

Supreme Lord 81

Chapter 81 Monster Battle

Even after the Black Bear had been shot once, it was unable to find Michael who was hiding behind the thick canopy of leaves, perched high up in the tree.

The Black Bear had its head turned in Michael's direction, but it didn't have enough time to take a closer look. The huge Frenzy Deer attacked the Black Bear violently.

Meanwhile, the rest of the huge Frenzy Deers horde was either returning to the vicinity of the clearing or charged at the Black Bear to attack it from all sides.

Wanting to make the most out of the situation, Michael also continued to shoot.

With the Hardwood Bow fully drawn out with the highest possible pulling force, in addition to the high destructive force the Return Arrow could unleash, Michael could inflict some serious damage. The Black Bear's fur might be too thick for the arrow to penetrate through, but there were enough spots Michael could target.

Even if his arrow was not a very lethal weapon, Michael's attack distracted the Black Bear. He released the Return Arrow whenever the Black Bear was about to claw one of the Frenzy Deers or dig its fangs into them, slowing it down. That way, Michael supported the Frenzy Deers while further enraging the Black Bear.

The huge Frenzy Deer used the distraction caused by Michael to charge at the Black Bear twice. It injured the Black Bear by cutting deep into its fur with the huge and pointy antlers.

The Frenzy Deer horde supported their leader from all sides, inflicting minor injuries on their enemy. They might only be Tier-1 Monsters, but their antlers were a force to reckon given their numbers.

After being surrounded by the Frenzy Deers and faced with an onslaught from all sides, the Black Bear's limbs sustained several serious injuries. Despite that, it was able to pinpoint Michael's location at last.

'It finally found me? Was about time it did,' Michael thought as he saw the Black Bear looking straight at him.

He smiled lightly and shouted out loudly, "Water Barrier!"

Kelia Tan waved her wand the moment Michael's order left his lips. She conjured a large water screen using bits of energy and moisture in the surroundings. A thin layer separated the fighting monsters from Michael and his people.

It was not strong enough to block any attacks, but that was not Kelia's intention either way. She created a temporary barrier, blocking the Black Bear's view while giving others the time to move now that their cover was blown.

Thus, Michael and the other long-range combatants jumped down from the tree. They used the other tree branches around them as a staircase and reached the ground within seconds. Afterward, Michael and his people changed their position once again.

The water screen dispersed while their group took the cover of the dense vegetation and put some distance from the mighty beast.

Realizing that it had lost Michael in the forest, the Black Bear grew enraged. And while it was trying to look for Michael again, it had to endure the constant attacks of the huge Frenzy Deer and its horde. The Frenzy Deers gained more courage and attacked more valiantly seeing that they weren't getting attacked or torn apart.

But their bravado did not last long as the Black Bear's paws smashed down on two of them as if it was swatting angrily at flies.

Enraged, yet unable to find the perpetrator, the Black Bear could only unleash its wrath onto the pesky beings around it. The Frenzy Deers were crushed, clawed, and bitten, killed one after another.

The huge Frenzy Deer was able to inflict more lethal wounds on the Black Bear's body in the meantime, but it had lost a lot of blood and was already lethally wounded as well.

"You can join the attacks now. Target the Black Bear's wounds for now," Michael ordered after he heaved himself on a large branch high up in the air of another tree. The Archers and Aero Crossbowmen had followed him, and they followed his instructions without hesitation.

Their distance to the battlefield had been shortened to 150 meters. It was still a big distance, but the Untamed Jungle was not windy, and it was not raining heavily either. Thus, hitting the target from 150 meters was the only issue.

Fortunately, the target was big and easy to pinpoint.

In the following ten minutes, the scene on the battlefield changed drastically.

The Water Elemental Mage changed the terrain in the clearing several times and showered it with rain to turn it sticky and trap the legs of the Black Bear in mud. This would provide Michael, the long-range units, and the Frenzy Deer opportunities to strike while limiting the Black Bear's movement. Simultaneously, Kelia conjured water spikes out of the moisture in the mud to pierce through the Black Bear's paws and its lower body.

Kelia conjured and released water bullets as well, but their lethality was highly restricted due to the amount of energy at her disposal, and her distance from the target.

But that didn't matter a lot because Michael and his long-range units were able to inflict some injuries upon the Black Bear. Michael's attack caused the most destructive damage since his attacks targeted the Black Bear's head most of the time.

The distraction caused by Michael and his people was enough to allow the Frenzy Deers to further injure and tire out their opponent, and the injuries inflicted by the Frenzy Deers were enough to distract the Black Bear from Michael's attacks.

With their combined power, it was possible to dwindle the Black Bear's strength drastically. But it was not impossible to avoid casualties altogether. In fact, the Black Bear was strong enough to deepen the severe injuries all over the huge Frenzy Deer's body and kill three dozen Frenzy Deers.

The huge Frenzy Deer was taking its last breaths and was about to bleed to death.

It was Michael's great fortune that the Black Bear attacked the Frenzy Deer horde and lessened the number of beasts they would have to deal with. He realized that the huge Frenzy Deer alone would have been strong enough to trample his entire military might to death before half a dozen arrows would have pierced its hide.

Both the huge Frenzy Deer and the Black Bear were definitely Tier-2 Monsters. The power, stamina, and endurance they displayed were several times higher than Michael had expected. They were, in fact, stronger than the lizard mother.

This was something Michael realized upon watching the terrifying battle of the two powerhouses for a long time.

It was probably another half an hour later when the huge Frenzy Deer and the Black Bear finally showed signs of exhaustion. Both monsters should have bled to death by now, had they been ordinary wild animals, but they were still alive.

Michael and his people were stupefied by that, but they were not discouraged. The two powerhouses and the remaining Frenzy Deer horde were already exhausted and weakened.

Meanwhile, Michael and his team were neither exhausted nor weakened.

They could display their full strength and reap all benefits!

"Charge!!" Michael shouted out loudly.

He had returned to the ground with the Archers and Aero Crossbowmen and charged straight into the clearing.

Tigerfang had manifested in his right hand and Tiara charged next to him, wielding her silver spear in one hand and the round-shield in another. Her new Artifacts materialized around her body, protecting, and strengthening her as she charged ahead.

It took Michael a single glance to understand that Tiara's strength had increased by more than 30%. She charged ahead confidently and pierced the silver spear through the head of the closest Frenzy Deer.

Now that the Frenzy Deers had returned to the clearing, more than 50 of them were left alive.

However, most were focused on the Black Bear and their leader.

Some tried to protect their leader while others attacked the Black Bear with their remaining strength.

As for the few that didn't do either, they turned into easy targets of Michael and his people!

Chapter 82 Exhaustion

In less than ten minutes, more than thirty exhausted Frenzy Deers died at the hands of Michael, or his people.

They could barely lift their antlers in an attempt to intimidate the new perpetrators before cold metal pierced through their chests or heads. The light in their eyes dispersed and they collapsed onto the ground where they died in a puddle of their own blood.

In the meantime, the Black Bear had delivered one more lethal strike upon the huge Frenzy Deer that crashed on the ground. It seemed like the huge Frenzy Deer would not get up this time.

The Black Bear had emerged victorious in its battle with the huge Frenzy Deer, but it was apparent that it lost the war. Not only was it mortally wounded, but the remaining Tier-1 Frenzy Deers were enough to kill it.

However, that was not all. A third party had joined the battle a long time ago. The third party had been in control of the battlefield all this time while the two predators kept fighting each other. Only when the time was ripe did the third party join the battle to deliver the final blow and end the war between the Black Bear and the huge Frenzy Deer?

Tigerfang was soaked in the blood of its opponents. Meanwhile, Michael had killed more than five Frenzy Deers on his own. That was not further difficult since he was a Late Tier-0 Lord with several powerful Artifacts and a great Soultrait to further aid him in battle.

Nonetheless, it was an achievement.

Michael and his people always maintained a distance of more than 50 meters from the two Tier-2 monsters.

They knew that the two mighty monsters were on the verge of death, but a sudden burst of power might spread through them.

Their tactic changed drastically when the huge Frenzy Deer collapsed to the ground.

The Water Elemental Mage turned the soil beneath the Black Bear into a mushy damp puddle before several water spikes shot out of the moist ground. Because the distance between Keltia and the Black Bear had shortened by two-thirds it was possible for the Water Elemental Mage to utilize more energy to attack.

The water spikes pierced through the Black Bear's fur, and it roared out in anger and pain.

A dozen Frenzy Deers charged at the Black Bear at the same time. They were exhausted beyond measure, but they fought desperately, hoping that they could protect their leader.

Simultaneously, a silver flash cut through the air. It flew in the wide-open mouth of the Black Bear and pierced through its mouth. As a result, blood spurted out of the Black Bear's mouth.

The monster's eyes shot wide open, and it turned to the left where the silver flash came from.

However, by this point, it was already too late. Michael smiled coldly with the Return Arrow nocked on the Hardwood Bow's bowstring.

As Michael sensed the golden opportunity, he immediately returned Tigerfang to the War Rune and pulled out the Hardwood Bow and the Return Arrow instead.

He was about to end the fierce battle between the two mighty monsters!

The bowstring was already fully pulled back, and it was released with a twang when the Black Bear's attention moved to him.

In the blink of an eye, a silver flash cut through the air once again. The Return Arrow pierced deep into the Black Bear's left eye before it could even react. It closed its eyes instinctively when the Return Arrow impacted, but it was already too late. The Arrow pierced through the eyeball and dug deeper as the Black Bear thrashed around while howling in pain.

Unfortunately, the force behind the arrow was not strong enough to pierce the Black Bear's brain. It stopped midway and began to shine brightly.

After it began to shine, the Return Arrow disappeared into thin air and returned to Michael's side. He nocked it on the bowstring without hesitation, pulled back, and shot once again. The arrow was aimed at the exact same position as the last one.

'If one arrow is not enough to pierce your brain, I shall release two on the same spot; one to pave the way, and the second to do the deed.' Michael thought as the second arrow impacted.

However, once again, the arrow was not strong enough. The Black Bear's eyelids were still closed, and the Return Arrow's destructive power was barely enough to pierce through the eyelid.

But Michael did not appear too worked up. Instead, he smiled lightly.

'If two arrows are not enough, I shall release three arrows; the first to pave the way, the second to remove the remaining obstructions, and the third to reach the finishing line!' Michael shouted in his mind as he retrieved the Return Arrow the second time. He nocked the arrow on the bowstring and shot once again.

The Black Bear wanted to move away, but the remaining Frenzy Deers, the Water Elemental Mage, and everyone else had already gotten in position and almost locked him in place.

Exhausted and severely wounded, the Black Bear could only struggle desperately in an attempt to escape its miserable fate. But by the time it opened its other eye, it was already too late. The Return Arrow had hit the same target for the third time, and it pierced cleanly through the hole in the Black Bear's eye, digging deep into its brain.

The Black Bear jolted the moment the cold metal tip of the arrow pierced its brain. It stared at Michael and froze in its tracks while staying unmoving even after the Frenzy Deers around it charged at it frantically.

Nothing happened for several seconds until the vibrant light in the Black Bear's unscathed eye dispersed. It turned dim and soulless.

Michael prepared for the impact of the energy influx when he saw that. However, he didn't expect the surge of the energy influx to be that strong. It was far more than he obtained from ending the lizard mother's life!

Fortunately, he was prepared and much stronger than he had been at that time.

His body endured the energy influx easily. Michael didn't feel restricted in his thinking or movements. It was perfect!

Meanwhile, the Black Bear collapsed to the ground where it remained unmoving.

The Black Bear had been killed, however, the battle had not yet ended.

It was not yet over for Michael!

Chapter 83 Energy Influx

The vigor and excitement that spread through his entire body when the flood of energy surged through every cell of his body was highly addictive.

Michael felt like cheering loudly and focusing on digesting the energy influx he obtained from killing the Black Bear, but he couldn't do that just yet.

The battle was not over, and the Frenzy Deers were not yet dead!

When the Black Bear smashed on the ground lifelessly, the remaining Frenzy Deers surrounded their dying leader. They wanted to protect their leader even on death's bed.

To their misery, Michael and his group didn't allow that to happen. The Hardwood Bow and the Return arrow returned to the War Rune while Tigerfang manifested in front of him once again.

Michael grasped it tightly and charged straight ahead. He infused a large amount of energy into Tigerfang to enhance its sharpness and sturdiness while doing the same to the Boots of Taran. The Swiftens enchantment was fully unleashed, further accelerating Michael's fast speed.

He may only be at the Late stage of Tier-0, but he had powerful Artifacts bound to his War Rune, enhancing his strength drastically. With his Eagle Eyes activated, Michael could also faintly predict the movements of his opponents. The precise details he saw with his enhanced eyesight provided Michael with enough information to put himself in an advantageous position in a battle.

Michael could evade the attacks of the exhausted Frenzy Deers easily and deliver a killing blow with one or two strikes. Meanwhile, the other members of his group weren't doing bad either.

The Archers and Aero Crossbowmen focused on the same target. They killed a Frenzy Deer with a single volley of their arrows and bolts before they diverted their attention to another target. Meanwhile, the Water Elemental Mage fought on her own. She used water bullets to minimize the consumption of her energy and kill the Frenzy Deers with a single but deadly shot simultaneously.

As for the rest, their teamwork was impeccable, especially with Tiara charging at the front. She was the only actual Tier-1 warrior, and she was in possession of several Artifacts that enhanced her power even

further. She could inflict more damage than the Water Elemental Mage and kill more opponents than Michael due to her swift and decisive movements.

Tiara moved through the battlefield like a Valkyrie. It looked elegant, yet merciless and brutal as blood and brain matter splattered everywhere around her.

At one point near the end of the battle, the huge Frenzy Deer bleated loudly. In response, the exhausted Frenzy Deers seemed to have gained a sudden surge of energy. They regained their full power and charged at Michael altogether.

Michael was a little bit stupefied at that point, but the number of Frenzy Deers left alive had decreased to less than a dozen. A barrage of arrows and bolts was enough to kill one of the energetic Frenzy Deers, while another one was killed by a water bullet to its head before it could even cross five meters.

The remaining Frenzy Deers were full of energy, but so were Tiara and the other melee fighters. Everyone charged forward while their Links of Loyalty within Michael's War Rune seemed to be going wild.

They hacked and slashed at the energetic Frenzy Deers, killing one after another in no time.

Meanwhile, Michael appeared in front of the dying leader of the Frenzy Deers. He knew that the Frenzy Deer had never attacked him, but the same applied to the Black Bear.

They never attacked him first. It had been Michael who started attacking both the ferocious monsters. However, in the Untamed Jungle, and everywhere across the Origin Expanse, only strength mattered.

As long as you had the necessary strength, you could do anything.

Michael understood that individual strength, connections, and wealth were the pillars of true power, whether inside or outside the Origin Expanse.

This was something he had experienced often enough, and he knew that he couldn't stay the weak and merciful coward he had been in the past. If he did not become shrewd and tactful, Michael would be faced with death much sooner than he thought.

A single mistake was all it took.

With those thoughts rampaging through his mind, Michael lifted Tigerfang high in the air. He turned it upside down and looked deep into the dark eyes of the Frenzy Deer's leader before he pierced it into the beast's flesh.

Michael grit his teeth as Tigerfang's tip cut through the Frenzy Deer's neck. He twisted the longsword in the monster's neck and pulled downward, cutting the artery.

Warm blood splattered on Michael's face as he kept staring at the big black eyes of the huge Frenzy Deer. It stared right back at him until the last moment when the life in its eyes finally dispersed. Its huge body twitched two more times before it stopped moving altogether.

What followed was a powerful surge of energy, which flooded Michael, and thunderous cheers that rang through the entire clearing and the area around.

Michael sighed heavily. He retrieved Tigerfang and put it back inside his War Rune while continuing to stare at the huge Frenzy Deer.

Many thoughts flashed through his mind and a fresh doubt of uncertainty surfaced on his mind.

However, before the seed could bury itself and grow roots, Michael grasped it and pulled it out.

He had always known that being a Lord in the Origin Expanse meant that one would have to become stronger and kill all probable future opponents or get killed eventually.

The Untamed Jungle was dangerous. Preparing for the worst-case scenario meant that he had to make use of all opportunities at his disposal.

'The Black Bear would have killed the Frenzy Deer today, either way. How much longer would it have taken until the Black Bear would have found my territory and targeted me?' Michael asked himself at this point.

'I did the right thing by hunting down the Black Bear.'

That thought was deeply imprinted on his mind.

It allowed Michael to divert his focus and take a look at the grand picture.

He had killed two Tier-2 Monsters, and their corpses – in addition to more than a hundred Tier-1 Frenzy Deers – were waiting for him to be claimed and looted!

Michael's hand began to glow brightly as golden streams manifested all around them.

It was Extraction time!

Chapter 84 Great Haul

Michael used Extraction on more than a hundred Frenzy Deers, the huge Frenzy Deer leader, and the Black Bear.

The Frenzy Deers' Antlers and Monster Cores were stored first before Michael collected the special drops he had extracted.

He stored the bodies of the huge Frenzy Deer and the Black Bear afterward and told Tiara to fill her War Rune's storage space with as many corpses as possible.

On the other hand, Michael's focus shifted to the special drops he had received.

The most common drops were the usual, something he always obtained when he used Extraction on monster corpses. In total, he extracted 1254 Summoning Scroll Fragments, 26 Summoning Scrolls, and 11 Blueprints.

He also extracted a Tierless 1-Star Artifact this time. It was a dark green-colored coin. Michael had no idea what it could do but it was an Artifact, a Tierless 1-Star Artifact though.

While all of that could be considered a pretty good haul, Michael's eyes fell on two familiar items.

Both the huge Frenzy Dear and the Black Bear had dropped a piece of parchment. They showed different areas of the Untamed Jungle's topography.

"Two more pieces of the map? Shouldn't I have most of them by now?" Michael mumbled to himself as he retrieved the three pieces of the map that he had collected until now.

The moment he retrieved the pieces of parchment, the five parchments began to tremble. The parchment exuded a dim white light and the trembling intensified.

An unknown force seemed to be trying to pull the parchments out of Michael's hands and he let them go subconsciously.

In response, the five parchments shot in the air. They stopped mid-air and hovered above Michael's head for a while. After a few seconds of staying still, the parchments began to move towards each other. The strands of fiber at the edges of the parchments wiggled as they tried to connect to the other.

Four parchments moved closer, forming a beautiful map of the Untamed Jungle's topography. Meanwhile, the fifth parchment connected to the underside of the map, where gleaming azure lines manifested. The azure lines felt like streams as they moved from the edges to the center of the fifth parchment where they connected. An array of azure streams formed on the backside, and it emitted an impressive aura.

'A miniature array? That's crazy...'

Michael stared blankly at the map that fell into his hands after the transformation had been completed.

"Oho?!" He exclaimed while his eyes widened.

What had been undetailed and a crude piece of parchment before was now a greatly detailed map of the Untamed Jungle. It didn't show the entire region, but Michael could pinpoint a few areas, such as the former Gogi Lord territory, and the lizard cave.

In one direction, one could even see the outskirts of the Untamed Jungle. That was the direction of the plateau connected to the Untamed Jungle and where Xiltra lay.

But what interested Michael more than the details on the map was the white arrow circled in as a red bubble. When Michael turned around, the arrow turned with him.

At first, Michael thought that it showed his position and that it turned with him to indicate where he was about to go, but that was proven wrong after he took a few steps.

The arrow moved in a different direction when he walked in a straight line.

'It's almost as if it is pointing at something...'

It felt like the arrow wanted him to go in a certain direction.

"Is that a GPS treasure map?"

The more Michael looked at the treasure map the more interesting it seemed. He felt his hands itching and his mind screaming at him, telling Michael to follow the treasure map immediately and enjoy a nerve-wracking adventure with his people.

However, he stopped himself. It was not as if the map would run away from him. The energy influx that spread through his entire body was high and he knew that he wouldn't be able to fight properly in his

current condition. He had to digest the energy influx of the two Tier-2 Monsters first. Afterward, he could take a good look at the GPS treasure map.

With that thought, he stored the map back in the storage space of his War Rune. To distract himself, he took a look at the blueprints he had extracted today. Two of them were unusually big, which indicated that the constructions were either much bigger than the norm, or that it was far more complex than ordinary buildings.

The two blueprints were no different from that.

"An...Intermediate Summoning Gate Blueprint...and a Small Teleportation Array blueprint?! What the..." Michael blurted out in shock.

Saying that he was baffled was a gross understatement.

Countless Lords struggled to obtain the blueprints for an Intermediate Summoning Gate. The blueprint was a perishable item that would be used up once learned by the architects and engineers. It would disperse afterward while providing the architects and engineers with the necessary knowledge to dismantle the Basic Summoning Gate and reassemble it with the additional parts to upgrade it.

The Small Teleportation Array was not a consumable item, but it was even more unique than the Intermediate Summoning Gate blueprint. The drop rate for the Small Teleportation Array was disgustingly low, and nobody knew for sure which monsters were more likely to drop it. Thus, only a handful of Lords were able to install Small Teleportation Arrays in their territory, with most of them being on the same level as Native Dukes, or Kingdoms.

And an ingenious stroke of luck had blessed Michael with two exceedingly rare blueprints of high value, just like that. He could earn tens of million by selling them, but that would be stupid.

Even auctioning them for a hundred million dollars each would be nonsensical for someone like Michael.

Instead of receiving momentary gains, he should make use of the blueprints for his territory and expand it using both the Intermediate Summoning Gate and the Small Teleportation Array.

With that in mind, he took a short glance at the required items to construct both the Intermediate Summoning Gate and Small Teleportation Arrays.

"Oh fuck!" He cursed almost immediately, "Even the items to construct them are fucking expensive..."

'Looks like I have to postpone their construction for a while,' Michael grumbled in his head before he put the blueprints inside his War Rune.

He then proceeded to look at the last drop he had extracted from the Black Bear's Corpse.

His eyes widened when he looked at the last items and his brain switched off as he blankly stared at the items that were lying on the ground, waiting to be noticed till now.

"Wait...what?! How is that even possible?" He shouted out in a voice loud enough to attract the attention of his subjects.

Tiara turned in his direction and saw Michael staring blankly at a bunch of transparent marbles.

Was there anything special about these marbles? They had something purple swirling inside them, but it didn't seem to be too....

Realization dawned upon Tiara at this moment. Her eyes widened and the hair on her tail shot up. She felt goosebumps spreading all over her body.

Until now, Tiara had only seen the marbles once, and that was when she had been next to Michael.

They had dropped upon extracting Fenrir's body!

Exactly.

Shockingly enough, the inconspicuous-looking marbles were none other than SoulStar Fragments!

Chapter 85 Feast

The last items Michael had extracted from the Black Bear were SoulStar Fragments!

There weren't many of them, but that did not matter. The SoulStar Fragments were genuine, and they had been extracted from a monster!

"How is that even possible?" He mumbled while a white stream of energy shot out of his War Rune.

It was the same tentacle-shaped stream of energy as usual. It dashed toward the three SoulStar Fragments and devoured them instantaneously.

'The Black Bear dropped 3 SoulStar Fragments...why though?' He asked himself first before he thought of something else.

'What is the correlation between the Heroic Summon Fenrir, the Gogi Lord, and the Black Bear?'

Until now, Michael had been certain that only Awakened with War Runes and Summons with a high star rating could drop Soultraits and SoulStar Fragments. However, now it was a monster that seemed to have dropped SoulStar Fragments!

'I have never seen or heard anything about a Bear living in the Untamed Jungle. The huge Frenzy Deer had a horde, and there should be more of them spread through the Untamed Jungle...but what about the Black Bear? Is it a special monster?'

It was a little bit weird.

The Black Bear seemed to be a special monster from somewhere nearby, but how did that make sense? Maybe it was just a single monster that had fled into the Untamed Jungle...but that didn't answer the most crucial question; what common points did the Black Bear, Fenrir, and the Gogi Lord have?

At the end of the day, Michael had been certain that he had finally figured out the condition for SoulStar Fragments to drop. However, the extraction of the Black Bear changed his understanding of his Soultrait altogether.

Fenrir had been in possession of an 8-Star Soultrait when he was still alive as Cleave Fenrir. His potential was tremendous even as a Heroic Summon.

And he assumed that the Gogi Lord had been in possession of a Soultrait. Michael was not too sure about that because he had never seen the Gogi Lord using a special Soultrait. But, of course, countless types of Soultraits existed. It was highly likely that it was a Soultrait one couldn't see.

However, it was a fact that all Lords were either in possession of a Soultrait or that they would awaken one later once their Soul was nourished through the dormant energy of the Origin Expanse. One way or another, all Lords were supposed to awaken a Soultrait at one point.

But if that was the case, what was the reason behind the Black Bear's drop of SoulStar Fragments? It was neither a summoned being with a high star rating since it had been in possession of a Monster Core, and it was not an Awakened being with a War Rune either.

'Let's just say that the Black Bear was a special regional boss and that all regional bosses drop SoulStar Fragments,' Michael told himself.

'That's valid until it's proven wrong.'

It was easier to give simple solutions than to think too long about something that was not actually worth it.

He would never be able to clear his mind if he wasted his time overthinking every little thing.

Furthermore, the Will of the Origin Expanse was unfathomable. It didn't have to make sense all the time, or so it seemed.

With that in mind, Michael's train of thought returned to the treasure map.

His adventurous spirit awakened and he desired to follow the arrow on the map to find out where it would lead him.

He didn't think that there would be much of a problem taking a quick glance at the destination. Furthermore, it would be better to find out what kind of place the arrow would lead him to so as to prepare for the worst case accordingly.

But before Michael went on his first adventure, he digested the energy influx of the Monsters he had killed.

The two Tier-2 Monsters provided a tremendous amount of energy, and he was able to digest almost all of it. That was different from before.

Michael could only digest less than a quarter of the Lizard mother's energy influx properly because his body couldn't handle the toll. He had to use three-quarters of the energy influx by constantly activating his Soultraits and channeling energy into his Artifacts, otherwise, he would have collapsed on the spot.

That was not the case anymore.

He could endure the energy influx and give his War Rune the time it needed to absorb everything for refinement.

Michael was not sure if the energy would be enough to break through the barrier separating him from the 1st Tier, but it wouldn't be a problem even if he couldn't reach the 1st Tier after killing two Tier-2 Monsters. He had more than enough time left to spare and there was no need to hurry.

Thus, Michael and his people returned to the territory now that their hunt had ended. It had been a great success, which Michael celebrated by giving the cooks several hundred kilograms of Black Bear Meat to serve everyone.

The nutrition in the meat of a Tier-2 monster was several times higher than the nutrition in a Tier-1 monster meat. It would make his subjects feel full and let them enjoy a lavish feast for quite a while, giving them something tender and juicy to savor.

They would probably think about the Tier-2 meat for a long time, which was something Michael enjoyed watching.

He combined 1250 Summoning Scroll Fragments into 50 Summoning Scrolls and put them together with the 26 Summoning Scrolls before he broke them to expand the population of his territory by 76 new subjects.

Other than two Warriors and another Archer, Michael summoned two 1-Star Carpenters, a second 1-Star Architect Apprentice, and a second Alchemist Apprentice.

The gains were pretty good, and it improved Michael's mood even further.

He ate several kilograms of Black Bear Meat while savoring every single bite of it.

His gluttonous stomach was in euphoria for a long time, and he felt extremely pleased with himself.

When it was late at night, everyone went to sleep. It was dark outside, and no more work could be completed in low light. However, everybody looked forward to each new day and was full of energy, ready and well-rested for the tasks that had to be completed in the next few days.

Meanwhile, Michael resumed his practice of the Berserker Physique.

After eating several kilograms of Black Bear meat, Michael's body was not only overflowing with energy but also with nutrition.

That being said, Michael could practice the Berserker Physique's first level with much higher intensity than the days before.

He practiced it for half an hour like usual, but the energy and nutrition he used up tonight had been several times his normal consumption.

His muscles screamed for rest due to all the soreness, which Michael had to ignore in order to start the second process of his daily workout; the practice of the Sun Soldier's Breathing technique.

Michael wanted to improve his physique and change his breathing fundamentally using the second version of the Sun Soldier's Breathing technique.

Neither was easy, but it felt like the nutrition provided by the meat of Tier-2 monsters – and their energy influx – allowed him to take a shortcut.

This excited Michael.

It made him wonder if it was possible to accelerate his progress even further.

The sensation of becoming stronger and altering his body made him feel something he hadn't felt for a long time.

It was addictive and made him crave more.

Chapter 86 Physique

The sensation of his muscles growing and enlarging along with the other changes in his body was truly mysterious.

Combining the use of the Berserker Physique's harsh practice and high consumption of both nutrition and energy with the freshness of the Sun Soldier's Breathing technique was miraculous.

The discomfort and the intense ache in his muscles after being subjected to extreme wear and tear in the workout were washed away the moment the breathing technique allowed him to enter a state of calm. The energy lingering in the air around him flooded his body. A single breath was all it took to open his pores and allow the energy in the room to enter his body from all directions.

His body reacted drastically to the energy at first, rejecting it for a few seconds, until it realized that the energy was stimulating the recuperation of his body.

In the next few minutes, he recuperated much faster with more energy inside him. The energy influx was still spreading through every cell in his body, but the fresh energy around him was more invigorating.

His War Rune couldn't absorb the fresh energy in the atmosphere of the Origin Expanse because he was not practicing a special technique that allowed such a phenomenon, but that was no problem.

After all, his body required the fresh and vibrant energy of the surroundings to recuperate faster and stimulate his body. That way, he could change the way he breathed fundamentally much faster!

Michael was not sure how much time had passed but he felt refreshed once he stopped practicing the Sun Soldier's Breathing technique.

'Did I sleep?' He wondered when he noticed that he was not tired at all. It was almost as if he had been in a deep sleep while sitting cross-legged for eight hours, or more.

Usually, he felt a little bit tired after he woke up, and it would take an hour or two until his body and mind were fully awake, but that was not the case right now.

He opened his eyes after practicing the Sun Soldier's Breathing technique and he felt refreshed and was wide awake immediately.

His mind was clear, and he didn't feel sore when he got up from the ground either.

"...amazing..."

Michael threw a few punches in the air, and went back to the ground to do a few push-ups before he got back up again. His expression was one of utter disbelief.

'Did the changes in my body already occur? I feel much stronger than expected, and my breathing feels more regulated and even.'

He had a hard time explaining how he felt right now. It was weird and something one had to experience in order to understand properly.

Michael threw a glance at the back of his hand to look at the refinement degree of his War Rune. Afterward, he sensed the remaining energy influx inside his body.

A third of the energy influx had been used up in a day. That was more than he anticipated his War Rune to absorb in half a day.

It was morning already, and his subjects were already bustling like usual, getting ready for the day's work.

Michael had a lot to do, whether it was to study the materials he received for the aptitude assessment or commanding his subjects to distribute more tasks. There was also the GPS treasure map.

However, instead of beginning to work, Michael decided to test himself again. He started with a few sets of push-ups, sit-ups, and other exercises in his room.

Once he was done with that, he left the room and went for a jog. Michael tested his acceleration, his top speed, and how long he could run at top speed without feeling tired out.

The results of his tests wouldn't be as accurate as they would be during the aptitude assessment, but that was not Michael's concern right now.

He was more intrigued about the changes in his body and how much he had improved.

His Tier-0 War Rune was not yet refined to the Peak stage, but his physique felt much stronger than the day before. He was close to the Peak stage, but it was not as if his body would have improved that much from the strengthening his War Rune provided overnight.

He had learned in school that the War Rune was a generator of power that had to be upgraded with the influx of energy. Due to the upgrades, the resultant power generated from the War Rune would constantly increase.

Such a comparison was simple, and it made sense. After all, the power circulating through the human body increased the further the War Rune was refined.

However, there was one point Michael hadn't been taught. It was something he realized only now.

No matter how much power the generator generated, the generator would be useless if it was put in a frail machine that broke the moment the generator unleashed all energy or a machine that was rusty. The generator wouldn't be able to use its power in the most efficient way and circulate it efficiently.

'Doesn't that mean, every Lord and Adventurer should be practicing body refinement techniques to keep their body up to date with their War Rune's refinement?'

Was that common sense, or did the school not teach him that intentionally? Michael was not too sure about that anymore.

However, he could tell that it was necessary to keep refining his body if he wanted to use the full potential of his War Rune's high refinement.

It would be a waste of time and effort to rashly advance his War Rune to the 1st Tier if his body was not able to handle the power it unleashed.

Fortunately, he had still some time left to find out more about the importance of body refinement, and the correlation between the War Rune's enhancements and the strengthening of the body through workouts.

As such, four days passed in the blink of an eye.

Michael continued to practice the combo of the Berserker Physique with the Sun Soldier's Breathing technique. And by consuming a large amount of Black Bear Meat to keep up with the high utilization of energy, Michael could vividly feel and see the changes that occurred in his body.

It was shocking.

After three days of hard work, he thought that he reached a threshold. Michael was certain that the improvements in his physique would slow down after the third day of his tests, and that he would have much more difficulty determining the extent of growth in his strength. However, he was proven wrong the next day.

On the fourth day, his War Rune consumed the remaining energy influx in his body. The Tierless War Rune's refinement degree reached the Peak stage.

The moment his War Rune reached the Peak of Tier-0, his body and mind were strengthened. Practicing the Berserker Physique technique afterward allowed him to sense drastic changes inside his body once again.

Did that mean he refined his body once again after his War Rune had been 'upgraded' to the Peak of Tier-0, or was it just the unrefined enhancement the War Rune provided that was refined through the Berserker Physique technique?

Michael was not too sure about that anymore...

Chapter 87 Following The Map

It had been five days since they defeated the Black Bear and the huge Frenzy Deer.

Michael was at the Peak of Tier-0, and he felt much stronger than ever before.

By working out every day, using the energy influx in his body and the nutrition provided by the meat of Tier-2 monsters, Michael could improve his physical strength. This allowed him to utilize the War Rune's provided power more efficiently.

It was his 25th day inside the Origin Expanse, and Michael had finally found an efficient routine to complete his daily tasks as a Lord and make sure that his subjects were happy and working hard.

Every morning, Michael used Extraction on the monster corpses hunted by Tiara and her combat unit the day before. He dissected the carcasses near-perfectly and used the special drops to summon more subjects.

Soon the warehouse was filled with dissected carcasses and duplicated blueprints. Hence, Michael squeezed them inside his War Rune's spatial space. He left the Origin Expanse to hail a shuttle that would take him to the Central Trading Hall where the House of Witchery was located.

Michael sold the remaining parts of the near-perfectly dissected Tier-2 monster corpses in the House of Witchery, only leaving their meat for himself and his subjects. Simultaneously, Michael sold more than 100 Tier-1 Monster Cores, Antlers, and other body parts of the Frenzy Deer Horde.

Over the course of two days, Michael left the Origin twice because his spatial space was too cramped to squeeze all goods in one War Rune. That made him wonder how other Lords sold or stored their goods after they created multiple sources of income such as mining ores, gardening, and horticulture. The spatial space would expand significantly after the War Rune advanced a Tier, but there were limits, nonetheless.

Either way, Michael earned more than one million dollars from his two trips to the House of Witchery. The Tier-2 monsters were very valuable, but the price for Tier-1 carcasses and duplicated blueprints couldn't be taken lightly either. They were still worth a lot.

Michael was happy with his income, but it was more of a necessity than a nice side hustle. After all, he paid a million dollars to equip himself with all kinds of goods for the treasure-hunting adventure.

Since his adventurer spirit had been awoken, and his mind was going wild while thinking about adventures, Michael did not hold himself back while spending on the necessary equipment. He was prepared for everything!

However, before he rushed into anything, Michael walked over to the librarians and various volunteers with a stash of paper, ink, and pens. He handed the librarians the Berserker Physique technique and

requested them to duplicate the technique. He instructed them to share it with everyone who wanted to use it to train their physique.

Even if Starless Sumons wanted to use these techniques, he was perfectly fine with it. The technique he had purchased allowed Starless Summons to turn into Warriors and attain enough power to defend themselves. Maybe the Will of the Origin Expanse wouldn't consider them Warriors according to their star rating, but their physique can turn into that of a warrior.

With enough hard work, they can learn how to wield weapons and become true warriors...just not in the star rating without attaining enlightenment.

But did it really matter whether the Will considered you worthy enough to be promoted? Michael didn't care.

He would rather prefer to have Starless self-proclaimed Warriors to protect his territory after training them harshly for months than Starless Summons, who would allow enemies to bulldoze them if they were to invade the territory.

With such thoughts flashing through his mind, Michael chose to support the Starless Summons, who were willing to train hard after they completed their daily tasks. He rewarded them and hoped that they would become stronger in no time.

Simultaneously, their ambition further fueled his desire to find out more about the place the GPS treasure map led to.

He waited for Blaire, Tiara, and Tiara's combat unit to gather before they set off together.

It was not difficult to follow the arrow on the map. It leads them straightaway to their destination.

Thanks to Blaire, they avoided some hotspots for monster packs to gather. This saved them lots of time, and they arrived at the location pinpointed by the treasure map only two hours later.

However, when they reached their destination, Michael was stupefied.

"The lizard cave...for real now?!"

Michael knew that the lizard cave was a treasure trove, but he didn't expect the treasure map to point at it. The arrow pointed at the entrance of the lizard cave as he circled around it multiple times. However, after they stepped inside the cavern entrance, the treasure map began to glow and change.

Instead of showing the detailed topography of the Untamed Jungle's outer area, it showed various underground tunnels in great detail. Meanwhile, the back of the map shone brightly, illuminating the ground.

He looked intently at the map and realized that the cavern system of the lizard cave was much grander than he could have anticipated. That was great, but it also meant that danger could appear from every corner.

"Before we proceed, make three copies of the map," Michael ordered Blaire, who had been standing to his left, observing the map after it had transformed.

She nodded her head, retrieved a large parchment, and began to redraw the map. She spent half an hour copying the map, so the details of the first copy were not that great. However, that was not important since Michael merely wanted to make sure that everyone studied the map for a while as she drew it.

This was to make sure that everyone could find a way out of the cavern system if they were to lose the rest of the group and get lost.

'If the lizard cave has a treasure created by the Will and those valuable natural resources, I shouldn't postpone conquering the lizard cave any further!'

Michael and the others could feel the eeriness oozing out of the depths of the lizard cave, but everyone understood that the natural resources of the lizard cave had to be harvested eventually. Otherwise, their territory's progress would slow down – if not stagnate – in the near future.

They were already lacking various resources that could be provided by the lizard cave, but Michael always postponed the conquest of the lizard cave, saying that it was too dangerous.

However, they had to take that risk now that things had changed. Finding and collecting a treasure created by the Will of the Origin Expanse could change the development path of the Origin Expanse altogether. The subjects could tell this instinctively when Michael showed them the treasure map, and they were all ready to support their Lord's conquest to the fullest – even if their death was the outcome.

Michael saw the trust and determination in his subjects' eyes, and he smiled faintly.

"Study the map for an hour," He instructed. Then, he turned to Blaire, who had been studying the map for almost two hours now, "Move into the deeper parts of the cavern system without attracting the attention of the monsters there. If you cannot proceed without getting found out return to me immediately. I don't want you to sacrifice yourself needlessly."

Michael handed her the treasure map after giving his order and bent down to touch the ground.

His hands began to glow golden as he exerted Extraction to extract some Gloa Crystals and the frail white stones, which had properties similar to magnesite. Michael was not sure what it was called, but that was not important since he knew what he was supposed to do now that he was already inside the lizard cave.

While the others studied the map, and Blaire ventured deeper into the cavern system, Michael retrieved a few empty glass vials from his War Rune.

A few more ingredients appeared on the ground in front of him as Michael sat down.

"Let's see if I observed him enough to replicate the flashbangs..."

Chapter 88 Tiara's Prowess

Blaire returned from the depths of the lizard cave half an hour later.

By then, Michael had finished creating a few flashbangs. They were not as potent as the ones created by the Alchemist Apprentice, but Michael didn't have any alchemy tools at hand, and it was his first time creating flashbangs using the materials of the Origin Expanse. Thus, he was quite satisfied with the result.

At least, they worked!

"The deeper you venture the more lizards we'll encounter. They're almost everywhere," Blaire began narrating her report.

"The number of lizards clustering together is still negligible but there are many small groups, and we won't be able to avoid them given our small group. Nobody can walk around as stealthily as I can. If we want to venture deeper and follow the arrow on the treasure map we'll have to fight our way through the lizards."

Michael listened intently, grimly nodding his head.

"Are all Lizards at the 2nd Tier?" He asked.

"No. The Tier-2 Lizards are rare and they seemed to be loners. The groups of lizards all consist of Tier-1 monsters, and their numbers are small as well," Blaire responded.

Michael got up from the ground when he heard that. He turned to his people, who were already watching him, waiting patiently for his command to set off and venture deeper into the lizard cave.

Michael smiled faintly when he saw that before he gestured to his people to get up.

"It's time for a small clean-up!"

He retrieved a bunch of objects from his War Rune and handed them out one after another.

First, Michael handed everyone three different types of potions. Then, he gave the Archers and Aero Crossbowmen explosive arrows and bolts. Lastly, he followed up by distributing highly potent paralysis venom.

At the same time, Blaire was given a few sets of traps, which she could install all around the cave swiftly.

As the Tracker of the group, she was the only one who could install the traps. That was also one of the many reasons why he brought her along with him today; to install traps wherever necessary.

Most items he handed out today were recently bought. They were quite expensive, especially the traps, the explosive arrows and bolts, and the highly potent paralysis venom. Each of them possessed the power to inflict injuries to Tier-2 Monsters or restrict them at the very least.

Thus, Michael bought them to make sure that he wouldn't be completely defenseless if he encountered an unscathed Tier-2 Monster. He wouldn't always be lucky enough to find injured Tier-2 monsters or be able to trick them into fighting each other and wait until both are exhausted to deliver the final blow.

Feeling confident of himself and his team, yet vigilant of the surroundings, Michael and his team ventured deeper into the lizard cave.

They walked past the cavity where he found the lizard mother's eggs a few minutes later, and they proceeded to walk ahead.

In no time, they crossed a big distance and the cavern entrance behind them couldn't be seen anymore. Simultaneously, it felt like the world around them changed completely.

The bright light shining through the cavern entrance was no more. It was replaced by the dim light of the Gloa Crystals, which protruded from the ground, the walls, and the ceiling.

As they proceeded to venture deeper into the lizard cavern, they encountered the first lizard group. There were four lizards the size of a big dog.

Michael retrieved the Hardwood Bow and the Return Arrow from his War Rune. He moved smoothly, nocked the arrow on the bowstring, and pulled back. A moment later, he released the arrow together with the others.

By now, Michael had four Archers in his army. Working together with the two Aero Crossbowmen and the Water Elemental Mage, his archers released their arrows and a total of eight projectiles whizzed through the air. Six projectiles hit the same target, breaking the lizard's scales before piercing the soft flesh beneath, while the remaining two projectiles pierced one target each.

Michael's Return Arrow pierced the brain of one lizard, while the water bullets of the Water Elemental Mage did the same.

Simultaneously, Tiara appeared in front of the remaining lizards. Her body arched and her hand holding the silver spear lunged forward.

The blade of the silver spear pierced through one of the lizards just before Tiara changed her trajectory suddenly. She turned her body instantly and slammed the dull backside of the silver spear through the other lizard near her, pushing it deeper into its flesh.

Something about Tiara's movements had changed since she obtained the Artifacts from Michael. He didn't think too much about it at first, but his curiosity increased the more he watched her fight.

Tiara's movements were weird, especially the way in which she could instantly turn and flip around. It was unnatural and extremely lethal for her opponents. Nobody expected her to be able to evade certain attacks, but Tiara easily turned and twisted herself with a burst of energy that left her opponents confused.

This was most apparent when they encountered a lone lizard that was as strong as the lizard mother, which annihilated the Gogi Lord and his subjects.

Michael tensed up when he saw the Lowest Tier-2 lizard, but he regained his calm the next instant. He had made more than enough preparations to kill such a monster, and with Tiara by his side, he did not have to worry.

She had advanced to the Mid Tier-1 and her combat prowess was close to Peak Tier-1 Monsters thanks to her skills, and the silver spear which could easily penetrate the hide of Tier-2 monsters as long as enough force is applied.

However, Michael was taken aback when he saw Tiara tackle the Tier-2 Lizard single-handedly. He had been certain that their whole team would have to rely on the high-potency paralysis venom to wear down Tier-2 monsters. But that was not the case.

Tiara merely required a single thrust to break through the highly durable lizard scales and cause a massacre in the lizard cave.

The silver spear dug deep into the Tier-2 Lizard's flesh before an explosion of power occurred. Energy surged out of the silver spear explosively, and it destroyed everything around it.

Even though Michael had exerted the Eagle Eyes Soultriai, he was stupefied. His eyes could follow Tiara's movements, but they didn't really make sense.

He had a hard time processing what Tiara had done. The battle was already over, yet Michael and the others stared blankly at the Battle Maid from the Silverfang Tigerfolk.

'Was that her Soultrait, or a martial art that uses her racial traits?' Michael wondered, his expression filled with doubt and confusion.

He could tell that Tiara's strength increased drastically thanks to the Artifacts' external enhancements, and it felt like the enhancement allowed her to fulfill the conditions to use special movements, which she used with great familiarity.

'Did she lose her power before becoming my personal maid? How is she suddenly so agile and nimble?'

Michael was not too sure about his thought, but it was definitely weird. Tiara's combat experience and movements had improved significantly compared to the way she fought before.

However, that was a good thing for Michael and his territory.

No matter what the reason may be, and how much confusion it caused, it was great that Tiara grew stronger!

Following the next few hours, Michael and his team were able to remove all obstructions in their way.

They ventured deeper into the lizard cave and followed the arrow on the treasure map as the cavern tunnel split up into several smaller tunnels.

The tunnels became increasingly narrow, but with Michael and Tiara in the front, nobody had to worry about anything.

After hours of hard work, a bright light illuminated the end of the cavern tunnel.

Michael and the others were tense and vigilant of the bright light. However, curiosity got the better of them and they continued moving forward.

Their hearts palpated and the thought of discovering the whereabouts of a heavenly treasure caused excitement to spread through every single cell in their body.

The group inched closer to the bright light.

It took a while for their eyes to adjust to the sudden intrusion of bright light, but when they saw the scenery that was unveiled in front of them, they were shocked to the core.

Even Michael was having problems controlling his expression and keeping a straight face. His eyes widened in shock and his jaw hit the ground.

A humongous underground hall now lay in front of their eyes.

However, it was not just an ordinary underground hall. No, it was far from ordinary.

"What the fuck...is that an illusion?! This cannot be real!"

Chapter 89 Miraculous Hall

A wild and untamed realm bursting with life and lush greenery appeared in front of Michael and his group.

Towering trees formed a dense canopy overhead, reaching toward the crystal ceiling, which illuminated the lively realm. The beams of light pierced through the thick foliage, casting uneven patches of warmth all over the underground hall.

Vibrant flowers of all forms and sizes were scattered across the ground, their colors ranging from velvet purples to fiery orange. Butterflies, Lizards, huge Frenzy Deers, and packs of Thorny Wolves entered their sight as the monsters walked around unbothered.

The air underground was thick and filled with the scent of exotic blossoms. It was like a sweet misty perfume lingering in the air around them.

'Oh my...'

Never would they have believed that the Untamed Jungle could be hiding an underground ecosystem pulsing with life and wonder beneath its surface. A seemingly ordinary cavern entrance with a complex tunnel system turned into a humongous underground ecosystem that took everybody by surprise.

Michael was stunned and he even forgot to breathe for a while. Upon realization, he gasped for air. He was embarrassed about that, at first, but he quickly realized that the others pretty much had the same reaction.

They too momentarily forgot to breathe at the miraculous sight of the underground ecosystem.

But who could hold them accountable for that? The entire ecosystem seemed to be too magical to exist in reality.

A soft, golden glow permeated the air, emanating from luminescent plants that dotted the land around them, giving it a mystic aura. The abundance of bioluminescent flora and fauna further added to the charm, casting ethereal streams of light that danced and shimmered like the gentle sparks of fireflies.

Verdant ferns and vibrantly blue moss grew everywhere, their hues contrasting the warm and earthy tones of the towering trees and the fertile soil.

There were even two crystal clear streams flowing through the various creeks in the underground ecosystem, their gentle trickling creating a soothing soundtrack. Clusters of small fishes darted through the water, their colorful scales shining like precious gemstones.

The air around them was filled with the melodies of birds, the splashing water, and the noises of the monsters living in the underground ecosystem. It felt like the underground ecosystem was a peaceful shelter for all life, abundant and all-encompassing.

Was that what paradise was supposed to look like?

Michael was not sure. How would he know what paradise looked like?

He only knew one thing for sure; he was at the right place.

His gaze moved deeper into the heart of the underground ecosystem, where he stumbled upon a half-covered temple that time had slowly claimed as its own.

The treasure map had led them to the heart of the underground ecosystem, and Michael instinctively knew that the temple was the final destination of the map. It was not even questionable, and he could not contain his excitement.

Moss and vines covered the ancient stone, reclaiming it with their emerald embrace. The temple's weathered facade told the tales of a forgotten civilization, its intricate carvings whispering stories of a bygone era.

Moss-covered statues, a few broken and weathered, towered around the temple, guarding it from outside invaders, as they looked down at the old – mostly covered – stone path leading to the temple's entrance at the top.

Michael's Eagle Eyes couldn't make out every little detail from his position, but his heart beat wildly at the sight of the temple. Somehow, he felt himself filled with a sense of reverence looking at the temple. It was almost as if the spirits of the jungle were still lingering within and around the temple's moss-covered stones, beckoning him.

The harmonious coexistence of nature and the ancient temple underground caused shivers to run down Michael's spine.

It seemed like he spent an eternity getting back to his senses, but when he regained his composure, he was still baffled.

'It looks like an Aztec temple, just much bigger, more impressive, and seemingly alive. The pressure I can feel from hundreds of meters away is already shocking...Just what is this temple?'

Oddly enough, the first thing that came to Michael's mind when he regained his senses was Fenrir's memories and the wicked Spear Art.

He didn't know how Fenrir must have procured the wicked Spear Art because the memories didn't show that, but if his memory wasn't failing him, Fenrir obtained the wicked Spear Arts and several unique treasures from ruins that seemed similar to this one.

It was not a jungle temple in an underground ecosystem, but it was also a place in the depths of the Origin Expanse.

Either way, if the jungle temple provided as exceptional treasures as Fenrir obtained, Michael would be over the moon.

He was getting excited, but he also understood one issue; not a single monster in the underground ecosystem was Tier-1.

The weakest presence came from the huge Frenzy Deer he saw a few minutes ago. It was as strong as the huge Frenzy Deer he killed after the Black Bear brought it to a near-death state at the surface.

If the Tier-2 Frenzy Deer was the weakest monster, how strong were the Thorny Wolves and the other monsters, which were spread out through the underground ecosystem?

"I will take a closer look at the temple and inspect it up close. You guys, stay behind," Michael ordered, "If a powerful monster that you cannot handle attacks, retreat and return to the surface. I will be fine."

While saying so, Michael retrieved a few items from his War Rune's spatial space.

He smeared the content of a glass vial all over his body, covering his scent and presence. Afterward, he swallowed the viscous liquid of another potion. The potion calmed the energy inside him as well as his heart and mind.

Afterward, he put a layer of mud on top of the potion he had smeared all over his body. The mud had been infused with certain enchantments to muffle the vibrations his steps created and to hide his presence even further.

Michael had no idea how that worked, but it did. It was not necessary to know the principle behind the potions and the mud to know that it was effective as he had paid a handsome amount to secure these items.

From one moment to the next, Michael's scent, presence, and energy seemed to disappear.

Combined with everything he used right now, Michael doubted that the monsters would be able to detect him. That was, as long as he wouldn't run around in the open like a maniac.

He could stealthily move around now without the need to worry whether the monsters in the underground ecosystem were peaceful, or if they would attack him for invading their territory.

Tiara and the others didn't like that Michael left them, but he had given them an order. They wouldn't go against his word and guarded the entrance to the underground ecosystem vigilantly.

Everyone was still in awe of the discovery they made, however, it was more important to stay alert and not be distracted in an unknown territory.

As miraculous as the underground ecosystem might be, it could be even more dangerous than the surface. In fact, it was highly likely that the underground ecosystem was far more dangerous than the outer area of the Untamed Jungle. The weakest monster here was Tier-2, after all!

Michael paved his way slowly but steadily through the densely grown underground jungle. The temple was only a few hundred meters away, but Michael spent close to half an hour covering the distance.

He hadn't been attacked even once, and he was certain that no monster had detected him yet.

That allowed him to focus his entire attention on the ginormous temple of a forgotten era that towered in front of him, waiting to be raided.

Chapter 90 Tongue Of The Old

Michael looked up at the old staircase that was built from ancient stones and his heart skipped a beat.

His curiosity was piqued when he saw the arched entrance of the temple. The entrance was more than twenty meters high up in the air above him, and only dozens of steps separated him from entering the temple.

Intrigued by the wonders of the old temple, Michael took the first step on the staircase.

The moment he stepped on the ancient stone, Michael felt as if the surrounding environment changed drastically. The pressure exuded by the temple intensified suddenly and strange information flooded his mind.

Instinctively, Michael stumbled backward. The temple's imposing pressure returned to normal, and the strange information seemed to be lifted from his mind.

'What was that?'

He looked down at himself to see if he sustained any injuries before he calmed his raging heart as well as suppressed the various emotions bubbling inside him as he returned to the first step of the staircase.

The intense pressure returned, and so did the strange information that flooded his mind earlier. It was as if the gravitational force weighing down on him had increased several times. The situation was harsh, but Michael could barely endure the intense pressure and keep himself upright.

He was about to take the second step to see if the pressure weighing down on him would increase further when the strange information settled down in his mind.

'What language is that? This doesn't seem like the Origin Tongue?' Michael thought at first.

'There are only a few lines. It should be a warning or a question...or it is a task I have to fulfill to disperse the pressure weighing down on me...?'

Michael had heard and studied quite a bit about old temples, and other treasure troves such as the burial grounds of royal families, forgotten cities, ancient ruins, and so on.

Most had challenges to pass successfully to obtain permission to enter these unique places.

Unfortunately, it was impossible for Michael to decipher what he was supposed to do.

That annoyed him a little bit, even more so because Fenrir's Memories made his senses tingle wildly.

There was something special about the old temple, but Michael couldn't find out more about the temple because of the language barrier.

It was also way too dangerous to enter the old temple if he couldn't decipher the unknown language. The strange information in his head could be anything – even clues. There might be quizzes to solve

inside the temple or clues that would help him to survive. If he was not able to understand the quizzes, or the clues, the old temple would be a hundredfold more difficult to conquer.

'Looks like I found a treasure, which I cannot have just yet,' Michael thought, feeling a little disappointed.

He figured that the old temple was a treasure trove, but also that it was deadly dangerous in multiple ways. First of all, wherever there was danger, golden opportunities would almost always present themselves. Only by overcoming the danger and taking risks would one be able to stake a claim on golden opportunities.

However, that was not the most important thing right now. The moment someone finds out about the old temple and the news spreads, the entire Untamed Jungle would be turned upside down. Meanwhile, his little territory would be bulldozed and razed to the ground without anyone bothering to throw a second glance at him.

'Keeping the old temple a secret wouldn't be a problem for now. Nobody except me found out about it, either way.' Michael tried to calm himself.

However, his train of thought continued to assume the worst, dragging his good mood down, 'But what if someone finds out about the old temple? Should I just detonate the tunnel leading to the underground ecosystem before anything goes wrong? Sealing this place should be the best...but what to do after that?'

Michael knew that the Elves and Xiltra were not far away from his current position. He was also fully aware that it was miraculous and his luck of how nobody except the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team had found him and his territory. Even they had found out about his territory only because of their coincidental encounter at the Gogi territory.

'What if the Elves told their guild about me? That might cause trouble sooner or later!'

Various 'what if' questions flashed through his mind at this point. He slapped his cheeks to clear his head and stepped back from the old temple. Even if the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team told anyone about him, there was nothing he could change.

His worries about the territory's safety intensified now that he had a ticking time bomb only a few kilometers away from his territory. It was also a treasure trove, but Michael couldn't enter and raid it just like that. Thus, he felt that it was more suitable to consider the old temple a ticking time bomb and a magnet for trouble.

'I should change my plans...' Michael told himself, with firm determination gleaming in his eyes.

He returned to his people in the next half an hour, told them a few things about the old temple, and returned to his territory.

Michael knew that it was time to experiment a little bit. He had many questions about his Soultrait's limits and now was the perfect moment to find out what they were!

He dissected the lizard corpses when they had returned to the territory and stored them inside his War Rune's spatial space. Afterward, he conjured the Runic Gate to return home.

Like always, Michael messaged his brother after he emerged back home.

He hailed a shuttle, took a shower, and researched a few bits of information on his way to the Central Trading Hall.

The staff of the House of Witchery was familiar with Michael so he was led to the appraisal room immediately after he entered the shop.

"What do you have to sell today?" The clerk asked with a bright smile on his lips.

Michael smiled seeing the hospitality. It felt great to be treated politely and with respect. It made him feel as if his time in school was just a bad dream.

"Two Tier-2 Lizard corpses and a few Lizard corpses ranging from Low to Peak Tier-1," Michael responded with a bright smile.

The clerk had been the one to complete the formalities when Michael sold the corpse of the Lizard mother and the corpses of the Black Bear and the huge Frenzy Deer. Thus, he could maintain his professional smile as he conversed with Michael.

"That's great. I hope you didn't lose many Soldiers when fighting with those mighty monsters!" The clerk said sincerely before he cleared his throat.

"If you're in a hurry, I can quickly prepare some goods for you. That way, my colleagues can complete the paperwork while we finish our business in the appraisal room."

Michael thought about it for a moment and nodded his head. The Clerk's suggestion sounded reasonable.

"I want to purchase the corpse of an extra-terrestrial Adventurer, an untouched monster corpse, and a recently killed monster, Tierless, and Tier-1 respectively. It would like to use the appraisal room with the corpses for ten minutes to conduct a little experiment if that's possible."