopped moving.

The air around him felt denser than before. He knew it was because of the mutated energy. Compton wanted to check the weird energy. But he has no extra time for it. So he decided to head to the ruin first.

"Let's go," he said.

After saying that, he continued to lead everyone deep into the woods.

But as they go inside, apart from the weird energy, the calm and quiet atmosphere gives everyone a creepy feeling.

No one said anything, everyone quietly followed behind. Even Erik has stopped thinking about Zack. Instead, he focused on the surroundings.

When everyone moved ahead, the ground below them started to shake. The tremor is not like an earthquake but it's happening inside a specific range.

"Step back a little," Compton shouted.

Hearing that I immediately leapt backwards. But still, the ground continued to shake. Like something is going to come out.

"It's a monster," the vice leader, Valerie shouted at Compton. Apart from the monster, nothing can make such huge tremors.

"Impossible," Erik uttered from behind.

My mind went blank for a moment. It's hard to fathom what's going on here. The tremor is making it impossible to control the balance.

But I vaguely heard their conversation. "Monster, how could be?" I mumbled under my breath. Elder Compton told me that there will be no monster activity here at day time.

If so then what happened now?

I raised my head to see the situation. My eyes widened in surprise the next moment. I saw a gigantic head rising from the ground. The head size alone looks the size of the monster.

My face become discoloured after realising the fact. If it's the head then, what about the rest of the body? The monster's head alone is humungous in size.

Then I can't imagine the size of the rest of the body. I suddenly recalled the name of the monster. "Ground Worm," I uttered in surprise.

But unlike normal worm monsters. This one looked completely back. Apart from the pitch-black head, only two red eyes can be seen clearly.

I had never seen such a creepy monster before.

BOOM

The next second, another tremor happened. The worm monster began to take out its entire body from the ground. The exploration team members immediately separated from the formation.

Only Ricardo Compton stayed in one place. If someone watches carefully they can see, using his elite power, Compton stood in mid-air.

A trace of confusion and apprehension appeared in Compton's eyes. Confusion because the mutated monster had never appeared during the daytime.

So this is the first time he to come across such a situation. Second, he has slight fear that many more monsters will appear in succession.

Because the tremor caused by this worm monster was so huge that it will soon attract other nearby monsters. So Compton decided to kill the monster quickly before leaving this place.

When the huge monster appeared, Compton swiftly acted. He raised his hand to conjure fireballs in a blink of an eye and threw them towards the worm monster.

Those fireballs emitted heat like a blazing sun. When they landed on the monster's body.

BOOM

A deafening sound reverberated through the area. The worm monster twisted its huge body to stop the fire. But the fireballs had caused enough damage.

It immediately affected the vitality of the monster. Seeing that, the monster is dying. Compton has no change in expression. When the monster first appeared, he has already seen through the monster.

The worm monster has the strength of Class 3 Mid level. So as an elite warrior, it was no problem for him to make it disappear.

But to end it quickly. Compton once again used the fireballs to kill the monster. When everything was over, he turned towards his team.

Seeing that everyone is fine, he sighed in relief. Then he led everyone towards the destination. But this time, the whole team increased their speed.

The appearance of the monster is not a good sign at all. So the whole team decide to move from this place as soon as possible.

Not long after they left, the destruction spot was swarmed by other mutated monsters.

Chapter 406 Another Encounter

(From MC's perspective)

Trunulesia Forest,

After ten minutes, Compton and his group arrived in front of a large shade tree to take some rest. Except for Compton, everyone collapsed on the ground to gasp for some breath.

All of them escaped from that place at full speed. None of them wants to encounter similar situations like the worm monster.

On the other hand, I sighed in relief. After looking at everyone's expressions, I realised that none of them had expected this situation to turn out like this. It was an unprecedented one.

This situation here is completely different from the Insect forest. You will never know when the mutated monsters will appear in front of you. "Are there any elite-level monsters in this forest?" I muttered to myself.

Because the appearance of the worm monster had already blown away my mind. I don't know what different types of monsters dwell in this forest.

Various thoughts occupied my mind.

I'm sure about one thing. It won't be easy to cross this forest in day time anymore. Then everyone's eyes fell on Elder Compton.

"Leader, what is happening?" Erik Lloyd shouted at the leader. He had completely lost his patience. The appearance mutated class 3 monster made him frightened already.

When the rest of them heard his words, none of them stopped him from lashing out. Because they can understand the situation. Mutated monster is stronger than normal class monsters.

Even if they are Peak Trainee Warriors, they are not confident enough to take down the Class 3 Peak mutated monsters.

At the same time, I wrinkled my eyebrows in displeasure. This Erik Lloyd is creating scenes unnecessarily. Elder Compton is a Mid-level, Elite Warrior.

So forget about Class 3, he can even easily take down Class 4 level Monsters.

Then I looked at Elder Compton. He seems to be pondering something else.

On the other hand, Compton is keeping an eye on the surrounding. He spread his elite-level sense to cover the area.

Previously the worm monster surprised him by appearing from the ground below. So he doesn't want to encounter a similar situation again.

When he heard Erik's words, his eyes flashed into a cold glint. Because like everyone else, he was also surprised by the change in the situation here. So he feels Erik's antics were too much.

Then he proceeds to think about the next course of action.

On the other hand, I watched everyone's expression begin to have changes. Especially after seeing elder Compton's silence. I can see veins popping up on Erik's forehead.

This guy even dares offend an elite-level warrior. I don't know whether he is stupid or not. When I was observing everyone's expressions.

I heard a faint howling sound from from distance. For a moment, I didn't take it seriously. But when I heard a similar sound a second time. I decided to use my perceptual ability around me.

The next second, I spread my sense around the surroundings. An area of more than 25 meters came into my view. When I heard the sound for the third time, I followed the direction.

Then I saw the group of black jackals. For a moment, I misunderstood them as hyenas. But looking at the body structure. I realised they were jackals. And I don't know the exact numbers in the group.

The jackals are in black due to mutation.

From the group, I sensed four strong and scary auras. Even stronger than mine. I have a vague feeling that they are Class 4 Monsters similar to worm monsters.

And the remaining monsters were Class 3 level.

Then I saw the group of monsters coming towards our direction. I immediately retracted my thoughts and looked at Elder Compton.

I saw Elder Compton is not in his place. Seeing that, I immediately turned towards the group of hyenas. I saw one silhouette walking in mid-air towards the group.

My pupils constrict after witnessing such a scene. "Sure, elite level is something else," I grumbled.

On the other hand, everyone got alert after seeing Compton's action. The vice leader and others immediately began to rush towards the monsters, including Erik.

In the end, I was the one who was left behind. I don't know whether these people know about the presence of four class-4 level monsters up ahead.

Then dispelling the thoughts, I followed behind the slowly. Fortunately, I had stored items in my spare storage ring. Which was in the small vault area placed in the forearm of the suit.

While rushing, I opened the vault to use the storage ring. The next second, I brought out the black sword from the storage ring and held it tightly in my hand.

This is going to be my first battle at Trunulesia forest and that too against mutated class 3 level monsters.

Boom

Suddenly, I heard a loud bang ahead. I realized, Elder Compton is fighting against Class 4 monsters. I'm careful not to enter their battle area. I knew the aftermath would be very serious.

So I diverted my path and found the nearest class 3 monsters. I saw rest of my teammates had begun to fight.

Seeing that, I didn't waste any more time. I raised my black sword against the incoming monster and made a fierce swing.

Puff

When the tip of the blade, came in contact with its skin. The blade went inside the skin smoothly like butter. The next second, blood spurted out from its neck. And the monster's body fell after losing its life.

Seeing that, I didn't collect the monster's body. Instead, I dashed towards the other monsters.

Time went by,

The clash continued to happen. One by one the monsters began to die at the hands of exploration team members.

On the other hand, Compton already killed two Class 4 monsters. Now he is fighting against the remaining two severely injured monsters.

At this time, everyone seems to be occupied and no one cares about the newcomer in their team.

After a few minutes, the vice leader Valerie thought about Zack Lockwood. She immediately killed the monster in front of her and then began to look for Zack.

When her gaze fell in a certain direction, her eyes widened in disbelief. Behind Zack, there are piles of monsters. And the count is higher than her.

Chapter 407 Part One: Recovering From The Exhaustion

(From MC's perspective)

Trunulesia Forest,

After killing the monster on my side, I looked at others. When my gaze met the eyes of the vice leader, I revealed a small smile on my face. She was shocked to see my actual strength.

But I was glad in my heart. At least hereafter, they won't look at me with contempt. After slightly nodding at her, I dashed to help others.

Valerie Lyons was exhausted. But after seeing Zack's sprinting, she doesn't know whether to laugh or cry. She had misjudged the person.

Not only her everyone in the team has underestimated the new team member, Zack Lockwood. But after this battle, everyone's opinion will change. Then dispelling the thoughts, Valerie went forward to help others like Zack Lockwood.

Time passed,

After a few hours, Ricardo Compton successfully ended the life of the last monster. With that, the battle has also come to an end.

Though the exploration team have won the battle. But they greatly exhausted their strength. Especially, Ricardo almost ended up using half of the essence.

Realizing that, he furrowed his eyes in displeasure. Their journey was getting delayed. if this goes on, they will have to spend the night time here.

Ricardo Compton instructed his team, "Let's leave this place as soon as possible." He also caught the auras of some monsters not far away from here.

Before this place gets swarmed by monsters, he decided to leave with the team.

Everyone moved their exhausted body again.

Garrett Marsh asked, "Hey, newcomer. How are you holding up?"

Hearing that, a strange light flashed into my eyes. I saw the expression of Garrett Marsh. This time there is no arrogance on his face. Looks like he finally acknowledged my strength of mine.

Then I said with a smile, "I'm fine Mr Garrett."

"Ha...Ha...Ha..."

"You can call me brother. With your strength it will be a matter of time before you surpass us," Garrett said with a laugh.

His voice was not so loud but still, it attracted the attention of others. Except for Erik Lloyd, others looked at Zack with a hint of approval in their eyes.

No way, it is not easy to survive in this place. Especially, to deal with mutated monsters. You must be a talented warrior. Otherwise, you will die in this place.

Feeling the respect from everyone's eyes, I sighed inwardly. Finally, the gap between the team members and me has reduced a lot. There is no more alienation. But I don't know what is going on inside Erik Lloyd's mind.

My eyes gleamed with a twinkle. But anyway, since I got the approval of others. I don't think Erik will act rashly. They don't know that I'm not a Trainee Warrior but a Peak level- Special Trainee.

This news will subvert this cognition. But I don't want to expose my strength yet.

Time passed,

After crossing several hurdles along the way, we finally reached the border of the trunulesia forest.

By the time we crossed the border. It was already nighttime. The team leader decided to spend the night time here. It's nighttime, we can't go and look for the ruins yet.

It's better to take rest and replenish our energy.

Everyone had set up their tent, including the leader Compton.

Soon the 6 tents can be seen under the night light.

Inside the tent,

I sat cross-legged and began to ponder my next course of action. Fortunately, Erik Lloyd didn't cause any problems. But I have a nagging feeling in my heart that Erik Lloyd is looking for an opportunity.

Well, this feeling can't be helped. If he has any plan like that, I still got enough time to kill him. After gaining some clarity, I began to cultivate.

In today's battle, except me. Everyone had released their elemental attack. Which raised some eyebrows. For that, I can only put up an act and say that monsters were weak.

But it will be hard to follow the same method in future. It will be fine as long as I can kill the monster with brute force. Once I come across strong monsters like level 4, then it will be disastrous for me.

Even, the early class-4 monsters can't be underestimated here. The mutated energy made the monsters fight across the ranks. Which is a terrible feeling. But I have to say, thanks to Elder Compton's quick thinking.

We were finally able to leave the forest late at night.

Looking in the forest's direction, I muttered, "Otherwise, you will never know what will you face at night time."

This solemn feeling brings me despair at the same time some excitement. Despair due to the various unknown inside the forest. And excitement due to the combat experience, I will gain after this trip.

Then I looked straight, where a large and luxurious tent was set up. It was the camp of Elder Compton. Now the five tents were arranged in a circle, having the leader's tent in middle.

This is also because elite warriors' senses were greater than Peak Warrior's. Elder Compton can easily sense the threat, so I with perceptual ability.

Dispelling the unnecessary thoughts, I think about the pressing issue. So far Elder Compton hasn't talked about the ruins. As if he was already overwhelmed by seeing the changes in the trunulesia forest during day time.

I don't know what happened at the ruin's site. It's reasonable that he is tight-lipped about it. The next second, a trace of doubt rose in my heart.

Is that ruin site safe? What will we do? If that place is also trespassed by the mutated monsters. I sucked cold breath when I thought about it.

The more think about it, the more it seems possible to me. No wonder, he hasn't said anything. If my assumption is true then, we will have to face another bloody fight in the morning.

Thinking about it, I decided to immerse myself in cultivation without further ado. My lightning essence has no consumption. But I feel tiredness all over my body.

Then I used a blood essence pill to recover my body strength.

Chapter 408 Part Two: Recovering From The Exhaustion

Trunulesia Forest,

Six tents had been set up circularly. But in the middle, there is a large tent. Inside the tent, the leader of the exploration team replenishes his energy.

Recalling the recent events, Ricardo Compton sighed to himself. "I hadn't expected the changes to be this severe," He said to himself.

He had underestimated the changes in the trunulesia forest. Before coming here, he had assumed apart from the high concentration of mutation energy, there is not much change.

But after coming here, he came to know that his assumption was wrong. Mutated monsters are rampaging in broad daylight. Which is something that has not happened since the ruin's discovery.

Fortunately, he had managed to bring his team safe and soundly. He can't imagine what would happen if they had stayed there longer.

He has a vague feeling that the monster will be more bloodthirsty and cruel during nighttime. His expression couldn't help but turn solemn when he thinks about it.

Now onwards, he has to act more carefully. He decided to drop his previous plans and arrangements. According to the previous arrangement, the exploration team will research the ruin and Zack Lockwood will train at Trunulesia forest.

But now the situation is different. He decided to bring Zack with him to the ruin. Then Ricardo Compton thought about another mess. The behaviour of Erik Lloyd pissed him off.

But he believes that after the recent fight against the monster. Erik Lloyd perhaps dropped the idea of offending Zack Lockwood.

He also remembers his conversation with Thornton, presumably, there is a big man behind the kid Zack Lockwood.

Compton had promised that he will protect Zack Lockwood. Now the situation demands even more attention from him. He secretly made up his mind not to let go of Zack from his sight.

...

(From MC's perspective)

The following day,

I woke up early. Then immediately I felt the weight of the armour. This was the first time I had slept wearing armour. It feels weird.

Then dispelling the thoughts, I examined internally using my perception. Now my both essence and body strength had recovered to a peak state.

Thanks to all those blood essence pills that I had consumed last night. Otherwise, It will be impossible for me to reach this peak state.

Then I got up from the ground and walked out of the tent. Then my gaze immediately fell on other tents. The rest of the tents were closed except the middle one.

Seeing that, my eyes gleamed with a twinkle.

"Looks like elder is awake," I grumbled.

Then I walked towards the large tent. I don't know what he has planned today.

Shaking my head, I entered his tent.

On the other hand, Ricardo Compton already perceived the presence of Zack Lockwood. When he saw him walking into the tent, he revealed a bright smile.

"Zack, come here and sit," Compton pointed his finger at the nearby chair, saying that.

Hearing that, I smiled and walked up to the chair to sit.

Looking at the bright smile on Elder's face, I bet he is in good mood. Then I watched him sit in the opposite chair.

"Do you have any doubts?" Compton asked.

"Hmmm," I'm stunned for a moment. Then I calmed down in my heart and thought about the question.

"Elder, do we have to wear this gear all the time?" I asked.

Hearing that, Elder Compton chuckled before saying, "Don't worry, there is a small base near the ruin. We can remove our gear then."

I sighed in relief after hearing his words.

Then thinking about the trunulesia forest my expression turned solemn.

"Elder?"

"I want to go back to the forest," When I said the atmosphere turned into pin-drop silent.

I saw Elder Compton's expression change drastically. What happened? I didn't say anything wrong.

"Zack, there is a change of plans," Compton said with a sigh.

Then looking at Zack, he further added, "As you saw yesterday, monsters are running through the forest in broad daylight."

"I don't know if there are other changes in the forest. So it's safe for you to stay here." Saying that Compton looked at Zack for an answer.

"This?" The elder's words shocked me. I had never thought he would backtrack at the last moment.

Changes inside the trunulesia forest are indeed scary. But I'm not stupid enough to go deep into the woods.

"Elder, I want to fight against the mutated monsters. Otherwise, my trip here would be wasted," I replied in a solemn tone.

Ricardo Compton didn't reply to Zack. But he began to ponder deeply.

"Alright, you can go to the forest. But you have to return to this base before dawn," Compton said.

Then he thought about something and added, "One more thing Zack, just practise around the outer area, don't go deep into the woods."

Hearing that I nodded in relief. After speaking with him about a few other topics, I left the tent.

On the other hand, seeing disappearing back of Zack. Compton let out a small sigh. He understands it's impossible to control Zack Lockwood. He also doesn't offend this person.

Since Zack is going to the trunulesia forest, he thought about sending one of the team members as a protector.

He immediately omitted Erik Lloyd from his mind. He also neglected Garrett Marsh. He knows Marsh is a good friend of Erik. So he doesn't have a good opinion of both of them.

Then the image of Terrell Boyd comes to his mind.

Compton shook his head in denial. Even though, Terrell Boyd doesn't have any ill intentions towards Zack. But he won't know whether Terrell would risk his life to save Zack.

Then once again he shook his head in denial.

Terrell is not the best man for the job. Which left him only two options. "Valerie and Robles."

These two will listen to him. After pondering for a moment, he decided to send Valerie Lyons as protector. She is the vice leader of the team. He believes she will risk her life to save Zack.

Then he summoned Valerie Lyons to his room to instruct her.

Chapter 409 Valerie's Concerns

Trunulesia Forest,

Shortly after Zack left, Compton summoned the vice leader of the exploration team to his tent.

Valerie Lyons walked into the tent. She knows it's the time for ruin exploration. When he saw the leader sitting in the chair, she gave a small bow before standing in the same position.

Compton nodded at her before opening his mouth to say, "I have some instructions for you."

Hearing that, Valerie blinked her big eyes but still she nodded and was ready to obey the orders.

"Zack will be heading to the premise of the trunulesia forest. So go and protect him from shadows," Compton said in a solemn tone.

Valerie widened her eyes in disbelief. She thought the discussion would be about the ruin. But what is it with Zack Lockwood? She furrowed her eyes in confusion.

She didn't know why the leader is giving too much importance to the kid.

On the other hand, Compton noticed the doubtful expression on Valerie's face. He sighed inwardly.

He looked at Valerie and said, "Just, do as I say. That kid came here to gain combat experience. And his safety is more important."

Hearing that, Valerie nodded and gave a bow before walking out of the tent.

Then she immediately glanced at the last tent from the left side. She knows this is the tent of Zack Lockwood. After realizing that, she walked up to the tent and waited for the kid to exit.

But suddenly she heard a voice from behind. "Don't let him know that you are his protector"

Hearing that, she turned around and looked at the leader's tent. After pondering for a few minutes, she left the place.

Soon after, Zack Lockwood walked out of the tent and head straight towards the trunulesia forest.

Seeing that, Valerie Lyons also began to act.

...

(From MC's perspective)

I slowly walked towards the trunulesia forest. Though I'm glad that Elder accepted my request without making things difficult but I still feel his concerns were genuine.

The changes inside the trunuledsia forest were real and I need to be very careful about it. That's why I'm walking at a slow pace. And my senses were all sharp.

One hour later,

I reached the outer area of the forest. Looking at the forest, a trace of apprehension appeared in my eyes. I recalled how we walked out of the forest with exhaustion.

Then I used my perceptual ability to spread my sense around.

"Hmmm," My eyes gleamed with surprise when I found a silhouette is following me secretly.

But soon I recovered myself and didn't stop my movement and it will alert the person who is following me.

Valerie Lyons? Why is she following me? A trace of doubt appeared in my heart. But then a look of understanding dawned upon me.

Considering, how Elder Compton was worried about my safety. I guess, she must have been sent by the vice leader to protect me.

After gaining some clarity, I sighed in relief. But again I'm not at all okay with the protection. If I had known earlier about this, I would have strongly objected to this.

But it's a pity, I can only do something after entering deep into the woods.

After a few minutes, I came across the first mutated monster. Thanks to my exceptional perception ability. I caught the location of the monster.

Seeing that, I didn't immediately act rather I began to observe the monster's movements slowly.

The mutated monster looked completely pitch black. When I saw its green pupils, I realized it was a snake monster.

The snake monster is currently coiled around the bushes. But its big head is continuously monitoring the surroundings.

Seeing that, a wide smile spread on my face. Before attacking, I decided to check the surroundings once more.

On the other hand, Valerie Lyons observed Zack's activities from distance. As per the leader's order, she didn't want to expose her whereabouts.

But after seeing the monster, she quickly became alert. She saw the appearance of the monster and recognised its level in an instant.

"Class 2 Peak level," She thought to herself. But the mutated snake monster can fight across the ranks. But she knows Zack's combat power. He can easily take care of the monsters.

Just as she expected, she saw Zack dashing towards the monster to attack. At this moment, she realised something. "I don't know what element that kid has?" She thought to herself.

She recalled the past fights. But she never saw Zack's element at all. So a trace of curiosity appeared in her eyes.

But to her disappointment. Zack has killed the mutated monster with brute force. It all happened in a blink of an eye.

She saw him smashing the snake's head. The next second, the snake's head burst into blood mists.

Seeing that, a look of approval appeared in her eyes. She felt Zack doesn't want to consume his elemental essence. Since he can kill the monster with body strength then wasting elemental essence is unnecessary.

Time passed,

After one hour, there were no mutated monsters around their area. Now, she saw Zack is going deep into the woods.

Seeing that, her expression changed drastically. Even she has no confidence in going deep into the inner area.

There will be more monsters in that area. If two of them were besieged, then it will become difficult to escape from that area.

Realizing this, she decided to stop Zack. She quickly disappears from the spot and dashed towards Zack at full speed.

A couple of seconds later, she appeared in front of him.

On the other hand, when I found the area is clear. I decided to go a little deeper. But I believe Valerie Lyons won't let me go. Yet I made up my mind to see what's her reaction.

Whoosh

When I began to walk towards the inner area. A few seconds later, she appeared in front of me.

Seeing that, a complicated expression appeared in my eyes. If she tails me, then it will be impossible for me to practise peacefully inside the forest.

I began to hatch a good plan in my mind.

Chapter 410 Part One: Ruin

(From MC's perspective)

Trunulesia Forest,

After knowing, Valerie Lyons is keeping an eye on me. I decided to stay alert. Unfortunately, I couldn't find a good reason to persuade her to go back.

I raised my head and saw deep dark woods in the middle of the day. A trace of apprehension appeared in my eyes. Earlier, I wanted to go deep into the woods. But I almost neglected the most important thing.

That's safety. There is a high chance of encountering more than one mutated monster. If it's a group of monsters, then it will be more difficult for me not to use the lightning element.

Thinking about the possible outcomes, I decided to stop my current plans. It will be better If I go back and confront Elder Compton about this.

After fighting out, I took one good glance at the woods before going back to the base camp.

On the other hand, Valeri Lyons is looking forward to seeing Zack's strength. But when she saw him standing like a statue in the same place. She furrowed her eyebrows, "What is he doing?"

Then she spread around her senses to find mutated monsters. Seeing that there are no monsters around the vicinity, she sighed in relief.

But it won't be the same for so long. Mutated monsters residing in this forest have terrible senses. It will be possible for them to find out their whereabouts.

So before anything goes wrong, she decides to remind Zack. But suddenly, she saw Zack walking back towards their base's direction.

"What happened?" She said to herself.

Then she decided to follow as well.

...

At the same time,

Ricardo Compton and others reached the ruin site.

In front of them, it's the ruins of a massive complex. Looking at the tonnes of stones, Compton's expression turned solemn. This is not the first time he has come here.

But he was perplexed after finding some disturbance ruins. A trace of trespassing can be seen.

Not only him, but others also find out some traces. Erik Lloyd commented, "How come monsters appeared here?" He squinted his eyes as he noticed the trace of monster footprints.

Garrett Marsh also heard his friends murmur. He said, "I just hope it's not the elite monsters."

His words immediately sent a cold shiver down everyone's spine.

Only Compton appeared to be calm. He is slowly accessing the situation regarding how to proceed further.

He accepted his communication watch to look at the map of the ruins. When he heard everyone's words, he uttered in a stern tone, "Keep quiet and watch out for the surroundings"

After saying that he immediately looked into the ruined map.

Others immediately began to act upon receiving orders. Garrett and Erik looked at each other before scanning the area for monsters.

Terrell Boyd and Kara Robles also did the same.

Four of them picked each direction to scan the place, leaving behind the leader Compton in the middle.

Right now, Compton saw the map. This was the map drawn by him when he visited this place previously.

The ruin is divided into three sections. The first section of the ruin covered the entrance and some dilapidated buildings. The second section covered one medium size building. The third section is unknown.

He had previously reached the end of the second section. Because of a shortage of manpower, he wasn't able to access the third section.

After checking out everything, he sighed inwardly. The map was fine. But the problem is the current situation of the ruin. If monsters had trespassed this place. Then there is a high chance for the old paths to be blocked.

Then it will take some time for them to clear out everything. After retracting his thoughts, he looked at everyone, "Alright everyone we can enter the ruin now."

After hearing that everyone sighs in relief and returned to their position. Seeing that, Compton slowly led them towards the entrance of the ruins.

The entrance has no gate except for a narrow path. Right now the path is occupied by grown-out weeds.

Seeing that Erik Lloyd went forward to clear the path. After entering the first section area, the group slowly started to access the area.

Compton decided to check the first section before entering the second section. He wants to see whether any mutated monsters are hiding here.

Last time, he had thoroughly checked the buildings. All the valuable research materials were already taken out. There is nothing more to research here.

His goals were this time to check the unmarked place in the second section and to further explore the third section.

Time passed,

One hour later, the group found no trace of the monsters. After knowing that, the group finally walked towards the second section.

After they left, the ground beneath some buildings started to shake. Some old run-down buildings immediately started to crumble down.

But unfortunately, the group was not here to witness them.

The second section,

"Leader, what is your plan?" Garrett Marsh asked.

He is the second most talkative person after Vice leader Valerie Lyons.

Others also perked up their ears to listen.

Compton looked around and recalled the location of the unmarked building.

"We will check the unmarked building first," Compton said.

When he uttered those words, the expressions of others turned solemn. Unmarked buildings were not ordinary buildings. Every room inside that building has some kind of restrictions.

Compton observed the reactions of everyone. He doesn't want to fool everyone. This ruin is dangerous. After several decades of research, they only came to know this ruin might be some Academy.

But his old friends had different opinions. I think this ruin is a laboratory. Differences of opinion, but nothing can be said unless they complete the research.

They still have one more section to explore. Who knows what kind of place is the third section? After dispelling the thoughts, he looked around the surroundings.

The area is covered with overgrown vegetation. It is not wise to use elemental powers inside the ruin. It might trigger some restrictions.

After a few minutes, they reached the unmarked building. Compton spread around his elite sense to check the area. His senses immediately covered the door.

Seeing that, there is no restriction on the door. He sighed in relief. Then he took a lead to open the door.

"Don't know how long it has been but this metallic door is still strong," Compton muttered to himself.

After entering inside, a wide spacious hall came into view. Compton was stunned for a moment. Because the place was empty without any furniture or other items.

Right after him, Erik Lloyd and others slowly entered inside. They were also stunned after looking at the place.

"What happened?"

"Has anyone come before us?"

Erik Lloyd and Garrett Marsh uttered one by one. Kara Robles started gazing at the other doors. But, suddenly her eyes widened in disbelief.