

Supreme Lord 61

Chapter 61 Gift

The items Michael had purchased earlier were very simple.

He bought all the necessary tools to perform alchemy, forge weapons and armor, and for gardening. The tools were of high quality and enough in quantity for three to four Alchemists and Blacksmiths to use.

Other than the tools, Michael purchased high-quality fertilizer for the Tiatcha Trees and potions with growth hormones. The potions had been developed for monsters and livestock. They would be quite useful for the Bilrox once they hatch.

Michael purchased several sets of tempered leather armors manufactured with the hide of Tier-1 monsters for his Warriors and Tiara to use, a wide variety of potions, a large medicine kit, and a bunch of recipes and books for all Subjects who were still Apprentices.

Being an Apprentice meant that they had the potential to become Experts when they were still alive. Sadly, they died before reaching that level, which meant that they could attain it now that they had been resurrected.

Unfortunately, everything was ridiculously expensive.

More than a third of his earnings had been spent on the items above, which had left Michael with a little bit more than 600,000\$ to purchase a better Bow Artifact and Arrows.

The Antler Bow was great, but it was not good enough anymore. Michael wanted to train his archery skills without being restricted by the power output of a Tierless 1-Star Bow Artifact. Thus, he purchased a bow whose pulling force could be adjusted by channeling energy inside it.

The 3-Star Tier-0 Hardwood Bow Artifact was perfect for this purpose. It didn't possess an additional enchantment, but the hardness of the frame could be adjusted with the amount of energy inserted. It could injure Peak Tier-1 Monsters in its strongest form, which was exactly what Michael needed!

The discounted price Michael received was 600,000\$ and a batch of arrows was included in it. However, he purchased a few hundred additional arrows, spending most of his remaining fortune.

Leaving the House of Witchery with an empty pocket – just like last time – Michael felt a little sad, but he was also satisfied with himself.

'I can give Tiara the Antler Bow to increase her perception a little. I can teach her a little if she is still interested in archery,' Michael thought to himself before he retrieved the Antler Bow.

He cut the connection between the Antler Bow and his War Rune and proceeded to bind the Hardwood Bow to his War Rune once he and his brother entered the shuttle, which they had hailed to return home.

A familiar white strand of energy emerged from within his War Rune. Michael willed it to bind the Hardwood Bow, and the strand of energy shot forward. Like a tentacle, it coiled around the Hardwood Bow Artifact before starting the binding process.

Michael closed his eyes to feel and sense the binding process intently while the Hardwood Bow turned into a white wisp, which was pulled inside his War Rune shortly thereafter.

The enhancement provided by the Hardwood Bow spread through his entire being when they arrived in front of their apartment complex. Michael felt his perception and agility increase considerably. It was several times stronger than the perception increment he had received from the Antler Bow!

However, the increment in his perception and agility was still weak compared to the enhancement he received from his Epic Artifact.

'Even if the difference between a 1-Star Artifact and a 3-Star Artifact is worlds apart, Tigerfang is even more exceptional!'

The Hardwood Bow increased his perception and agility by roughly 20%, while Tigerfang's overall increment was more than 70% even now. The external increase of strength provided by Artifacts was

predetermined and wouldn't change. Nonetheless, Tigerfang's enhancement was still extremely high even after his War Rune's degree of refinement was about to reach the Late stage.

It was truly an invaluable treasure for a Tierless Lord and served as a mean to increase Michael's survivability drastically!

"Are you not getting out?" Danny asked, pulling Michael out of his train of thought.

Michael shook his head to free his mind and left the shuttle. It was only then that he noticed something lying on his lap.

It was an arrow.

"Huh? Isn't that the..." He blurted out in a dumbfounded voice when Danny nodded his head, "That's the Return Arrow. You were looking at it as if you were going to steal it, so I purchased it."

Danny laughed lightly, recalling when Michael had a look of pure yearning on his face while staring at the Return Arrow. Unfortunately, he didn't have enough money to purchase it just yet. He would have to save up another million to purchase the Tierless 3-Star Artifact, the Return Arrow.

"You bought it? Why wo—..." Michael began, but he couldn't even finish his sentence when Danny began glaring at him.

"I just bought it, so what?! Don't tell me that you don't need it? I know that your territory is in an extremely dangerous region, otherwise, how would you be able to earn 50,000\$ after you spent three days in the Origin Expanse, and a million after spending eight days in the Origin Expanse??" Danny shouted after being slightly influenced by the emotions that wreaked havoc in his mind for the last half an hour.

Danny was fuming in anger when he noticed that Michael was about to retort, so he added, "It's fine if you don't want to talk about it, but don't you dare to lie to me, Michael!"

Michael kept his mouth shut and scratched the back of his head helplessly.

"Okay..." He could only say before he began to bind the Return Arrow Artifact to his War Rune, "...Thank you..."

The Return Arrow was actually something Michael wanted. It was a Tierless 3-Star Artifact that could be used indefinitely, until it broke into pieces, to be precise.

The Arrow Artifact was strong enough to support the Hardwood bow, and it had the 'Return' enchantment, which was the biggest reason why Michael wanted to purchase it, in the first place.

One could configure the return enchantment by channeling energy inside it to determine exactly how far the arrow could travel away from of the War Rune before it would return to him automatically. The concept was similar to that of a boomerang.

"It's good that you did not reject my gift. I just want to make sure that you can survive as long as possible. The Return Arrow will increase your agility a little but you should ensure that you will never lose your weapons when you're in battle. Arrows are consumables, and you cannot retrieve them most of the time. The Return Arrow is different, so I can feel reassured that you'll be fine...hopefully!" Danny said before he added lightly,

"I can buy you a few more Artifacts if you want!"

However, Michael shook his head immediately.

"I'm fine, thanks Danny. Pay attention to your Primedival Pyramid and buy yourself some Artifacts!"

"Alright, I will do as you say. But first, I will leave to take a look at my territory. The preparations for the expedition should be completed by now," Danny answered as they stepped inside their apartment.

The next moment, two Runic Gates appeared in the living room at the same time, one created through Michael's War Rune, the other manifested by Danny's War Rune.

"It was great to spend time with you. Let's repeat that soon!" Danny said as he approached his Runic Gate.

He was a little reluctant to leave his brother alone, but he also knew that Michael would be fine. His little brother was stronger and more talented than he was, after all!

Michael nodded his head with a bright smile on his face.

"Yes, let's go out to eat when we meet again!"

Chapter 62 [Bonus]Third Piece

Michael wished to spend more time with his brother, but the protection barrier would be lifted soon. Furthermore, Danny was also busy with his expedition.

Danny didn't say a lot about the expedition, the desert region that surrounded his territory, or his life and experiences as a Lord. However, that was fine. It was not as if Michael was willing to reveal everything he had experienced, either.

They spent a few hours together and talked far more about the Origin Expanse and the livelihood of Lords than ever before. They had a great time together catching up with each other and their experiences, but they had to separate now.

Michael entered the Runic Gate his War Rune materialized, and he returned to the Origin Expanse.

The apartment that had been filled with noises seconds ago returned to peaceful silence as the brothers returned to their territories to live the life of busy and hard-working Lords.

Like always, Michael first smelled the aroma of the Untamed Jungle's flora and fauna. It was incomparable to the smell outside the Origin Expanse and had an almost addictive quality to it.

He stretched his body when he emerged on the other side of the Runic Gate and looked at his surroundings.

It was already afternoon, but that was something Michael had already expected. He walked over to the wooden manor where he received his daily report.

Afterward, he ordered one of his subjects to look for Tiara and the others. For the next task, Michael retrieved the goods he had just purchased and put them neatly inside the warehouse. He hadn't built a farm, an alchemy house, or a smithy yet, but it was important to have the tools ready beforehand.

He moved the books and recipes he had purchased into one of the wooden manor's empty rooms and told everyone to use them. Michael had also purchased a big stash of paper, several bottles of waterproof ink, and a pen that could be easily filled with the ink. These were all items needed for the Scholars and Librarians to replicate the books and the Sun Soldier techniques for everyone to read without the need to wait several days due to having limited copies.

Once most items had been stored neatly, Michael met up with Tiara. He gave her the Antler Bow, two-thirds of the arrows he had purchased for himself, and the leather armor sets for her and the Warriors, who'd spawned without an armor.

"Master, you're way too generous with us...wasn't all of this way too expensive?" Tiara asked in shock. She hadn't expected her Master to go out of his way and generously spend a small fortune to buy them tempered Tier-1 leather armor sets, and to give her the Antler Bow Artifact and refined arrows.

"If you think that I'm too kind and generous, you can thank me by continuing to give your best to protect the territory," Michael responded with a light smile. He didn't mind spending a small fortune on his warriors if it allowed them to survive the ordeals they encountered every day.

They fought for him and his territory, so it was only fair to give them what they deserved. In that regard, Michael was certain that he should reward his people more than what he could provide for now.

"In that case, I hope you're satisfied with the 63 monsters we hunted when you left the Origin Expanse!" One of the Warriors exclaimed proudly. He was overjoyed with the tempered Tier-1 leather armor and couldn't even hide his emotions at this point.

Michael smiled when he saw the Warrior's reaction. He had already noticed that some of his combat units had grown stronger, but he hadn't expected them to have hunted 63 monsters. Even half of that number would have been more than what he expected from them after hunting for half a day.

"You guys left the protection barrier to hunt, didn't you?" Michael asked after he turned to Tiara. He didn't look at her as his maid anymore. Tiara was more like his commander-in-charge.

She nodded her head and explained, "With Ms Kelia by our side it is much more secure than you might think. Her control of the Water Element is exceptional, and the high humidity in the air plays in favor of her ability. She is great!"

Ms. Kelia was the Water Elemental Mage. Michael could tell that she was powerful simply because she was a 3-Star Elemental Mage, but it seemed as if she was even more resourceful than expected. After all, it was not easy to hunt 63 Tier-1 monsters when they had only one Tier-1 combatant in their group.

"That's great. Maybe, I'll be able to summon a few more Warriors to aid you in battle once I finish extracting the carcasses!" Michael exclaimed and the others nodded their heads vigorously.

They were excited at the thought of their military might expanding further. Tiara's ears perked up when she heard 'summon', and the hint of a smile appeared on her face.

"After you left this morning, two subjects emerged from the Summoning Gate. They're both 1-Star Summons just like the knights in training from yesterday!" She said with a bright smile.

Michael was stunned. More 1-Star Summons?

He sensed the Links of Loyalty connected to his War Rune and realized in astonishment that two more Links of Loyalty had been formed. They were stronger than ordinary Links of Loyalty, similar to the bonds of the Knights in training.

Did that mean, getting two 1-Star Summons like the Knights in training was not a one-time reward, but a reward he could claim daily?

That would be great!

'Should I start conquering more territories to procure more Summoning Crystals? That should increase the number of daily summons...I could earn a bunch of SoulStar Fragments and Soultraits on the side as well!' Michael mused, even though he knew that it was not easy to conquer other territories.

Michael was not even sure where the closest Lord territory was located, in the first place. He might be the last Lord in the entire Untamed Jungle region without realizing it.

Even if he was the last Lord, it was fine. He could find other ways to procure what he desired.

But for now, Michael had to take care of his territory. He extracted the monster corpses like always and ordered his subjects to store the near-perfectly dissected body parts in the warehouse.

Meanwhile, Michael's full attention was on the seemingly ordinary piece of parchment he had extracted from a ferocious wolf's corpse.

"Another fragment of the Untamed Jungle's Map? Is it actually a map, or a treasure card?" Michael murmured to himself as he stared at the third piece of parchment that showed the topography of the Untamed Jungle.

'How many more pieces do I need to complete the map? Will I be able to find out more about the Untamed Jungle once I find the remaining pieces?'

Either way, Michael stored the parchment in his War Rune while being deep in thought.

He received the energy share from the monster killed by his subjects and could clearly feel that his War Rune's refinement degree would soon reach the Late stage.

'Great. Everything will work according to my plan.'

Chapter 63 Hatchlings

Despite being one of the biggest events for all Rookie Lords, nothing much happened when the protection barrier around Michael's territory was lifted.

It dispersed and opened the ways for outsiders to intrude on the territory. However, no monster dared to attack the territory right away. Tempered wooden walls and spiked walls had been constructed to protect the territory and the citizens, but that was not all.

The remaining monsters in the territory's vicinity knew that their kind had been ferociously hunted over the course of the last ten days and had received a painful death. They understood that a new Overlord had emerged in the small area of the clearing and immediate surroundings, so they were wary of Michael's territory.

That was some great news, which allowed Michael to focus on his territory's progress and on extracting resources and monster corpses in the following days.

All Tiatcha trees in the range of the territory had been uprooted and planted near each other. A few of his subjects were dedicated to caring for them and ensured that the trees received fertilizer and the best possible treatment to make sure that they would grow fast and prosper.

At the same time, more treehouses had been constructed, the warehouse was expanded, several gardens have been constructed beneath the treehouse complexes, and both smithies and alchemy houses had been constructed as well.

The infrastructure of his territory was finally put in place and meticulously organized. The humongous jungle trees that stunted each other's growth because they had grown too close to each other, were taken care of. Some of them were removed to provide resources for treehouse complexes and other construction projects, while others had parts of their roots extracted.

Michael did the latter because he wanted to leave the opportunity open to build bigger buildings high up in the trees with the use of several trees that had grown close to each other.

Other than that, Michael also joined Tiara and her combat unit to go out hunting. He had yet to see the combat prowess of the Aero Crossbowmen, the Knights in training, and the Water Elemental Mage.

Thus, he joined them one day to see how much their teamwork had improved and how dangerous it was for them to fight Tier-1 Monsters.

At the end of the day, Michael was quite surprised. The Aero Crossbowmen and the Water Elemental Mage easily killed lone Tier-1 Monsters long before the melee fighters reached it. It was not much different in group battles either. The melee fighters would only engage in battle once the group exceeded five monsters since other subjects could easily tackle fewer numbers.

That was exceptional and it was also why Michael was able to extract roundabout 700 Summoning Scroll Fragments, 13 Summoning Scrolls, and 5 blueprints every day for three days in a row!

In fact, on the third day, Michael was even rewarded with a Tierless 2-Star Artifact. Michael felt that it was a bummer because he and his people killed Tier-1 Monsters only to be rewarded with Tierless Artifacts, but the 2-Star Artifact was a Bracelet with the 'protection shield' enchantment. It was worth a small fortune in the market, but it could also be very well used by him or Tiara.

However, since Michael was already in possession of multiple Artifacts and eager to hone his archery skills, he gave the 2-Star Bracelet Artifact to her. It allowed Michael to stay worry-free when Tiara and her fighters would leave the territory to go out hunting.

Other than the combatants, Tracer also left the territory. She had recuperated at last and started to work again right away. Blaire Tracer was embarrassed about her foolish mistake. She had indirectly forced Michael to engage in war with the Gogi Lord after stealing three Bilrox eggs.

Michael never said anything about that after the Gogi Lord had been exterminated, but Blaire felt bad and guilty for putting him in such a situation nonetheless. Thus, she began to explore the Untamed Jungle relentlessly. She investigated every nook and cranny and made a detailed map of the Untamed Jungle with precise marks about every unique-looking spot in the surrounding area.

Michael was satisfied with Blaire's work, but he was more focused on other tasks.

Two 1-Star Summons with strengthened Links of Loyalty emerged from the Summoning Gate every day, and Michael used the gains he made daily to summon new subjects in the morning. Over the course of three days, Michael summoned 126 subjects. On the first day, he summoned 41 subjects, the following day 42, and a day after Michael summoned 43 subjects.

Amongst the 126 Summons, 14 were 1-Star Summons while the rest were Starless Summons.

Just like that the number of Michael's subjects exceeded 200, but that was not everything.

The refinement degree of his War Rune reached the Late stage, which was fast. His 13th day in the Origin Expanse had yet to pass, but he was already quite powerful.

His subjects had become a lot stronger as well, and their Link of Loyalty had strengthened as their trust in him increased over the course of time.

All of his gains were exceptional, but the cherry on the cake was that the Bilrox were ready to arrive in the world.

It was the evening on the third day after he had returned, and Michael had just received the report that the Bilrox were about to hatch.

He rushed to the other side of the clearing where a small fence attached to a wooden hut came into his sight. Tiara, Blaire, and a few more people were already inside the hut. They looked over to Michael when he barged inside the hut and bowed lightly to him before their attention returned to Heren, the Lesser Tamer, who leaned over the three wiggling eggs.

The atmosphere in the room was filled with excitement and anticipation. All eyes were fixed upon the eggs, nestled in a straw-lined nest.

Subtle cracks had appeared on the little eggshells. Seeing the cracks for the first time, Michael's heart skipped a beat. A nervous energy buzzed through him, and he rushed forward. Without any care for his image, he squatted down next to Heran Tarn to take a close look at the wondrous scene.

Time seemed to slow down suddenly. The first signs of life emerged – a tiny chip in the shell.

Michael held his breath, and his heart began to beat even wilder than before as the fragile creature within the egg struggled to escape the prison. With each peck, the crack expanded, revealing glimpses of the vivid world beyond.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, the shell gave way to a small yet pointy beak, small and black in color. The room was filled with a mixture of awe, joy, and empathy at this miraculous moment. It was the first time life had been given birth in Michael's territory!

Tired, yet relentless, the hatchlings instinctively kept pecking the eggshells. They scratched against the remaining fragments of the eggs that had been their cocoon for months until they fell onto the straw nest with a soft thud. Exhausted and overwhelmed with the new surroundings, the hatchlings took their first uncertain and wobbly steps. They explored the unfamiliar environment with great curiosity.

Everyone sighed in relief when they watched the three hatchlings look around curiously. They seemed exhausted but healthy.

Various emotions filled the room. Everyone was awestruck while watching the Bilrox hatchlings, but there was more behind the birth of the little hatchlings.

Their birth infused everybody with the hope of a better future. The Bilrox's existence unraveled countless new paths of development for the territory.

Furthermore, the birth of the vulnerable yet determined creatures reminded everyone of their childhood and their struggles.

At that moment, everyone shared an appreciation for the wonders of nature and the beauty of creation.

It was truly miraculous.

One of the Bilrox hatchlings slowly wobbled and reached Michael's leg. It chirped shrilly and rubbed its head against his leg.

'Oh my...'

Michael's heart melted when he saw that.

He had only been taking lives since he entered the Origin Expanse, so it was an overwhelming experience to witness the birth of life for the first time.

His heart couldn't take it anymore. Michael's hand reached down instinctively.

He caressed the hatchling gently while ignoring its damp and matted feathers, which had a distinctive slimy texture.

The remaining two Bilrox hatchlings squeaked shrilly and soon joined the conquest as they approached Michael to compete for his attention.

Michael chuckled when he saw this and he looked over to the Lesser Tamer, who returned his gaze with a smile.

"Take good care of them and use everything you deem necessary to make sure that they are healthy and mature well. Report immediately if they're injured, or missing nourishment"

At this moment, everyone realized that Michael had fallen victim to the cuteness of the hatchlings.

But...who could hold him accountable for that?

They were just too cute!

Chapter 64 Benefits

Michael and the others spent more than two hours inside the hut, caressing the Bilrox hatchlings, and watching the Lesser Tamer taking care of the newest members in the territory.

After two hours, the three hatchlings had fallen asleep. Michael reminded the Lesser Tamer once again to take care of the Bilrox hatchlings and do everything possible to raise them well before he and the others left the hut.

Once the miraculous event of the Bilrox hatchlings' birth was over, Michael began with the task distribution for the following days.

He was not sure for how long he would be away, but he wanted to make sure that everyone would be busy while he left to attend the graduation ceremony of his high school.

Michael was still not looking forward to it, but he could tell that the graduation ceremony would turn into an interesting event, especially with his old homeroom teacher and Niklas Liekhoven present, and the afterparty later.

He was still oblivious to his final exam score, but he didn't really care about that anymore, either. Somehow, marks and grades felt negligible to him after having fought with his life on the line several times. His life in the Origin Expanse was different from the days he spent in Laki.

Michael had responsibilities now, and he felt like certain parts of his previous life had become insignificant.

Half an hour later, Michael finished distributing the tasks. His War Rune's storage space was also filled to the brim with the most valuable body parts of the countless monsters he had collected during the last four days.

All preparations had been completed, and Michael left the Origin Expanse once again.

He returned home and appeared in his apartment.

The first thing he did was to open the crystal watch to see the time.

[13:51 pm]

"There are still four hours left before the graduation ceremony begins. That's more than enough," Michael murmured before he switched to the messenger app.

His brother hadn't sent him a message, but it looked like Alice Zenovia had sent a detailed answer to the question he had asked her before. It was related to the benefits of the Saphirelake Military Camp's benefits.

However, before he opened the message, Michael hailed a shuttle and took a shower. He took a quick shower, put on the clothes he washed last time, and left the apartment.

After getting inside the shuttle, he opened Alice's message at last.

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): I am generous enough to forgive your insolent behavior. HOWEVER, don't think that I will always be that generous. It is hard to be the bigger person, you know?!]

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): Either way, I'm glad that you're asking me about the benefits the Saphirelake Military Academy has over other Military Academies and Universities. First of all, the Saphirelake Military Academy has yet to be registered in the ranking of top education institutes since it opened less than five years ago. That is also why you might have a hard time finding credible information about the Saphirelake Military Academy and its benefits.

However, you can be at ease with me by your side. I will be your beautiful guide!]

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): The biggest benefit of the Saphirelake Military Academy is that it's one of mankind's first educational institutions in the Zenot Stellar System. If you don't know much about the Zenot Stellar System yet, it is also the stellar system where we encountered the Barbarians and the Warlock Centaurs first.

The Tritan Alliance was signed in the Zenot Stellar System as well.

The government has high hopes for the Saphirelake Military Academy and the other educational institutions on Kelta, which is mostly thanks to the Barbarians and Warlock Centaurs. The government requested the strongest human Lords and Adventurers to become professors and instructors of mankind's education institutions within the Zenot Stellar System. This was a predicament to make sure

that the younger generations of humanity would be protected and strengthened to spar with the Barbarians and Warlock Centaurs head-on.

The Barbarians and Warlock Centaurs are proud races. They love war and are very powerful, but they take honor and the Warrior oath very seriously.

That is also why the government wants to make sure that the Barbarians and Warlock Centaurs take mankind seriously. The easiest way to achieve this is by showing the superiority of our youngest generation. We can only show our rapid growth rather than the strength of our oldest Lords. After all, their oldest generations have been Lords in the Origin Expanse for Millenia, while we've only been there for half a millenia.]

Michael had to take a short break while reading her long message. He was still inside the shuttle, and on his way to the Central Trading Hall but his mind was somewhere else.

'Either her message is chaotic, or my mind is...So...No, I should first read everything and then figure out if I understood her properly...'

Michael calmed down and read Alice's next message.

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): Due to the high hopes the government has for the educational institutions in the Zenot Stellar System, they invest much more funds in the Saphirelake Military Academy than the academies and universities in the Solar system. However, that is not everything. The Saphirelake Military Academy received big funding from charity organizations of big families of clans. The reasons behind this are simple.

First, they want to make sure that their children can attend the Military Academy without wasting their precious time with the application process and aptitude assessment. Second, the big families and organizations want to gain a little bit more power and say in the government and in the Military Academy to research information about other students. This is to search for potential targets to lure into their own clans or families.

After all, only the best of the best will be able to attend the academies and universities in the Zenot Stellar System!!

There are a few more reasons but I doubt that you want to hear all of them.

P.S Don't worry, the big families and organizations won't have a lot of power. Even my family doesn't have a permanent seat in the committee, yet.]

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): Thus, the benefits of the Sapphirelake Military Academy can be boiled down to two major factors; A vast pool of resources, and the strongest Lords and Adventurers as professors and instructors to teach you!]

Michael began to frown when he read Alice's last message. He was a bit mad.

'You...couldn't you have sent only the last message and left it at that?!?' Michael thought at first.

However, after giving it some more thought he realized that he had spent at most two or three minutes reading the messages, but Alice had spent a lot more time explaining everything to him in detail.

Michael was also fairly sure that Alice had shared confidential information with him, which was much more than he could have hoped for.

'Maybe, I shouldn't be such a pain in the ass to her?' He thought, glad that he hadn't sent her a message yet.

The shuttle arrived at the destination, and Michael got out a moment later. However, his eyes were still glued to the information Alice shared with him.

It would be a lie if he were to say that he was not interested in the Sapphirelake Military Camp and getting to know Barbarians and Warlock Centaurs.

Despite that, Michael didn't really want to be thrown into a pool full of sharks once again. His time in high school had been nothing short of a nightmare, and he didn't want to go through the same misery again.

But as soon as he thought of it, Michael froze in his tracks.

"Who says that it will be the same as before?" He asked out loud suddenly.

He had changed over the past few days.

Now, Michael had powerful Soultraits, and the means to become much stronger as long as he survived the ordeals of the Untamed Jungle.

It was even possible for him to extract more Soultraits and increase their Star-rating.

Why would he have to be afraid of the kids born with a silver spoon in their mouths that would attend the Military Academy alongside him?

He just had to crush them if they acted up!

It would be great if you could leave a review as well.

Chapter 65 [Bonus]Body Refinement

Michael was on his way to Bartholomew House of Witchery for the third time in a week.

Almost two weeks had passed in the Origin Expanse, but to the outside world, only a little over a week had passed. Some of the staff at the shop knew how much money Michael had earned on those three trips, and that he spent the entire fortune he had earned.

From their point of view, it was ridiculous how much money Lords could earn, and how much they had to spend. It was crazy.

Michael immediately walked over to the Witchery Bazaar where three staff members led him inside the appraisal room.

'Now that I am set to enter the Saphirelake Military Academy, I should advance to the 1st Tier before the 20th,' Michael thought while retrieving the blueprints and carcasses he wished to sell.

Michael recalled Danny's advice and the fact that there were fewer open spots in the Academy due to the influence and donations of the rich, who wished to give their child the best opportunity to grow and reserve a seat.

Most ordinary people would consider the actions of the rich annoying and unfair, but Michael thought that it was surprisingly good.

More donations meant that the Saphirelake Military Academy had more funds, which would provide more and better resources to him as long as he would become one of the strongest freshmen!

That was also why he had to increase his strength as quickly as possible and receive a high evaluation in the aptitude assessment.

He was willing to give his best to join the Saphirelake Military Academy. It seemed important for his future, whether it was about the high possibility of an upcoming war, or his future growth. The system might be rigged by the rich, but that was quite normal.

No matter where one looked, the wealthy and strong would have their hands in the game of power and influence.

Michael figured that he would have to accept this reality and barge straight into the Lion's den if he wanted to become stronger and overcome all kinds of ordeals and perilous situations.

But for now, he had to face the graduation ceremony first.

"Sir, are you fine with this price?" The clerk asked.

Michael was pulled out of his train of thought and noticed only now that they had returned to the Witchery Bazaar's counter. The clerk held out the form where all necessary information was mentioned.

He sold the near-perfectly dissected carcasses of 261 Low Tier-1 Monsters for an average of 1025\$, and 21 blueprints for an average price of 4800\$, totaling 368,325\$.

That was more than enough money to purchase a suit of high-quality, and a few other things for his territory.

But instead of purchasing something immediately, Michael left the House of Witchery. He visited the tailor where he purchased an expensive suit and handmade leather boots for the graduation ceremony. Afterward, he went to a different shop to find a way to workout properly inside the Origin Expanse.

Nowadays, he spend most of his time inside the Origin Expanse, mainly fighting, or using his Soultrait to aid his subjects in collecting sturdy resources. That was why Michael had to search for a technique that allowed him to use the dormant energy of the Origin Expanse to stimulate his body to keep it fit and agile.

Michael had already researched a few techniques, but he was still unsure what he wanted to purchase.

It should be a workout technique that uses the Origin Expanse's energy to its full extent and his body's nutrition to stimulate every fiber in his body. That way, Michael could stay fit and improve his physique as well.

With a fit body and a stimulating workout it would be much easier to adjust to the constant enhancement he received from the War Rune and improve his stamina.

He entered a shop called [Rainbow Koi], a shop where thousands of books, tomes, and scrolls were sold, and searched for a suitable technique for 20 minutes before he found something interesting.

"[Berserker Physique]. It is a formidable technique that refines your body using the training method of the Berserker tribes in the Origin Expanse. Their Shamans shared the techniques with a human Lord, who is willing to sell the technique for merely 200,000\$!" The young man explained graciously.

Michael frowned a little, but he couldn't help himself. The introductory part of the Berserker Physique sounded interesting.

"Isn't it just the copy of a workout technique? Why is it so expensive?" Michael asked, feeling certain that the shop wanted to exploit him.

However, the young man shook his head valiantly.

"Esteemed customer, you don't understand. The Berserker Physique is not an ordinary workout technique but a body refinement technique that increases your physical strength, endurance, and stamina to that of a Peak Tier-1 Lord up to 30% once practiced to the extreme!"

Michael pressed his lips together and asked one last question before he made his final decision.

"I can share the technique with my subjects, right?" He inquired, and the staff member nodded his head immediately,

"Of course, you can. Even Adventurers, who took an oath of subordination to you, are given permission to practice the technique!"

Michael nodded his head subconsciously, "Alright, I'll take it."

After he made his decision, the staff member acted quickly and completed the formalities.

Five minutes later, Michael left the shop with the Berserker Physique technique and a massive deduction of 200,000\$ in his bank account.

He left the Central Trading Hall, hailed a shuttle, and opened a holographic screen.

Danny was not online, but Michael sent him a message, nonetheless. He wanted to let his brother know that he was still alive after the protection barrier had been lifted.

'I hope he is doing fine. The expedition this time around would most probably be a little bit more dangerous than usual.'

Michael knew that Danny didn't like cooperating with other Lords under normal circumstances. He had experienced a few betrayals in the past, which made him very vigilant when it came to trusting other Lords in the Origin Expanse. However, for this particular expedition, Danny made an exception and created an alliance with three other Lords.

He had researched a lot about the other Lords and found them trustworthy enough to explore the outer parts of the Primedival Pyramid.

However, Michael didn't really feel good about that.

The fact that Danny was willing to make an alliance with other Lords meant that the Primedival Pyramid was far more dangerous than he initially expected.

'I swear, if you worry about me all the time while you're in an even more dangerous situation, I will kill you!'

Chapter 66 Personal Growth

The shuttle brought him to the designated destination; in front of the gates of the Golden Sun province's most prestigious school.

Many luxurious cars had already been parked in the parking lot next to the school, and Michael could see a few familiar faces.

He didn't bother to walk over and greet them and headed straight in the direction of the school's auditorium.

While he walked to his destination, various thoughts flashed through his mind. The memories of his school life resurfaced as he saw the familiar corners of the high school, and he immediately wanted to leave once again.

His time in high school hadn't been as bad as Michael always said. He was just too embarrassed about his own behavior in school to talk about it with someone.

However, to the golden spoons, Michael was an eyesore. He had always been since he joined their school.

He was merely an ordinary citizen, yet he dared to enter the most prestigious school in the province. Who did he think he was, a prodigy?!

Many students were irked when he became the top student after the first semester results were announced. They bullied him and succeeded in suppressing Michael completely. He didn't have any power, forget about any influential connections he could use.

One time, he got so pissed that he nearly beat the shit out of one of his bullies, only to recall the trouble that would await him if he dared to act on his impulse of going against the children of wealthy and highly influential families.

The hesitation he felt on that day and the worry of the aftermath and how it would affect his future had made him feel hopeless. It was one of the most frustrating moments in his life.

Just because he was ordinary and they were born with a golden spoon, Michael had to accept their bullying and presumptuous attitude. If he retaliated, he would be at fault. He didn't have the necessary power to twist the truth however he wanted, but his bullies had.

Michael didn't want to be expelled because he required the benefits provided by the elite high school. Thus, he ended up hiding in the corners of the school ground every now and then, avoiding everybody altogether.

It was quite embarrassing, but the situation had changed now.

They were not students anymore, and Michael's life had been turned upside down since he manifested the War Rune. The days after he entered the Origin Expanse shaped him into a different person and he was now more confident about himself. Even if someone was to attempt to bully him, Michael wouldn't stay idle. He would retaliate and do everything he could to protect himself.

In the worst case, he could leave Laki to enter the Origin Expanse for a few weeks. However, Michael was sure that it wouldn't be necessary to flee and escape into the Origin Expanse.

When he reached the auditorium, Michael walked over to the small counter where he showed his ID to register as a graduate before he was let inside.

The auditorium appeared just like always to him except for the fact that it had been decorated a little, and tables and chairs had been placed all over the auditorium.

On the left side of the auditorium, some staff members were busy setting up the plates for the buffet at the afterparty, while others hurried through the auditorium to change minor details in the decoration.

Michael saw a few familiar faces, but he ignored them once again and sat down at the table the furthest in the back.

The graduation ceremony started less than 20 minutes later in which Michael thought about his high school life, and the most important question- what he could have done better.

Ever since he entered the Origin Expanse he had matured a lot. Rather than being annoyed with the bullies, or sulking about the unfair treatment he received merely because he was an ordinary citizen, Michael felt frustrated about his own behavior in the past.

The more he thought about it the clearer it was that he had been acting like a coward.

'At least, I know that I've been a coward in the past. If I use the mistakes I made in the past and learn from them, I shouldn't have to consider these years as a failure and wasted time. Instead, I can use them as a lesson to grow stronger, to become better!'

Michael nodded his head subconsciously. Learning from mistakes was the most important if he wanted to grow as an individual. Unlike what others thought, it was fine to make mistakes. However, it was not fine to repeat the same mistakes over and over again.

Understanding this principle was the first step of Michael's growth as a person.

'I think it was a good decision to come here,' He acknowledged at last. Even if the afterparty was why he participated in the graduation ceremony, Michael felt that the most significant gain he made today was that he had come to terms with his past.

He could acknowledge why he acted like this in the past and what kind of person he had been in the three years he spent in the elite high school!

Michael's train of thought naturally wandered elsewhere after his mind fell at ease.

'If I reach the 1st Tier before the 20th, I should be considered a genius, or not? It will be a little over half a month since I first stepped into the Origin Expanse, and I have two Soultraits. My combat prowess is also not that bad nor is the knowledge I acquired in the last few years. It shouldn't be too difficult for me to get accepted at the Sapphirelake Military Academy, right?' Michael thought.

After a while, the graduation ceremony was halfway done. The headteachers and the principal had concluded their speeches, but Michael's mind was somewhere else.

He was in the Origin Expanse, trying to find the most efficient way to advance to the 1st Tier.

'Hunting a few Tier-2 Monsters should allow me to advance to the next Tier.'

The Lizard mother's energy share had been massive. Michael couldn't even absorb half of it at that time. By now, Michael was confident that his body and War Rune were strong enough to handle the energy share of a Tier-2 monster.

The only problem was how he should hunt Tier-2 monsters with the means at his disposal.

'Will a sneaky attack be enough? Probably not. I should make a few more preparations and purchase some stuff...'

For a while, Michael completely forgot where he was. His surroundings turned insignificant as his thoughts focused on the various plans that were forming in his head.

His goal was to become a Tier-1 Lord before the aptitude assessment for the Saphirelake Military Academy started on the 20th. He still had two weeks left to achieve this goal. But the task was not easy as the energy required to reach a higher refinement degree increased drastically from the Late stage.

It would require several times more energy to refine his War Rune to the peak of the 0th Tier than refining it infinitely close to the Late stage.

After that, Michael had to break the barrier that separated Tier-0 existences from the 1st Tier.

This would require a tremendous amount of energy, lots of time, and exceptional willpower.

With that in mind, he continued to ignore the speeches and useless talk of the headteachers and the principal. He couldn't care less about them now that his mind was focused on the Origin Expanse.

After all, the afterparty was the most important event he eagerly awaited. It was an opportunity for Michael to get back at some idiots and witness their stupidity one last time.

Times had changed, and Michael had grown much stronger, physically, but even more so mentally!

He was not the same man as a week ago!

Chapter 67 Afterparty

They didn't have to change their location for the afterparty. It was being held in the same auditorium.

The interior space of the auditorium was tweaked a little after the formal part of the graduation ceremony ended, but it was nothing major.

Most chairs and tables had been pushed to the right side of the auditorium to leave an open space in the center.

Michael presumed that the open space was the dance floor for the couples to dance and have fun. Even though most of them were already Lords or would become Lords soon, they were merely 18 years old and filled with the desire to pursue romance and have flowery feelings toward their beloved.

At least, that was the case for many students. They walked over to the dance floor after a while and started to dance slowly and intimately.

Meanwhile, the preparations for the buffet had been completed as well. For someone like Michael, the buffet was the most important. One could even say that it was one of the minor reasons why he chose to come to the graduation ceremony!

He didn't really care much about the couples dancing on the dance floor. They could be as passionate and intimate as they wanted to be, but delicious food was still better in his opinion.

Michael was just a glutton, one of the few prideful Gluttons, at that!

He headed over to the buffet the moment it was opened. His plate was filled to the brim within minutes, and he began feasting on the food at a nearby table.

Because he was dressed in a pristine new suit, Michael chose to eat with etiquette. It was not necessary to gobble down his food as if he had been starving for weeks.

Fifteen minutes later, he finished his first plate. He went back to the buffet to get a second serving.

Michael wanted to eat in silence before observing his former classmates, but he was not given that much time. Niklas Liekhoven, some of his idiotic friends, and their headteacher Kelen Dame were already waiting for him at the table.

Michael knew that some of them had been watching him for a while now, but he didn't think they would be so impatient.

Even dogs were not interrupted while eating!

"Look, who's here? If that isn't Michael Fang!" Niklas Liekhoven pointed at him with a vibrant smile, "To think that you're daring enough to come here today. Are you not afraid that I will beat the shit out of you?!"

Niklas' voice turned cold when he spat out the last few words. He stared at Michael like a predator eyed their prey before they attacked.

Michael's right eyebrow rose lightly as he held Niklas' gaze. However, his expression was emotionless, and his eyes were clear, without any hatred, or fear.

"Michael Fang. Just because you scored higher than Niklas in the final exam does not mean that you are at the same level. You should lower your head in front of him!" Kelen Dame said in a tone that made it seem like he was ordering Michael.

However, Michael just turned to Kelen Dame without a change in his expression.

"I don't even know my score, so...how about you keep quiet?" Michael responded, his voice tranquil and calm like a lake. He looked at the back of his former headteacher's right hand and smiled lightly.

Kelen Dame was already in his mid-30s but he was barely a Tier-1 Adventurer. He lost his territory quite early and spent more than a decade to advance to the 1st Tier. After that, he left the Origin Expanse to become a high school teacher. There was nothing else he could do with himself given his lacking power and influence.

As a Tier-1 Adventurer, the only thing he could do was to become a teacher at a prestigious high school where he enjoys a great salary without the need to face the dangers of the Origin Expanse.

Niklas noticed that Michael scoffed at their former headteacher's War Rune, and his vibrant smile widened.

He pointed at the gloves Michael had put on and laughed lightly, "You don't need to hide that you didn't manifest a War Rune. Just stay the loser you've always been!"

Michael frowned.

'Can't he sense my War Rune's fluctuations through the gloves? Is his perception that bad?'

Initially, Michael put on some gloves to keep a low profile. Less than a third of the high school graduates had turned 18 so far. Thus, most students couldn't sense the energy of the Origin Expanse his War Rune exuded.

However, someone like Niklas and Kelen Dame should be able to sense the subtle trace of energy radiating from him. But that was not the case. They couldn't sense it!

'Are they idiots?' Michael asked himself before he snickered, 'What a stupid question. Is that even debatable?'

"You don't have to laugh in sadness. It's fine. Not everyone can be as talented as I am!" Niklas was gloating in a voice loud enough for most students to hear. He lifted his right hand high into the air and showed it to everyone.

After everyone had seen it, he took a step closer to Michael to give him a clear view of his War Rune.

Niklas tried to shove it into his face to make it clear that he was the most talented.

But Michael didn't even flinch upon looking at Niklas' War Rune.

"Congratulations. You refined your Tierless War Rune to the Mid-Stage," Michael said in an emotionless, dry voice.

It required a tremendous amount of willpower not to laugh out loud when he said that. Niklas was two months older than most of them, yet his War Rune was less refined than Michael's.

Michael's Tierless War Rune was on the verge of advancing to the Late stage while Niklas' War Rune reached the middle stage not too long ago.

"Looks like you're baffled, idiot. However, listen up!" Niklas Liekhover continued to boast and show off before he made another announcement, "By the end of the month, I will become a student of the Sapphirelake Military Academy!"

Michael listened to Niklas gloating patiently. His expression changed a little, which Niklas took as a sign to rub salt on Michael's injury.

"Meanwhile, you will have to struggle to earn enough money to stay in the capital. Poor you!" He drawled in the same arrogant, overly bright smile as before.

Little did he know that Michael's expression changed because of a different reason.

Michael looked at Niklas for a while before he diverted his attention for a moment.

He knew that the Liekhover family was powerful. Still, given that Niklas said, 'by the end of the month', Niklas had indirectly confirmed that his family had failed to buy him a spot at the Sapphirelake Military Academy.

'Does that mean, we will meet again on the 20th? That would be fun,' Michael thought, unable to control a grin from appearing on his face.

Niklas noticed the change in Michael's expression clearly. It irked him much more than he expected, and he was just about to do something when one of his subordinates took a stride closer to Michael to push his plate away, spilling the food all over.

Why did he do that? He probably wanted to impress Niklas and use the opportunity to make fun of Michael.

But Michael looked at the idiot for a moment before he moved to the side. He stretched one leg out and the wannabe bully tripped and fell over with a loud thud.

The young man, who had been Michael's former classmate, wailed in pain when his smacked his face right on the floor.

Michael burst into laughter the next moment. He hadn't expected his former classmates to be even more idiotic than before.

Only a week passed but their IQ must have dropped by a dozen points.

Niklas grit his teeth seeing that Michael was fooling his crony. He growled and was about to manifest one of his Artifacts when loud cheers filled the auditorium.

The girls began to squeal loudly as Jasmine Blade entered the afterparty in a graceful dress, alongside a young man with azure-colored hair.

Jasmine looked beautiful and elegant as she strode through the auditorium. Meanwhile, the young man beside her was handsome and walking alongside her with his chest puffed out and his chin held high.

He was well aware of the gazes lingering on them and his body language was filled with confidence. The short strides he took next to Jasmine pulled the attention of everyone in the auditorium toward him and his partner.

However, Michael was just confused as he looked at the young man.

'Isn't that...'

Chapter 68 [Bonus]Sinner!

'Isn't that the fierce beauty?'

Michael was not sure why he thought about Alice Zenovia when he looked at the young man, but they looked eerily similar. Their similarities were too many to be a coincidence.

While looking at the young man, Michael forgot about Niklas completely. His eyes followed the young man and Jasmine Blade, until he heard some of his former classmates murmuring.

"Isn't that Kaleb Zenovia? Why is he here?"

"Didn't you hear? The Zenovia family and the Blade family are going to join hands together. The arranged marriage between Jasmine and Kaleb is quite an old piece of news now."

'That's the fierce beauty's brother?' Michael realized. It made sense. That is why they seemed so similar to him.

He felt that Kaleb looked rather beautiful than handsome.

'I bet that he was often mistaken as a girl when he was younger.'

Now that he was pondering about their relation, Michael recalled that Alice had said something about her brother and his soon-to-be fiancé when they first met after his final exam.

"Right, she was told to watch the final exam of her brother's soon-to-be fiancé," Michael mumbled.

He smiled faintly and used the opportunity to step back.

Even if Michael wanted to show Niklas that he was far from useless, that he was stronger than his family's wealth and connections were useless in the face of incompetence, he could tell that the time was not ripe.

It was much better to feast on the buffet than bothering about Niklas and his subordinates. Food was much higher in his priority list than these idiots. They could be taken care of once his stomach was filled to the brim.

Michael was one of the few people who were focusing on the buffet right now. Most graduates wanted to make sure that their connections with the other graduates could be maintained in the future, while others would enjoy themselves by drinking, or dancing with their beloved.

Michael didn't have any friends in school and was a loner. He was the only student with an ordinary background, who made it into the elite class of the most prestigious school in the Golden Sun province. Thus, he was looked down upon by almost everyone.

Even if some wouldn't look down on him, approaching him with good intentions could be considered as volunteering to be bullied. Hence, most of the students steered clear of him too.

But Michael was fine with that. In fact, it was much easier for him to be a lone wolf. He didn't have to be considerate to anyone and could focus on his food!

At least that was something what Michael hoped for.

Unfortunately, it didn't take long before the atmosphere of the afterparty changed for the worse.

Just as Michael approached the big spit-roasted pig to get a taste of it, goosebumps appeared on his body. His heightened perception told him that something was wrong, and his body moved backward instinctively.

A moment later, an azure streak flashed past his eyes. The azure flash cut through the air and pierced the apple placed in the spit-roasted pig's mouth.

It was an arrow.

Someone had shot an arrow through the auditorium without a care for the safety of the people at the buffet!

Michael hadn't been right next to the spit-roasted pig but a single miscalculation would have cost his life!

Michael's head flicked to the direction from which the arrow had flown towards him in anger. He thought that it could have been Niklas Liekhover, who wanted to make fun of him, but the archer holding the bowstring was actually Kaleb Zenovia!

Kaleb Zenovia was standing next to Jasmine Blade with a smug expression on his face. He was surrounded by a small crowd of women who seemed to have joined Kaleb's fan club and were openly admiring him. They squealed loudly and a few even clapped when they saw that Kaleb's arrow pierced the center of the apple precisely.

Their squeals and Jasmine's praises were enough to make a smile blossom on Kaleb's face.

Initially, he wanted to act a little tough in front of his girlfriend. However, since he was only 17 years old and not yet a Lord, he could only show off the skills he attained after undergoing rigorous training since he was young.

He was famed as an exceptional talented archer, which was why he gave everyone a little demonstration of his skill.

His plan worked out perfectly. Jasmine was in awe and everyone's attention had been pulled over to him.

He cleared his throat after he thought of something and made an announcement.

"Everyone, let's have some fun tonight. How about a small competition?"

The auditorium erupted in an uproar when they heard what Kaleb said. He wanted to turn the afterparty of their graduation ceremony into a competition? Who the hell did he think he was?

Well...he was Kaleb Zenovia...and his suggestion earned thunderous cheers from the newest members of his fan club, and his girlfriend.

Meanwhile, many guys were both excited and agitated simultaneously. They wanted to show off what they had learned as well, but they were also bothered because Kaleb deliberately acted to attract the attention of all women.

He was not even an Awakened yet, but he felt that it was necessary to show off his skills. Was it even possible to be more arrogant than this young man?

It hadn't been long since they graduated but almost a third of the graduates had already manifested their War Rune. Niklas's Tierless War Rune was already refined to the Mid Stage as well. His strength, perception and eyesight were much stronger than that of an ordinary human. Furthermore, he had been trained from a young age as well.

In fact, Niklas was not alone. Everyone had been trained from a young age, and many had already manifested their War Rune. Despite that, Kaleb wanted to hold a competition against them? Wasn't he too full of himself?

They walked over to Kaleb Zenovia and readily showed their interest in joining the competition, without caring about the competition's subject. They didn't want to give Kaleb the opportunity to act high and mighty in front of them. Their pride was on the line!

On the other hand, Michael was just angry.

No matter whose family Kaleb came from, he shouldn't have shot an arrow at the buffet while being amidst so many people.

First of all, they were not in a training facility for archers. It was forbidden to go around and shoot arrows wherever one wanted.

Second, Kaleb didn't seem to take the safety of others into consideration. A single mistake could have cost someone's life. Kaleb's action had been reckless and utterly selfish.

And last but not least, Michael was not hungry anymore after Kaleb shot the apple in the spit-roasted pig's mouth, which had been less than five meters away from him.

While Michael could accept the first point, the second made him angry. As for the third point, it was more than enough for him to start loathing Kaleb.

Nobody, not even his brother, was daring enough to make him lose his appetite, even less when he had been happily saving up some space in his stomach to savor the spit-roasted pig at the end. He had been eager to relish the flavors and savor every bite, yet Kaleb made him lose his appetite.

That was the worst sin anyone could commit!!

Chapter 69 Competition

Michael didn't really want to join any competition at first, however, Kaleb provoked him way too much.

Not only did he show off his skills by foolishly releasing an arrow in the buffet – where people, including Michael, were busy enjoying their food– but Kaleb had gone a step ahead and made Michael lose his appetite. That was the worst.

Kaleb deserved a beating for that!

"What kind of competition do you want to hold?" Niklas Liekhoven asked Kaleb as he made his way to the crowd of people around the young man.

Niklas disliked Kaleb right from the moment he entered the auditorium. So what if he was a Zenovia? What did it matter? Kaleb was just an unawakened kid in front of him!

"It is pretty simple," Kaleb said calmly and confidently, "I want us to compete with each other using our archery skills."

"Since some of us are awakened, you'll only embarrass yourself when you lose bitterly later," Niklas responded in a cold and mocking tone.

Kaleb raised one of his eyebrows before he gave a nonchalant shrug.

"If I lose it means that I have to train more, that's it."

Niklas glared at Kaleb, but he didn't mock him any further. He would let his archery skills speak up for him!

"I will join your little competition!" Niklas declared, which was followed by several other people stepping forward and joining the competition as well.

More than a dozen had joined when Michael reached the crowd.

"I'll join as well," Michael announced calmly.

He understood that it wouldn't be good if his emotions were all over the place. Archery required him to calm down and become one with tranquility.

"You? Your Archery skills are a mess! Weren't you barely in the top ten of the class?" Niklas asked mockingly before he rubbed salt in the wound by adding, "You shouldn't embarrass yourself. Just sit back and continue eating, hog."

This time, it was Michael's eyebrow that rose. Michael had been consistently ranked 8th in almost all practical classes. Not only did he become eight intentionally, but it was not even a bad rank to be.

After the first semester when he had been attacked by everyone for becoming a top student in most subjects, Michael tried hard not to be first.

If he gave his utmost, he would have been much higher in the ranking. Wasn't it obvious that he was holding back by staying in the bottom ranking in most subjects, whether it was theory or practical subjects?

Michael glanced through the crowd to gauge the reaction of his other former classmates, but all of them had a reaction similar to Niklas. Nobody expected anything from him. He was just an unwanted extra in their opinion.

'Good thing that I came today. It's about time to wipe the smiles off their faces!' Michael murmured to himself before he turned to Kaleb.

He stared loathingly at the young man for making him lose his appetite, "I will join."

Kaleb gave him a small nod, but he was a bit confused.

Why was this young man so angry with him? It was not as if he did something inhumane. Wasn't it just a competition?

However, after looking at the expressions of the other guys who had been rushing over to join the competition as well, understanding dawned upon Kaleb.

They were all angry that he had attracted the attention of all the girls at the afterparty!

Nonetheless, Kaleb stared at Michael for a few more seconds. He heard a few insults that were thrown at Michael and began to frown.

"Why are they acting like 5-year-old children after their Barbie doll was taken from them? This guy is clearly unbothered about the insults thrown at him, so he must be used to this behavior already," Kaleb whispered in Jasmine's ear.

He thought about it and added, "Did he, or his family offend one of these clowns?"

Jasmine diverted her attention from her friends and looked over to see Michael being bombarded with insults and bullied by the others.

"He was not in my class, but I heard that Michael Fang is an easy target. He has no background and somehow managed to get into the Elite Class. His class taught Michael a lesson after the first semester because he thought that being in the Elite Class means that he is a bigshot now. I heard that he is a coward. You can just ignore him," She explained nonchalantly before intimately caressing his cheek.

Kaleb planted a kiss on her lips before his attention was pulled back to the guys who groaned after seeing the couple's public display of affection.

He accepted everyone's participation in the competition since it would be more interesting with more people, but he never looked at Michael again.

Ten minutes later everyone interested in the competition had joined.

Kaleb clapped his hands twice to draw everyone's attention to him.

"Now that everyone has joined the competition, let me explain a few basic rules of the competition," He said calmly.

"It is pretty simple. We will use the auditorium as our playground. First, someone shoots a target or makes a call directly. Afterward, the others will move to the same starting position before they'll hit the same target, repeating their predecessor's action. That means..." Kaleb took a pause and retrieved an arrow, nocked it on the bowstring of his foldable bow, and pulled the bowstring back.

A moment later, he aimed and released the arrow. It pierced the apple of the spit-roasted pig once again.

"That means, everyone will have to hit the apple of the spit-roasted pig. Once everyone hits the target, the next one in the row can choose the next target. It's pretty simple, isn't it?" Kaleb finished the explanation with a faint smile while bathing in the cheers and squeals of the girls next to him.

Jasmine looked at Kaleb with a blush and stepped forward. She wove her arms around his left arm and smiled even brighter as she looked back at the cheering girls, who were also the newest members of Kaleb's fan club.

'The rules are pretty simple, but the execution can be quite difficult,' Michael thought as he looked around to see what kind of targets he should choose for this challenge.

He heard insulting comments around him but ignored them mostly.

'How can I get back at Kaleb, and these idiots at the same time?' Michael wondered.

Showing off his archery skills would, at most, shock everyone. That was not enough.

Michael thought about it for a while, and his expression lit up when a great idea flashed through his mind.

"Is this competition even fun without a bet?" He asked in a light-hearted tone.

His voice was low but loud enough for everyone to hear. The guys turned to Michael before they burst into laughter.

They laughed so much that their eyes watered and they could barely breathe anymore.

Tears trickled down the corners of their eyes and they pointed at Michael while continuing to laugh, openly ridiculing him again.

Niklas and the others were the first to stop laughing. They looked at each other and grinned devilishly.

"How much do you want to bet, Mr Fang? Is 10\$ fine with you, or is that too much for you to handle? How about 5\$ then?" Niklas asked while another one joined the taunting.

"Maybe 5\$ is also too much. How about we make a different bet?" He said while looking at the third guy, who cleared his throat.

"How about the loser has to remove their clothes and walk home naked?" The third guy proposed, and the entire group around Niklas began to cackle hysterically.

The girls frowned when they heard what their former classmate said, and even Kaleb couldn't help but squint his eyes in disgust.

However, he noticed that Michael was unfazed and even had a small smirk on his face.

'Did he just smile?' Kaleb asked himself, unsure if his eyes were deceiving him.

"How about I bet an Epic Artifact?"

Michael manifested Tigerfang out of thin air before he showed his possession for everyone to gawk at.

"Who dares to bet with me?!"

Chapter 70 Bet

The moment the thin longsword manifested out of thin air, everyone realized that Michael was actually a Lord.

Niklas, who had been mocking Michael before, couldn't help but stare blankly at Michael and Tigerfang.

"How can that be possible?" He murmured in disbelief while Michael removed his gloves.

It would be rather inconvenient to continue wearing the gloves now that he would be entering the archery competition. He didn't want to lose the bet over a silly mistake and be forced to part with Tigerfang because his fingers slipped from the bowstring.

Michael showed Niklas his War Rune intentionally, but Niklas was too baffled to react. However, it was not just Niklas who was left speechless. Their former head teacher, Kelen Dame, looked stupefied too. He stared blankly at Michael's War Rune and his jaw hit the ground the next moment.

"Refinement degree close to the Late stage..."

Everyone stared blankly at Michael, while Kaleb was the first to recover from the shock. He merely smiled and thought,

"Looks like he is not the loser everyone assumed him to be."

Michael's head turned to Kaleb with a sinister smile.

"If someone dares to challenge me, you'll have to bet something of equal worth!" He announced, his eyes glimmering brightly.

'Since I'm already here, I shouldn't waste my time and return home empty-handed,' Michael thought, feeling quite satisfied with his performance.

'Give me all your money, you bastards! That's the reimbursement for all the suffering you caused me in the past few years!!'

For the first time since Michael got to know the high and mighty descendants of powerful families and clans, they hesitated.

Only a third of all students had already manifested their War Rune, but most of them were utterly clueless about how expensive an Artifact was. They didn't have to work hard to earn it and would get any Artifact they desired by asking their parents and clan elders.

Yet even their parents and clan elders couldn't promise to gift them a Tierless Epic Artifact!

"I have 800,000\$ in my account, right now," One of the students said just as everyone wondered how much they should bet to join, or if they should back off. They might be better than Michael, but they weren't confident in defeating Niklas, or Kaleb, whose skill level was still a mystery to them.

"That's fine with me. I don't really care how much you bet," Michael said with a shrug before he added provokingly, "But if the others think about betting small amounts of money, they only show that they have a small dick and no confidence."

His eyes were on Niklas and his cronies as he said the last few words and a vibrant smile blossomed on his face.

'Yes, I'm talking about you, brickhead!' His eyes seemed to scream.

Niklas grit his teeth and stepped forward. He was ready to throw a punch at Michael, but Kelen held him back.

"If you want to defeat him, accept the bet and get his Artifact. I don't know how he obtained an Epic Tierless Artifact, but it's an invaluable treasure if it's genuine!" Kelen explained hurriedly to calm down Niklas.

Niklas clenched his fists and reluctantly held himself back.

"Can you prove that your Artifact is a genuine 5-Star Tierless Artifact and not some cheap replica?" Niklas bellowed angrily.

Michael shook his head in response, but he remained calm.

"I cannot prove it right now, but I am willing to become your subordinate through the oath of subordination if Tigerfang is not a Tierless Epic Artifact. The winner can take Tigerfang to an appraiser and see for himself, whether I'm spouting nonsense or not," He retorted with a steely gaze.

His words were overflowing with confidence. Even Niklas couldn't say anything for a second or two. However, at the thought of turning Michael into his subordinate, everything else turned insignificant and a devilish smile appeared on his face.

"I'll bet 2,000,000\$!" He announced grandly.

Niklas looked back at his people and gestured to them to place their bets.

Slowly but steadily, most people joined the bet. Niklas bet the most money, but the total sum was much higher than Michael had expected.

"In that case, let's set up a contract. I already sent the form in the group chat," Michael added after a minute.

"You guys merely have to add the amount of money you bet and give it a nice swish with your finger where you have to sign."

While Niklas and the others had been shouting out their bets grandly, Michael had been busy setting up the contract. He wanted to make sure that nobody could escape their fate after losing bitterly and humiliating them further.

He turned to Kaleb, who looked at him with renewed curiosity.

"Jasmine, can you forward the form to him? After all, Kaleb will have to join the bet if he is big enough to join the games of us adults!"

Kaleb's expression changed drastically, and he was about to say something but held himself back when he saw the expression on Michael's face. He realized only then that Michael wanted to provoke him.

"Send me the form, babe!" He told Jasmine who nodded her head faintly.

She had not expected Michael to already have manifested a War Rune, forget about obtaining an Epic Artifact. She knew very well how rare and expensive Epic Artifacts were. Not even her family could promise her one when she manifested her War Rune.

Jasmine was not sure if Kaleb would obtain a Tierless Epic Artifact once he turned 18, but the chance was quite high. The Zenovia family was on a whole different level than the families that could be found in the Golden Sun province.

Meanwhile, Michael waited patiently. His attention was on the contract that was being updated in real-time. He noticed that Kaleb didn't fill out the column stating what he would give if he were to lose the bet, but he simply signed it.

That meant Kaleb would give the winner of the bet something he desired as long as it was at par with the value of Tigerfang.

'You don't even consider the possibility of losing the bet? Your arrogance will kill you in the future...I shall teach you a lesson in your sister's name!' Michael thought before he turned his attention to the contract.

Everyone had signed the form and the competition could begin at last. But now that high bets had been made, everyone was a little tense.

Only Niklas, Kaleb, and Michael were calm.

"I already shot the apple of the spit-roasted pig twice. Let's use it as the first target," Kaleb said nonchalantly and both Michael and Niklas agreed.

Niklas manifested a Bow Artifact out of thin air, and he retrieved an arrow out of his War Rune's storage space. He nocked the arrow on the bowstring and pulled the bowstring back slowly. He perfected his aim for a few seconds and shot.

The arrow cut through the air before it pierced straight into the apple.

Niklas' subordinates exclaimed and clapped like sea lions when they saw that their boss hit the target. Afterward, they took turns to shoot the target as well.

In the next ten minutes, the remaining participants retrieved their own bows or borrowed the bows of the other participants to shoot their target. Most of them succeeded, leaving only Michael in the end.

However, Michael didn't really pay much attention to the first round. It was too simple. He was more focused on the confused caterers who were running around with apples in their hands, trying to replace the apple cores that fell out of the pig's mouth after being hit several times.

It was quite an amusing sight.

Now that it was his turn, Michael manifested the Hardwood Bow and an arrow. He put the arrow smoothly on the bowstring, pulled back, and shot within a single smooth motion.

The arrow shot through the air with horrifying velocity and penetrated through the apple, splitting it apart at once.

Niklas froze when he saw how Michael used the bow with precision. Michael required merely two seconds to manifest the bow and hit the target. Most weren't even able to take a proper look at his bow when the arrow had already pierced the target.

Niklas was not the only one who was shocked. Everyone was baffled and a stunned silence enveloped them all.

What the hell happened to Michael?

Was he still the same loser as before?

Michael merely smiled.

"How about I choose the second target? Let's reduce the number of participants a bit!"