

Supreme Lord 51

Chapter 51 Upside Down

After he gathered his thoughts for a while, Michael traveled deeper into the Gogi Lord's territory.

However, what he saw confused him more than before.

Everything was destroyed.

Not a single stone was in the right place. The wooden manor had been reduced to ruins and the vegetation had taken over all the space, covering the wooden planks and pillars.

A single glance was enough to tell that the wooden manor would become one with the surrounding environment in a day or two and the trees and vines would gobble it up.

"Is that also the doing of the Untamed Jungle?" Michael mumbled quietly as his gaze moved across the small accessible area that had once been the center of the Gogi Lord's territory, "Is it trying to get rid of the traces left behind by the Gogi Lord, his subjects, and his territory?"

Most buildings had been razed to the ground. The vegetation had quickly claimed the space, invading the settlement, snaking its way through the gaps into the buildings to cover them first before devouring them. Only the Summoning Gate was left in good shape.

Michael strode through the Gogi Lord's territory. He couldn't see any monsters, but he was still vigilant, and his senses were hyperaware. The Untamed Jungle felt scarier than ever before, and it was uncertain whether he was in danger right now, or if he was safe and sound.

The more time he spent in the center of the Gogi Lord's territory, the scarier the scenery around him grew. There was a feeling of unease bubbling inside of him and it grew so intense that Michael felt like he should leave at once.

However, there was still no imminent danger. There was no reason for him to leave, other than the eerie feeling the Untamed Jungle caused within him.

'Just what is the relationship between the Untamed Jungle and Lords?' Michael wondered again.

He could tell that the eeriness and the scary feeling were somehow directed at the now-dead Gogi Lord. The Untamed Jungle seemed to have hated the Gogi Lord to the core, but it attacked the Gogi Lord's territory only now, after he died.

Michael was aware that the Untamed Jungle had not attacked him or his territory either. He had already extracted several trees and killed hundreds of Monsters, but the Untamed Jungle had not harmed or hindered him in any way.

If not for his encounter with the Gogi Lord, Michael would have never thought that the Untamed Jungle was sentient, and a devourer.

That meant the Untamed Jungle couldn't attack Lords when they were alive. Some reason prevented the Untamed Jungle from venting its hatred at the beings it loathed to the core. Only when they die would it get its revenge, devouring things they once valued and loved...wiping away every trace of their existence.

If that were really the case, Michael and his territory could be reassured. He didn't plan to die anytime soon either.

After he traveled a while through the Gogi Lord's territory, Michael found the remnants of a once large and empty area. The grass and plants in the area had grown a lot, but Michael was more interested in the demolished fence around the area, and the monsters that had been raised and taken care of inside before.

Michael expected to find a few Bilrox, who had been left alone, or at least, some Bilrox feathers, but there was nothing.

After he witnessed what happened to the Gogis, Michael immediately thought that the Untamed Jungle must have devoured the Bilrox horde as well.

However, that thought was proven wrong once he began to unleash Extraction on the small ranch.

Michael tested if the Bilrox horde had been devoured using Extraction. He walked inside the ranch and scanned the ground with his Soultrait. It didn't require much energy to scan the surroundings with Extraction if he didn't extract anything.

Thus, in no time and with the use of a little energy, Michael found out that the wet soil hadn't absorbed Bilrox blood or its remnants. Their only remains in the ground were dung, quite a lot of it at that.

'Was it the Forest Elves then? They wouldn't waste their time inside the Untamed Jungle to lay waste to the Gogi Lord's territory...but they might have taken the Bilrox horde.'

Michael concluded that the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team took the Bilrox Horde, including all of their feathers. The Untamed Jungle wreaked havoc afterward, turning the entire territory upside down.

That was the most likely course of events. It calmed Michael a little to know what must have happened, and he diverted his focus to the destroyed buildings. There was something he wanted to find out.

'If the Untamed Jungle doesn't attack living Lords and subjects, I should be fine,' Michael repeated in his head like a mantra. Simultaneously, he stayed vigilant of the surrounding area.

He had a nagging feeling that something was odd about the destruction of the Gogi Lord, but he had no way of finding out more, not right now, at least.

Michael spent the next 20 minutes using Extraction on the destroyed buildings. He first started with the wooden manor, extracting the most precious resources out of the manor's ruins and salvaging whatever he could.

Afterward, he walked over to the other buildings to unleash Extraction on them.

Within 20 minutes, Michael extracted two blueprints and various precious materials. This made him feel excited.

'Oho?!'

Michael's eyes gleamed brightly, and a bright smile appeared on his lips as his head flicked to the Summoning Gate.

He walked over to the Summoning Gate and unleashed Extraction once again. His hands were shrouded in golden streams, and it didn't take long before the first materials were extracted.

'Summoning Gates can be dismantled, and their cores and other components can be used to strengthen existing Summoning Gates or construct stronger Summoning Gates...but is that everything?!'

The glint in Michael's eyes intensified while his smile widened, reaching his eyes.

His energy was rapidly drained, but Michael continued to extract. Beads of sweat trickled down his temples, and his back was drenched in sweat not long after.

Never before had he used that much energy to extract a single object or corpse. It felt a little weird to realize that his energy had been completely drained, yet the Summoning Gate was still towering in front of him.

However, that was all the more reason to keep working hard and give his utmost. He could rest a little to replenish his energy and continue extracting right from where he stopped before.

It didn't matter if he had to spend several hours extracting the Summoning Gate because he was certain that he would gain a lot.

At noon, Michael's stomach grumbled loudly, but he didn't take pause, nor did he stop extracting.

He looked at the first few drops he had extracted with a tinge of excitement in his eyes.

'Ohh!!'

Chapter 52 Summoning Core

A total of ten Ordinary Summoning Scrolls, two Aero Crossbowman Summoning Scrolls and one Mythic Summoning Scroll had been extracted.

That was great!

He knew that using extraction on more than 200 Gogis would have yielded a much better result, but Michael also knew that he shouldn't complain when he was given something.

He could only shudder at the thought of what must have happened to him if he had returned to the Gogi Lord's territory after handing over the Gogi Lord's corpse.

Extracting the Summoning Scrolls and Summoning Scroll Fragments on more than 200 bodies would have required way too much time. He would have been even more exhausted than he was yesterday, and it was likely that he would have collapsed due to internal and external factors.

It had been way too dangerous, and not worth the loot of 200+ Gogi corpses.

Michael was in danger even now. He had spent several hours outside his territory, all by himself, while being just a Tierless Lord. If that was not dangerous in a region such as the Untamed Jungle, few things could be considered dangerous, in the first place.

However, he was brimming with vigor now, and not restrained by the foreign memories occupying his mind, and untamed energy raging through his body.

'The Summoning Core!' Michael exclaimed inwardly.

His eyes glowed as he looked at the fist-sized orb. It was white but also had numerous black spots.

That was the Summoning Core. It didn't look special but the Summoning Core's presence was mystical. His fingertips began to tingle upon touching the Summoning Core and his face lit up.

Every Summoning Gate had to have a Summoning Core, otherwise, they couldn't use the Gate to summon subjects. Nonetheless, Michael felt weird while holding a Summoning Core in his hands.

He had been certain that the Mythic Summoning Scroll which he had extracted from the Summoning Gate had been the most precious gain today. However, upon looking at the Summoning Core, he changed his opinion immediately.

The Summoning Core was more valuable than the Mythic Summoning Scroll, even if a Mythic Summoning Scroll guaranteed a 2-Star Summon.

The thought of enhancing the Summoning Gate in his territory was already worth more than a 2-Star Summon. After all, it would bring him more long-term benefits!

Michael had read a lot about Summoning Gates and the conditions that had to be met to upgrade it, but it was the first time that he was holding a Summoning Core.

Fortunately, he had seen a few pictures of a Summoning Core before, otherwise, he would have had a tough time recognizing the Summoning Core. But there was something that confused him a little.

'Isn't the Summoning Core way too dark? In the pictures, they have fewer black dots...'

Michael was not sure what the black dots were, but he used Extraction on it to figure it out. If other Summoning Cores had fewer black dots, it shouldn't be a problem to extract one or two.

The golden streams engulfed his hands before they entered the Summoning Core. His energy was rapidly drained while grain-sized black masses formed on the surface of the Summoning Core.

Immediately, a reeking stench spread through the surroundings, making him double up.

Michael wanted to vomit the moment the stench infiltrated his nostrils. He stored the grain-sized mass of dirt inside his War Rune's storage before he retrieved it once again. This time, he held his breath and looked at the black mass he had just extracted from the Summoning Core.

'Isn't this what everyone calls 'Impurities'? It smells bad, is black, and looks like mud. Yes, that should be impurities,' Michael guessed with the knowledge he recalled from high school.

Students at Elite High Schools learned quite a lot about Impurities. In fact, everyone had impurities in their body. There was nothing like inherent purity.

But even if there was nothing like inherent purity, it was important to learn more about it.

Impurities could be considered as deviations from an ideal essence. They signify the presence of substances that disrupt or corrupt the harmony, or perfection of a particular existence, or system. The human body was a good example of such an ecosystem.

The human body amassed impurities from pollution, certain food, and other means from a young age.

Lords and Adventurers underwent a natural cleansing whenever their Tier advanced. The removal of impurities improved the circulation of blood and energy, and it allowed the body to accumulate more energy inside the body. That was one of the many reasons why a Peak Tier-0 Lord was said to be several times weaker than a Lowest Tier-1 Lord- because the Tier-1 Lord had already undergone his first natural cleansing.

That is also why mankind desired to cleanse their body and remove the impurities within their body; to grow stronger and evolve.

The pursuit of purity was inevitably associated with the yearning for transcendence or the attainment of a higher state of being. This desire was also something Michael felt sometimes.

He was still young and had a lot to learn, but he often found himself listening more intently in class and paying attention when the lesson was related to impurities.

It was often said that the degree of purity of an existence could give a rough estimation of its potential and power. Michael understood this concept to a certain extent, but he had never received the opportunity to prove it.

Fortunately, that changed now that he was in possession of a wonderful Soultrait and a Summoning Core filled with impurities.

Driven by desire, Michael continued to extract the impurities within the Summoning Core.

He spent half an hour extracting as many impurities as possible. His 3-Star Soultrait's limit was to remove roundabout 10% of the Summoning Core's impurities. That was a lot more than Michael expected, considering that his Soultrait had yet to be strengthened. He was a Tierless Lord with less than 100 subjects, after all.

Michael was very satisfied, but he had yet to find out if this particular Summoning Core was better than the Summoning Core in his territory.

Unfortunately, he couldn't rush home just yet.

A huge Summoning Gate was still waiting for him to be extracted!

Chapter 53 Oath

It was already afternoon when Michael returned to the territory.

The Summoning Gate in the Gogi Lord's territory had been completely dismantled, and everything had been stored inside his War Rune.

Now that he was back in his territory, Michael removed the Summoning Gate's parts and stored them in the warehouse.

Afterward, he retrieved the Summoning Core and approached his Summoning Gate.

"Can I add another Summoning Core already, or do I have to upgrade it first?" Michael mumbled to himself when he sensed something.

A suctioning force tugged at the Summoning Core in his hands. Michael's eyes widened but he kept holding the core tightly.

The suctioning force grew intense as he approached the Summoning Gate. Understanding dawned upon Michael, and he began to circle the Summoning Gate.

A few subjects stared at their Lord in wonder. They could tell that their Lord was exhausted after spending most of the day outside the territory, yet Michael seemed overjoyed and excited. Seeing the excitement on their Lord's face calmed their worried hearts.

In less than two days the protection barrier would disperse. After that, nobody would be able to protect them if a powerful monster or a horde of hundreds of monsters was to attack them. The chances were slim, but something bad could happen, and the subjects kept thinking about that.

Despite their worries, their Lord seemed quite calm. He had been the most worried of them all in the past, but somehow, he had now turned into the calmest one. This was a welcome change

There had to be a reason behind their Lord's calmness, and though they did not know the reason, it infused them with renewed confidence and hope.

Meanwhile, Michael was oblivious to the effect he had on the people around him. He was fully focused on the Summoning Gate in front of him.

At first, he thought that he would have to experiment a lot to configure the Summoning Gate and to add a new Summoning Core, but that was not the case.

A hatch on the metal foundation of the Summoning Gate opened, revealing several small sockets, and the Summoning Core of his Summoning Gate. Michael stepped closer to take a better look at the sockets and his territory's Summoning Core when he noticed two things.

First, the suctioning force had grown much stronger, pulling the Summoning Core to the socket right next to the other Summoning Core.

Second, the Summoning Core installed in the Summoning Gate was filled with impurities. It had even far more black dots than the Summoning Core of the Gogi Lord's territory.

He didn't think too long and bent down to take a better look at the Summoning Core. A second later, golden streams conjured in his palm.

Michael began to extract the impurities from the already-installed Summoning Core.

Since the Summoning Gate was going wild to pull the purified Summoning Core inside the hatch, Michael might as well purify the other Summoning Core.

He added the purified Core and put it on the socket next to his Summoning Core while continuing to extract as many impurities as possible.

Michael collected the impurities inside his War Rune to remove them later. He didn't plan to turn his Summoning Gate into a reeking piece of metal.

When he was done, Michael removed his hand. The hatch closed the next instance, leaving Michael with nothing but a black mass of impurities.

The Summoning Core he acquired in the Gogi Lord's territory was inside his Summoning Gate, but he couldn't open the hatch to look at it. It was as if the Summoning Gate didn't want him to fool around in the hatch and make a mess out of it.

He was just about to get up when he heard Tiara's excited voice.

"Master, look! Your Summoning Gate activated itself!"

'Huh?'

Michael looked up, just to see that one star lit up when two men emerged from the Summoning Gate's energy pool.

'Why did two 1-Star Summons appear?'

He was a little confused, but upon staring at the two well-trained men, who wore a full metal armor, and wielded a longsword and a metal shield, Michael could hardly complain.

Two Knights in training just appeared in front of him, just like that!

He was dumbfounded but quickly regained his senses.

"My name is Michael Fang, and it looks like I'm your new Lord..." Michael introduced himself shortly when he sensed that two new Links of Loyalty had been formed.

Their Links of Loyalty were stronger than those of the others, and they were both 1-Star Summons, which were well-equipped. Was that a gift?

"How did you come here?" Tiara asked the question Michael wished to know the answer to as well.

Tiara was excited but she was also a little suspicious. She had been eyeing Michael from a distance since he returned to his territory and knew that he had not broken the seals of some Summoning Scrolls.

"Didn't my Lord summon us?" One of the Knights asked. He seemed confused as he looked over at Michael. He kneeled in front of his Lord, put down the shield, and handed Michael his sword.

"I, Herald Levian, pledge my loyalty, bravery, and honor to defend the weak, protect the innocent, and uphold justice. I do solemnly swear to uphold the virtues of chivalry and faithfully serve my liege, my kingdom, and the code of knighthood. I shall be the sword led by my liege and master!

May all the Gods be my witness and grant me strength to fulfill this oath until I take my last breath!" Herald Levian pledged in front of everyone.

The other Knight in training followed his companion's example and knelt. He removed his shield and held his longsword out for Michael to grasp.

"I, Siegfried Sertan, pledge my loyalty, bravery, and honor to defend the weak, protect the innocent, and uphold justice. I do solemnly swear to uphold the virtues of chivalry and faithfully serve my liege, my kingdom, and the code of knighthood. I shall be the sword led by my liege and master!

May all the Gods be my witness and grant me strength to fulfill this oath until I take my last breath!" Siegfried pledged while impatiently waiting for Michael to take his sword and accept his oath.

Herald Levian seemed a bit more patient than Sertan, but even he was confused why their liege had not moved forward yet to take his sword. However, he didn't dare look up.

Michael stared blankly at the two Knights in training. He tilted his head after a while and looked over to Tiara, who merely smiled.

She motioned him to take the swords, which Michael did after a moment of hesitation.

'Did they appear because I added another Summoning Core, or because I purified them?'

He was not certain if that was the reason, but it seemed the most likely. He took a look at the Knights' longsword and thought about it for a moment before he returned them.

"As the protectors of the weak, and my swords, you shall not be unarmed. To heed my commands and protect the weak from the ferocious monsters outside my territory, you will need a weapon. Take back your weapons and prove your dedication and loyalty to me!" Michael announced and motioned them to get back on their feet.

He had never expected to start role-playing, but one look at the bright expressions on the Knights' faces told him that his words had been pleasant enough.

'I wonder if I can summon two 1-Star Summons every day now...' Michael wondered, feeling as if a ray of hope was in sight.

It might have been a coincidence that two 1-Star Summons emerged after he installed the Summoning Core, but Michael hoped for the best-case scenario.

There was nothing else he could do.

After all, he required as much support as possible to survive in the Untamed Jungle!

Chapter 54 Advancing Slowly

Now that the Gogi Lord was dead, Michael wanted to focus on calmly expanding his territory.

He had many things to pay attention to and work on, but none of them had to be finished in a rush. The only task that had to be completed in the next few days was putting up the spiked wall.

Michael asked his subjects to construct a spiked wall and an ordinary wall around his territory to hinder the monsters that would attack the territory after the protection barrier was lifted.

He was not too worried, but it was always better to be careful. The Untamed Jungle was not a region that could be taken lightly, after all!

'I should use the lizard cave to harvest Gloa Crystals and other minerals soon. The resources in the lizard cave are quite exceptional and will help my territory advance!' Michael thought while breaking the seals of the Summoning Scrolls he was left with.

At first, 10 Starless Summons emerged from the Summoning Gates, followed by two 1-Star Aero Crossbowmen, and a 3-Star robed woman.

The Aero Crossbowmen looked quite imposing. They wore a full set of leather armor and held a silver crossbow in their hands. Two small quivers were attached to their belts that were accessible and easy to reach in times of danger. However, the most impressive were those wind currents swirled around them, making their hair flutter. It was quite an intriguing sight.

On the other hand, the robed woman radiated a feeling of utter calmness and tranquility. She seemed to be in her 50s and wielded a wooden wand. An azure crystal was embedded at the top of the wand. Streaks of water conjured around the azure crystal, drawing Michael's attention.

"A Water Elemental Mage? That's great!" He exclaimed in excitement. The 3-Star Elemental Mage emerged from the Mythic Summoning Scroll.

The chance to summon a 3-Star Summon had been quite low but Michael seemed to have hit the jackpot. Not only would it be much easier to procure water with the mage, but a Water Elemental Mage was also useful in combat. She could attack and defend by shooting water jets.

Michael introduced himself to his subjects and welcomed them into his territory. The summons introduced themselves as well before they looked at the territory.

Tiara showed them around and tried to familiarize them with the Untamed Jungle. She didn't hesitate to mention the dangers of the Untamed Jungle, but her words made it look like she was talking about the weather rather than something life-threatening.

Because it was already late afternoon, there was not much for everyone to do. It would be too dark once the sun disappeared behind the horizon and venturing out at that time would be risky. That was also another reason Michael wanted to make the lizard cave his. Harvesting a few Gloa Crystals would change the dynamic inside his territory completely and not restrict them to only daytime activities.

They wouldn't have to rely on the sunlight with Gloa Crystal torches placed everywhere.

However, Michael didn't think that it would be easy to conquer the lizard cave. The Lizard mother might have been the only inhabitant of the lizard cave he came across, but Michael believed that there were a lot more lizards as strong as the lizard mother, if not stronger.

The ominous feeling that spread through his entire being when he entered the lizard cave was still apparent in his mind. He clearly recalled the sensation, which had intensified as he made his way deeper into the cave.

It was highly likely that there were stronger monsters in the deeper parts of the cave, and Michael didn't want to bother them just yet. Despite that, Michael knew that time was ticking, and fighting the monsters in the lizard cave in the future was an obvious course of action because the cave was a treasure trove.

The crystals and ores he had procured by using Extraction at the cavern entrance were already quite shocking. If he could manage to find the crystal and ore deposits Michael would be able to make enough money to stir envy in the hearts of most Lords. After all, even Tier-2 Lords might not have had the chance to procure a source of income of similar value.

The lizard cave was not yet in Michael's possession but that would change in the future. His territory would progress rapidly from now on just by looking at the number of combat units, and their terrific combat prowess.

He had Tiara, four 1-Star Warriors, two Aero Crossbowmen who could be considered Elite 1-Star Summons as they possessed the ability to control the surrounding winds to a certain degree, two 1-Star Knights in training with the prospect of attaining enlightenment and becoming 2-Star Knights, and a 3-Star Water Elemental Mage.

With such a group, hunting was bound to become easier, and progress would inevitably follow suit not long after.

In fact, Tiara and the Warriors had gone out to hunt a few monsters while Michael was busy in the Gogi Lord's territory. The number of monsters that dared to get close to the protection barrier decreased drastically over the last few days, but they were fortunate enough to hunt 18 Low Tier-1 Monsters during the day.

Fully Extracting the bodies of 18 Monsters was no problem for Michael anymore. He knew the anatomy of the monsters he had dissected dozens of times since he had entered the Origin Expanse, and Extraction had been upgraded to a 3-Star Soultrait as well. The efficiency of Extraction increased a notch while the energy consumption decreased.

Michael spent less than half an hour fully dissecting the monster corpses, whose body parts were quickly moved to the warehouse.

Afterward, Michael was left alone with the loot created by the Will.

'181 Summoning Scroll Fragments, 4 Summoning Scrolls, and 2 Blueprints. No Artifact.'

It was not easy to procure Artifacts even with Extraction's bonus. Michael had expected that, which was why he didn't fret much and switched his focus on the other drops.

He combined 175 Summoning Scroll Fragments into 7 Summoning Scrolls and put the remaining six aside. A total of 18 monsters turned into 11 Summoning Scrolls and 2 blueprints. Others would never be able to procure Summoning Scrolls and blueprints that easily. Thus, Michael began to wonder what he should do with the opportunities his Soultrait revealed.

'Selling the Summoning Scrolls may sound like a good opportunity, but I need them. The more subjects I have, the stronger my Soultraits grow. Furthermore, I need more people to work on the territory... But what about the blueprints? I should have a few blueprints doubled, or even tripled by now. They should be worth something, right?'

Michael knew that he had many things stored in the warehouse, but he had yet to take a look at everything. They had too many monster corpses without use for them. It was time to return home and sell the excessive body parts and the lizard mother's body.

The warehouse was quite small, which was also why they had to expand it soon. However, it was also true that he had several barrels filled with the blood of Tier-1 Monsters, and chests overflowing with Monster Cores, Gemstones, Antlers, and much more.

However, they were also lacking various resources. The most important were sources of light to see when it was dark. Other than that, it was also important to purchase paper, quills and tint to copy the Sun Soldier technique for everyone in his territory to read and train.

Many showed interest in the Sun Soldier techniques and Michael wanted to provide his subjects the opportunity to grow stronger and attain enlightenment. Copying the techniques was allowed but sharing them with people outside his territory wasn't.

Even sharing the techniques with Adventures who made an oath of being a loyal subordinate to a Lord was frowned upon.

If Michael was found guilty of selling copied techniques, he would be tried by a jury and fined. That was too troublesome, especially since they lived in the era of technology and the internet. It was easy to find out that he purchased the Sun Soldier Breathing and Weaponry technique from Bartholomew's House of Witchery.

There were many tricks that could be applied to fool the system, but that was also illegal.

Michael was not that desperate yet either. He had more than enough items to sell, in the first place.

He was interested in visiting Xiltra to find out more about the market in the Zentika Empire, but the border city was too far away, and not easy to travel to and from in a single day. This was even more true with the Untamed Jungle in his way. Once the Bilrox hatched and matured it would be easier to travel to Xiltra, but that would take a while.

That meant Michael had to leave the Origin Expanse again to sell the goods he gathered during the last few days.

His War Rune has already recharged, so he could use the Runic Gate to return home.

But before he would return home, Michael slept for a few hours.

He felt that he would need the rest right now because something told him that his second trip back home would be more turbulent than the first.

Chapter 55 Bartholomew Network

Michael spent a long time organizing the storage space of his War Rune.

Since his War Rune's degree of refinement increased a lot compared to the last time he left the Origin Expanse, it was easy to fill it with more stuff. However, he had so much to sell that he had to use his professional Tetris skills to fit most items inside.

"I will be back before the protection barrier disperses," Michael promised his subjects sincerely as the Runic Gate manifested next to him.

It was his 9th day inside the Origin Expanse, and it was not long until the protection barrier would disperse. The protection barrier was up for 10 days, but it was usually not exactly for the entire duration of ten days. Sometimes, the protection barrier would disperse a few hours too early, sometimes it would last a full day longer.

However, there were still rough calculations one could take into consideration to guess how much longer the protection barrier would last.

Michael used this calculation to reassure himself and his subjects that they would be fine before he left.

He stepped through the Runic Gate and returned home.

When he emerged in his apartment the first rays of sunlight greeted Michael. It was dawn, the perfect time to start making money.

Michael first entered the bathroom to take a well-needed shower. Then he threw his clothes in the washing machine and switched it on. He changed into a separate set of clothes and looked at his crystal watch not long after.

On the crystal watch's messenger, Michael noticed messages from two chats. The most received messages were from Alice Zenovia, but Michael ignored them.

His brother had messaged him. That was much more important! With a smile on his face, he opened those messages.

[Danny(GluttonNr.1): It's good that you made it out alive. You have to tell me everything the next time you come back home. If you leave out anything, I will find you and...]

[Danny(GluttonNr.1): Either way, message me once you get out of the Origin Expanse. I want to give you some Artifacts and Summoning Scrolls. That way, you can show off to your friends when you meet them again!]

'Does he want me to really message him, or is he lowkey threatening me not to message him?' Michael wondered with an amused look when he saw the threats in his brother's messages.

However, he smiled, until he saw the last sentence Danny had sent to further poke him.

"You know that I have no friends, you stinky Glutton!!" He cursed and immediately moved his fingers to the button next to Danny's nametag.

He called his brother the next moment instead of wasting time chatting.

"If you fled to the Origin Expanse, you're a fa—..." Michael had begun just to shut his mouth when his brother's voice rang out through the crystal watch.

[Looks like my taunt worked. Haha!] Danny announced proudly.

Realizing that his brother had planned all of this, and he had walked right into the trap, Michael's eye began to twitch. It infuriated him even more.

"You really want a beating, don't you?!?" Michael asked, ready to fight it out. However, Danny just kept laughing.

[Don't bother, we know that I will win!]

Michael wanted to retort something, but he knew that Danny was stronger. His brother was on the verge of advancing to the 3rd Tier. Even the EmeraldLead Adventurer team were mere children when faced with an opponent like Danny.

[Where are you? Let's talk about your experiences in the Origin Expanse. I should be able to give you some pieces of advice, and bountiful resources to help you advance faster!]

"I don't need your resources, but we can meet up and talk. Treat me to a meal in the Central Trading Hall!"

[The Central Trading Hall? That's fine with me. Where do you want to eat?]

"The Pleonexia Buffet opened up, so let's go there. It's open all day," Michael proposed after he took a quick glance at the list of restaurants inside the Central Trading Hall.

[Sounds good. I heard the Pleonexia Buffet has high-quality meat and vegetables from Origin Expanse. Let's meet in half an hour!]

"I'll be there. Let's talk then, I have to research something now. See you," Michael said to tell his brother that he was now the busybody.

Danny laughed before he agreed.

[You must be busy now that your protection barrier is about to be removed. Make your research and meet up with me in the Pleonexia Buffet once you are done, Michael, who is now super busy!]

Danny ended the call after he finished taking a jibe at his little brother yet again. He had a lot more questions, but he clearly recalled the pressure he had to face in the first ten days inside the Origin Expanse.

He didn't have any time for Michael at that time. In fact, he was so busy that he could only return home once, and that was only for an hour to sell a few items and buy something before he rushed back to the Origin Expanse.

Compared to him, Michael seemed quite calm. Michael was even willing to spend some time with him and talk about his life in the Origin Expanse instead of madly rushing back. That gave Danny some hope and reassurance about Michael's slightly better situation inside the Origin Expanse. Maybe, territory was in an advantageous position without too many monsters and enemies surrounding him!

Michael hailed a shuttle and traveled to the Central Trading Hall's Plaza. He looked at the guide and made his way to the Pleonexia Buffet. From the moment he hailed the shuttle, Michael's focus had been on the member website of the House of Witchery.

He wanted to make the most use of the Golden Bartholomew Membership Card. Thus, he had to find out all the benefits and understand how to abuse them to the full extent.

Michael was certain that it would be quite difficult to exploit the system, but it was not that hard. There was not too much to abuse, in the first place.

'With the Golden Bartholomew Membership, I am given access to all Bartholomew facilities with VIP status. I can participate in the VIP auctions and inspect the online catalog of items that will be stocked the following week. I will receive the best price for selling items, and my purchases are discounted...all of that is amazing, considering that I didn't do much to receive such benefits...'

The benefits Michael mentioned were not everything. He was also given access to the hidden shop of the House of Witchery, and he could tap into Bartholomew's network system. His access rights had been adjusted with the golden membership card, which meant that he could research most of the things he wanted to know.

The Bartholomew network system was quite advanced. It had various types of information about the Origin Expanse, such as the regions of the Origin Expanse, human territories, details about other extraterrestrial races, and mankind's relationship with them, and even more information about the rarity and price range of certain resources.

Since he had yet to register his Lord ID, the network system was the best replacement to gather as much information as he could procure.

'Let's see...what should I start with? The Untamed Jungle, Xiltru, or the Zentika Empire?'

Chapter 56 Native Empire

"That makes no sense," Michael mumbled as he entered the elevator.

He was already inside the Central Trading Hall and was about to reach the Pleonexia Buffet, but he was too stupefied to realize that.

But it made sense somehow. Michael had been searching for information about the Untamed Jungle, Xiltru, and the Zentika Empire for the past ten minutes, but he barely found any useful information.

Neither the Untamed Jungle nor Xiltru were mentioned in the database of the Bartholomew network. That was already weird because the Bartholomew network was considered a reliable source filled with information. The network even had information that was hard to procure with an ordinary Lord ID. It required a higher access grade to procure this information which was why Michael had been optimistic.

Sadly, despite the massive pool of information Michael could access, he was barely able to find three reports related to the Zentika Empire. To make things worse, none of them sounded very pleasant either.

The first report was about the Lords whose territory had been bulldozed by the Zentika Empire's Armies. None of the Lords wanted to go further into detail, but they said that the Zentika Empire had various inhuman conditions to fulfill if one wanted to remain a Lord inside the Zentika Empire.

One condition was to sign a soul-binding contract that had been acknowledged by the Will of the Origin Expanse. This soul-binding contract prevented any Lord from spreading information about the Zentika Empire to the outside world. This ensured that the Zentika Empire stayed hidden from the preying eyes of greedy individuals that might want to raid and pilfer it.

While that was still fine, some conditions mentioned turned lords into the vassals of the Zentika Empire, while restricting their growth drastically. However, since only a few Lords were able to escape total annihilation, there weren't any detailed reports about the internal structure of the Zentika Empire, its size and the full extent of the Empire's military might.

The second report was a little bit different. It was made to honor a few Lords living on the outskirts of the region surrounding the Zentika Empire. It was a short article about the living conditions of the Lords, who were reportedly residing in a humongous mountain range that was nestled between two rival Empires. These Lords detailed their grievances, sharing their ghastly living conditions, and the harsh weather that turned every day into a game of survival. The small report shared the flora and fauna found in the mountain range, the dangers of the environment in certain regions, and the native Empires of the Origin Expanse rather than the issues these Lords had to face.

In Michael's opinion, they were merely fillers that were used to add more words to the report.

The report was written by a reporter for a small company. It never gained much traction and had less than 100,000 views ten years after it had been released.

For Michael, both reports were mostly useless. He was not a Lord residing in the Zentika Empire, and he was fairly sure that the freezing cold mountain range was not next door either.

If Michael wanted to give the reports some credit and consider his time spent well to some extent, it was useful to know that the Zentika Empire didn't acknowledge independent Lords inside their empire.

Only the third and last report revolving around the Zentika Empire was of any real use to Michael. The third report was about the Zentika Empire's Emperor and the royal family. It was stated that multiple royal families existed and that each of them originated from a different race.

The Zentika Empire was considered a Native Empire, which meant that the natives of the Origin Expanse had built it. They built it from scratch and have been the undisputed rulers since then.

Why was that important for Michael?

It was pretty simple.

A widespread theory about the Origin Expanse's natives said that all natives were once subjects of Lords. That means all natives came from the outside, and they died inside the Origin Expanse before they were resurrected as natives of the Origin Expanse and subjects of their Lords.

But how was that related to the creation of Native Empires?

Lords were unlikely to die before their subjects much like a chess game where the pawns and other pieces sacrifice themselves to save the King. Most Lords would jump onto the battlefield when the battle had already been fought by their subjects.

To put it in simple terms, the creation of most native Kingdoms and Empires was a result of the corpses of Lords!

'If the first generation of the Zentika Empire's royalty were freed after their Lord died, they might have started a conquest against all Lords in order to free other subjects from the Link of Loyalty and forced subordination,' Michael thought after he read all three reports twice.

He could tell that he was currently imagining the worst-case scenario, a scenario that was unlikely to be true, in the first place. Nonetheless, Michael's mind went wild, using the little pieces of information he was provided with.

Michael was not sure about the source of information from the last report, but he considered it reliable until proven otherwise. Whether the Zentika Empire was controlled by natives, or an extraterrestrial Lord didn't make much of a difference for Michael for the time being.

However, it helped him to mentally prepare himself to have some information about potential opponents and threats. If the worst-case scenario were to come true, he wouldn't be too shocked.

"That was not the kind of information I wished to find," Michael mumbled to himself when he heard someone appear next to him.

"What information did you want to find, busybody?"

It was Danny who had appeared next to him. He smiled brightly upon seeing that his brother was well and unscathed, and slapped hard on Michael's back.

"Forget it," Michael responded while rubbing the spot his brother had hit.

Ever since Michael had entered the Origin Expanse, his brother stopped holding back and treating him like a kid. He slapped Michael lightly but it felt as if his left shoulder was dislocated.

"How was it in the Origin Expanse? Is your territory nice? Where exactly are you? If I know someone near you, you could team up with him. How about your resources? You told me that you don't need my help, but I cannot believe that. I was always struggling because I never had enough resources or money to buy everything I needed. Do you need cash or some resources?" Danny bombarded Michael with questions.

They had yet to enter the Pleonexia Buffet, but Danny had already asked more than 20 questions. He didn't even give Michael time to take a breath and answer a single question.

Danny didn't stop asking questions even after they reached the Pleonexia Buffet. He continued throwing one question after another while showing a code on his crystal watch's holographic screen.

'Did he make an online reservation just to bombard me with questions? No, that cannot be...right?' Michael wondered, hoping that he was just mistaken.

Pleonexia Buffet was a high-quality all-you-can-eat buffet. Danny first sat down at their table, ready to order drinks, and continued to ask his younger brother some questions.

However, Michael disappeared at the buffet to fill three plates to the brim. He placed them on their table and sat down to start feasting.

Both Danny and Michael were gluttonous, and they did not have a set time when it came to having food. Whenever they had the opportunity, they would eat as much as possible because they knew that they would often skip meals. That happened a lot in the past, and it would get even worse now that Michael had become a busy Lord.

Thus, it was no problem for them to fill their stomach to the brim even though it was early in the morning.

Just as Michael sat down on the chair – glad that his brother had left to fill his plates – he received a new notification.

He opened the messenger and saw a message pop up.

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): I saw that you were online 28 minutes ago!! Why are you ignoring a pure maiden when she sacrifices her time for you?!? Where is your chivalry as a man?]

Michael's expression turned sour at once, and he put down the drumstick he had picked up a second ago.

'What a crazy bi...'

Chapter 57 Tritan Alliance

He had received several messages from Alice Zenovia. It had only been a little more than two days outside the Origin Expanse, yet Alice Zenovia acted as if the universe was about to collapse. And that was merely because he didn't answer her 'properly' before.

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): "—"...really?!?]

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): How can you be so cold to me? I'm a kind-hearted woman, who is giving her utmost to support you, yet you're acting like that?]

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): I am disappointed in you!]

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): Come on...just message me properly once you're back...]

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): As long as you agree to sit for the entrance exam of the Sapphirelake Military Camp, I will forgive your insolent self! That's how generous I am!!]

It was the first time Michael found the time to look at her messages. And he was surprised to have received so many from her. He had not expected Alice to be that affected by the response he had given before. In his opinion, his answer had been more than enough to show that he was alive.

'Am I the first who was daring enough, to ignore her?' Michael wondered after he re-read her message.

His frown turned into a faint smile while thinking about it, and he put the crystal watch's screen aside while shaking his head lightly.

He couldn't believe that Alice Zenovia was actually behaving like a spoiled brat merely because he didn't answer her as enthusiastically as she had hoped.

It was quite fun.

"What's wrong with your face?" Danny asked as he sat down with three plates and a bowl.

They were all filled to the brim, just like Michael's plates.

"Why? Is it handsome?" Michael joked light-heartedly, feeling good.

Danny was about to take a bite of his food when he froze in his tracks. His expression turned sour, and he looked at his brother as if he had lost his sanity.

"...That was a joke..." Michael grumbled, which caused another change in Danny's expression.

"You got a girlfriend?" He asked.

"Huh? No," Michael responded with furrowed eyebrows.

He chose to change the topic because it looked like they weren't going anywhere with this discussion. Furthermore, he didn't really want to answer most of Danny's questions. That would only make him worry too much about his little brother's safety. Michael also thought about Alice Zenovia and the invitation she issued when they first met.

"Do you think I should apply to a university or military academy?"

Danny took a bite from one of his plates while looking at his brother. He was thinking about something before he answered,

"Did someone tell you that you should apply? Did your school send you a notification about it?" He asked.

"A notification? Why would I receive a notification from school?" Michael responded in confusion. He was not sure what Danny was trying to imply.

"...Michael...you do know that you took your final exam the day before your War Rune manifested...right?" Danny followed up while staring at his brother as if he had grown another head.

Michael was already familiar with this expression, but he could only return a blank stare to his brother.

"You didn't prepare yourself for the graduation ceremony?"

"Prepare what?"

At that point, Danny was certain that his brother was either an idiot or addicted to the Origin Expanse. Maybe, it was both!

"Wait! Do you even know the score of your final exam?" Danny asked sternly, just to see Michael shaking his head.

"I am probably somewhere in the top ten of my class. But it doesn't really matter, does it?"

Danny could only sigh when he heard what his little brother said. He was about to open his mouth, but he was not too sure if it would be a waste of time and breath to mention this to Michael.

"So, you want to tell me that you came back to sell the goods of your territory, and purchase necessities for your territory, and not to purchase a new suit and prepare yourself for the graduation ceremony on the weekend?" He asked at last, even though he was pretty sure what Michael's answer would be.

Michael nodded as an answer.

"I actually forgot that we have a graduation ceremony," He mumbled before shaking his head, "That's not important right now. Do you think I should join a military academy or not?!"

This time it was Danny's turn to stare blankly at his brother. The graduation ceremony and the afterparty were considered one of the most important social events for graduates, yet Michael didn't pay any attention to it.

'Is it because he had no friends in school? I heard that Elite Schools make it hard for ordinary students, but Michael never complained about his school-life,' Danny thought while pressing his lips together in a thin line. 'Maybe, it is not that important for Michael to be present at the graduation ceremony. If he is on bad terms with his classmates, or he's getting ignored altogether, it might be better for him to not go...'

Danny freed his mind after a while. He continued to eat, and thought of an answer to Michael's question, rather than trying to convince him to be present at the graduation ceremony. Michael was very responsible, in the first place. He knew what to do, and what he shouldn't do.

"I noticed that you didn't apply for the Lord ID yet, so I guess you haven't heard the news yet," Danny explained slowly, "One of the Alliances affiliated with humans is on the verge of waging war with another extraterrestrial lifeform!"

Danny's words crashed down on Michael like a tidal wave. Michael's expression turned sour, but he continued to listen intently as Danny continued to explain.

"For now, everyone is preparing for the worst-case scenario while hoping for the best, but it looks like the situation is slowly turning worse. In a few years, at most, war will break out and the military will send out draft calls. That is something pretty much every Lord with the necessary access permission can tell."

Danny took a few bites of his food to give Michael the necessary time to digest the shocking news. However, Michael opened the holographic screen of his crystal watch instead.

He used the Bartholomew Network to look up news about the war, only to figure out that most news articles and reports of the last few days were related to the 'cold war', the 'next interstellar war', and topics closely related to the conflicts between the extraterrestrial race and the Tritan Alliance.

Michael didn't know much about the Tritan Alliance, but the summary was quite simple.

When mankind left the solar system, they encountered the Barbarians and Warlock Centaurs in the adjacent stellar system they'd traveled to. Mankind helped them solve their problems and create an alliance by causing a huge massacre.

Both the Barbarian race and the Warlock Centaurs were honorable warriors, who loved to clash with other races and fight. Mankind made sure that they became allies before using their military power to improve their influence.

That had worked out very well until today, but it looked like being in an alliance with war and violence-loving races came back to bite them at last. It didn't seem easy to have war-loving companions.

"Many Lords, big families, and influential clans desire to send their children to military academies, and universities with military courses. They want to make sure that their children and disciples can accumulate military merits and form connections with high-ranked members of the military without being on the battlefield. That way, they can improve their military ranking quickly once everyone is drafted for war," Danny said, summarizing the key points to his little brother.

He was not sure what Michael had seen online, but he was drained of all his color.

"So..."

"So, I think you should apply to a military academy. The person who told you to apply to one probably tried to help you out. I don't know who that person is, but he – or she – should have seen some talent in you. Of course, you should stay vigilant because that person might try to lure you into their organization, or something like that, thinking that you are just an ordinary person that can be used as a replaceable extra or an experimental lamb," Danny cautioned before he added another note,

"That doesn't mean the person has to be bad. He or she could have good intentions. You will have to figure out their true intentions on your own."

Michael couldn't agree more. He had already suspected Alice Zenovia's intentions, but he was not yet sure what she was trying to do. She told him to apply to the Sapphirelake Military Academy in their first meeting itself. That was a little weird.

However, the recent messages affirmed that she was a straightforward person, who couldn't hold back when she wanted to say something. Alice Zenovia didn't seem like a dishonest person.

Even if she wanted to bait him, Michael was pretty sure that she wouldn't turn him into a meatshield. Of course, he couldn't be certain of that. It was just his gut feeling telling him that she did not mean any harm. He could be wrong.

"But I am not sure if you will get accepted into a military academy. It will be quite difficult because the acceptance threshold should be much higher than in the years before. Even if you get accepted, you will have to compete against prodigies who've trained meticulously since they started to walk and have years of teaching and lessons to back them.

It won't be easy to procure resources, but if you can make it, you'll be able to get your hands on treasures and resources that you would never be able to obtain otherwise. After all, the government showed its willingness to increase the funding for universities, and even more so Military Academies to prepare for war!"

Michael was a little dumbfounded after listening to his brother. He was not sure what to do right now, and he opened his chat with Alice Zenovia subconsciously to ask her a question.

However, he held back and didn't hit the enter button. Michael deleted the message before he looked at his brother.

"I understand what you're trying to say, but...why did you never apply to a university, or military academy then?"

Chapter 58 Benefits Of A Lord ID

"I understand what you're trying to say, but...why did you never apply to a university, or a military academy then?" Michael asked before he proposed,

"Do you want us to apply together? With your 5-Star Soultrait and Tier, you would be accepted with open arms. I can even ask someone to send an application form to the Saphirelake Military Academy on your behalf. I think she would do that!"

Michael couldn't hide that he was a little excited at the thought of studying at the Saphirelake Military Academy alongwith his brother.

Even if Danny was never able to spend much time with him, Michael always thought of him as a great and loving brother. He could tell that Danny always gave his best to support him and spare some time to train together.

Danny was his best friend, and he would sacrifice his life for him, if necessary. That was not even debatable.

However, Michael quickly noticed that Danny didn't seem as excited as he was. Danny went silent and he had stopped eating as well.

"..."

'Seems like I shouldn't have asked,' Michael thought, giving it a shrug.

He couldn't hide that he was a little disappointed, but it didn't matter.

"I won't force you. It's just a thought that occurred to me. I felt that it would be easier for us if we go together," He said, forcing himself to smile.

Michael knew that if he was accepted into the Saphirelake Military Academy he would have to leave the planet. They would be light years apart because the Saphirelake Military Academy was on Kelta, which was the first planet in the new stellar system they'd begun to colonize a few decades ago.

With lightyears separating the brothers, it would be extremely difficult for them to meet up.

Michael suppressed a deep sigh, and he began to eat again. The information Danny had shared weighed heavy on his mind, but he was hungry, nonetheless. There was almost nothing that could cause him to lose his appetite.

Meanwhile, Danny was still deep in thought but Michael didn't bother him any further. Michael had learned a lot today, whether it was about the Origin Expanse and the Zentika Empire, or the outside world, mankind's current state of events, and the future that awaited him.

He had a lot to digest but he felt better knowing what was going on than being left in the dark. Being ignorant would come back to bite him when he least expected it. Thus, Michael was quite satisfied.

As for his thoughts about the Saphirelake Military Academy, Michael was still not certain if he should apply to it. Alice Zenovia might have told him to attend it, but there were countless military academies in the solar system. Some of them ought to be ranked higher than the Saphirelake Military Academy. Couldn't he apply to them instead of having to leave the solar system to get admitted to a military academy that was constructed only recently?

Michael opened his chat with Alice Zenovia with those thoughts flashing through his mind.

He wrote a message on impulse and hit the send button before he could rethink his decision.

[Michael: Sorry for replying so late, I've been busy with my territory. I didn't have the time to research the Saphirelake Military Academy and compare them to other Military Academies near Elyra, so I cannot give you a certain answer yet. Even if I sit for the aptitude examination on the 20th and pass, I am not sure if I will join. I know nothing about the benefits the Saphirelake Military Academy has over other academies and universities. If you could give me some information about the benefits, I might be able to give you a clear answer soon.]

After he sent the message, Michael focused his full attention on Danny and the delicious food of the Pleonexia Buffet. The food was even better than Michael expected, and he savored each bite. Simultaneously, he began to answer some of Danny's earlier questions once he refilled his now-empty plates.

Danny had yet to finish his bowl and three plates of food when he returned to the table, but he was less uncomfortable than he had been when Michael asked him to join a university, or academy together.

Michael made use of that to talk to Danny. He wanted to know more about the Tritan Alliance, and the treaties mankind made with other races. Michael was also curious about Danny's territory, how far the development had progressed, and how many powerful subjects he had nurtured since he became a Lord in the Origin Expanse.

They talked a lot, and it looked like they would never stop until a staff member came over to politely ask them to hurry up since their allocated time had been used up. The staff member asked them if they wanted to extend their time, but the brothers declined. They had gobbled up close to 30 plates of food that had been filled to the brim. The amount of food and nutrition were enough to feed a family of ten for two days, maybe even more.

The brothers didn't see a problem, but they noticed that some of the staff members looked at them in disbelief. Michael even heard someone asking their friend if they had starved themselves for several days to prepare for the Pleonexia Buffet in an attempt to taunt the brothers. Little did they know that this kind of meal was something Michael could eat every other day. His stomach would digest everything rapidly and turn it into a massive amount of energy.

That was exactly what he required. After all, the Origin Expanse was bound to cause countless sleepless nights in the future. But that was only obvious. Being a Lord was time-consuming, especially if one wanted to be a good Lord.

The two brothers got up from their table and left the Pleonexia Buffet. They finished their meal, and it was now time to do two things.

First, Danny asked Michael to register himself as a Lord and get his Lord ID information. The reason for that was apparent to Michael, whose brother had done the same thing four years ago.

To create a Lord ID a trace of the War Rune's data would be extracted and stored inside the Lord ID. This made it near-impossible to copy the Lord ID, which turned it into the most authentic identification device. However, that was not everything.

With the War Rune's data in the Lord ID, the access permission to the Lord network would be upgraded automatically whenever the War Rune's Tier increased. It would be updated in real-time in the Lord ID if a Lord loses his territory or dies as well.

The Lord ID's card would naturally lose its luster and become blank when the Lord's territory was lost, and it would burn if the Lord died. This information would be sent to the AI governing all Lord IDs, which made it much easier to be updated on a Lord's death in the Origin Expanse, and to forward the information to the deceased's family.

Danny wanted his information and to be immediately informed if something happened to Michael. Michael was against that because he didn't want to make his brother worry needlessly, however, the brothers clearly recalled the dispute they had four years ago.

At that time, Danny didn't want to share his Lord ID with Michael because of the same reason. It was just the other way around this time.

Michael realized that he was wrong and that he had to comply to his brother's demand. That was fine until something bad happened, which Michael wouldn't let happen.

Thus, they went over to the branch of the awakened department that was located inside the Central Trading Hall. It took only a few minutes to reach the awakened department and the Lord ID was created and all set to be used in half an hour.

When the Lord ID was done, Michael forwarded the ID's information to Danny. However, his brother was fully focused on Michael's War Rune.

Danny could tell from Michael's presence that he was already a decently powerful Lord with quite a few loyal subjects. While that was great, the fact that Michael's War Rune was almost refined to the Late stage was a little worrisome.

"Are you sure that you don't need any help? I began to save up a little after entering the Origin Expanse. I always put some of my savings aside to make up for the little time I could spend with you..." Danny said in a sad voice as they left the awakened department.

He looked a little embarrassed, but Michael just smiled.

"Gifting me Tigerfang is already more than I ever expected to receive from you. I don't think I should ask how much your bank account had to bleed to buy me an Epic Artifact...Furthermore, Tigerfang is powerful enough to cut through Tier-1 Monsters, so you don't have to worry about my safety!" Michael reassured his brother with confidence spreading across his face.

However, Danny's face turned dark upon hearing his brother's words.

"Cut easily through Tier-1 Monsters...is that so? How do you know that?!?"

'Fuck...'

At that moment, Michael realized that he had fucked up.

Chapter 59 A Shocked Brother

The moment Danny realized what he had just said, Michael knew that he fucked up.

'How am I going to explain that now?'

Michael opened his mouth, but he closed it just a moment later. He didn't want to tell Danny about the Untamed Jungle because his brother would worry more than necessary.

Danny could only sigh deeply upon seeing that Michael was reluctant to speak up. He looked at Michael once again and scanned him from head to toe.

Michael was clearly unscathed and doing well. It worried him that Michael spoke so lightly about fighting Tier-1 Monsters, but it was not as if he could do something against it. His little brother was just as stubborn as himself.

"No matter what happens, tell me when things go south...please," Danny said in a low voice. He grit his teeth and clenched his fists, "I don't want anything to happen to you. You're the last..."

Danny began but trailed off as the last words died in his throat. He couldn't get himself to say them out loud. But that was not necessary, because Michael understood what Danny wanted to say.

Their parents had never been there for them. After 'that' happened, they just disappeared, leaving a house and some monthly allowance for the brothers.

"I understand. Don't worry, I am giving my best to survive," Michael reassured his brother before he added a little bit more seriously, "But we should go to the House of Witchery now. I need to sell a bunch of items and buy even more!"

Michael went ahead while Danny's gaze lingered on his brother. He could only shake his head before he rushed behind his brother.

"The Market of Olympus has a higher rating than the House of Witchery. Why don't we go there instead? I am getting good prices for the goods I sell my goods there every time!" Danny proposed but Michael shook his head.

"I get a special price from the House of Witchery. The Market of Olympus won't give such prices to ordinary customers. I looked at the buy and sell ratio of most shops and did some calculations. The House of Witchery is the best with the benefits I get."

"Benefits? Why would you get benefits from the House of Witchery?" Danny asked, but Michael only offered a smug smile and a shrug.

He didn't answer his brother even after Danny asked for the fifth time. Michael wanted to show off the golden Bartholomew membership card when the timing was right.

They entered the shop less than ten minutes later. Some of the staff members remembered Michael, and they immediately greeted him with a bow. Michael didn't expect this kind of special treatment, but it made him feel good since his brother was witnessing everything.

He had a hard time staying calm as he approached the Witchery Bazaar. Whether it was a coincidence or destiny, the same young man from two days ago had a shift at the Witchery Bazaar.

He rushed over to Michael and bowed deeply to him the moment he saw him.

"You're already back, Sir. How can I help you? Do you want to sell new goods again?" The young man asked in an overly polite voice.

Michael was unable to hold back his smile anymore as he glanced over to Danny. Meanwhile, his brother could only stare at the strange situation with widened eyes.

"I came back to sell some goods, yes. But I have a lot more than last time, and I'm not sure if you can appraise them fast enough to make sure that their quality won't deteriorate when I take them out after a long time," Michael said while continuing to smile.

Most of his goods had been stored in the warehouse for a while. The preservation enchantment array was exceptional, but it was not a perfect solution. The quality of some goods had deteriorated a little, though they had not gone bad. Nothing was spoiled.

"No problem. I will call over a few more staff members to help me. That's no problem, at all, Sir!" The young staff member said as he left the brothers at the counter.

He rushed over to his colleagues and brought some of them over the next minute. Afterward, he led Michael to the appraisal room.

"Will your friend over there come with us, Sir?" The young staff member asked while looking at Danny after he gave a quick bow in his direction.

"That's allowed?" Danny asked, dumbfounded.

He thought that it was a custom to not allow anybody to enter the appraisal room except for the seller and the required staff.

"Of course, not. Sir can bring as many people inside the appraisal room as he desires!" The young man said as if it was perfectly normal. The other staff members nodded their heads in agreement as well.

Danny turned to Michael and frowned deeply.

His eyes seemed to scream 'What the hell did you do?!', but Michael merely smiled.

"I will stay here," Danny said after he pondered for a second or two.

He didn't really want to see the goods Michael had brought to sell. If there were corpses of multiple Tier-1 Monsters in his storage, his mind would go awry, and he would start questioning Michael about the danger of the region his territory had spawned in once again.

There had to be a reason why Michael didn't want to talk about the region around his territory, and Danny had already guessed it. However, he didn't want to reaffirm his guess by following Michael inside the appraisal room.

"Alright, I will be back soon," Michael said before he followed the staff members inside the appraisal room next door.

The temperature inside the appraisal room plummeted instantly and they waited patiently for Michael to retrieve the goods he wished to sell.

Thus, he began taking them out one by one.

Michael retrieved six blueprints first. He had two sets of those blueprints, so he might as well sell one of each.

Afterward, he retrieved the Bilrox feathers in his possession. Michael had extracted them a second time to clean them perfectly.

Michael followed up with 93 Low Tier-1 Monster Cores, several dozen Gemstones, Antlers, and other precious body parts from 93 Low Tier-1 Monster corpses, such as their extracted blood, unscathed organs, clean tendons, and more. This time, Michael sold the extracted meat of Tier-1 Monsters as well.

However, that was not everything. In fact, it was merely an appetizer.

The main dish was about to be served now.

Michael retrieved several hundred perfectly extracted lizard scales, close to two tons of lizard meat, the perfectly extracted and well-preserved organs and other precious body parts of the lizard, and her monster core.

When Michael retrieved the perfectly dissected lizard corpse, the staff members stopped moving for a moment. Their jaws hit the ground and their eyes widened as they turned over to Michael.

Was that guy really a Tier-0 Lord?!

'Why are they acting like that? It shouldn't be the first time they saw such monster corpses. They didn't see the desert, either!' Michael thought while retrieving the War Axe Artifact of the Gogi Lord.

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Half an hour later, Michael and the staff member left the appraisal room. The staff member looked deathly pale while Michael smiled brightly.

'As expected, the lizard mother was a Tier-2 monster!'

Satisfied with himself and the gains he had made, Michael followed the staff member to the counter to sign the deal.

Meanwhile, Danny praised himself inwardly when he saw the stunned look on their faces.

"Good thing I didn't join them..."

Chapter 60 Fortune

Now that all goods had been appraised, Michael only had to sign the form that listed all goods and the amount of money he would receive, and he would be done.

Danny followed Michael to the counter, and he saw the total sum of money Michael was about to receive by chance.

His heart skipped a beat and he looked at Michael in utter shock. Michael hadn't signed the paper yet. His hand hovered over the form, but he looked at Danny with a sly smile.

"Do you want to see how much I'll get?" He asked teasingly, seeing Danny's reaction.

However, Danny could only shake his head. He was already sweating and looked absolutely stunned and so far, he'd merely seen the total sum, and not what items allowed him to earn so much money.

'You're scared about what you'll see, aren't you?' Michael mused inwardly, even though he understood Danny's reaction.

If he were in his brother's position, he wouldn't want to know where such a huge sum of money came from either.

Danny was just shocked, which was completely justified.

His earnings were more than Michael's but that was because his territory was bigger, and his sources of income were quite big and diverse. The money he earned from hunting was extremely high. However, that was because he was a Tier-2 Lord with four years of experience as a Lord.

He could leave his territory to go out and hunt groups of Tier-2 Monsters with his military might and 5-Star Soultrait. That was definitely possible and not even that hard for him since he had formed a strong and cohesive group with exceptional teamwork with his subjects.

But Michael was merely a Rookie Lord, whose protection barrier was still up. He hadn't even been in the Origin Expanse for ten days!

"Did you sell your soul?" He couldn't help but ask in astonishment, yet Michael just laughed.

"I just sold a few monster carcasses and an Artifact. It's nothing major," Michael waved off his hand as if it was the most natural thing.

Meanwhile, the clerk and the other staff members, who had appraised Michael's goods, could hardly keep a straight face. Their eyes shot wide open upon hearing the brother's conversation, but they chose to keep their mouths shut. That was best for everyone.

'Well, I didn't expect the War Axe to be worth that much either. I should have researched a little bit more about the price of Artifacts,' Michael acknowledged at last.

He glanced at the list of items he had received and nodded his head.

Michael would receive an average of 5,500\$ for each blueprint. Two of them were quite rare drops, which were good for new Lords. Wealthy families wouldn't hesitate to buy the blueprints for an

exorbitant price since the blueprints allowed their offspring to develop their territories at a much faster rate.

Other than that, the average price for the Low Tier-1 corpses increased to 1,080\$, which was mostly due to three major factors. First, most monsters in the Untamed Jungle seemed quite rare. Their population was way too high in the Untamed Jungle, but they could rarely be found anywhere else. Second, Michael included the extracted monster meat this time as well. He had not done that last time.

As for the third reason, it was something Michael was the proudest of. Like last time, he had been very thorough when he had dissected the carcasses. That was why it would be very easy to work with the materials he provided. As a result, the Shop's AI gave his goods a high evaluation score, just like last time.

This high evaluation score was also why Michael earned 150,000\$ from the near-perfectly dissected lizard corpse. The lizard scales were particularly good for armor, and they could be ground and used by Alchemists as well. The meat was delicious and had been sold in a massive amount of 1.8 tons. Meanwhile, the remaining parts of the lizard were also well-preserved and near-perfectly dissected, earning Michael a small fortune.

The Bilrox feathers, on the other hand, earned the least with 5\$ for each piece. He sold a total of 166 Bilrox feathers, earning him an additional 830\$.

Finally, the 3-Star Tier-1 War Axe of the Gogi Lord had been appraised to be worth 730,000\$, which totaled his goods to be worth slightly above one million dollars!

"If I might suggest something, Sir...it would be better to sell the 3-Star Tier-1 War Axe through a VIP auction, or by looking for a customer who is specifically in need of a huge War Axe. After all, the Shop's AI evaluated the battle axe as too hard to wield since it is too big for human Lords and Adventurers to use. If not for the War Axes' over-dimensional size, you would have received much more money for the Weapon Artifact!" The staff member provided well-meant advice.

Michael considered it for a moment before he shook his head.

He knew that Artifacts were rare to drop, and extremely hard to produce since the link to the War Rune cannot be recreated easily. Good Weapon Artifacts were even scarcer, yet Michael was satisfied with the price he received.

He didn't have the time to wait for the next VIP auction, forget about searching for the perfect customer. It was better to use the money at his disposal to invest in the future and advance faster rather than waiting for weeks to earn a little bit more from the War Axe Artifact.

Michael signed the deal without hesitation. Danny was a little shocked after hearing about the 3-Star Tier-1 War Axe but he gave his utmost to ignore the worry blossoming deep inside his heart.

He told himself that Michael was simply lucky and that he received good fortune by defeating one or two Tier-1 Monsters. Deep down, Danny could tell that the situation was a little bit different than what he assumed, but there was nothing he could say about it.

It was not as if his life as a Lord in the Desert was much easier. He was about to go out on an expedition to conquer a Primedival Pyramid, so who was he to tell Michael off?!

Danny used his actions of the past and present to ease the worry in his heart. He had been a lot more reckless in the past, and he could tell that Michael would be fine if things wouldn't get worse.

Danny knew what his brother was capable of, and he believed that Michael would overcome all kinds of troubles.

With that in mind, he followed Michael to give him a few pieces of advice about the items he would require eventually.

Just like that, the brothers went on a shopping trip to splurge Michael's hard-earned money in less than twenty minutes.

"How can a million dollars feel like nothing? That's a huge fortune...but I've spent it just as easily as I spent the 50,000\$ last time I came here..." Michael grumbled in a depressed voice before Danny patted his brother's back.

"In the future, you will have to spend a lot more. However, the beginning is the hardest. Once you have a few stable sources of income, you'll be able to set aside some money to purchase stronger Artifacts, and high-ranked Summoning Scrolls!"

Michael forced himself to smile and nod his head.

He knew that he had a lot to do, but it was still a little depressing to see his bank account balance after a short shopping spree.