

Supreme Lord 251

Chapter 251 Stealth And Destruction

As more than a hundred icicles poured down on Michael, he reacted quickly.

He used Enhancement on the Typhern Leather Armor Set twice and triggered the protection enchantments to protect himself from the worst before the hail of icicles impacted.

The layer of protection was quickly destroyed – frozen due to the icicles that impacted though luckily not as heavily as expected.

However, the freezing cold affected Michael quite a lot. His arms and upper body were struck by the remaining icicles, slowing down his movements quite a lot.

His upper body was half-frozen.

Under ordinary circumstances, Michael wouldn't be able to do anything. His entire being felt as if it was covered in ice, which was only obvious. He was on the verge of freezing to death, after all!

But Michael was not ordinary. He unleashed Extraction, enhanced by four layers of Enhancement, choosing himself as the target of extraction. He then extracted the cold from his body, by focusing on the areas that had been frozen.

In less than five seconds, Michael's skin regained its usual color and his body temperature returned to the norm. Afterward, Michael was ready to jump back into the battlefield.

Not even a second after he was ready to fight again, Michael was greeted by a small batch of enemies. One of them was already slashing at him, his longsword less than a meter away from cutting deep into his body.

Michael reacted instinctively. He pulled Zark back, condensed an energy arrow, and shot. The arrow collided with the longsword, forcefully terminating his enemies' attack. In the next instant, Michael retrieved Zark and manifested the Wyverntooth Spear.

He applied four layers of Enhancement on the Wyverntooth Spear and shrouded it with another layer of Extraction's golden streams. Afterward, two Spirit Whips appeared, lashing out at the closest enemy.

The Awakened didn't expect two mental attacks to strike him suddenly, causing him to falter as the Wyverntooth Spear's black blade shot forward. The blade was thirsty for blood, which was exactly what it obtained. Piercing deep into the enemy's neck, the black blade was instantly drenched in warm blood.

The Awakened's body writhed in pain and he stared into Michael's dark eyes with nothing but pure hatred. He didn't want to die. He didn't want to end everything right here.

There was still so much he had to do. Allowing everything to end right now was not something he could accept.

However, the Awakened could clearly feel the lifeforce and origin energy inside him being drained rapidly. Even if he wanted to get up, he couldn't feel his legs anymore. The Awakened slumped to the ground, slowly bleeding to death while the remnants of Michael's golden streams drained his origin energy and lifeforce rapidly.

Michael then used Enhancement on the Spirit Whips to lash out at the next opponent, breaking his mental defense before he appeared in front of his opponent.

Michael moved rapidly, inflicting deep gashes in the opponent's arms and legs to allow more golden streams to infiltrate the enemy's body and end him from the inside.

But before Michael could deal any actual damage, he noticed that a Lord appeared next to him. He was wielding a spear as well and seemed to be moving extremely fast.

Suddenly, the spearhead seemed to split up into several more that shot toward Michael simultaneously.

'Is that an illusion, or are all of them real? I cannot differentiate between them!' Michael cursed in his heart, jumping back to evade the incoming spear thrusts. He avoided getting struck and continued to retreat. A batch of icicles hailed down as he retreated, forcing Michael to step aside and use Enhancement on the Eagle Eye Soultrait.

He had to get a better understanding of the situation all around him more clearly to decide where to move and what to do at any moment in the battle.

Slowly, Michael was being restricted in movements and put into a tricky situation. Whenever he attacked one of the Lords or their subordinates, the others initiated attacks. They attacked from the side, or created a hail of icicles that poured down on him.

Yet, the smile on Michael's face was never wiped off, but that was only obvious. Everything was going according to his plan, after all.

Except Michael and Tac Lec, nobody knew about the existence of Tiara and Masked Saber. They made a big detour around the battlefield to avoid getting seen, and they hadn't revealed themselves until now.

That was not because they had suddenly gotten cold feet and didn't dare to join the battle. On the contrary, Tiara and Masked Saber desired to join the battlefield as soon as possible.

However, sometimes it was better to avoid a battle and prepare everything necessary to finish more enemies in a single wave.

With that motive, Masked Saber drank several energy potions to fill his body with origin energy. He then spent several minutes to convert the origin energy flooding his body into silver energy. Masked Saber compressed the silver energy shrouding his saber, preparing for a big attack.

After a few minutes of hard effort and the usage of every last bit of origin energy spreading through his body, Masked Saber's silver energy blade was ready to be unleashed.

Tiara acted as Masked Saber's bodyguard. She protected him from potential danger and led Masked Saber silently to the outskirts of the battlefield.

Once they went into position, Michael began to move. He retreated further, which was seen as a sign of defeat and a countermeasure for being unable to face the pressure of more than a dozen people attacking him at once.

Unfortunately, his opponents misunderstood Michael's actions. They couldn't be more wrong with their thoughts.

After Michael retreated far enough, Masked Saber's muscles in his right arm bulged. His veins popped and he groaned loudly, slashing horizontally through the air.

Masked Saber unleashed a highly compressed silver energy blade, which nearly caused all bones in his right arm to break the moment he released it.

The highly compressed silver energy blade accelerated rapidly. It cut through the air, creating a whistling noise that rattled the very ground beneath it – pulling everyone's attention to it.

At first, the compressed silver energy blade didn't seem all that dangerous. It didn't exude any pressure and seemed like a big-sized crescent-shaped wind blade with unique coloring.

But the silver energy blade was too fast. It was not possible for such a fast attack to exude no pressure. At the very least, the silver energy blade should release some excessive origin energy, which could be used to indicate the strength of the incoming attack.

However, there was none. The attack had been sealed perfectly, allowing not a single trace of energy to be wasted.

What did that mean?

Being able to create a an attack that didn't exude the slightest bit of pressure nor a trace of origin energy meant that the creator of the attack had an extremely high mastery of the attack he used, and that the attack was crafted by striking a perfect balance between stealth, and exceptional destructive force.

It was not a weak attack one could afford neglecting.

The perfectly compressed silver energy blade was an attack one had to pay attention to – if one wanted to survive that is.

To the misfortune of most Awakened, and Summons obstructing the path of the silver energy blade, not many realized the danger of the attack before it was way too late.

Hard evidence for that were the blood-curdling screams of agony reverberating through the mountain range as blood, intestines and body parts splattered all over the battlefield, painting it red.

Death and chaos lay waste to the battlefield while the Grim Reaper reaped the poor souls, who didn't realize how unpredictable life was until the very end.

Chapter 252 Ruling Of The Strongest

Masked Saber's attack drained all of his origin energy. He couldn't feel his right arm due to the force unleashed by the compressed silver energy blade, and he was exhausted to the extent that he could collapse at any moment.

Michael saw Tiara rush to Masked Saber for support and that they slowly retreated in his direction.

However, Michael had yet to finish the battle. Most opponents died facing the highly compressed silver energy blade, but not everyone was dead yet.

Four Summons, one Awakened, and three Lords were still alive; but only the Lords were nearly unscathed. The four Summons and the Awakened were swiftly taken care of.

Michael merely replaced the Wyverntooth Spear with Zark, pulled the bowstring back, and drilled an energy arrow in each of their heads.

Since they were already injured, the five targets weren't able to focus on Michael and the incoming energy arrows. They screamed in pain due to their severe wounds, only to end up with the Grim Reaper's soul-reaping scythe pressed against their necks as the arrows impacted.

Meanwhile, five streams of energy influx entered Michael's War Rune, allowing him to divert his attention to the three remaining Lords without any worries.

Two of the Lords had to use the majority of their origin energy to erupt their Soultraits and block the silver energy blade – or evade it.

They were flabbergasted and stared blankly in Masked Saber's direction, unsure how they missed noticing the subordinates of the Lord they'd been fighting.

Their expressions were filled with regret, shock, and anger, yet there was nothing they could do to bring back their loyal subordinates.

And their lives were on the line as well. The battle was still not over, after all!

Michael released a few energy arrows to test how much they had been weakened before he retrieved Zark to manifest the Wyverntooth Spear once again. Several layers of Enhancement shrouded his lower body, increasing his speed and acceleration drastically.

He turned into a blur as he blasted ahead. Simultaneously, three four-layer enhanced Spirit Whips manifested around Michael.

His head began to ache horribly, but Michael simply ignored the pain. If anything, Michael used the pain as a catalyst to break through his limit. He used Enhancement on the Wyverntooth Spear, just to apply Extraction's golden streams to the Wyverntooth Spear as well.

Michael moved across the battlefield with nimble steps. He created a feint by moving to the left before moving to the right. That way, he avoided the glacier-blue icicles of the Zantur, the third Lord, who had survived Masked Saber's attack.

The Zantur still had some origin energy left inside his body, but his barrages of dozens of icicles – directed at both Taros and Michael – had drained him quite a lot.

Even now, the Zantur was trying to face both Michael and Taros by using the glacier-blue icicle Soultrait. It was indeed a powerful Soultrait that could be used to support his comrades-in-arm on several battlefields. The only issue was that the icicles were useless against Michael and Taros.

Taros would rip out his frozen skin without a change in his expressions and his superior regenerative ability would heal him in the blink of an eye. Meanwhile, Michael could use Extraction to remove the frost before it infiltrated his body.

The only issue Michael faced while using Extraction on himself was his low mastery of using Extraction on himself.

Until now, Michael rarely used Extraction on himself. In his two natural cleansings, his body had naturally expelled impurities, which was also why it had been far easier to extract the impurities within his body during that time. It was like his body had guided Extraction during those two times.

But this guide didn't exist when he tried to remove the freezing effect of the icicles from his body. Thus, he was stupefied by the freezing chill for a second or two whenever he was struck by the icicles, slowing his movements.

Fortunately, Michael didn't have an issue with that anymore. Evading the icicles was no problem at this point.

He appeared in front of the two exhausted Lords as they gulped down several energy potions. They clearly hoped to be able to unleash their full strength before Michael arrived. However, they were too late.

Michael unleashed Extraction to extract the origin energy in the surroundings. He then slashed through the air horizontally, slicing through the two exhausted Lords simultaneously.

Two of the three enhanced Spirit Whips lashed out at one of them each, just for the black spear blade to slice through their chests as if it was a searing hot knife cutting tofu.

Michael lashed out with the Spirit Whips a second time after the Wyverntooth Spear sliced through them. He then allowed Extraction to invade their dying bodies, draining their remaining lifeforce and origin energy rapidly.

The Zantur tried to restrict Michael, but a wall of Extraction's golden streams had already formed in front of him, extracting the icicles' freezing effect before they passed through the gaseous golden wall to reach his opponent.

Michael allowed the icicles to impact now that they couldn't cause him any harm. Afterward, he shot forward with the aim to finish the Zantur and end the whole battle for good.

However, just as Michael burst forth in the Zantur's direction, Michael saw several large objects flying through the air – right at the Zantur.

'Corpses?' Michael immediately recognized the objects that had been thrown through the air. He looked over to Taros, just to see that the ferocious Demi-Human had already delivered a lethal blow on his opponent. He threw the corpses in the Zantur's direction with the intention to bury him under them.

However, the Zantur could evade most corpses. He was only hit by one of them, which was enough to push him down on the ground.

By the time the Zantur tried to get up, Michael had already appeared in front of the Zantur. Extraction was fully unleashed, extracting the origin energy in the surroundings.

Michael spun the Wyverntooth Spear in the air, turned it upside down, and struck at the defenseless Zantur, who was also under the constant assault of three four-layer enhanced Spirit Whips.

The Zantur coughed up blood, but he was unwilling to give up. He condensed a few icicles mid-air, hoping to strike and kill Michael at once. I think you should take a look at

But Michael's spear was already right in front of the Zantur. It was only a few centimeters away from his face.

"Noo...—" He could barely utter in a weak desperate voice before the black spear blade was drenched in blood once again.

The blade cut easily through the Zantur's silver skin, and it dug deep through his eyesocket, piercing his brain way too easily.

By now, Michael was accustomed to death and murder. It was not a good feeling to kill his opponents, but the rules of the survival had been deeply imprinted in his mind.

He knew that others would pounce on him and tear him apart the moment they obtained the golden opportunity. Thus, instead of giving others the opportunity to reap his life he preferred to be the merciless killer.

Surviving and living properly was not easy in the Origin Expanse, but the rules were. Survive by all means and take whatever you can if you're capable enough.

The strong could do whatever they wanted, while the weak had to obey them in order to survive.

And in this battle, Michael was going to survive. He had promised himself that he would gain everything and he was steadily progressing towards that goal. While he emerged victorious, the Lords, their Awakened, and their Summons lost what was the most precious to them; their lives.

They had entered the Lord Rift, hoping to make the biggest gains – even if that meant they had to kill other Lords – only to end up as another Lord's prey.

Michael twisted the Wyverntooth Spear in the head of the Zantur before he pulled the weapon out of his target, finishing off the pesky opponent once and for all.

Not even a moment later, a new energy influx entered his War Rune while Michael instinctively used Extraction on the Zantur to extract the remaining origin energy inside his body.

He replenished his origin energy rapidly while looking over to Taros, who reciprocated his gaze with a devious glint.

Taros tilted his head staring at Michael, gripping his war axes tightly.

'Shouldn't he be tired by now?' Michael wondered, averting his gaze to look between Taros and Tac Lec.

The two of them had been fighting for quite a while before the dozen Lords arrived, and it was not like Taros fought vigilantly. He was injured more often than anyone else on the battlefield. Even with superior regenerative abilities, Taros should be exhausted by now.

Thus, Michael just nodded his head in Taros' direction before he started to collect the corpses all around him.

'Oh? I already extracted his Soultrait Symbol? I hope they didn't see that,' Michael thought, slightly surprised when he saw the Soultrait Symbol of the Zantur popping up in the golden stream of Extraction.

Nothing else had been extracted from the Zantur's corpse yet. Thus, Michael quickly stored the Soultrait Symbol and the corpses in the War Rune's storage space.

Even though he looked like he was fully focused on collecting the corpses lying around on the battlefield, Michael was still vigilant of Taros and Tac Lec.

They seemed to have stopped fighting for the time being to stare at him intently.

Michael's body was still covered in the white hues of Enhancement, and his Artifacts were still manifested as well.

If Taros or Tac Lec initiated an attack, Michael could react instantly. He was ready.

However, they didn't attack him. They simply kept staring at him for a while.

'Their Soultraits would be quite nice for my repertoire. Eating to grow stronger seems to suit me perfectly, and controlling the four basic elements seems quite nice as well,' Michael thought in regret.

Fortunately, he understood his situation very well.

Michael was not exactly weak, but he had witnessed Taros' fighting style. His brute force was terrifying, especially after he summoned the War Axes.

Dealing with a bunch of Lords, whom he could injure to drain them slowly with Extraction, was possible. However, fighting a single individual like Taros or Tac Lec was not something Michael was good at.

His combat style so far had been honed to fight large-scale battles after all.

Chapter 253 The 8th

"You're the Lord of the Southern Ice Mountains, the Awakened who removed the Chaos Essence that took root in Xiltra, aren't you?" Michael asked Taros after spending a few minutes in a stalemate situation with Tac Lec and Taros.

He actually wanted to leave now that he collected most corpses, but his curiosity held him back.

Michael wanted to know if Taros' strength was mostly based on his unsealed Divine Beast bloodline, or if his Soultrait was the reason he was so strong.

There was something odd about Taros, and Michael wanted to unravel the mystery.

"You don't look like a Lord of the Zentika Empire, so how do you know that Chaos Essence took root in Xiltra?" Taros asked with a strong dialect of the origin language.

He didn't seem to be used to speaking in the origin language often, given that his voice was hoarse and he seemed unfamiliar with the pronunciation of the words he used.

"This guy over there is a Lord in the Untamed Jungle, and he destroyed part of the Untamed Jungle using Chaos Pills to kill some of Lord Targes' Paladins. The Paladins, who survived the initial attack, unknowingly brought the Chaos Essence inside Xiltra. You know the rest," Tac Lec answered on behalf of Michael.

Interestingly enough, Tac Lec didn't seem to feel like fighting anymore. The Zantur was still vigilant of surprise attacks, but he didn't conjure new elemental combinations to bombard Taros with them.

A smile filled with satisfaction had blossomed on his face. Tac Lec was clearly satisfied with the death of the dozen Lords and their subordinates.

'It seems like the Lords' deaths will reward him with quite some benefits,' Michael thought, his eyes moving to Tac Lec.

Michael was quite surprised when he heard what Tac Lec said. He didn't expect Tac Lec to know what he had done to defeat the 13 Paladins.

Unfortunately, that also meant the Zentika Empire was well aware of what he was capable of, and how much pain and suffering his actions had caused to them while he was still a lower Tiered Lord.

"I researched Chaos Essence quite a bit when I heard about the destruction a Tier-1 Lord caused in the Untamed Jungle's outer area. You did quite well with the Chaos Pills, though it was definitely dangerous," Tac Lec answered Michael's doubts while his head flicked to Taros.

Taros' war axes disappeared inside his War Rune, and his body deflated back to his original size. Once his body regained its original size, Taros' arms and legs began to shake.

"Fuck this shit. I've been using my Divine Beast bloodline way too much to defeat these scums," He cursed, pointing at Tac Lec, who coughed up blood as well.

The bright shimmer on his silver skin dimmed down following Taros' words. Tac Lec had been using his Unique Racial Ability much longer than he intended to. The arrival of the dozen Lords had stirred quite a trouble for the trio.

He stopped using his Unique Racial ability and sighed deeply. A few healing potions appeared in his hand with a flick of his wrist, and he gulped them down at once.

"Don't even think about attacking. I can burn my blood to exceed my limit. You don't want to face me when I'm at my lowest. Desperate beasts are the fiercest, after all!" Taros threatened seeing that Michael was the only one with his Soultraits activated, and his Artifacts tightly gripped.

"Don't worry. I made enough gains by killing these Lords. You are probably more useful to me alive, either way," Michael said, trying to sound nonchalant.

However, he was also getting tired slowly.

Extracting the lifeforce and origin energy of other existences might help him to momentarily alleviate any pain and the lack of origin energy. But unfortunately, the lifeforce and origin energy was not his. It belonged to someone else and had to be annexed and altered properly under normal circumstances.

Michael couldn't spend much time focusing on the annexation and alteration process mid-battle. Thus, he absorbed the lifeforce and origin energy just to use it up the next moment.

The constant usage and absorption of energy and lifeforce that was not even his was quite draining. The exhaustion was slowly piling up and struck him once the adrenaline coursing through his body lessened – which was immediately after the battle ended.

Michael felt a little dizzy. He terminated the usage of all of his Soultraits and sighed heavily. A few glass vials appeared in his hands as well, and he swallowed the viscous liquid inside without complaints.

By the time he finished the potions, Tiara and Masked Saber had reached him.

They had been vigilant of Tac Lec and Taros, ready to move around the battlefield and strike them from the back. But since Michael chose to avoid fighting the two Lords, they thought that it was better to move next to Michael.

At least, they could protect Michael better by standing close to him.

After seeing Masked Saber and Tiara from the Silverfang Tigerfolk, Taros changed his stance.

He had been busy tearing apart a few Lords, Awakened, and Summons, and didn't even notice that Michael brought his subordinates to the Lord Rift.

"So you're the Lord in the Untamed Jungle. Seems like our future goals are the same then. There is no need to waste our time with useless talk. We'll see each other in the future, whether it will be as opponents or allies," Taros said, looking at Tac Lec and Michael before he turned around.

He walked off and began marching toward the upper area of the mountain range without another backward glance.

Michael was quite impressed with Taros' confidence. He was not sure if he could walk off like that knowing that two potential enemies were staring at him from behind.

Taros was not scared of getting stabbed in the back, but why?

"You're trying to annex the Zentika Empire, aren't you?" Michael asked Tac Lec when he realized what Taros' words meant, "Why?"

Tac Lec's attention moved from Taros to Michael. He stared straight into Michael's eyes, but didn't say a word.

A whole minute of awkward silence passed but Tac Lec didn't say anything. He simply turned around at one point and left.

"Just say that you don't want to tell me. No need to act mysterious like that," Michael grumbled.

He was curious about Tac Lec's reasoning and past, but he wouldn't bother the Zantur with questions. There was no need.

If Tac Lec desired to annex the Zentika Empire from within, why would Michael have anything against that? It played straight into his cards!! I think you should take a look at

Left alone with no more enemies, or observing eyes, Michael turned to Masked Saber and Tiara to inspect their injuries. Michael took a look at Masked Saber's right arm and channeled some of his origin energy into Masked Saber.

Creating an attack like the highly compressed energy blade was far from simple. Masked Saber overdrafted the origin energy inside his body to create it, causing a state of energy overcharge. Energy pills and potions may help Masked Saber a little but Masked Saber wasn't able to control the origin energy inside his body right now.

He required Michael's help to circulate the origin energy through his body and annex the energy slowly to alleviate the state of energy overcharge.

Michael spent more than half an hour tending to Masked Saber's condition even though the commotion caused by the big battle was likely to attract monsters and other Lords. He didn't care if someone would come to find them. Treating Masked Saber was his highest priority.

Nonetheless, it was great that nobody attacked them until Masked Saber felt a little better.

They chose to leave quickly after collecting the corpses Taros left behind. Taros had been more interested in the mountain range than the corpses and the potential loot he could obtain from them.

Michael was the exact opposite. He may not be able to Extract the SoulStar Fragments and Soultrait Symbols of the Lords and Awakened he didn't kill, but he could still extract a large number of Summoning Scrolls, the Artifacts bound to their War Rune, and the loot they collected inside the Lord Rift.

Michael would never leave those treasure troves behind.

Once the battlefield had been plundered, Michael and the others left. They decided to take a short break inside a small cave a few kilometers away from the mountain range where Tiara and Masked Saber stood on guard for potential dangers while Michael took a good look at the fortune they earned.

Michael first retrieved the corpses of all Summons, the Awakened, and Lords that had been killed by Taros. He wouldn't get any SoulStar Fragments and Soultraits from them, so he wanted to extract them quickly.

Michael's golden streams of Extraction emerged from his palms, they moved in the air as if they were alive and shot toward the corpses.

After advancing Extraction to a 6-Star Soultrait it was much easier and faster to extract corpses. Michael plundered the corpses within a few minutes, resulting in a vast fortune of Superior Tier-2 Monster corpses followed by all kinds of other rare treasures that could be easily found in the Lord Rift.

The Lords and Awakened killed by Taros had even been able to find some rare saplings and seeds – which Michael could plant to create a highly enriching ecosystem for rare trees and plants.

Michael dissected the monster corpses while extracting the additional Summoning Scrolls and other loot he could extract via Extraction.

Following that, Michael organized everything. He then retrieved the remaining corpses with a bright gleam in his eyes.

He didn't know what awaited him but he was quite excited.

However, before Michael could start extracting the remaining corpses, he noticed that something was wrong with his body.

His body felt eerily warm and his heart was palpating wildly.

Barely a few seconds passed before he began to vomit blood.

'What is happening?'

A throbbing headache crept up his brain, and he felt like he was going to suffocate.

Suddenly, everything around Michael turned pitch-black, except for a huge white pillar that manifested in front of him.

'Huh? Isn't that...!' Michael stared at the pillar of light, slowly realizing what was going on.

He had inadvertently entered his consciousness, the deepest part of his being, where the pillar of light – the heart of his War Rune – was located.

Eight Soultrait Symbols were revolving around the pillar of light. They seemed in disarray and moving unstably.

Only the Symbol of Extraction seemed stable and were exuding a golden light to form a glowing sphere of light.

Michael squinted his eyes while looking at the golden sphere of light.

'What is going on here? And why do I have eight Soultrait Symbols? I should only have seven Soultraits!!'

Even if Michael wanted to understand the situation, the appearance of a new Soultrait, and the creation of the sphere of light confused him quite a lot. And then there was the fact that his Soultraits seemed to be in disarray, all of a sudden.

Michael didn't even do anything special, yet everything inside his consciousness seemed to have changed.

"Extraction, Eagle Eyes, Enhancement, Spirit Whip, Taming, Soul Grimoire, Mind Reader, ... and Glacicle?" Michael murmured trying to figure out what was going on.

"Glacicle...isn't that the Soultrait of the Zantur? Didn't I store it inside the War Rune's storage space? Why did it fuse with me?!"

Michael had no idea how that happened, but Glacicle seemed to have fused with his War Rune. It was a Soultrait with zero stars. The outlines of the first star could be seen dimly, but they were extremely weak.

'I didn't obtain any information from Glacicle's description and effects because it's not even a full-fledged Soultrait after I extracted it. Did the War Rune accidentally absorb the Soultrait instead of storing it because it's not even a complete Soultrait yet?' Michael was not sure if his theory made sense, but he didn't know what else it could have been that drove the outcome.

However, one thing was for sure; fusing with Glacicle was the only thing that changed compared to before – and it was most likely the reason for his suffering.

Fusing with Glacicle – his 8th Soultrait – caused a drastic reaction that affected his entire being.

If Michael didn't want to end up in an even worse state than he was, he had to find a solution – quickly.

Otherwise...

Chapter 254 Sphere Of Light

Michael had very limited knowledge about the problems that could occur by fusing too many Soultraits to his War Rune. In fact, only a handful of Awakened all over the Origin Expanse would know what would happen if they manifested eight Soultraits. It was not exactly a common occurrence, after all.

'Maybe if I upgrade Glacicle to a complete 1-Star Soultrait something will change?' Michael mused, not really sure how much impact upgrading Glacicle would have.

But even if it was not that impactful, Michael didn't know what to do, in the first place. There was not much to do other than experimenting a little.

With that in mind, he willed some of the SoulStar Fragments stored near the pillar of light to move toward Glacicle.

Michael pushed a handful of SoulStar Fragments towards the Symbol of Glacicle, yet only two SoulStar Fragment reached the Soultrait. This surprised Michael quite a bit. He ignored the stream of Glacicle's Soultrait information, which had begun to enter his mind slowly, and focused on the movements of the remaining SoulStar Fragments instead.

The SoulStar Fragments Michael had willed were subtly pulled toward the sphere of golden light that expanded around the Symbol of Extraction.

As the SoulStar Fragments collided with the sphere of light they burst apart. The strand of soul power that had been stored inside the SoulStar Fragment was unleashed and devoured by the sphere of light. The sphere of light's glow intensified; a clear indicator of it being nourished by the soul power of the SoulStar Fragment.

'Hmm? What is this sphere of light? It can even absorb SoulStar Fragments.' Michael wondered, only for his attention to move back to Glacicle.

Under normal circumstances, a starless Soultrait shouldn't require more than two SoulStar Fragments to upgrade to a 1-Star Soultrait. After all, it usually required three to five SoulStar Fragments to upgrade a 1-Star Soultrait to a 2-Star Soultrait. Yet, Glacicle's 1st Star hadn't been fully formed yet.

Michael frowned seeing this, but he chose to ignore the confusing feeling that spread through him as he continued to invest SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Glacicle. This time, however, he focused on the Glacicle Soultrait to see how many SoulStar Fragments it required to be upgraded.

10 SoulStar Fragments later, Michael's frown deepened.

'It took 12 SoulStar Fragments to complete Glacicle? Why would it be so expensive?' Michael asked himself, in bewilderment.

He then moved his attention to Eagle Eyes to see if there was something wrong with just Glacicle, or if his other Soultraits required more SoulStar Fragments to be upgraded as well. After he used more than 30 SoulStar Fragments on Eagle Eyes, realization dawned upon him.

'Why are all Soultraits so expensive to be upgraded all of a sudden? Is it because I added an 8th Soultrait? Maybe, the War Rune cannot sustain more than seven Soultraits.'

Various theories formed in his mind, but one was absurder than the other. Most of them didn't make any sense, in the first place.

At the end of the day, Michael couldn't find out the reason all Soultraits were suddenly more expensive to be upgraded after Glacicle fused with his War Rune. If he had to guess something it might be the fact that the human soul couldn't endure the toll of fusing with more than seven Soultraits. That was the theory that made most sense in Michael's opinion.

Of course, this theory might still be wrong.

Unsure what to do now, Michael experimented a little bit more with his Soultraits. For every SoulStar Fragment he used to upgrade his Soultraits another SoulStar Fragment was used to nourish the sphere of light.

Michael did this intentionally, hoping that the sphere of light would provide the answer he sought. It didn't seem dangerous and the Extraction Symbol was at its center.

At one point, Michael began to invest SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Extraction. It was a mere experiment with little to no hope to change anything. However, that tiny strand of light at the end of the dark tunnel began to shine brighter when Michael noticed something.

"Extraction's SoulStar Fragment demand didn't increase? It stayed the same!" He exclaimed as his eyes widened in surprise.

Once he realized that Extraction didn't require more SoulStar Fragments, it didn't take long before Michael made another discovery.

'The sphere of light formed a socket that revolves around the Symbol of Extraction... Could that be helpful?' Michael mused, instinctively willing Eagle Eyes to move to the empty socket that was revolving around the Symbol of Extraction.

Afterward, Michael spent a few more SoulStar Fragments to see whether upgrading Eagle Eyes was still expensive or if it returned to the original cost of upgrade.

It only took ten SoulStar Fragments for Michael to reach a final conclusion.

"Eagle Eyes's demand for SoulStar Fragments is still not the same as before, but it's not as cheap as before. The sphere of light seems to control how much upgrading Soultraits costs."

After his initial discovery, Michael spent most of the remaining SoulStar Fragments to nourish the sphere of light. Initially, he had 1193, but his experiments cost him close to 200 SoulStar Fragments. Michael spent the rest nourishing the sphere of light, which expanded in size upon digesting 1,000 SoulStar Fragments in the blink of an eye.

Michael felt a little discomfort spreading through his body upon nourishing the sphere of light. It felt like something inside him was changing slowly. However, the final result was not a bad feeling. On the contrary, he felt pretty good after more empty sockets manifested within the sphere of light.

The sockets were in different positions – some closer to the Symbol of Extraction, some farther away –, however, all sockets were revolving around the Symbol of Extraction.

Once a total of seven sockets had been formed, the Soultrait Symbols began to vibrate violently. They moved around in unpredictable patterns, causing great harm to Michael, who began to vomit blood once again.

He was not sure what was going on, but he could see that only the Eagle Eyes and Extraction Soultrait were calm and unmoving while the rest were moving frantically, making him feel uneasy.

Michael may not understand what the sphere of light was, but he could tell that he needed it. He willed his Soultraits to enter the sphere of light, where he embedded them in the empty sockets one by one. I think you should take a look at

Only then did the Soultrait calm down.

Once the Soultraits calmed down, Michael didn't feel like vomiting blood anymore. His condition improved immediately, and he could pay more attention to the sphere of light, and the changes that occurred to him after binding the 8th Soultrait to his War Rune.

'The cost of upgrading a Soultrait is determined by the distance the sockets have to the core of the sphere of light, right?' Michael asked himself, knowing that he would have to experiment a little bit more before he could come to a conclusion.

He left his consciousness and got up from the ground. Meanwhile, Masked Saber and Tiara stood next to him, staring at their Lord and Master with worry.

"Are you fine? What happened?" Masked Saber asked when he noticed that Michael seemed to have stopped puking blood and was in a condition to talk.

Tiara bent down to help him get up, but she realized that something about Michael had changed. Michael's expression and everything were still the same as before, yet something had changed about his presence.

Somehow, he felt a little bit more like a deadly predator than before. The danger she perceived from him naturally was much higher than before.

"Did something happen to you, Master?" Tiara could only ask, unsure of what had just happened to Michael.

"I am fine. I just encountered a small issue with my Soultraits. But it's solved now. There is no need to worry," Michael responded to Masked Saber and Tiara, forcing a smile on his lips.

He wiped the blood around his lips and focused on the corpses of the 8 Lords and 9 Awakened he and Masked Saber had killed in the previous battle.

After unleashing Extraction, he quickly extracted the corpses' SoulStar Fragments, Soultrait Symbols, Artifacts, the loot they'd procured in the Lord Rift, and more.

Michael gained a total of seven Soultrait Symbols and 719 SoulStar Fragments. Upon extracting the Soultrait Symbols afterward, Michael was able to accumulate a total of 1363 SoulStar Fragments.

That was more than enough to continue experimenting with the sphere of light, and the changes in the upgrade cost for his Soultraits.

He used roughly 100 SoulStar Fragments to figure out how expensive upgrading the Soultraits was in the different spots all over the sphere of light before he concluded that Extraction was the cheapest to upgrade and that the cost of upgrading the other Soultraits increased exponentially the further the distance to the center of the sphere of light.

"If that's the case...can't I just switch their position whenever I want to upgrade them?" Michael murmured quietly to himself before he gave switching the position of his Soultraits a try.

His train of thought was quick, but reality was cruel. Extraction couldn't be moved away from the center of the sphere of light. It felt like the entire sphere of light would crumble the moment Michael tried to move it. Thus, he quickly forgot about moving another Soultrait to Extraction's central position.

The other Soultraits couldn't be moved either, but they didn't cause the sphere of light to crumble when he attempted to move them.

That was also why Michael chose to use Extraction on a few Soultraits to see if he could extract them from the sphere of light's sockets, and if it was worth moving them around.

Michael spend the next half an hour experimenting with the sphere of light. Unfortunately, the results were rather unpleasant.

It was possible to extract the Soultraits from the sphere of light's sockets, but he lost SoulStar Fragments while extracting the Soultrait Symbols. The loss was not small either. He lost between 10% to 20% of the accumulated Soul Power while extracting the Soultrait Symbols.

That meant low-level Soultraits with a Soul Power of 10 would lose one or two Soul Power Units, while those stronger Soultraits with a soul power of 200 would lose 20 to 40 Soul Power Units.

This ruined Michael's plan to keep switching his Soultraits' position to ensure that the cost of Soultrait upgrades wouldn't be enormous. It also meant that Michael had to figure out which Soultraits he should focus on, and which Soultraits didn't require his focus. After all, investing twice the amount of SoulStar Fragments to upgrade certain Soultraits – that were located further away from the center of the sphere of light – wasn't really worth it.

'Enhancement and Eagle Eyes are still the best Soultraits for combat and other purposes. But what about Spirit Whip?' Michael asked himself, scratching the back of his head.

There were only three sockets located close to Extraction, and one of it had already been occupied by the Eagle Eyes Symbol. Enhancement was the Soultrait he used the most in combat. It was the most versatile Soultrait he possessed, granting him great opportunities mid-battle.

This left only one more empty socket that granted a low upgrade cost for Soultraits. The other sockets were located farther away from the sphere of light's center, increasing their upgrade costs by more than 50%.

"For large-scale battles, Glacicle will be much better than Spirit Whip – especially if I use Enhancement to strengthen the Glacicles," Michael mumbled, "I can still upgrade Spirit Whip to 5-Star, but I am not sure if Spirit Whip's enhancement will have a big impact if I keep focusing on it. Glacicle, on the contrary, can turn into a terrific Soultrait that requires little to no focus to create a barrage of hundreds of Glacicles."

Michael was not happy that he had to organize his Soultraits, but he could understand why it was like that.

The human soul was never supposed to handle eight Soultraits at the same time. However, Michael had broken the established norms.

It was a little bit annoying, but it was also something Michael could be proud of.

Furthermore, the increased upgrade cost wasn't too much of a problem. After all, he would still focus only on a handful of Soultraits. Nothing had changed, or so Michael thought.

Chapter 255 Council's Conditions

After a long time, Michael finally finished arranging the constellation of his Soultrait Symbols.

Extraction was the sphere of light's core, while Eagle Eyes, Enhancement, and Glacicle formed the inner area that revolved right around the Symbol of Extraction.

The middle area had two sockets which were occupied by Spirit Whip and Taming, only for Soul Grimoire and Mind Reader to fill the outermost sockets in the 'outer area'.

Michael had yet to find a significant use for Soul Grimoire and Mind Reader. Thus, he rather focused on his other Soultraits for the time being.

In the worst case, he could spend 2.5x the original cost to upgrade the Soultraits in the outer area. It may be expensive, but it was better than removing a Soultrait from the inner area to switch the position of his Soultraits once again.

"This is so difficult," Michael complained silently, fully understanding that the situation wouldn't get easier.

On the contrary, he could tell that for every new Soultrait he bound to his War Rune, he would have to spend more SoulStar Fragments to create a new socket in the sphere of light.

Michael actually thought about removing Soul Grimoire and Mind Reader from his War Rune just to decrease the number of his Soultraits. Unfortunately, the sphere of light could only work properly as long as all of its sockets were occupied. That meant Michael had to place all eight Soultraits in the sockets, otherwise, the sphere of light would malfunction and possibly be destroyed.

Unsure whether he could repair or recreate the sphere of light if something were to go wrong, Michael did not dare to take the risk of damaging the sphere of light.

Thus, he had to live with the consequences of possessing eight Soultraits.

"Well, it's not too bad. Everything is rather organized, and the difference in the amount of SoulStar Fragments required in the inner area vs. the middle area is only an increase of 50%. It's still feasible to upgrade Spirit Whip once I've accumulated enough SoulStar Fragments," Michael told himself before moving his attention to Glacicle.

Michael had spent 100 SoulStar Fragments to experiment a little with the increase of upgrade cost inside the sphere of light. Thus, he had only 1263 SoulStar Fragments left.

He then used some of the remaining SoulStar Fragments to make up for the loss of Soul Power Units some of his Soultraits encountered when Michael had used Extraction to switch the positions of the Soultraits inside the sphere of light.

Moving them around had been quite expensive for Soultraits with 4-Stars and above. He had to spend more than 500 SoulStar Fragments to make sure that his Soultraits were as strong as they had been before!

Fortunately, that left more than 700 SoulStar Fragments at Michael's disposal.

He immediately used 336 SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Glacicle to 4-Stars. This resulted in a flood of information entering his mind, providing him with basic information about Glacicle's power, its effects, and certain special functions.

'It should require a little bit more than 3000 SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Glacicle to a 5-Star Soultrait. Spirit Whip will probably require close to 4,500 SoulStar Fragments. I should start collecting more SoulStar Fragments,' Michael told himself and realized what a tough task he had set up for himself.

It was actually not that easy to harvest SoulStar Fragments. However, the Lord Rift was a golden opportunity to change this since even monsters dropped SoulStar Fragments in here.

Thinking about the monsters of the Lord Rift, Michael diverted his focus to the loot he plundered from the Lords and Awakened he and Masked Saber had killed.

There was a big mountain of corpses and other loot waiting for him to dissect and organize.

Michael had lots of work to do.

Three hours later, more than 300 Superior Monster corpses had been dissected, looted, and tightly secured inside his spatial pouch.

The Lord Rift's countdown was slowly moving closer to the last phase, leaving less than one and a half days for Michael to make some more big gains.

"If we enter the abandoned town to search for natural Artifacts and other heavenly treasures, we will definitely be attacked. But is that really something we should avoid? If they want to kill us, there is no reason for us to show mercy, right? Killing the Lords of the Zentika Empire can only benefit us and the territory," Masked Saber said when he saw that Michael was thinking about their next move. I think you should take a look at

Michael knew that Masked Saber was right. Like always, Masked Saber's words made sense. Nonetheless, Michael felt that something was wrong.

It was obvious that some Lords would enter the abandoned town to prey on others, but after seeing two groups of Lords fighting side-by-side, Michael felt that the hierarchy in the Zentika Empire was not that simple. That was something Michael reaffirmed with the Memory Orbs he had obtained from the Lords and Awakened he and Masked Saber had killed.

Some of the Lords didn't want to work with other Lords. They would rather travel through the Lord Rift on their own. However, most Lords of the Zentika Empire had been forced to work with others due to the conditions the council had forced upon them.

These conditions were tied to the Lord Rift entrance tickets which the Lords had only been granted by the council after they accepted to obey the stronger and work together with them to ensure that the Zentika Empire gained the most.

While it was correct that the Zentika Empire benefited a lot if the Empire's Lords worked together, it was also true that the weaker individuals barely received scraps. Their biggest gains would be the corpses of the Superior Existences they had killed.

Considering that the Lord Rift was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, most Lords were displeased at the thought of working with other Lords – especially the arrogant folks, who would order them around as if they were their slaves. In exchange for that kind of treatment, they would only obtain a few monster corpses as well. It was truly frustrating.

But even then, all the Lords, who had been chosen by the Council still agreed to the conditions.

Why?

Entering the Lord Rift was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Not only was it possible that they might gain a lot more than they initially thought, but it was also an honorable task. Thousands were dying to get the chance so being chosen as trustworthy and powerful enough to enter the Lord Rift and bring back as much gains as possible would increase their social standing by a lot.

It would bring them honor and glory throughout the Zentika Empire.

Honor may not feed them, but the thought of additional gains certainly did. Thus, the weaker Lords could only obey and temporarily become the helping hands of the stronger Lords. They accepted the condition of the council and obtained a Lord Rift entrance ticket.

"Only Tac Lec and a few other Lords were able to procure their own Lord Rift Entrance ticket. That means we might have to face bigger groups of Lords if we're entering the abandoned town," Michael pointed out, but Tiara only gave it a shrug.

"But will that really be a problem for us, Master? Our teamwork is great, and we're stronger than most enemies either way. Masked Saber's silver energy blade is extremely powerful, my Soultraits are not weak either, and you are...well, you are our Master, and in possession of several combat-related Soultraits. Even Tac Lec and Taros wouldn't have an easy time fighting you despite having a higher degree of refinement and better Artifacts!" Tiara declared proudly.

Michael could understand her point of view, but he shook his head. There was something else he forgot to mention earlier.

"Since we know that the Lords in a group have all accepted the conditions of the empire's council, we know that they'll start searching for the outsiders in the last 20 hours of the Lord Rift's countdown. The memories of two Lords showed me that the Zentika Empire's council wants to get rid of all outsiders to ensure that only they could gain something from the Lord Rift. The Lord groups will search for us and attack with their numerical advantage and great fighting power," Michael said, revealing another important piece of information, which he had found out from a Lord's Memory Orb.

He looked at the response of his subordinates, smiled slyly, and added, "That being said, I think we should strike the groups of Lords first. If they're going to attack us either way, we might as well stride forward and take them by surprise!"

Michael's strategy was quite simple at this point. If others wanted to harm him, his people, or his territory, they would be his enemies. And enemies had to be removed as quickly as possible to ensure that they couldn't cause any trouble.

Michael was fully aware that he changed a lot during the last few months. Instead of being afraid or hesitant of ending the lives of living beings, Michael could mercilessly strike his enemies.

He was still very vigilant of others, and careful before he jumped into action, but he never had a second thought once he identified his opponents.

Now that he found out who his enemies in the Lord Rift were, Michael was ready to strike them first.

There was no hesitation in his actions as they began moving closer to the center of the Lord Rift. He had spent more than enough time harvesting rare plants, herbs, trees, and extract ores.

It was about time that the Hunters went on their next kill!

Meanwhile, the temperature in the Lord Rift continued to rise.

Chapter 256 Hail

Tiara ran through the densely grown forest as fast as she could. Her feet carried her quickly past the thick undergrowth while her eyes moved left and right to keep track of the surroundings.

She utilized her Soultrait to keep changing her trajectory without losing her momentum. Because of the sudden changes in her movement pattern, nobody could tell where exactly she was headed to.

This forced the pursuers behind her to keep following Tiara, unable to reach her.

Not even a full hour had passed since Michael decided that it was time to hunt the Lord groups in the Lord Rift when Tiara ended up being hunted by a large group of more than ten Lords!

It was difficult to catch her, but some of the Lords managed to inch closer to her.

It was only a matter of time before they would arrive next to Tiara and catch her.

When Tiara noticed that her movement speed wasn't enough anymore, her pupils changed color and shape. Fur began to grow out of her body, and Tiara's presence became wilder and more ferocious. Her movement speed accelerated again, allowing Tiara to increase the distance between her and the hunting Lords.

A few projectiles whizzed through the air with a terrifying velocity, but Tiara evaded them using her Soultrait to change her movement pattern instantaneously. Even after more than ten projectiles came flying toward her at the same time, Tiara was not scared. She used her Soultrait repetitively, nimbly evading the projectiles.

After a pursuit of more than five minutes, Tiara reached the small plains bordering the densely grown forest. She didn't hesitate to push through the foliage and emerge in the small plain where she continued to run with all her might.

The hunting Lords continued to pursue her, being unable to go against the order they had been given by the Zentika Empire's council. Their mission was to hunt down all outsiders, and Tiara from the Silverfang Tigerfolk was most definitely not part of the Zentika Empire.

They pushed their bodies through the densely grown forest and finally escaped the forest, ready to accelerate to catch and kill Tiara at any moment.

Their focus was on Tiaras so they were unable to detect the gradual rise in temperature around them. By now, the Lord Rift's dimension was extremely hot. It felt like they were in a desert in the late afternoon. Yet, the surrounding area of the hunting Lords felt much more comfortable than anywhere else. It felt like a cold gust kept brushing past them, refreshing the men and women from the Zentika Empire.

To their misery, the cold gust was not a good omen. On the contrary, it was the Grim Reaper's sign, a clue that their lives were hanging on a silky thread.

It didn't take long before the last Lord and his subordinates found their way out of the dense forest, and it was only at this point that the situation all around the hunting Lords changed drastically.

The faint cold gust was cut through by a freezing cold that swept through the surroundings, encompassing all hunting Lords simultaneously. Their subordinates were also affected, causing some of the more cautious Lords to look around them.

However, it was too late when they finally looked up at the sky.

A hail of more than a hundred Glacicles was already pouring down on the Lords and their subordinates.

Some screamed out in terror, understanding that they wouldn't be able to react fast enough to block all attacks. Meanwhile, others lifted their shields, triggered the protection enchantments of their Artifacts, or erupted with their Soultraits instinctively in an attempt to protect themselves.

But no matter what they did, nobody was fast enough to block all Glacicles. Their velocity was extremely fast. Not even Taros could react fast enough to block them even though he had more time to react than the hunting Lord on the small plain.

The Glacicles poured down with great velocity and burst into countless ice shards when they impacted. Upon shattering, the Glacicles exuded a freezing chill that spread rapidly on their target's surface. The frost affected the utility of enchantments and engravings and froze the skin and flesh of the beings it came in contact with.

The hunting Lords didn't even realize what happened to them before they were already under attack.

Michael didn't have a high mastery of the Glacicle Soultrait yet, but it was a 4-Star Soultrait that didn't require much origin energy or focus for ordinary attacks. The only issues in terms of energy consumption and required focus only arose when too many Glacicles had been manifested.

The downpour of 125 Glacicles was already Michael's limit with his current mastery. Even then, it was only possible to manifest 125 Glacicles because he'd used Enhancement three times on the Symbol of Glacicle, enhancing the power of all Glacicles while simultaneously reducing the focus required to keep the Glacicles in one place before they were released.

Glacicle was a pretty simple Soultrait. Its most-used function was the basic function with which Michael could manifest a small glacier-blue icicle. The Icicle was extremely potent, but not deadly. It could only freeze everything in its immediate surrounding upon shattering.

However, that was also the reason Michael picked Glacicle over Spirit Whip. Spirit Whip was hard to use against enemies with great mental defense and high mind power. It was also an attack that could only be used successfully if the enemy didn't expect a mental attack.

That may be great, but it was not as if Michael wanted to rely on the possibility of his enemy being unguarded against mental attacks. After all, Michael knew that he would fight stronger opponents in the future. Most stronger opponents had already experienced mental attacks and guarded themselves against them.

Thus, Michael was quite satisfied with Glacicle. Against opponents of a lower Tier, it would be lethal, while enemies of the same Tier would struggle to counter the rapid speed of the long-range attack.

Even then, Michael could still utilize Spirit Whip. It was a powerful 4-Star Soultrait that could be utilized in great ways.

The more Michael thought about it, the more satisfied he was with the gains he made in the warfare against the Jungle Expedition and by participating in the competition for the Lord Rift's loot.

At the moment he was seated on a thick branch high up in the trees near the border to the small plain and continued observing the hunting Lords for quite a while.

He waved his hand to conjure dozens of Glacicles in the air and released them with a burst of energy to freeze the enemies, who had been able to evade most Glacicles.

Afterward, Michael retrieved Zark. He used Enhancement on Zark three times and pulled the bowstring back. A condensed energy arrow was nocked on the bowstring which he released in the next second.

The arrow whizzed through the air rapidly. Nonetheless, it was much slower than the third batch of Glacicles Michael released after shooting the first energy arrow.

At this point, the hunting Lords and their subordinates had been struck with three or more Glacicles. Most hit their upper bodies, but there were also Glacicles that hit their legs, restricting their movement by freezing their thighs, calves, and joints.

Satisfied with this, Michael chose to start the bombardment of energy arrows, precisely picking the enemies, who had yet to regain their senses, or those who couldn't protect themselves against the tremendous force of Zark's energy arrows.

By the time six enemies had been killed, Tiara had turned around as well. The silver fur growing out of her body had thickened and she radiated the presence of a true predator. Her presence hung thick in the air, causing terror in the hearts of those she attacked with her silver spear.

'This transformation affects your emotions a bit too much,' Michael mused. He could tell that Tiara was much stronger and that her instincts were on a whole different level whenever she began to transform, but it was also obvious that she wouldn't back off to retreat strategically, and that she would charge ahead no matter what happened.

That bothered Michael quite a bit because even if it didn't put her in danger against the hunting Lords, it could become a problem in the future.

Michael took a deep breath and jumped down from the tree branch. He switched Zark with the Wyverntooth Spear before applying five layers of Enhancement on the Wyverntooth Spear. A burst of strength passed through his body and he turned into a blur as he shot forward like a rocket.

He continued creating dozens of Glacicles which he released with a burst of energy. The Glacicles' effect increased in intensity upon shattering at the exact same spot as before. The freezing effect spread deeper into the bodies of the enemies, chilling their bones and further slowing them down. Slowly but steadily, they were worn down even before Michael arrived in front of them.

However, the situation grew much worse once Michael reached his first opponent. First, he manifested a dozen Glacicles all around his body to shoot toward the young Destors before condensing a Spirit Whip that struck heavily on the Destors' mind. Only the white in the Destors' dark eyes was visible as the dozen Glacicles penetrated deep inside him.

Wasting no time, Michael thrust the Wyverntooth Spear deep into his chest, allowing Extraction to infiltrate the Destors' body and drain his lifeforce and origin energy.

Afterward, Michael twisted the blade and pulled it out, leaving a dying and half-frozen Destors behind on the ground.

Chapter 257 Bloodlust

Michael and Tiara moved through the battlefield with nimble and deadly movements.

Most of the hunting Lords and their subordinates were half-frozen by now. Their strength deteriorated quickly, and it grew increasingly more difficult to move around.

Meanwhile, Michael's movements grew smoother. He was having less difficulty controlling the Glacicle Soultrait, and it became increasingly easier to endure the headache creeping up his mind.

At this point, Michael could only experiment with his Soultraits. Other than Taming, Soul Grimoire, and Mind Reader, he could use all of his Soultraits for combat. The Soultraits could be combined wildly, creating a wide variety of uses. This was also why Michael felt extremely great even though his head felt like splitting apart.

Noe even draining the lifeforce and origin energy of the half-frozen bodies lying around him could relieve him of his headache completely. It was only possible to reduce the pain and make it easier to bear while continuing to use his Soultraits wildly.

He was not sure how much time had passed, but Michael and Tiara ended up defeating the last hunting Lord at one point. The hunters had become the hunted and ended up as miserable corpses spread all over the battlefield.

After ensuring their opponents were dead, Tiara appeared next to him, her cheeks flushed red in excitement. The silver fur all over her body was slowly retracted, allowing her to regain her original appearance. Nonetheless, the flush on her cheeks and her excitedly wagging tail were clear indicators of her bloodlust.

She was not yet satisfied.

'How can someone like her become a maid in the Origin Expanse? She is not even a Native. What happened to her to become subordinate to the Will of the Origin Expanse?' Michael asked himself once again.

It had been quite a while since he thought about it, but he was still curious about Tiara's origin, and her race. The Silverfang Tigerfolk must have been quite powerful if they had people like Tiara amidst them. Even if Michael were not a professional instructor, he could tell that she used unique combat techniques that had been adjusted to fit her Soultrait's unique abilities.

It was just that Tiara was hiding her unique combat techniques most of the time. She only unleashed them in the midst of the battlefield after she triggered her transformation, transforming partially into a ferocious tiger.

'Maybe, I should ask her again once all of this is over. I hope the Will of the Origin Expanse didn't restrict her from talking about her race and past.' Michael murmured to himself while looking at the excited expression Tiara was sporting.

She looked straight in his eye and couldn't help but ask, "How long do you think Masked Saber will take before he arrives, Master?"

The corner of Michael's lip curled upward at her question. He took a look toward the northern area and activated Eagle Eyes for a moment.

Then he lifted his hand and pointed slightly east in the northern direction, "At most five minutes. Let's clean up this mess and wait until he arrives with his gifts."

Upon hearing that, Tiara rushed across the battlefield to collect all corpses. Meanwhile, Michael focused on replenishing his used-up origin energy.

He spread Extraction's golden streams outward and filled his origin energy rapidly. Then he fixed the battlefield a little bit to make it seem less like the graveyard of more than ten Lords and their subordinates.

Once they were successful in hiding the evidence, Michael and Tiara jumped on a high tree branch near the borderline between the small plain and the densely grown forest.

Not long after they started to hide, Masked Saber arrived with five Lords and their subordinates pursuing him.

"Only five? That's quite boring," Tiara clicked her tongue while jumping down the tree branch.

The bloodlust she felt earlier made her want to hunt more enemies. She wanted to slaughter them, tear them apart, and see their blood gushing in all directions. Unfortunately, five Lords and their subordinates were not enough for her and the others to quench their thirst.

Michael wanted to say something, but he held back. He noticed that Tiara was still hiding in the bushes on the ground rather than charging at the Lords hunting Masked Saber.

Michael expected a few more Lords to have grouped up by now, but it looked like Masked Saber couldn't find larger groups than five Lords. But that was fine.

He used Enhancement three times on the Symbol of Glacicle before he manifested a total of 125 Glacicles in the next minute. The Glacicles were clearly visible if one paid a keen eye to the cloudless sky, but they were well-hidden as long as one didn't pay too much attention to the sky.

That was also why he gave Tiara the command to charge ahead. He allowed her to go all-out and satiate her bloodlust. Tiara was happy and didn't hesitate to trigger her transformation. The next moment she charged out of the bush and turned into a flash. Her movements were rapid, and her sudden appearance was unexpected.

Yet, the Lords and their subordinates were able to react within seconds. They triggered their Soultraits and the enchantments of their Artifacts to face the ferocious beast-like Tiara, whose glaring gaze caused chills all over their bodies.

Masked Saber turned around upon seeing a blurred figure charge past him. He hadn't seen Tiara like this before, and was a little stupefied.

However, seeing the Glacicles forming in the sky above them at a ridiculously fast speed, Masked Saber chose to change his tactic and charge at the Lords next to Tiara.

Masked Saber and Tiara were less than ten meters away from colliding with the Lords and their subordinates when a hail of Glacicles poured down onto the battlefield. Simultaneously, energy condensed arrows whizzed through the air with great precision, piercing into the enemies' vital points right after the Glacicles impacted and shattered.

The freezing chill stored inside the Glacicles was unleashed, spreading across the bodies and Artifacts of the Lords and their subordinates mere moments before Masked Saber and Tiara arrived, their weapons thirsting for blood.

Masked Saber ducked underneath an incoming sword slash and moved to the side. He twisted his body and released a small silver energy blade before he slit his saber across his opponent's neck. Afterward, he pushed his opponent's body backward, issuing a rapid thrust straight past his head. The dying man turned into Masked Saber's meat shield and as a barrier from the saber thrust that pierced deep into the chest of the next closest enemy.

Masked Saber didn't end his attack right there. He released a burst of silver energy from the tip of the saber when the saber blade dug deep into his opponent's chest. The Destors screamed out in pain, only to collapse lifelessly on the ground the next moment.

While Masked Saber fought strategically, using his enemies to play around before getting bored and killing them quickly and painlessly, Tiara turned into a killing machine. The strength behind her unpredictable attacks increased considerably, while her movement patterns became even more difficult to see through. It was near-impossible to accurately predict her next move. Even Michael would have issues with that no matter how exceptional Eagle Eyes was.

Fortunately, Michael could continue releasing Glacicles and energy condensed arrows. He supported Masked Saber and Tiara from the back, ensuring that no enemy could flee and that they wouldn't be able to use a gap in his subordinates' defense to counterattack and injure them.

Michael used Zark, Glacicle, Enhancement, and Eagle Eyes efficiently, and without giving himself another intense headache.

The battle against the five Lords and their subordinates ended quickly. But that was expected. None of the Lords were as powerful as Tac Lec and Taros. After all, neither of the two had been forced to obey the Zentika Empire Council's rules and conditions. They obtained their Lord Rift Entrance Tickets through their hard work, contrary to those weaker Lords, who had been chosen to enter the Lord Rift because they were easy to manipulate.

Looking at the overall situation, Michael could tell that only the Zantur with the Glacicle Soultrait had been actually powerful. The Artifacts Michael had extracted from the Zantur Lord had been 4-Star Tier-2, which were the highest-ranked Artifacts Michael had been able to harvest until now.

The Zantur Lord and his subordinates had been the strongest and best equipped. Meanwhile, everyone else was either worse equipped in terms of Artifacts, or their Artifacts were on par with Michael's but their Soultraits were much weaker. After all, only the Zantur Lord seemed to have had a 5-Star Soultrait until now.

Other than the Zantur Lord's Glacicle, no Soultrait seemed powerful, or intriguing enough for Michael to desire to fuse it to his War Rune.

That was actually quite disappointing. However, it made sense as well.

Only a few powerful Lords would accept the conditions of the Zentika Empire's council to obtain a Lord Entrance ticket from them. In fact, Michael was certain that many powerful Lords rejected the Zentika

Empire's offer to enter the Lord Rift. The restrictions the Zentika Empire put on their Lords were not worth it for some to risk their lives.

'I wonder how many Lords were able to procure their own Lord Rift Entrance tickets. Until now, I've only seen Taros, and Tac Lec moving around alone...but they don't even have subordinates by their side. Maybe their Lord Entrance tickets are different from mine.'

The battle against the five Lords ended without any issues. After a quick survey around, Michael jumped down the tree and walked over to the corpses. He released Extraction to drain the corpses' origin energy all while plundering them as well.

He extracted SoulStar Fragments, Soultrait Symbols, Artifacts, blueprints, Memory Orbs, and the loot they'd collected in the Lord Rift.

Afterward, he asked Tiara to retrieve the corpses of the Lords and Adventurers he and Tiara had killed before. Michael used Extraction on them as well, quickly plundering everything before he paid more attention to the extraction and dissection of the monster corpses they had generously collected for him.

"I think our territory will benefit greatly from the Lord Rift. Everything went by smoothly!" Tiara exclaimed, her cheeks still flushed from excitement.

Her bloodlust slowly subsided, but her excitement only increased seeing the corpses and huge piles of loot all around them.

Michael stored everything inside his War Rune's storage space, and his spatial pouch before asking Tiara to help him in storing a few more things.

Then his attention moved to the pile of SoulStar Fragments and Soultrait Symbols. They had obtained a total of 8 Soultrait Symbols from the last two battles.

Michael was not interested in them, but he looked over to Tiara, thinking that it might be better to start focusing his attention on Tiara's growth.

However, Tiara just shook her head seeing his expression.

"These Soultraits don't suit me, and I don't think you have enough SoulStar Fragments to upgrade my Silvarean Tiger, and Inner Force Soultraits either, Master," Tiara explained calmly, still smiling vibrantly.

But Michael was a little stupefied.

"You have two Soultraits? That transformation is not a Unique Racial Ability?" He asked in surprise, only for Tiara to smile mischievously.

"My race's Unique Racial ability is not that easy to awaken. If I was to try awakening my Unique Racial Ability as a Tier-2 Awakened I would die," Tiara said lightly, before adding, "Maybe I can show it to you in the future!"

'So she has two Soultraits, and she believes that I don't have enough SoulStar Fragments to upgrade one of them?' Michael could only think, realizing once again that he didn't know anything about Tiara.

Tiara was his loyal Battle Maid, yet Michael didn't know a lot about her.

This further added to his confusion, making him feel flustered.

"Show me in the future, please. There is a lot we have to talk about once the Lord Rift closes," Michael mumbled slightly absent-minded.

'She has two 5-Star Soultraits, doesn't she? Doesn't that mean she is most likely from a powerful family of the Silverfang Tigerfolk?'

Michael thought that his assumptions made sense. Tiara's combat prowess, her unique combat technique, and her overall demeanor were clear indicators of proper education and training.

Yet, she ended up as a personal maid in the Origin Expanse. How could that happen?

Chapter 258 Hunters In Town

Even though Tiara was in possession of two powerful Soultraits, Michael felt that it was a great idea to equip her with more Soultraits. Unfortunately, Tiara didn't like the Soultraits they received from the Lords and Awakened they'd killed in the Lord Rift. There was nothing Michael could do about it.

"It's better to create a Soultrait set-up with Soultraits that have great synergy, in the first place. After all, our situations are a little bit different," Michael mumbled to himself.

He was in possession of Extraction, meaning that he could extract Soultrait Symbols and SoulStar Fragments. Meanwhile, Tiara would depend on him if she wanted to upgrade her Soultraits, or if she desired to obtain a new Soultrait. Thus, Michael could bind a wide variety of Soultraits as he pleased while it was better to focus on a selected few when it came to nurturing Tiara and the Forest Elves' Soultraits.

Though when his gaze fell on Masked Saber, he released a heavy sigh.

'It would be quite interesting if Summons could obtain Soultraits as well.' He thought, feeling slightly frustrated to be unable to strengthen Masked Saber by giving him a bunch of Soultraits. After all, Masked Saber was not in possession of a War Rune as a Summon.

'There is nothing I can do about that, either way. The only thing I can do is help him advance his Tier, provide better equipment, and more suitable techniques,' He told himself with a heavy heart.

It made him a little uncomfortable that Masked Saber had a condition attached to his life. The moment his skin was exposed to others, or his face revealed, he would die. That was a harsh condition, and definitely not something Michael would want to live with.

Unfortunately, Michael could only do so much to protect Masked Saber.

Masked Saber was not too worried about the condition attached to his life, but Michael felt like a heavy weight was pressing down on his heart with every passing second. It was a weird feeling that didn't make any sense. He didn't even feel like this at the thought of Tiara dying, or the future dangers that could lead to his territory's destruction.

"What do you want to do now? Should we continue to hunt a few more groups of Lords, or do you want to rest a little bit, Master?" Tiara asked, still a little excited from the previous two battles.

By now more than half of the Lords inside the Lord Rift had been killed. That left only the stronger ones behind to fight with all their might. But Michael was not scared.

"Let's take a look at the abandoned town's periphery. We can scan the area around the abandoned town first and see how many Lords are moving through the abandoned town before we enter," Michael suggested after he thought about it for a second.

They had roughly 40 hours left to travel through the Lord Rift and plunder heavenly treasures before they would be thrown out. That was more than enough time.

With that in mind, the small group went on to complete their next task with high spirits. They'd already gained a lot from the Lord Rift, but they could tell that their strength was enough to generate even more benefits.

Over the course of the next six hours, Michael and the others walked around the abandoned town. They always maintained a distance of more than one kilometer from each other and fought a bunch of monsters. However, Michael used most of the time to create a detailed map of the abandoned town's infrastructure in his head. He used Enhancement on Eagle Eyes to see farther with great precision, allowing him to pinpoint the location of some Lords and a rough estimate of the actual number of Lords pacing through the abandoned town.

"Several small groups are either resting, or waiting for something in three different spots," Michael updated Masked Saber and Tiara once he finished gathering all information.

Eagle Eyes was pretty helpful for scouting tasks. He didn't even have to approach his enemies and fear being discovered to collect the most vital information such as the number of their enemies, their race, and certain details about the equipment they possessed.

These three factors were already enough to make a rough guess of the Lords' combat prowess, which Michael, Tiara, and Masked Saber could exploit easily.

"Let's go to the biggest group, Master!" Tiara exclaimed in an even more excited voice than before.

Michael could only smile seeing Tiara like that. She wasn't much older than him, but she always acted mature and wise in their territory. Michael always felt that Tiara grew up with a heavy burden weighing down on her shoulders, forcing her to become mature and wise faster than others.

However, the feeling of being weighed down didn't seem to exist in the Lord Rift for her. Tiara was more energetic than ever, and the excitement spreading through her entire being was contagious. It affected Masked Saber, who patted Michael's shoulder before he nodded faintly in the abandoned town's direction.

"How about we let the tiger lose?" He asked, causing the corners of Michael's lip to tilt upward.

"Alright. Let's go then," Michael agreed and quickened his pace.

They didn't require long to enter the abandoned town. Their small group moved silently alongside the crumbling house walls, their weapons gripped tightly.

Michael kept the enhanced Eagle Eyes fully unleashed as they silently moved toward the first targets inside the abandoned town.

It didn't take long until they were only separated by two walls and roughly 100 meters. Michael used Enhancement on Glacicle just to manifest several dozen Glacicles mid-air. Afterward, Masked Saber and Tiara moved around the house walls toward the right.

Meanwhile, Michael exposed himself by walking toward the left, entering the main alley where seven Lords and their subordinates were guarding the entrance to a large building.

Michael pulled Zark's bowstring back, condensed an energy arrow, and released it alongside the Glacicles that shot forth like bullets.

Michael didn't pay attention to the result of his first batch of Glacicles. Instead, he continued firing energy arrows at the chaotic battlefield in front of him.

Only after he released six energy arrows did he decide to change his tactic. He manifested the Wyvern tooth Spear, applied three layers of Enhancement, and turned into a blur. The strength coursing through him was much higher than expected – a clear sign that his War Rune's refinement degree was improving slowly but steadily.

However, Michael didn't pay too much attention to that right now. He was more focused on the battle in front of him, and increasing his gains inside the Lord Rift. After all, Michael couldn't tell how long it would take before he would enter a place such as the Lord Rift once again.

He had to reap as many benefits as he could while the opportunity was in front of him.

The Lords guarding the entrance to the large building were first surprised about the sudden attack, only to realize that merely a single individual had attacked them.

Six of their subordinates ended up dead, and even more had been affected by the aftermath of the Glaciers shattering upon their bodies, yet none of the Lords were worried about their lives. They were in a numerical advantage and their enemy didn't seem to be in possession of powerful Artifacts either. He wasn't even at the Low-stage of the 2nd Tier. How could he be considered a threat?

Most Lords were not worried about Michael's attack. However, two of them quickly realized that Michael was alone and that he fit the characteristics written in the reports about the Lord in the Untamed Jungle.

Realizing that Michael might be the Lord, who defeated the Jungle Expedition and the 13 Paladins with his merciless tactics, they quickly entered a state of vigilance and looked around.

They anticipated a trap, and couldn't be more right as they discovered a young Awakened, and a Summon wielding a black sword coated in thick layers of silver energy.

But just before they could shout out loudly to warn everyone their vision tunneled. A freezing chill spread through their eyes all of a sudden, and horrible pain appeared in their eyes, only to spread further.

Michael had noticed that some Lords and subordinates turned their attention to Tiara and Masked Saber. It seemed like they had noticed what Michael and his subordinates had planned. Unfortunately, their diverted attention turned them into easier targets for the Glacicles.

After the first impact of the Glacicles, everyone realized that they were not necessarily lethal, and that the freezing chill was the Glacicles' biggest attribute. However, that didn't mean Glacicles weren't dangerous. They were ridiculously fast and could still do some minor damage – such as piercing through the eyeballs and affecting vital organs right before shattering.

Michael had perfected his aim from religiously practicing Archery almost every single day, combined with his enhanced Eagle Eyes to accurately pierce several Glacicles through the distracted Lords and subordinates' eyes. The Glacicles shattered after piercing their eyeballs, spreading the freezing chill through their head.

It was only a matter of time before they would die.

Meanwhile, Tiara and Masked Saber initiated their own attack. A crescent-shaped silver energy blade burst through the abandoned town, cutting several enemies into half before it lost momentum. Meanwhile, a ferocious tiger-like being emerged in the center of the Lords and their subordinates before she started wreaking havoc, letting go of the responsibilities that had shackled her down – even if it was just for a few hours.

Chapter 259 Magical Smithy

Instead of entering the large building after defeating the Lords guarding it, they merely collected the corpses before moving onward to attack and kill the other two groups.

Only one of the two groups was resting while the other group was guarding a small smithy. Interestingly enough, the sound of something heavy hammering on metal rang out from the smithy. It attracted Michael's attention and he decided to enter the old, abandoned smithy once all enemies had been taken care of.

It was already extremely hot in the open, but the temperature in the abandoned smithy was even higher. A blazing flame filled the forge, while a heavy-looking hammer and tongs moved through the air magically. The tongs and the heavy hammer were moving on their own, forging a sword.

"What is that?" Michael could only ask aloud, not sure what to think about the magically moving hammer, tongs and the other tools that seemed to be busy at work.

He was fully aware of the forging process a blacksmith had to use to forge a high-quality armament, yet the forging technique used by the magical tools seemed to be on a completely different level. At the first glance, it looked weird and nonsensical, but his initial assumptions changed upon realizing that the final result was much better than expected.

It didn't require an expert to tell that the sword forged by the magical tools was of extremely high quality despite the low-grade materials that had been used to forge it.

Somehow, Michael and the others ended up spending several hours watching the magical tools moving and hammering the searing hot piece of metal as it slowly shaped into a fearsome sword.

The process of shaping the sword was completed quite quickly, and with great precision. It was quenched, and properly treated before the magical tools sharpened it. At the end of the forging process, the sword was moved to a small barrel where more than ten of such swords had already been stored.

"Were the Lords waiting for this?" Tiara asked, not sure if the weapons were worth the Lords' time.

She knew that the forging process had been exceptional, but that didn't mean they were worth the wait. Tiara thus approached the barrel and picked up one of the swords. She swung it around, channeled origin energy inside it and tested out a few things, only to freeze in her tracks at last.

"Forget about my doubts. This is crazy," Tiara exclaimed, handing the sword to Michael before picking up another one which she handed to Masked Saber.

Michael wielded the longsword carefully. He was not a weapon-expert but he had some knowledge about weapons.

The blade was double-edged and perfectly sharpened. Meanwhile, the entire blade was balanced to a near perfect degree. It would be quite difficult for master blacksmiths to create a sword like this – in such a short time at that.

The Magical Smithy required only six hours to complete one of those swords, and they were all of the same quality. The material used wasn't the best, but the forging technique used by the Magical Smithy was quite extraordinary.

"If the blacksmiths in our territory could learn how to create such exceptional armaments, we would be able to upgrade the military's equipment by leaps and bounds!" Masked Saber uttered in surprise as he felt a burst of strength passing through his body when he channeled origin energy into the blade.

Michael did the same and realized another perk of the blade, "Why does it feel like this sword enhances my physical strength and agility as much as a natural 3-Star Tier-1 Weapon Artifact would?"

Masked Saber's gaze flicked over to Michael when he heard what his Lord said, "...because that's exactly what it is... This sword. No... these swords are like Natural 3-Star Tier-1 Artifacts, even though they're not Artifacts. Everyone can wield them."

Michael's heart skipped a beat hearing Masked Saber's word.

If they could mass-produce these armaments and distribute them to his army, nobody at the same rank would be able to defeat them even in a one-on-one battle. Their opponents would definitely lose in terms of strength and agility, providing a significant advantage to their people.

"But I don't think that we can accelerate the forging process any further. The Magical Smithy needs exactly six hours to complete one sword. That means we'll end up with less than 20 finished products until the Lord Rift closes..." Tiara mumbled, looking over to Michael as if he had an answer to all the problems.

"Let me test something first before I accidentally break this masterpiece," Michael said, approaching the Magical Smithy while retrieving some of the remarkable ores he had extracted from the mountain range not too long ago.

He wanted to see if the Magical Smithy could use other ores to produce a sword using a different type of ore. However, he didn't know how to access the configurations of the Magical Smithy – if something like that existed in the first place.

At first, Michael simply stood there, holding the ores out thinking that the Magical Smithy might be able to detect better ores. But that didn't work out as he expected.

He then moved to the small crate where a bunch of Silverstream iron ores were piled up. Silverstream iron ore was a somewhat rare Tier-1 ore with great energy conductivity. The energy veins inside it were extremely strong even though they were highly susceptible to getting damaged in the forging process.

Michael stored the Silverstream iron ore inside his spatial pouch before putting the ores in his hand down onto the crate.

He expected the Magical Smithy to pick up the ores, but instead it seemed to stop working.

"Does it not work with other ores?" Michael wondered, feeling slightly disappointed. He had hoped to be able to forge better Artifact-like armaments even if it was just for Masked Saber to use.

His disappointment was clearly visible on his face, but before he could turn gloomy something from the corner of his eye attracted his attention.

The blazing flame inside the forge was flickering, seemingly trying to pull his attention toward it.

"Maybe..." Michael mused, picking up the ores in the crate before throwing them inside the searing hot forge. The blazing flames inside the forge exploded into a small cloud of fire and felt restlessly alive.

In response, the tools of the Magical Smithy began to move once again.

"Great. It's working with other ores as well," Michael said, subconsciously nodding in satisfaction.

Afterward, he folded his hands on his chest to intently watch the reduction process of the ore and how the ingot was processed. When the impurities within the ingot were removed by the heavy hammer using a special forging technique, Michael stepped forward. He used Extraction and removed most of the impurities to hasten up the forging process.

After that, Michael chose to wait a little bit until he turned around to Masked Saber and Tiara.

"Let's take a look at the other building the Lords were guarding. It looked like a library, but it doesn't make sense for someone to guard it if they cannot just plunder everything. There must be something similar to the Magical Smithy," Michael said, only for Tiara to tilt her head.

"What about the Magical Smithy then? And don't you want to extract the corpses of the Lords and Awakened first, Master?" She asked, feeling that it was not safe to leave the Magical Smithy alone.

However, Michael was not too worried.

He retrieved the corpses of their enemies and extracted them quickly. They didn't provide much additional loot from the Lord Rift since they had been guarding the Magical Smithy and the other large building, but Michael still made great gains, including his wealth by 1195 SoulStar Fragments – after he dismembered the Soultrait Symbols he had just extracted.

Upon adding the SoulStar Fragments, Michael had more than enough accumulated to upgrade a 4-Star Soultrait to a 5-Star Soultrait.

The only question was which Soultrait he should upgrade.

He could upgrade Spirit Whip once to see how strong the Soultrait would grow, or he could directly divert his focus to the other Soultraits.

'What is the Soultrait I'm using the most? It's clearly Enhancement. I use it in every battle to enhance my Artifacts' sharpness, durability, and their external enhancement. Then I use it on my Soultraits and my body as well. I should really upgrade it,' Michael concluded quickly, ignoring Spirit Whip, Glacicle and his other Soultraits.

They might be great for combat, but Enhancement could even be used on Extraction to increase the extraction efficiency outside the battle.

There was no need to think about it any longer. He spent 3,000 SoulStar Fragments without hesitation, manifesting a fifth star on the Symbol of Enhancement.

Streams of information entered Michael's mind slowly as he upgraded Enhancement, giving him a more profound understanding of Enhancement and the changes after it had been upgraded to a 5-Star Soultrait.

"The first two layers of Enhancement are extremely cheap to apply, and the enhancement percentage increased from a third to a whopping 50%. That's pretty crazy. If I use two or three layers of Enhancement on my 4-Star Soultraits, their power will be comparable to 5-Star Soultraits!"

Michael was not sure to what extent he could upgrade Enhancement, but it was definitely an extremely powerful Soultrait. He couldn't even fathom how powerful it would become upon upgrading it to a 6-Star Soultrait.

In comparison, the upgrade of Soultraits like Taming lacked in comparison. Michael didn't feel such a drastic difference after upgrading Taming from 4-Star to 5-Star. Of course, that might also be the case because he rarely used Taming.

If he used Taming a little bit more, the Soultrait's charm would probably be more apparent. Michael was certain about that.

'It's not like I'm in a rush to upgrade my other Soultraits. Let's focus on the here and now,' He told himself, diverting his attention back to the others.

"We can leave the Magical Smithy as it is. I doubt anyone can take it from us," Michael said, waving his hand lightly before he added, "Even if someone does, we can just snatch it back forcefully!"

Chapter 260 [Bonus]Hungry Librarian

Michael was not too worried about the Magical Smithy when they walked out of the building.

Contrary to his expectations, there weren't many Lords and monsters in the abandoned town. Even the Lords, who had entered the Lord Rift, had abandoned this place.

But that was actually for the better in Michael's opinion. They wouldn't have to worry about getting attacked, or someone stealing the Magical Smithy.

After walking for a few minutes, their small group of three finally reached the large building that looked like an old library. They entered the building, just to realize that the interior of the library was well-kept and untouched by the curse of time. It didn't look like the library had been abandoned, at all.

"Nobody bothered taking the books with them? Aren't books the most important inside a library? There is no other reason to protect this building except for the books inside," Tiara asked, not quite understanding why a group of Lords had been guarding this place.

There was nothing other than dozens of shelves filled with various books.

Masked Saber retrieved one of the books the closest to him. He flipped through the first few pages, and nodded his head in understanding.

"The language is quite hard to understand. The Lord probably didn't bother taking these books because they don't know their value. Well, even I cannot tell whether they're valuable books about the Origin Expanse, or novels of ancient times," Masked Saber said before handing the book to Michael.

Michael flipped through the pages as well, nibbling on his lower lip as understanding dawned upon him slowly.

"That seems like one of the older origin tongues. The books are probably from before the Second Epoch. Maybe the Forest Elven Elders can help us decipher them?" He wondered, his gaze roaming over the vast collection of books.

'Our storage space is almost full. If I want to take all of those books, I will have to remove the monster corpses,' Michael was in a dilemma, not sure if the books would be more valuable than the monster corpses of superior existences.

But when he thought hard about it, Michael recalled that he was not really in desperate need of money.

"I think we should take the books with us. Even if they're mere novels of ancient times, they'll give us insights about the time before the Second Epoch. That should give us some essential clues to take a step closer to unravel the secrets of the Temple of the Forgotten as well," Tiara said in a matter of fact tone.

"In the worst case, you can just throw out the monster meat, intestines and everything else of lesser value. Let's just keep the Diamond Deer's antlers, their tendons, the Werewolves' horns, scales and so on. Other than their most valuable parts, we don't need anything, or am I wrong, Master?" She added, smiling nervously at Michael.

Michael responded with a smile as well. Even though he was occasionally overthinking and trying to make everything fit, it was often much easier to have a simple-minded person voicing out her opinion.

This simple-minded person was Tiara, and Michael was glad to have her by his side. Without her, he would be standing in front of the bookshelves for an eternity, trying to come up with a perfect plan to both keep both corpses and store as many books as possible.

"Alright then. Let's throw out the less valuable monster body parts," He said before accessing both his War Rune's storage space and his spatial pouch. He retrieved tens of tons of monster meat, and the less valuable body parts of more than a thousand monsters.

Now that he thought about it, Michael couldn't help but be surprised how so much stuff fit inside his spatial pouch and storage space. It was quite surprising.

Tiara retrieved lots of monster meat and other goods as well. She didn't hesitate to throw them aside, creating a huge pile of unwanted stuff next to the goods Michael had retrieved.

Michael and Tiara were so focused on their spatial spaces that they didn't even notice when Masked Saber grew tense. Masked Saber unsheathed his saber, stepped in front of Michael, and changed into a defensive stance, ready to protect Michael with his life if necessary.

"Please put your weapon aside, esteemed traveler. This Library of Laxartia hasn't been constructed to commit crimes and spread violence. It's a place of peace and knowledge," A hoarse voice echoed through the library, pulling Michael and Tiara out of their trance-like state.

Their heads flicked over to the voice's source, and their eyes widened in surprise.

A purple-skinned being the size of a small dog was seated on a yellow cushion that was hovering in the air. The purple-skinned being had long pointed ears and large violet eyes that were filled with wisdom. He had short arms and wielded a small staff, which looked more like the branch of a birch tree than anything dangerous.

Nonetheless, Michael could feel a distinct difference in their power level. Even with their combined forces, Michael, Tiara, and Masked Saber would never be able to defeat the small being if it were to come to a battle.

He was still shocked about the sudden appearance of a foreign being, but Michael stepped forward, putting a hand on Masked Saber's shoulder.

"Put the saber away," He said as calmly as possible and waited until Masked Saber did as he was told.

Afterward, he looked over to the small being once again before he greeted him, bowing deeply with his right hand placed on his heart.

Uncertain which tradition the being followed, Michael could only use the most common custom to politely greet an elder and a superior being.

"There is no need for formalities, esteemed traveler. This body of mine is but an empty shell bound to the Great Will. All that is left of me inside this space is a wisp of my former self, and this tiny body, if you can consider it as such, in the first place," The being said in a neutral tone.

His attention moved to the piles of monster meat and body parts and a sliver of interest gleamed in his eyes.

"I am wondering if this is a tribute to the God of Wisdom, or if you were trying to make space to fit the library's books inside your storage spaces," The being remarked, looking over to Michael to study his response.

"You...can consider it as tribute, but we thought the library was abandoned just like the rest of the town, so we wanted to take the books with us. After all, their value is deteriorating drastically since they are collecting dust here. Books exist to be read, after all," Michael said, trying to navigate a safe path out of this tricky situation. I think you should take a look at

He didn't feel any threat due to the being in front of them, but that could change at any moment. Michael was not confident enough to ensure that he could keep the being calm and composed.

"It's a good thing that you're honest. Otherwise, you would end up like everyone else," The being said nonchalantly.

However, Michael could only swallow his saliva seeing the glint in the being's violet eyes.

'Good thing I didn't lie.'

"I will take this. That should be fine, right?" The being asked, pointing his bony hand at the piles of monster meat and most of their body parts.

Michael nodded his head and gestured to the being to take it all. He moved toward the piles and swung the branch-like staff twice.

A huge black diagram formed on the pentagon and massive swirls of energy were pulled toward it. In the next five seconds, most of the energy was pulled toward the black pentagon, only for a humongous black mouth to emerge out of it.

A black body with four rows of arm-long teeth shot out of the Pentagon. It was huge, big enough to devour the entire pile of meat and body parts at once.

Seeing the big black body – its maw to be precise –, Michael felt his hair standing up to its end. He couldn't even divert his attention from the humongous maw as it swallowed the piles of meat and body parts one after another.

Nobody in the room dared to breathe seeing the being. It was terrifying, to the extent that Michael wasn't even sure whether the Mythical Serpent or the being in front of them was more terrifying.

A chill spread down his spine, and he couldn't help but stare in front of him with his eyes wide open.

The small purple being burped after the huge maw disappeared, attracting the attention of the small group of three.

"Superior Existences at Tier-2. Not the best meal I had, but definitely filling. It was not too bad," The being said before turning to Michael.

"I am a mere wisp of my former self, but I still have some of my former power," He said, only to give it a faint shrug, "Either way, now I'm merely a Librarian assigned to this place that can only be entered by young and naive fools, who think that they're powerful and that the Origin Expanse can be easily conquered by them."

He took a pause before continuing, "You are not much different. Your power is not too bad, but you are still foolish. I can tell that your subordinates trust you, but that is worthless if you don't trust yourself as much as your people do. As a true leader, you have to be able to stand up for your actions and order your subordinates with confidence and charisma, otherwise, your survival in the Origin Expanse will always be questionable," The Librarian said before he began to wave his staff.

Following that, the books shelved all over the library began to move. They responded to the Librarian's actions and were pulled through the air, revolving around Michael's group.

Piles of books were stacked up all around them, creating a small maze filled with the books inside the library.

"I cannot allow you to take the books with you, but you're allowed to do anything with the books inside here. Even if you burn them, they'll naturally be repaired once the Lord Rift closes." The Librarian

informed while adding, "As a small token of gratitude for the meal you've provided, I shall help you find the books you're looking for. The least I can do is to lend a 'small' helping hand."

Michael stared at the Librarian for a while. His lips parted to say something, but he shut his mouth the next moment.

Even if he asked the Librarian for help, it was not as if he could read the words written in the books, in the first place.

"In that case...can you help me find books related to translations or books that revolve around studying the language used in all of the books here. None of us can understand what's written in the books. We initially wanted to take them back to decipher them," Michael requested, revealing his honest thoughts and their initial plan.

"Translation books? You don't understand the language written in the books? It seems like a lot more time than I expected passed outside," The Librarian said before he scratched his chin. "There are a few books that may help you understand the written language, but I doubt that you will be able to learn it in a few hours."

Michael had been quite curious for a while now about how he could understand the Librarian. But he didn't have to search for an answer for long. The Will of the Origin Expanse naturally translated the words spoken by the Librarian inside the Lord Rift.

The Librarian waved his staff to move more than a dozen books in front of Michael, Tiara, and Masked Saber.

Masked Saber was just about to bend down when Michael gestured for him to stop.

"You said that even if they're destroyed the books will be restored, right?" Michael asked the Librarian, who noticed that something was different in Michael's expression.

Michael didn't seem to be too worried about their comprehension ability. It was almost as if Michael was certain that they could learn the written language of the Draconia Era just like that.

"The Will will restore everything that has been destroyed, that's correct," The Librarian responded, giving Michael all the information he required to get moving.

He lifted his arms, his palms facing the books lying on the ground.

Then, Michael unleashed Extraction, enhanced with several layers of Enhancement.