

S. Lord 886

Chapter 886 Path Fortress

The Minor Typhoon Rocs paid attention to the surroundings and scouted the area while the rest retreated to Paradise Valley. They no longer needed to waste time in the Sacred Desert with the Blaze household. At least, not until the Blaze Patriarch took the bait.

It was a waiting game, something Michael wasn't really good at, but he was fortunate enough to have many high-priority tasks waiting for him.

First, Michael collected his subjects from the conquered settlements. He told the residents to make a decision and that they would receive certain benefits if they traveled to Paradise Valley with them right now. As for the rest, they could stay in the conquered settlements for a few more days.

"I won't rush anyone to make a decision, but keep in mind one thing: I will return. Your opinion of me might not be great, but I doubt you loved your Lords. They mistreated you, didn't give you enough food and water, and they forced you to live crammed like rats. Do you think the other Lords of the Blaze family will treat you better? They don't give a shit about you. All they wanted from their subjects was your soul power. That's why they summoned so many of you without the resources to treat you properly."

Michael could have said a lot more, but he couldn't be bothered. The Summons were intelligent lifeforms. They could weigh the pros and cons and make a decision on their own accord. They weren't forced into submission by anyone.

Many chose to follow Michael and his people, but others decided to stay. They needed more time to decide and were still uncertain who would win the war. Michael was clearly a higher lifeform with great strength, but they had also witnessed the power of the Blaze Patriarch once or twice—at least some of them. Unsure who would win the war, they instead waited until it was certain who emerged victorious. Their calculative mindset was unpleasant in the eyes of many combat Summons, especially the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs, who hated the human Summons for considering betraying one another so quickly. Greed, the drive to survive, and selfishness weren't precisely unknown traits to humans. However, looking at the Blaze's Summons, who have been mistreated and nearly starved to death, reacting in the same way filled the Berserker and Warlock Centaurs with disgust.

But Michael didn't mind. He would accept them if they decided to follow him after the Blaze household ceased to exist, but they wouldn't receive any benefits. If they wanted to acquire a high standing in Michael's territory, they would have to work much harder than those who followed him immediately.

Returning to the Path Fortress in Paradise Valley took a while, but they didn't encounter any trouble. Well, that wasn't entirely true. The Minor Typhoon Rocs found a few scouts roaming through the Sacred Desert. They appeared from all directions and observed Michael and his people returning to Paradise Valley through a wide path in the Blazing Sand Mountain Range.

Michael was okay with that. Specifically, he was happy the Blaze household's scouts saw them. It made many things much more accessible.

Once in the Path Fortress, Michael was busy establishing Links of Loyalty with the Summons who had come with them. Not even one-quarter of the surviving Summons chose to join them, but there were still close to 250,000 Summons whose Links of Loyalty had to be created. It was highly advantageous that Michael didn't have to do much to establish a Link of Loyalty with Summons. He had to channel a trace of energy into the Summons to bind them to him. The Summons could resist the Link of Loyalty, but those who tried were thrown out of Paradise Valley without mercy. Michael had already given the Summons enough chances to make a decision. He wasn't willing to show any more mercy to those who tried to con him.

Even though establishing Links of Loyalty with the Summons was easy, it took several hours to finish his business. Michael multi-tasking by checking the links of loyalty of others and retrieving the Awakened and Summon corpses to extract them. The sight was grotesque to some, but Michael told them not to mind the bodies.

The Untamed Awakened stored the corpses once Michael was done looting them. They stuffed their War Rune storages and brought the bodies to the Untamed Jungle, where they would be used as a tribute. The Untamed Jungle would devour the corpses and transform them into energy to accelerate the growth of the vicinity's plant life. That was exactly what Michael and his territory needed.

Once all Summons had been linked, Tiara, Lilica, and others distributed the Summons across the ten city-states in Paradise Valley. Every settlement in Paradise Valley was massive, with thousands of empty buildings. Even if all of them were to enter one settlement together, they wouldn't be able to fill the settlement to the brim.

Michael didn't pay much attention to the distribution and other work. He granted every new Summon a few Jungle Points while the others paid attention to ensure everyone had enough food, water, and a place to sleep for a month. Once the month was over, they could relocate according to their contribution to the territory's development. Those who didn't contribute were still given food, water, and a place to sleep, but the quality of their lives wasn't special. The food and water was bland and simple, and the sleeping place wasn't comfortable.

Michael didn't like idle Summons but had to give them enough to survive. Their Soul Power was important, and he didn't want to imagine what would happen to his subjects once they heard he started throwing out useless subjects. His hard-working subjects would start fearing him. Their work might not deteriorate in quality or quantity, but the Links of Loyalty with everyone would suffer when his subjects started fearing him. Michael wasn't going to let that happen.

Now that a few years passed since Michael became a Lord in the Origin Expanse, he is doing much better. But, of course, Michael wasn't a perfect Lord even now. It wasn't possible to become a perfect Lord. However, it was possible to give his utmost and improve every day. Michael tried to treat his subjects justly and to create enough opportunities for them to grow and become valuable assets to the territory. It was only apparent, but Michael did that to help his subjects. There were also selfish intentions behind his aid of knowledge and resources. Nonetheless, he could be like other Lords and ignore most Starless subjects, focus only a bit on the 1-Star Summons, and pay full attention to 2-Star Summons and those ranked even higher. The gap between weak and strong would widen, and the displeasure of the low-ranking Summons would increase. Michael didn't like that.

Still, it was nearly impossible to transform a Starless Summon into a 4-Star Summon. If they worked incredibly hard and had some affinity toward certain occupations, they might be able to

receive several promotions and reach 3-Star. However, that was already incredibly rare. The best examples were the Hunter Academy and the Sacred Knight Temple.

Among half a million Starless Summons who'd participated in the training of the Sacred Knight Temple, not even 100,000 managed to become 1-Star Blessed Squires. Not even 10,000 advanced to Holy Knights, and only a dozen advanced to become Sacred Knights. Siegfried Dragoon was overjoyed with the probability. He was certain that Michael's treatment, the surrounding environment, and his subjects' happiness were why so many Sacred Knights were born among his Starless Summons.

He thought that there were far more Sacred Knights than there should be. According to his experience, only 1 in 100,000 would make it to a Sacred Knight. Under normal circumstances, the norm was even lower. Yet, the exact opposite was the case for Michael's subjects. 2 in 100,000 Starless Summons managed to break their natural limit repeatedly, advancing to 3-Star Sacred Knights. That was a pleasant surprise, though part was owed to Legion and Master Tigris' training.

It was also one of the few reasons Michael decided to continue investing heavily in his subjects. After all, the Sacred Knight Temple's situation was only one of many, but the results were the same everywhere.

Michael was doing the right thing granting opportunities to everyone. After all, even Starless Summons desired to grow stronger, to break out of their cocoon and change their fate.

Michael merely gave them a slight push in the right direction. The Starless Summons did the rest. They worked tirelessly with unbending determination and surpassed their limit.