

Supreme Lord 161

Chapter 161 Nonsense

The moment Michael joined the fight, the tide of the battle changed drastically. It turned out much worse for the invaders.

The six Adventurer teams were occupied with facing his soldiers when Michael appeared next to a Late Tier-1 Zentors Adventurer.

His Artifacts were shrouded in a white hue, and his eyes shone in a golden luster.

Eagle Eyes and Lesser Enhancement were unleashed and on full display for everyone to see.

Certain that Michael's Soultrait was related to his eyes, or the white hue engulfing his Artifacts, the Zentors unleashed his own Soultrait.

His body expanded and he was about to smash his heavy fists down on Michael's tiny body when his expression turned blank all of a sudden.

The corner of Michael's lip tilted upward in a smirk. He had caught the Zentors off-guard!

Not expecting a mental attack at this point, the Zentors was hit with a fully empowered Spirit Whip. The Zentors lost focus and his Soultrait was deactivated immediately.

Michael used the Zentors' struggle and shock to pounce upon him and thrust forward with Seron Voulge.

Normally, his opponent would have regained his composure by now, but the backlash of having his Soultrait forcefully deactivated dealt additional damage on his mind.

The Zentors regained his senses when it was already too late. His head felt extremely light, blood spurted through the surroundings, and his vision tunneled all of a sudden.

The last thing the Zentors could remember was hearing a thud. After that there was nothing. He had been devoured by eternal darkness. Death was the only thing that remained.

Michael moved on after defeating his first opponent in close combat. He didn't waste any time and kept Eagle Eyes, Lesser Enhancement, and Spirit Whip activated.

After upgrading Spirit Whip to a 3-Star Soultrait, it turned even more terrifying than it had been.

The Spirit Whip's range expanded quite a bit, and the lethality increased exponentially. But the same could be said about the difficulty of maintaining and controlling the Spirit Whip.

Before, Michael could use five Spirit Whips simultaneously. However, right now, a single Spirit Whip was all Michael could use while fighting and using his other Soultraits.

But that was all he needed. A single Spirit Whip was strong enough to affect a Tier-1 Adventurer. If they were hit with the Spirit Whip off-guard, their defense would crumble, and it would become increasingly difficult to regain their former dynamic and upper hand in the fight.

That was something Michael made use of. On his way to the Tier-2 Adventurers, his Spirit Whip lashed out at every one of the remaining Adventures. They were unprepared and lost their focus for a moment after the impact.

That was enough to deactivate their Soultraits and fire affinity for a moment. The moment of disturbance was not enough for Michael to kill all of them, but his Warriors had already been prepared to attack when Michael arrived and caught the opponents off guard.

They used the golden opportunity and struck their opponents from all directions.

As the massacre continued, the Forest Elves witnessed everything, and they realized what total annihilation truly meant.

They might have injured the most powerful members of the six Adventurer teams before the poison rendered them unable to continue fighting, but the Forest Elves knew that the battlefield in front of them was far from simple.

Their opponents were obliterated, rendered unable to run through the Untamed Jungle with fast strides, and incapable of properly fighting against the people who fought like they had been trained to move through the Untamed Jungle for years.

"They're just...a bunch of Tier-1 Summons...so why..." One of the Forest Elves began to speak, only to stop mid-way.

He was baffled at the sight of Michael and Tiara working together to not just fight but kill a Tier-2 Adventurer.

Of course, the two didn't fight alone. But even then, the combat prowess and synergy displayed by Michael and Tiara was terrific – just like their Soultraits.

Lilica had difficulties forcing a smile on her face. She had already sized up the surrounding area and the battlefield and knew that there was a canopy bridge spread across the dense thicket above them.

The canopy bridges were well-connected and well-hidden. Lilica wouldn't have found the canopy bridges if not for the barrages of arrows and spears. She noticed that the projectiles shot downward after reaching a certain height, which was why she looked up, just to find hidden canopy bridges that had close to a hundred Archers, two Elemental Mages, and most other long-range combat units hidden behind the lush greenery. They were close enough to participate in the battle, but far enough to not bother the close combat units and stay safe.

Everything was well-designed, perfect for a situation like today.

It was quite shocking.

Nonetheless, Lilica looked at her comrade with a faint smile. She asked in a voice loud enough that summarized what everyone else had been thinking, "Do you think they could defeat us?"

The attention of the four Forest Elves was pulled to their leader.

"It's pretty simple, actually," Lilica said. She frowned deeply and couldn't smile anymore at the sight unfolding right in front of them.

"We wouldn't stand a chance against them. Maybe, not even when we're at our peak."

She revealed the bitter truth in an emotionless tone, almost like it was a bad joke. However, they knew that Lilica wouldn't joke about something like that.

They knew her well enough to understand what she was feeling right now.

After a while, Lilica's expression turned sour. It was hard to hide the bitter feeling in her heart, tinged with just a little jealousy.

In fact, everyone felt like her. They all lost their territory due to various reasons. However, the biggest reason was their inability to face their enemies.

Overpowered, they could only surrender as a Lord and become part of the Zentika Empire or give up their rights as Lords and become Adventurers. That way, they could retain some freedom.

However, it was incomparable to the feeling of freedom and power one had as a Lord and the confidence received by leading an army of loyal subjects.

Michael hadn't been a Lord for a long time. The members of the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team clearly recalled that the protection barrier of his territory was still up when they first met.

Not much time had passed since then, but Michael was already strong enough to fend for himself against powerful opponents.

It was amazing, but it was also a slap on the face of all those who hadn't been strong enough to protect their territory.

She added, "They learned to use their environment and numbers to their advantage. In such a short time, they learned how to overpower existences of a higher Tier...They learned how to hunt Tier-2 Monsters while being Tierless."

She was highly impressed by Michael's progress.

"I have to be dreaming. That doesn't make sense."

It was a fact that all monsters had a weak spot and exposed vital points that could be hurt even by existences of a lower Tier.

However, the damage caused by a Tierless existence's attack was nothing noteworthy to a Tier-2 Monster because its vitality was extremely high.

But if hundreds of people attacked simultaneously, even a small attack with pebbles could turn into a downpour of rocks, drowning the enemy slowly.

The situation in Michael's territory was not much different.

Most of his Summons were still Tierless. However, the Summons with high star rating were also those who advanced to the 1st Tier.

They had been strong before, but now their power has increased by leaps and bounds.

Their attacks were either used to distract the opponents, restrict their movements, or slowly take them out one after another.

By skillfully hiding their attacks amid the 'insignificant' attacks of Tierless Warriors, they gained several opportunities to inflict serious injuries. And that was exactly what they did.

Chapter 162 Owing A Favor

In the end, the battle ended in less than ten minutes. It was total annihilation.

They killed every single member of the six Adventurer teams without suffering a single casualty.

Every member in Michael's army fought carefully. They executed the combat tactics perfectly and emerged victorious.

First, attacks poured down from the canopy bridges. The first barrage included an onslaught of earth spikes jutting out of the ground, and water whips emerging from all directions. After the first barrage, the lethality of the elemental attacks was vividly branded into the minds of the attacking Adventurers.

They grew increasingly more vigilant of attacks from the ground and surroundings. The second barrage of projectiles was ordinary, void of any elemental attacks. They believed that Michael and his team had exhausted their powerful attacks. Hence, the Adventurers didn't expect the appearance of tamed Monsters – forget about a Heavy Armored Elephant and a Greater Eagle. Neither were Monsters that could be found in the Untamed Jungle nor were they easy to tame.

And that is why the arrival of the tamed Monsters distracted the attacking Adventurers once again. They were shocked – even more so as the close combat units unveiled themselves all around them. The Adventurers had now been surrounded.

At last, the elemental attacks started again. The Mages focused on the strongest opponents to restrict them. By then the numerical advantage of the territory's army was displayed. Tiara, the Knights, and the Berserkers combined their terrific combat prowess to fight the strongest opponents. Meanwhile, Michael began to help the weaker forces to get rid of the Adventurers one by one.

Michael didn't expect Spirit Whip to be that powerful after upgrading it to a 3-Star Soultrait. However, it was powerful enough to open a small gap in the enemies' defense, restrict their utility of Soultraits for a moment, and to use both to strike once – killing them with a single attack.

It was important to take note that the six Adventurer teams had already been injured in the fight against the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team. None of the Tier-2 Adventurers had been unscathed, and most had even sustained one or two severe injuries, which affected their combat prowess greatly.

At the same time, they had been mentally and physically exhausted after pursuing the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team for hours, and by entering the Untamed Jungle, which was something they would never do under normal circumstances.

Nonetheless, Michael was overjoyed. It was an exceptional achievement to win the battle against the six Adventurer teams without a single casualty and merely a few minor injured Warriors.

It was the first big battle they had won without the need to hold a memorial for the deceased!

As Tiara and the rest collected the Adventurers' corpses, Michael turned calmly to the Forest Elves.

He smiled at them and extended a friendly invitation, "If the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team is free tonight, how about you join us for dinner?"

Michael seemed genuinely happy, but that was something the Forest Elves couldn't understand, at all. It was quite obvious that his achievement in today's battle was glorious, but was it not a problem for him to have killed their pursuers? Didn't he know how problematic that could be in the future?

Furthermore, the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team had led their pursuers to Michael's territory, forcing them into an unwanted fight. Shouldn't he be angry at them? Why would he invite them for dinner?

The Forest Elves couldn't understand Michael. But that was only obvious.

They didn't know that Michael was in possession of Extraction and that he made huge gains from killing the Adventurers. He was confident of being able to extract a large number of SoulStar Fragments, potentially more complete Soultraits, and items from the Adventurers' storage space which is why he offered them a helping hand.

Even some of their Artifacts would be extracted, further increasing his wealth once sold.

How were they supposed to know why he was happy?

Despite being oblivious, Lilica agreed to feast with Michael and his people. They didn't know what would happen once they returned to Xiltra.

Even if the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team never offended anyone, enough citizens of Xiltra – and the rest of the Zentika Empire, didn't like them. Usually, the Forest Elves were accepted in society, but they were clearly a minority even amongst minorities in the Zentika Empire.

Anything could happen to them once the authorities got to know that six Adventurer teams suddenly disappeared into thin air.

Meanwhile, Michael guided the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team back into his territory. He was not afraid that they would attack anyone because they had witnessed the combat prowess of his army. Furthermore, they were in a weakened state. Michael and Tiara would be enough to deal with them.

'Everyone probably thinks the Forest Elves are at fault for the mishaps revolving around the people involved in Senator Keltos' scheming.' Michael thought on their way back to the clearing. He listened to the quietly gossiping Forest Elves, who were wondering what crime they had done to offend someone with enough influence and wealth to hire six Adventurer teams to send after them.

There might be more reasons the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team was attacked, but it didn't really matter. And Michael couldn't care less either.

The EmeraldLeaf team owed him a big favor now, At least, that was what the Forest Elves believed.

And that was all that mattered.

On their way to the territory, the Forest Elves looked around in awe. They didn't expect to see treehouse complexes spread all over Michael's territory. They were well connected via canopy bridges and constructed with high-quality materials. Everything was sturdy, and well-functioning. In fact, even the trees were taken care of to ensure that they wouldn't die and that their growth was not restricted.

Michael had removed a few trees, but he paid attention to removing only those which stunted the growth of other trees.

The Forest Elves' image of Michael and his actions as a Lord improved considerably after witnessing his territory's state. They witnessed first-hand how Michael treated the environment around him, and his people. His subjects loved him, and he reciprocated their care and loyalty.

"You can wash up over here, and rest for a few hours in this treehouse," Michael said, pointing at a big bathhouse, which had been constructed not too long ago, and a nearby treehouse that was still empty.

He wanted to give the Forest Elves some time to think about what had happened, and what they wanted to do in the future.

At the same time, Michael didn't want to postpone the extraction of 43 Adventurers.

The corpses had already been brought to warehouse number three, where he could extract them without anyone bothering him.

"Thank you very much. We are indebted to you and will repay the favor soon," Lilica said gratefully. She forced a smile on her lips despite feeling as if the entire Origin Expanse was crashing down on her.

Michael simply nodded before he departed. He reached warehouse number three in no time, where his loyal subjects and a bunch of corpses were waiting for him.

Wasting no time, Michael exerted Extraction and got started.

Less than two hours later, Michael was done.

Not a single completed Soultrait Symbol manifested, but that was something Michael was actually grateful for.

He would rather use the extracted SoulStar Fragments to upgrade his Soultraits rather than amass more Soultraits. He already had too many Soultraits, and couldn't use more than three simultaneously in a battle, either way.

That was bound to change in the future with his increased proficiency in wielding his Soultraits, and the simultaneous usage of several Soultraits, but that was something for the future.

'But what will I do about Harry then?' Michael suddenly recalled Harry Baren.

The thought of upgrading his Soultraits immediately led his thoughts back to Harry, and the excitement the young researcher exuded whenever they talked about Soul Power and Soultraits.

Only recently, Harry had been overjoyed for days just because he finally found someone to talk to about his Soul Power theories, how it was directly related to the power output of Soultraits, and how Soultraits developed with the increase of Soul Power.

There was a lot to talk about, and Michael learned a lot from Harry, especially when it came to learning how to maintain focus mid-fight and keeping the Soultraits activated even if something unexpected happened, but he was not willing to expose his Soultrait's secret to him. That was too risky for the time being.

'Should I wait until after the second aptitude assessment to distribute the SoulStar Fragments?' Michael wondered, his gaze moving to the pile of SoulStar Fragments.

Upgrading Spirit Whip was fine and all, but Michael would rather upgrade Lesser Enhancement and Eagle Eyes. They allowed him to increase his combat prowess in a wide variety, whether it was close-combat or long-distance battles.

'Should I just lie and say that I had a fortunate encounter? No, that would be too suspicious if I keep upgrading my Soultraits. I cannot use the same excuse over and over again,' Michael shook his head and sighed deeply.

'Well...it's not like I'm in a rush right now. I can just wait until the second aptitude assessment ends before upgrading my Soultraits again. After the second aptitude assessment...I won't care anymore...I guess?'

It was certainly not easy to come up with plans to keep a secret hidden. Michael would rather expose Extraction, but he knew that he was not strong enough to protect himself and Extraction from the greed of humans – and other races.

With that in mind, Michael absorbed 121 SoulStar Fragments without using them. They rested next to the white pillar in his consciousness, waiting to be used.

Afterward, his attention returned to the Artifacts and other loot he had extracted from the Adventurers' corpses.

Interestingly enough, he was very lucky this time around. He extracted a few Memory Orbs from the Adventurers.

Contrary to his expectations when he first obtained Memory Orbs and SoulStar Fragments, the probability of extracting memories from others was much lower than SoulStar Fragments.

Furthermore, Michael had yet to extract a Memory Orb from a Monster.

It had been a while since he obtained his last Memory Orb, and Michael absorbed them immediately.

Streams of memories flooded Michael's mind. At first, it hurt a bit. Too many memories entered his mind at once, and he had a hard time sorting through the feelings that infiltrated his mind.

However, he slowly gained control of the memory stream, which he absorbed slowly.

Only an hour later, Michael was already done. All memories had been imprinted onto his mind.

"So that's who you guys are!"

Chapter 163 Nowhere To Go

At last, Michael got to know two out of the remaining Lionhearts, who had been given a secret mission by Senator Keltos.

He knew where they worked, and what kind of cruel tasks they had given the six Adventurer teams in the past.

The six Adventurer teams had been formed by the two Lionhearts, who were twin brothers. They called themselves Twin Lions and earned most of their fortune by managing several mercenary groups in other Border Cities, and the six Adventurer teams in Xiltra.

The Twin Lions ordered the attack on the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer group because they had a big misconception. They believed that the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team worked for one of Senator Keltos' competitors and that the Forest Elves had been ordered to kill the Lionheart Leader and his Adventurer group, alongwith the Minotaur group.

Michael got to know a lot more, but the most important information was that he found the Twin Lions – and that they were his enemies.

Just like the Lionheart Leader of the big Adventurer group, they would rather regain their rights as Lords, and use their territory in the Untamed Jungle to fulfill Senator Keltos' secret mission, than live their life as Adventurers.

The Twin Lions were interested in the Lord within the Untamed Jungle. They wanted to find Michael and kill him. Unfortunately, he wouldn't allow that to happen – especially not now when he knew everything!

Now that he had completed the extraction, Michael stored 26 Artifacts inside his War Rune. Most of the six Adventurer teams had at least one Tier-1 Artifact, and Michael was fortunate enough to extract 26 Tier-1 Artifacts out of 40+ Adventurer corpses.

They could be sold for a small fortune in Xiltra, but Michael had a better idea. But he put that aside for the time being.

He left the warehouse and returned to the center of the clearing. The Forest Elves were already seated near the open mall – if one could call it such–, which Michael and his people had constructed to ensure that everyone could eat together. Hundreds of people could eat there at the same time.

Tiara, Blaire and a few other people were seated around the Forest Elves. They tried to make the Forest Elves feel more comfortable – which worked more or less.

Lilica was the only one who seemed a little bit uncomfortable. Her eyes were restlessly scanning the surroundings, and she jumped up from her seat when she found him.

In the past few hours, Lilica had received enough time to contemplate. And she had a lot to think about for sure.

At the end of the day, she came to a conclusion; she had to forfeit her pride and do something she didn't really want to do.

Over the past few years, Lilica had meticulously collected various detailed pieces of information about the Zentika Empire, the surrounding regions, the other Empires and Kingdoms adjacent to the Zentika Empire, and so on.

Initially, Lilica wanted to use these detailed pieces of information for her own future. Once everyone in the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team advanced to Tier-3 and they accumulated enough wealth, connections, and knowledge, she wanted to create her own territory.

Unfortunately, she didn't have the means to create a territory and reclaim her rights as a Lord, just like that. To create a territory, she would have to receive her Elder's guidance and resources. After all, she was not wealthy and knowledgeable enough to do so on her own.

However, the Elder's guidance and resources wouldn't be given to her without a reasonable demonstration of her power and preparations. She had to be fully prepared and strong enough to ensure that she wouldn't lose her territory again.

Lilica never expected that her carefully constructed plans would fail like this. They shattered into countless pieces, and she didn't even know how, or why.

As bitter as it may be, Lilica chose to share some of the information she had collected over the past few years with Michael. That way, she could repay Michael's favor, and maybe elevate her position and think of a way to keep working toward her plan's success – somehow.

Lilica approached Michael and they went on a long walk to have a deep discussion. More than two hours passed before they finally returned.

There was no change in Michael's expression. He looked nonchalant as if Lilica's information hadn't been exceptionally helpful. However, the opposite was the case. Michael learned a lot, and he was quite shocked, especially about the last point she mentioned before they returned.

"During my research, I found information about a Lord Rift in the Zentika Empire that opens every few decades. It is a rift that can only be entered by Lords. According to the information I procured, the Will of the Origin Expanse created it long before the Zentika Empire was created, and it is one of the reasons the Zentika Empire was able to flourish and stay strong against the enemies surrounding it.

In fact, the Lord Rift is also one of the reasons the Zentika Empire accepts Lords despite being a Native Empire!"

When Lilica told him about the Lord Rift, he grew curious. However, he wouldn't enter the deeper parts of the Zentika Empire just because he obtained some information about a Lord Rift.

Rifts were special creations of the Origin Expanse. They lead to a separate realm where heavenly treasures form. A Lord Rift was a rift specialized for Lords. The loot they could find inside ranged from Summoning Cores to Lord Seals, and even included Soultrait Symbols.

Even Soultraits could be found in Lord Rifts. These Rifts were one of the places in which the strongest of mankind found a way to procure a second Soultrait artificially!

Soultrait Symbols were the least valuable for Michael. He was more interested in Summoning Cores, and other treasures. Nonetheless, it was not worth entering the depth of the Zentika Empire for the Lord Rift, not as long as he didn't have more information about them.

'I can think about it when the Lord Rift opens, but not right now,' Michael told himself as he picked up a big-sized plate to eat something.

Lilica looked at him from the side and frowned deeply.

Either Michael was too good at keeping a straight face, or her high value information was worthless to Michael.

One way or another, Lilica was frustrated. Nothing seemed to go according to her plans.

After Michael sat down next to Lilica and the other Forest Elves, he considered something before he retrieved a few pieces of paper. The papers were the documents which he had extracted out of the War Rune of the aggressive Lionheart, who had worked together with the Minotaur's team.

Michael figured that Lilica was up to something, but he didn't want it to work. Thus, he handed her the documents. Afterward, his focus turned to the highly nutritious meal, and he inhaled the delicious aroma wafting through the air.

While Michael went back to the cooks for seconds, Lilica and the other Forest Elves began to understand how cruel reality was.

Their dreams and plans had been smashed to the ground and bulldozed repetitively as realization dawned upon them.

The documents in their hands were hard proof, depriving them of their last ray of hope.

"A Senator is after us?" Lilica mumbled in shock as she put the pieces together.

All of the Forest Elves turned deathly pale, and their youngest blurted out what all of them were thinking.

"We have nowhere left to go in the Zentika Empire..."

Chapter 164 Promising Offer

There was no way that the Forest Elves could accept their fate, but reality was often cruel and merciless.

Now that the six Adventurer teams died in the Untamed Jungle, while they'd been pursuing the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team, the Forest Elves would never be able to explain the situation properly.

They were not even aware of the existence of the Twin Lions and could only guess that the Senator had sent his subordinates to give them a silent death. Luckily, they didn't die due to Michael's timely intervention.

Unfortunately, the Senator's followers would now think that the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team killed their underlings.

"What should we do?" One of the Forest Elves asked with a trace of desperation in her voice.

She looked at Lilica, whose expression was bitter and overflowing with frustration.

Lilica didn't know how Michael had procured the documents, but they were authentic. She was certain of that.

"I..." Lilica started, only to stop when Michael lifted his hand.

He had just finished his second helping and decided that it was time to speak now.

"If you're willing to listen, I have an offer to make. Of course, you can choose to decline at any time," Michael said, which made Lilica curious.

Even before handing over the documents, he had extracted, an idea had formed in his mind. Michael couldn't tell whether Lilica and her team would agree, but it was worth a try.

He had the upper hand right now.

Under normal circumstances, the Forest Elves wouldn't have to worry about anything. Killing a few Adventurers in the Untamed Jungle wasn't much of an issue.

However, the core problem was that the Adventurers attacked them in the name of the Senator's subordinates. If the underlings used the Senator's authority, or Senator Keltos put them on the wanted dead-or-alive list, their life would be over. They couldn't stay in Xiltra or the Zentika Empire without living in constant fear of being caught.

This was something Michael realized quickly.

Lilica and the others didn't have much of a choice if they wanted to stay in the Origin Expanse and make a living. They still wanted to get stronger by using the dormant energy of the Origin Expanse – and all other benefits the Origin Expanse had to offer.

That was why they grudgingly agreed to listen to his offer.

"I can accept you in my territory, under the condition that you become my subordinates—" Michael began to speak.

However, before he could finish his offer, the youngest member of the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team jumped up from his seat.

His face flushed in anger, and his eyes glaring daggers, the young Forest Elf was jabbing his finger in the air, pointing accusingly at Michael.

"Do you want to insult us, HUMAN? What kind of offer is that? Do you feel almighty just because we're in a sticky situation? We will never accept to be enslaved by a lesser race!!" He bellowed, speaking out what all Forest Elves thought at this moment.

Even if they didn't have a safe place to stay, they could still work it out...somehow.

Michael raised an eyebrow at that as he watched the young man trembling in anger.

"Shut up, and let me finish," Michael retorted sharply, his ice-cold eyes causing the youngest Forest Elf to feel the chills running down his spine.

The others had a lot to say as well, but nobody uttered a word. They kept their mouths sealed shut. The situation wasn't as simple as it seemed.

Entering the Origin Expanse by manifesting the Runic Gate in an unprotected area was suicidal. If they emerged in the Origin Expanse when a hungry monster walked by, they would be torn to shreds.

It was common knowledge to seek well-protected places to anchor your Runic Gate. Too many powerhouses, who had been too confident in their capabilities ended up dying because they underestimated the hidden dangers of manifesting the Runic Gate in the wilderness.

If the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team wanted to stay in the Origin Expanse while retaining the opportunity to safely return home and come back whenever they wanted, they required a secure place to stay. Unfortunately, the Zentika Empire was not an option anymore, and the Untamed Jungle was overpopulated. The chances to encounter a fierce monster while returning from home were extremely high as well.

"As I said, I can accept you in my territory, under the condition that you become my subordinates. You will have to form a Link of Loyalty with me. However, the Link of Loyalty will have a special clause that allows you to break the Link as long as certain conditions are met. That way, you can leave whenever you want to, or break the Link of Loyalty if I mistreat you," Michael explained, his eyes still glaring coldly at the youngest Forest Elf who had butted in without letting him complete.

"Of course, the conditions will be known by all parties involved, and they will include the clause that you can only break the Link of Loyalty after informing me about it. That way, you can leave whenever you wish while I can ensure the safety of my subjects since I will personally send you out of my territory once the Link of Loyalty has been terminated. I won't accept potential threats in my territory, and I cannot trust you enough after the link is severed. After all, my goodwill has already been abused once."

Michael intentionally mentioned the last two sentences. He recalled the Gogi Lord corpse, which he had handed over to the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team upon their request, and the fact that the youngest Forest Elf had ended up exposing information about his territory, thereby breaking the promise Lilica made to him as a representative of the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team.

The youngest Forest Elf's complexion paled upon hearing the reason why Michael couldn't trust them. Meanwhile, Lilica and the others fell deep in thought.

"Even if you guys want to stay only temporarily in my territory, you will have to accept my condition. Furthermore, you'll be part of my territory the moment the Link of Loyalty has been established. That means I won't mistreat anyone. You won't make any losses because you can always terminate the Link of Loyalty if you don't like my attitude," Michael revealed in all honesty.

He didn't hide anything since it would make things worse, and added, "But I think it's quite obvious that I won't give you everything for free. If you want to eat and sleep, you'll have to work just like everyone else!"

Michael knew that he was not offering a lot. However, the little things such as safety and a place to stay were of immense value right now.

He didn't put any restrictions on the Forest Elves and gave them a secure place to anchor their Runic Gate. They would be able to travel back home and come back to the Origin Expanse at any time, without the need to worry about their safety.

The Untamed Jungle might not be the best place for them to stay, but it was – by far – not the worst.

They were Forest Elves and could survive in any kind of forest. As they were born, raised, and trained in a forest, the Forest Elves wouldn't die easily in a forest.

That was also how they earned their money in Xiltra. They used their expertise and accepted the mission that led to the Untamed Jungle. Others didn't want to enter this place, but the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team didn't have a problem with that.

However, staying in the Untamed Jungle by themselves wasn't helpful either. They had lost access to Xiltra, and the Zentika Empire as trading hub for resources. Being one of the only Forest Elves – if not the only Forest Elves – in the Zentika Empire, their appearance would expose them immediately.

Lilica and the others were enraged at Michael's offer at first. But the more Michael revealed the more they understood their situation.

They might survive in the Untamed Jungle without any help, but what then? The loot they procured from the Untamed Jungle was worth close to nothing at home. At the same time, the goods produced at home couldn't be sold in Xiltra anymore. After all, they couldn't return without fearing being captured and prosecuted.

That was just one of the many things revolving in Lilica's mind, and it was already frustrating enough to feel like punching the air for a few hours.

Michael didn't push the Forest Elves closer to the idea of becoming his subjects. He knew that it was not something he could force.

Instead, Michael remained silent after he said what he had to say. He just waited, and let them think it through.

"Hypothetically..." Lilica murmured quietly, which Michael took as a positive sign.

"What would happen if we accept your condition, become your subordinates by forming a Link of Loyalty with you, and bring some goods from outside the Origin Expanse? Would you claim them as your territory's property, or would they still belong to us?"

Lilica was being very careful and calculative. She didn't want to make a mistake by blindly trusting Michael. Her gut feeling told her that Michael was sincere and that he wouldn't take advantage of them, but she also knew that her gut feeling was not always right.

"Goods from the Forest Elves' home? That would be amazing!" Michael blurted out his thoughts in excitement, "If the Forest Elves bring their goods into my territory, I have another market to trade my goods with!"

Michael then realized that he had said everything aloud and cleared his throat.

"To be honest, I have a few deals with a big corporation in mankind's territory, and it would be a lot easier to trade with you guys than traveling to Xiltra and purchasing goods from their shops. If we start trading with each other, we could save money both ways while still making a profit. Of course, your goods still belong to you. I am not taking anything from my subjects!"

Lilica and the others looked at him in surprise. They felt that Michael was a weird Lord, a Lord, who could be kind, gentle, and sincere at one time, and like a brutal, merciless tyrant the moment he stepped on the battlefield. However, the most important fact was that Michael – despite his young age – seemed to be good at thinking about and planning for the long term.

If Michael could create a business relationship with the Forest Elves, the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team might have to stay longer in his territory. In fact, if their business relationship were to progress further, the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team might receive orders from their Elders to permanently stay with Michael – though it was very unlikely.

Considering the growth of Michael's territory in such a short time, including the massive increase in combat prowess he attained, Michael was a good candidate as a business partner. This was especially true now that Michael was the only one left with access to Xiltra and the Zentika Empire.

'Did he consider all of these factors?' Lilica wondered.

'Even if he didn't consider all of them, one or two are already enough to consider him a decent strategist and businessman.'

Lilica knew that she had already put aside her pride by sharing the information she had wanted to make use of before to reclaim her title as a Lord. She was also aware of their current situation.

Thus, the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team had to make a decision; try to fight on their own and see how far they could go, or become Michael's subordinates – even if it was just temporary.

"Can you tell me more about your plans, or do you want us to make a decision now?" Lilica asked, still debating in her mind.

"I can tell you about my plans. But I would rather prefer to show you some of my plans," Michael responded mysteriously,

"Follow me!"

Chapter 165 Power Expansion

Michael could clearly tell that it was a great opportunity to get the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team on his side.

Not only were the five members Tier-2 Adventurers, but they could connect him to a race and market that was the complete opposite of mankind's market.

Mankind lacked the means to create big farms and reinvigorate the barren and destroyed lands in the Origin Expanse. They possessed other means that allowed them to survive in the Origin Expanse for half a millennium.

The Forest Elves had more means to create flourishing flora and fauna wherever they were. They had too many of them, in fact. However, they lacked many other resources.

Thus, Michael didn't hesitate to give the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team a tour of his territory.

He first walked over to the Bilrox Ranch, then he visited the Weaponsmith, the Master Alchemist, the Priest, and tamed Monsters before he proudly showed the Forest Elves the development of his territory, and the farms.

While all of this was already enough to demonstrate how much everyone trusted Michael, and how quickly his territory developed, Michael showed the Forest Elves the lizard cave, and the Nature Spirit, at last.

Even before the Forest Elves got to know the Nature Spirit, they had already made a final decision – or so it seemed.

However, the moment the Nature Spirit appeared in front of them, just barely sprouting out of the wet soil, the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team failed to hide their shock.

Their eyes nearly popped out of their sockets as they stared at the Nature Spirit with an utterly dumbfounded expressions.

Michael saw their reaction and couldn't hide a victorious smile.

"How did you find a Nature Spirit like this?" Lilica asked Michael once she regained her composure.

Michael tilted his head, "I summoned it. The Nature Spirit is a 4-Star Summon, though a bit too timid for my taste. I am currently trying to find ways for the Nature Spirit to build up some confidence."

Michael had a lot more to say about the Nature Spirit, but he stopped at that point. He saw the brightly twinkling eyes of the Forest Elves and realized that he said more than enough.

Michael didn't know that the Forest Elves could sense the emotions of the flora and fauna around them vividly. It was their sixth sense, a racial trait that allowed them to grow all kinds of plants rapidly by sensing when a plant had been watered perfectly, and what other nourishment was needed by them to flourish.

They could also sense the Nature Spirit's emotions, its joy, and trust in Michael as a human being and a Lord.

The forest around Michael's territory also seemed to be well-kept. Certain conditions could be improved, but the Forest Elves acknowledged that Michael was not one of them, and thus unable to figure out the mistakes he made.

Feeling the emotions of the Nature Spirit and the Flora and Fauna, the Forest Elves instinctively wanted to trust Michael as well.

The youngest Forest Elf approached him with his head bent low. He bowed deeply to Michael.

"I apologize for my behavior earlier, and for the mistake I made in the past. I didn't mean to expose you to the Lionhearts. It's all my fault."

The youngest Forest Elf had not intended to purposely break the trust Michael had given them, but it had somehow happened. He couldn't even recall it clearly... It was one of the most embarrassing moments in his life.

"It's fine. My territory is still standing strong. We cannot change the past, either way," Michael said before he carefully added, "But we can try to make up for the mistakes we did in the past and learn a lesson from every mistake. That way, you will become a better person with every passing day."

The Forest Elves nodded in understanding. Afterward, they began to gather and talk to each other in the elven tongue.

It was about time they came to a final decision.

After more than ten minutes passed, the Forest Elves separated again. They looked at Michael who responded with a faint smile.

"Did you make a final decision?" He asked, and the Forest Elves nodded in unison.

"We would like to join your territory..." Lilica said, "...for the time being."

"That's wonderful. Let us do our best to turn this small territory into a grand place full of vigor and power!" Michael exclaimed before manifesting white streams of energy that shot out of the back of his War Rune.

The tentacles moved around vigorously, desiring to take on the Forest Elves by themselves.

The Forest Elves swallowed their saliva, understanding that it was time to accept Michael as their new Lord – even if it was just temporarily – or leave for good.

Lilica was the first to react. She released a stream of energy from her War Rune as well. Her eyes were still gleaming in determination, but there was also something else, something she would never reveal to others. Lilica felt fear and apprehension.

Even if it was just a little bit, she was afraid, and Michael could tell that with a single glance.

"Let's connect the links with the terms and conditions," Michael murmured, and Lilica nodded.

Their streams of energy connected smoothly. The power of being a Lord streamed through his energy, creating the Link of Loyalty swiftly. While being formed, the terms and conditions were laid out and engraved on the Link of Loyalty, slowing down the process of creation drastically.

But neither Michael nor Lilica paid much attention to that. They formed the Link of Loyalty with great vigilance.

After half an hour, the Link was completed. It took way longer than it should have, but Michael and Lilica went through the terms and conditions multiple times to make things easier for the next four links.

Two more hours passed before the whole EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team had become Michael's newest subordinates. The Links of Loyalty were established, and Michael could immediately sense who trusted him, and who eyed him with vigilance.

The Links of Loyalty were not of the same firmness. Lilica's link was surprisingly thick, indicating high trust and loyalty.

That was great, and it gave Michael high hopes for the future of their business relationship.

Through Lilica and her team, Michael gained a connection to the Forest Elven tribe, and several powerful Tier-2 Adventurer subordinates at last.

"Take these and go to the medical house. The Priest and a few doctors will make sure that no traces of residual poison are left in your bodies, and that you'll recuperate quickly," Michael ordered in a light tone while handing out a bunch of potions.

Michael's tone didn't change a lot from the usual, but the Forest Elves found themselves taking his words more seriously. They followed his command and were led to the medical house.

"Do you think it'll be possible to conquer the lizard cave now that we have the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team on our side?" Michael asked Tiara.

Tiara was still next to him. Her gaze followed the Forest Elves while she was deep in thought.

"The cavern system is deep and complex. I'm not sure, Master," She revealed honestly, "But we can only find out by trying."

Michael silently agreed.

They had researched the lizard cavern a lot, but they never made it too deep into the cavern system.

Maybe it was time to change that.

Chapter 166 Connecting Markets

Two days later the Forest Elves regained their combat prowess, and the few injured Warriors had fully recuperated.

The feast was over, and the members of the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team had grown closer to the territory's citizens.

Lilica and the others taught some tips and tricks to the archers in the territory. They noticed that the archers were heavily relying on theoretical knowledge – procured from a bunch of books – to improve their technique, and accuracy. But not everything can be taught through books. Some essential tips and tricks could only be learned by experiencing them.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of the Forest Elves, the territory's archers' proficiency improved rapidly. This helped improve the Forest Elves' image significantly in the eyes of the territory's citizens, and their respect for Michael increased as well.

The Forest Elves were glad to be in Michael's good books. He gave Lilica a bunch of Tier-1 Artifacts to initiate the trading business between the Forest Elven tribe and his territory.

In exchange for the Tier-1 Artifacts, which he had extracted from the corpses of the six Adventurer teams, Michael wanted blueprints, devices, and plants to aid him in agriculture.

Michael sold the other Tier-1 Artifacts at the Bartholomew shop in the Dekalos-Class spaceship. He bought close to 4000 Summoning Scrolls from the money earned through the Tier-1 Artifacts. However, Michael didn't use the Summoning Scrolls.

Instead, he traveled to Xiltra on Icarus and sold them for a much higher price than he paid to buy them. In return, he purchased various goods for blacksmithing. This included materials required to construct several Intermediate-rank smithies, forging blueprints, various ores, forging tools, and close to 100 books related to forging.

Under normal circumstances, Michael would have never done something like this. He would have used his fortune to strengthen his subjects with energy pills and other resources. After all, his territory had more than enough citizens thanks to Extraction.

Despite that, Michael chose to focus on blacksmithing for the time being because Lilica and the other Forest Elves told him that their tribe's biggest problem – or one of their biggest problems – was the inability to claim mines and big ore deposits.

It felt like a cliché to Michael, but in general, the Forest Elves had very little affinity to the underground environment, forget about forging. They rarely spawned in the mountain regions in the Origin Expanse as well. Their major and minor spawn regions were mostly big forests. Thus, they lacked weapons and metal armaments the most to dig through the underground— especially their low-ranked Lords.

Lilica and her team had been one of the Forest Elves tribe's biggest suppliers for low-level armaments, and ores until now. They were one of the few groups that spawned outside a forest – though the Untamed Jungle was pretty near.

Now that Lilica could hardly supply low-level armaments without help, Michael would turn into her supplier. Lilica and the others would merely be the errand boys and girls – tasked with carrying the goods from the territory to the Forest Elven tribe.

Michael would receive certain plants, herbs, and other ingredients required to concoct energy pills and various potions in addition to blueprints related to agriculture. The blueprints were even easier to procure for the Forest Elves. They didn't need them and would usually dump them in a place where they collected dust until one of their business partners asked for them.

These blueprints were worthless to them, but they could be sold for a decent price if the customer was desperate enough to reach deep into his pockets.

Because of Lilica's recommendation, and the fact that Michael produced a fair price list for his goods, the blueprints were rather cheap for Michael to purchase. As long as he kept using Xiltra to purchase cheap ores, and created the low-level armaments in his territory, he would earn good profit.

But that was not enough for Michael.

Once he claimed the lizard cave, it wouldn't even be necessary to spend money in Xiltra. The lizard cave, and the smithies in his territory would be enough to create low-level armaments. The costs would be more than halved and his profit would increase by a lot.

That sounded quite nice.

"Let's go hunt monsters together first. We need to understand your combat prowess to put the five of you in our groups accordingly. Please show me what you're capable of!" Michael said as everyone finished their preparations for the cavern conquest.

Michael and the others had already seen the Forest Elves use their bows and daggers in the last two days, but they never fought seriously in a life-and-death battle in front of them.

Thus, the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team ended up demonstrating how they usually fought against monsters in the Untamed Jungle.

The tracker of the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer group released his Soultrait in front of the lizard cave. He manifested an object in the air above him.

It was a sixty-centimeter-high totem pole, shrouded in bloody-red miasma.

The totem pole was hovering in the air as it continued to release more bloody-red miasma.

It consisted of a central upright post, which had unique intricate carvings depicting various animals, spirits, and even supernatural beings. The carvings were bright in color with a large eagle carved at the top of the pole.

To Michael, the totem pole exuded beauty and mystery, but he quickly noticed that the Demi-Humans and Icarus felt vastly different.

The Demi-Humans were on the brink of losing their rationality, and Icarus screeched out wildly. The totem pole was affecting the monsters and half-monsters in its range though neither Icarus nor the Demi-Humans had been targeted by the totem pole.

The totem pole's target was inside the cavern system, a single monster that would lose its reasoning and grow increasingly angrier as time passed. It would reach a point where even the strongest monsters wouldn't be able to resist the urge anymore.

The monsters would charge at the totem pole and attack blindly – running straight into the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer Team.

That was the power of the [Rage of the Primal] Soultrait.

It may not be the strongest Soultrait for combat, but it was certainly a Soultrait with exceptional potential. All it required was proper usage and timing to unfold impeccable results.

After Rage of the Primal had been activated, the five Forest Elves got into action. The four other Forest Elves activated their Soultraits as well.

Everyone retrieved their weapons, which were Tier-2 Bow Artifacts seemingly carved from the same tree. The Woodwoven Bow Artifacts looked eerily similar, and so did the arrows. A quiver filled with green arrows appeared on the Forest Elves' backs, and they retrieved an arrow simultaneously.

They unleashed a tremendous amount of energy and channeled everything into their arrows and bow before they nocked the arrow on the bowstring. Afterward, they closed their eyes while resting their empty hands lightly against the bowstring, ready to shoot the arrow at a moment's notice.

Several seconds later, their long, pointed ears twitched. The Forest Elves opened their eyes at once, pulled the bowstring back, and aimed at the entrance of the lizard cavern.

The next moment, a shuttle-sized lizard emerged from the entrance. It let out a terrifying roar and was just about to spit out a fountain of acid when its voice was silenced. The acid spit that had accumulated in its throat dispersed, and the Forest Elves began their assault.

A moment after the lizard's massive body was clearly visible to everyone, the Forest Elves released their arrows.

A sound, just like an explosion, rang through the vicinity five times in rapid succession.

Five arrows shot through the air like missiles in the next instance, and they impacted hard on the durable lizard scales.

The next moment five deep holes had formed on the lizard's body and blood was oozing out of them.

Chapter 167 Failed Demonstration

Michael was certain that the lizard charging at the totem pole was stronger than the lizard mother he had lured toward the Gogi Lord territory.

Despite that, the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team demolished the Tier-2 Hard-scale Lizard like it was nothing special.

The Lizard was dead, and the Forest Elves walked over to Michael, confidence plastering their faces.

"The Woodwoven Bow Artifacts and those arrows are a set, aren't they?" Michael asked when the battle finished.

He had noticed that the Forest Elves channeled a tremendous amount of energy into both the Arrow and the Bow. They put an equal amount of energy into each of the Artifacts before everything was released at once when the arrow was fired.

"You noticed that already?" Lilica asked in slight surprise.

The EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team wanted to show off their Artifacts and power a little, but it looked like Michael found out their secret immediately.

Michael had used his Eagle Eyes to observe the Forest Elves' archery technique, but he noticed something much better; the synergy between the Artifacts the Forest Elves used.

"The Pieckers are a special type of arrow. They've been enchanted with one enchantment- Piercing. It's a Tier-1 enchantment which has been altered and upgraded. In exchange for the alteration and upgrades, a few restrictions had to be put on the enchantment, otherwise, the energy consumption would have been much higher. Thus, the enchantment of the Pieckers is only activated when their speed reaches a certain threshold," Lilica explained before one of the other Elves added,

"Furthermore, they're consumables, which is mostly due to the material used. They're pretty cost-efficient and as long as you use the Tier-2 Woodwoven Bow's Force enchantment to increase the arrow's speed without affecting the pulling force, even Hard-Scale Lizards will have a hard time recovering from the attack!"

The Forest Elves looked smugly at Michael. They were proud of their race's invention. Pieckers were certainly great arrows. Michael couldn't agree more.

However, he noticed the downsides as well. It was hard not to notice them.

"But it looks like you won't be able to use these attacks often. Maybe five...no...seven times in a row until everyone is out of energy," Michael voiced out his doubts.

Lilica and the other Forest Elves nodded their heads. They weren't affected by Michael's comment. On the contrary, they seemed even prouder.

"We can release 7 Pieckers in a row, that's correct. Our Adventurer team can kill seven Tier-2 Monsters before we have to replenish our energy!" The youngest Forest Elf said proudly.

The only Forest Elf who noticed that something was wrong was Lilica. She noticed that Michael was not completely convinced.

"Are you not satisfied with that, Michael?" She asked.

But, instead of answering immediately, Michael remained silent. He was deep in thought. Thus, Blaire answered on Michael's behalf.

"Shouldn't five Tier-2 Adventurers with Soultraits have a much easier time killing a Low Tier-2 Monster? It seems like a waste to use so much energy and consumable Tier-2 Artifacts to kill the Hard-scale Lizard. We cannot sell the scales anymore either as they are not intact, and its inner organs should have burst as well," Blaire grumbled quietly as she finished her observations of the Lizard's corpse and stepped back.

"Even if those arrows are cheap, they've been thoroughly enchanted. This battle was probably a financial loss. What a disaster..."

Blaire grumbled while looking at Michael, and in a voice quiet enough to feel assured that nobody else could hear her words. However, the Forest Elves had been listening intently and halted in their tracks the moment Blaire's words reached their ears. As Tier-2 Adventurers with great inborn hearing sense, the Forest Elves could easily hear Blaire's quiet grumbling.

Unfortunately, they didn't like her thorough analysis.

They stared at Blaire while their earlier confident expression disappeared slowly.

Michael saw their reaction, but he had nothing encouraging to say.

"If you want to respond to that, please do. I am more than willing to listen. Every bit of communication helps," Michael said instead.

Lilica's lips parted but no word came out of her mouth. She pressed her lips together in a thin line after a few seconds and sighed deeply.

Their strategy to show off their great power seemed to have failed miserably.

"Master, did you see the destructive power of those arrows?" Tiara asked loudly as she rushed over to him. Her tail wagged excitedly, and she could barely stand still in front of her master.

"Yes, I saw them," Michael answered.

"They're amazing!" She exclaimed, which caused the Forest Elves' drooped ears to rise once again.

They looked at Tiara with twinkling eyes, thankful that at least one of them was impressed with their hard work.

"Though it was wasteful to use so many of those arrows, I think we could make use of them," Tiara added, crushing the Forest Elves' hopes to get praised a little bit more immediately.

What was going on? Was everyone trying to crush their pride?

Michael nodded his head faintly, agreeing with Tiara's comment.

He turned to Lilica and asked, "Are you guys willing to split up and become the leaders of one Archer Unit each? We would use the Pieckers to create an opening and target the severe injuries inflicted by the Pieckers to wear down Tier-2 Monsters with each Archer Unit."

It was not a detailed battle strategy yet, but it was something that didn't require too much teamwork or coordination.

Michael didn't expect the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team to create miracles. He wanted to add them to his Army, most importantly, to make use of their high combat prowess in the most efficient way.

He knew that their Pieckers were only one of many powerful attacks, but Michael had yet to spend more time with them to get to know their fighting styles, martial art techniques, weapons, Artifacts, Soultraits, and synergy.

"You want to split us up?" The youngest Forest Elf asked, shock visible in his eyes.

"If you're comfortable with that, yes," Michael responded. However, he could already tell that it wouldn't work like this.

Thus, he added something after giving it a thought, "Or you guys will have to change your fighting style a little. You've been fighting in a small group for years now. I favor using the numbers and abilities of all people in the territory. That way, I can exhibit the highest combat prowess."

The Forest Elves clearly recalled how Michael's army fought against more than 40 Adventurers. All of them had years of experience as Adventurers, and they weren't weak by any means. Despite that, Michael overwhelmed them with Summons of a lower Tier and his battle strategies.

He gathered enough information before the battle and utilized the environment to his advantage to minimize risks. Michael's strategies might not be perfect, but he was still a young Lord. He was bound to learn a lot, and adapt to every situation. That was what he had been doing the whole time, and he wouldn't stop now.

"We've been fighting together for years. Furthermore, we don't know how long we'll be staying in your territory. If possible, we would like to work together," Lilica said, at last.

She could tell that Michael was a little dissatisfied with their inflexibility, but he acknowledged their discomfort.

"In that case, you all will have to fight a few more times as a group. Only one Pieckers per fight though, and an energy consumption of less than 10%. If a Mid Tier-2 Monster arrives, you can use everything you have, but Low Tier-2 Monsters shouldn't be a problem for you guys," Michael ordered, his voice a little sharper than before.

"Meanwhile, you'll also watch my people fight. If you have any advice, feel free to share. As long as it's useful, I will implement the advice into our battle strategy."

Michael realized that they had to postpone rushing inside the lizard cave for the time being. They would still enter it today, but it was more important to keep an eye on the Forest Elves. Michael knew that they wouldn't become baggage, yet their actions didn't seem to boost the morale of the entire army.

Everyone fought carefully, but the Forest Elves seemed like barbarians after their first fight. They were not willing to split up, nor did they show any real teamwork with the rest of Michael's subjects though they were experienced adventurers.

It was quite ironic, considering that Forest Elves were said to be graceful combatants and not barbarians. It raised a few red flags for the rest of his team.

Chapter 168 Elders' Orders

Michael's expression was sour when they returned to the clearing.

Several hours had passed and the sun was about to disappear behind the horizon.

At last, Michael and the others decided not to enter the lizard cave.

Despite not entering the lizard cave, they conquered it indirectly by telling Liopham to keep using his Soultrait, Rage of the Primal. He used his Soultrait to pull smaller groups of Monsters out of the cavern system where they would be ambushed with a great numerical advantage.

Michael was glad that one of the Forest Elves was in possession of Rage of the Primal, but overall, he was dissatisfied with the stubbornness of the Forest Elves. It felt like they were born to waste money—and to make his life much harder.

His dissatisfaction turned to mild annoyance as he had expected them to wholeheartedly cooperate with him and his team.

Their individual skills and combat prowess were great. In fact, even the teamwork between the five Forest Elves was exceptional, but it felt like they were born to make Michael's life harder.

'Did I expect too much from them?' Michael wondered.

'Was it the right decision to take them in?'

He clearly recalled that he had reasonable hopes. Michael merely wished that his army and the Forest Elves would learn to cooperate with each other and that they would have better coordination while conquering the lizard cave. That way, it would be much easier to hunt small groups of Tier-2 Monsters.

Everyone would benefit from that since Michael was willing to provide the Forest Elves with a few benefits. At least, that was the initial plan.

In fact, Michael and his people still had a hard time hunting a Tier-2 Monster on their own. However, it was possible – despite not having anyone at Tier-2 in their group. It was hard to pull off, but the chances were not zero. Furthermore, nobody sustained any injuries, which was the best means to demonstrate the efficiency of his army's tactics. Their strategies were detailed and precise, and their utility of abilities was greatly displayed and fully exploited.

Though the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team could also hunt Tier-2 Monsters and had a much easier time than Michael's army, their energy consumption and wastage of precious Artifacts was disastrous.

It felt like they didn't conserve their energy while fighting, nor did they care about doing so, at all.

All of their strategies had one thing in common-high energy consumption.

It was not a bad tactic if they were fighting small battles – which was normal for an Adventurer team of their size. They had to complete their mission and would return home afterward.

However, in an army with hundreds of members, consuming as much energy as the five Forest Elves would lead to a disaster.

If the front lines were to use too much energy, they wouldn't be able to protect themselves, forget about others. Meanwhile, those at the back wouldn't be able to support the frontlines anymore the moment their energy was drained.

Either way, the battle strategies would lose their worth if nobody was able to execute them. By then, even Peak Tier-1 Monsters would be enough to obliterate the territory's army.

A Tier-2 Monster would kill them all before moving forward and entering the territory where all of the citizens would be massacred mercilessly.

The responsibility and scale of the battle were just two out of the numerous differences between a Lord's battle and an Adventurers' battle.

That was why Michael had to change lots of things.

**

10 extremely tiring days later in the Origin Expanse, Michael was drenched in sweat, overflowing with annoyance and desperately hoping that the troublesome days had passed.

The last ten days felt like an eternity to Michael, and he found himself imagining bashing the heads of the Forest Elves more often than he was willing to acknowledge.

It was truly difficult to convince the stubborn Forest Elves that it was necessary to change their fighting style.

Michael tried to make them understand what he wanted to achieve with the changes he proposed, but it felt like talking to a wall.

They weren't really cooperative and easily came up with excuses.

—We're only temporarily in your territory, either way.

—What will you do once your Soldiers start relying on us? They will have trouble readjusting after we leave.

—Our fighting style fits us perfectly. We kill our opponents fast to ensure that there will be no future problems. If you cannot afford the expenses, that's fine. We have enough to pay for our own expenses. You don't have to trouble yourself with us for long either way, so just swallow your pride and accept our standpoint!

They always reminded him that they would leave soon. It made sense that they thought like this, but their excuses angered him often.

Only Lilica remained silent. In the first few days, she interfered every now and then, suggesting Michael accept them as they were, but her comments gradually became less, after noticing his reaction. She started keeping her opinions to herself and didn't say anything to Michael in the past three days.

Michael didn't know why Lilica turned silent, but it was a good thing for him. It was an opportunity to strike the Forest Elves and make sure that they would adapt to them.

Unfortunately, the results hadn't been as great as he hoped for.

Despite his frustration, Michael was also painfully aware of how powerful the Forest Elves were.

The conquest of the lizard cave progressed much faster than it would have without the Forest Elves. Furthermore, their teachings had great results for the Archers, and he saw a major improvement in their efficiency.

Everything progressed much faster than before. The training was great and quite successful, the cavern system was slowly being conquered, and more than 100 citizens in Michael's territory crossed the barrier to the next Tier, advancing to Tier-1.

All of that was great, but it was all accompanied by constant headaches.

He couldn't even say too much because if he went overboard, he would lose the Forest Elves as a business partner as well.

Over the past ten days, Michael created an improved system that allowed him to increase his profits. They claimed a few ore deposits and began mining them. That way, Michael didn't have to rely on Xiltra to purchase ores.

He visited the smithies every now and then to use Extraction on the molten metal ingots, successfully extracting a large amount of impurities. That way, he improved the quality of the ingots while simultaneously studying his Soultrait in-depth.

The metal ingots would be forged into low-level armaments which were given to Lilica and the others. They sold them to the Forest Elven tribe which would give him blueprints, herbs and other ingredients as per his request.

The Bartholomew Corporation was overjoyed at the number of blueprints Michael provided. At the same time, the Forest Elves were also happy about the quality of the low-level armaments.

However, Michael was the happiest about the trading system he had created. His territory made the most gains. His finances were much higher than ever before as well.

And fortunately enough, his time outside the Origin Expanse was as pleasant as his finances.

While ten days passed in the Origin Expanse, only five days had passed outside.

Michael enjoyed his time in the Dekalos-Class spaceship a lot. This was especially true now that Frederik's behavior improved greatly.

Frederik Kolbenheim didn't underestimate Michael anymore. He became much stronger by using more of his resources, and by entering the Origin Expanse more often to control his subjects and focusing on the development of his territory precisely. Frederik began to make use of the time difference between the Origin Expanse and outside to grow stronger.

He understood that if he could not even defeat Michael, he would never be able to compete against the rest of the freshmen, forget about their seniors. Frederik's initial plan had been to become the number one student of the freshmen batch and start fighting against their seniors.

But to achieve that he had to become a lot stronger.

"You are much stronger than I expected. I shouldn't have underestimated you..." Frederik admitted through his gritted teeth a few days ago.

It cost him a great deal of courage, and the sacrifice of some of his pride to say that straight to Michael's face, but he did it. Oddly enough, Frederik felt much better once he acknowledged that Michael was stronger than most others.

"You have the right to attend the Sapphirelake Military Academy, even if you're not from a noble background," Frederik added, swallowing the provocations that flashed through his mind and simply left without another word.

Michael had been greatly surprised by Frederik's sudden change in behavior. He had never expected him to say something like that.

Meanwhile, Jacqueline was a little frightened of Michael.

Nobody had slapped her before, yet Michael did not only that. He even beat the shit out of her like there was no tomorrow.

It was only obvious that she couldn't help but feel different about Michael. She was scared.

But Michael didn't really care about Jacqueline, so he didn't bother. He gave his best during the Limit Breaker Course, that was all.

Her reaction was actually quite satisfying to look at. It was different compared to how his bullies had looked at him in the past. Maybe, he had the same expression as Jacqueline when he was in high school.

Fortunately, that was a thing of the past.

The Barbaric Couple's attitude toward him was quite interesting. Kaleb was no different either.

The young Zenovia grew a little closer to him, though it was still quite obvious that Kaleb was jealous of him being a Lord. Kaleb wanted to turn 18 as quickly as possible.

Over the past few weeks, Michael had been quite surprised about Kaleb's great talent multiple times. That young man was bound to become a promising Lord, no matter what his Soultrait would be.

Other than the time he spent with the Barbaric Couple and Kaleb Zenovia, Michael realized that the courses were about to conclude. There were only four days left before they would arrive in Kelta.

In these four days, Michael wanted to keep working hard. He enjoyed pushing himself and testing his limits since it made him feel as if he could accomplish anything.

Furthermore, competing with his peers felt great. He could see his progress and compare it to the progression of the people around him. It was incomparable to his high school days.

Here, nobody tried to restrict him. It was fun.

These days, Michael contemplated a lot about his situation.

He was certain that he had done a decent job until now. However, he began to wonder what he could have done better, and what he could do to improve his situation.

Killing the Twin Lions and the last unknown subordinate of Senator Keltos seemed like a good idea, but that would attract Senator Keltos' attention as well.

Furthermore, the lizard cave was still a big project that had to be completed, just like the Temple of the Forgotten.

But first things first, Michael had to figure out why the Forest Elves' behavior changed all of a sudden.

To be precise, Lilica was speaking to the other Forest Elves with a grim expression when he returned to the Origin Expanse.

The Forest Elves had turned pale, while Lilica's expression seemed a little bit off.

"What's going on?" Michael thus asked the obvious.

Lilica and the Forest Elves stared at him for a while. None of them wanted to say a word.

After five minutes of silence passed, Lilica revealed the reason behind their worried expressions.

"It looks like our Elders like both the quality and quantity of the low-level armaments you provide," She uttered quietly before she added heavily,

"They want us to stay a little longer...and to listen to you..."

Chapter 169 Part Of The Territory

Because the Forest Elves weren't very cooperative until now, and they kept talking about leaving soon, Michael thought about several ways to expand his market and range of businesses. That was also why he included the possibility of working together with other Lords, such as Frederik Kolbenheim and Jacqueline Orlando.

The Barbaric Couple might not be the nicest, and they were quite annoying, but their territories were connected to the mountains and the ocean. By making use of their territory, it was possible to connect their markets and expand their businesses, and wealth.

The time he spent in the Dekalos-Class spaceship showed Michael quite clearly that he could improve a lot, and that it was easier to survive in the Origin Expanse by working with other Lords, even if it was just for the sake of business.

Being a Lord in the Origin Expanse was not that simple. Many lost their territories even among the freshmen who had been accepted into the Sapphirelake Military Academy.

In fact, it was quite common for Lords to lose their territory and rights as a Lord. Less than 1% of all Lords were able to protect their territories for more than three months.

Why was that the case?

Many Lords and Native Kingdoms, and the Empire would attack recently constructed territories for various reasons. Lords attacked other Lords to plunder their resources, most of the time. These resources included the Summoning Cores, which were extremely valuable. In fact, they were the most valuable assets in most territories and the primary reason for attacks in most cases.

Meanwhile, Natives wanted to destroy Lords because they were bound to turn into big problems if they were given enough time to grow. On the other hand, the natives mostly accepted Adventurers since they weren't as dangerous.

Precisely, most Adventurers were helpful to the native forces. They could be used in exchange of benefits such as wealth and resources.

That was why Michael couldn't allow himself to relax and lower his guard about the safety of his territory.

Michael recalled one of his brother's quotes about the Origin Expanse's dangers, and that peace was just the calm before the storm, most of the time.

– When you lower your guard and you feel the least in danger, your opponents will appear, far stronger than you can fathom, and much higher in number than you can handle! –

Thinking about his brother brought a wistful smile on Michael's lips. He would have messaged Danny, but the messenger app didn't work properly in spaceships. There was merely a system that connected the crystal watches on the spaceships. That was also why he could message Alice but could not send messages to his brother.

It was quite annoying.

Unfortunately, being annoyed that he couldn't message his brother, or thinking about the calm before the storm, were not the most important right now.

No, the most important thing was to figure out how to take care of the Forest Elves, and what to do with them. They would stay longer in his territory, in accordance with their Elders' order, which meant that certain things had to change.

Even that was not everything the Forest Elves had been instructed. Apparently, the Forest Elves told their Elders in the tribe a lot about Michael and his actions, and they agreed with his decisions. The Elders must have lectured Lilica and the others because they grew more cooperative in today's meeting and daily conquest of the lizard cave than before.

It had been quite a while since Michael participated in a fight with his small army, along with the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team. Overall, he was satisfied with the result.

A group of six Horned Gray Wolves had been scavenging around the lizard cavern's entrance when Blaire and her trackers found them.

The archers and all other long-range units got into position high up in the canopy bridges, the Mages began to cast their spells, and the melee fighters moved through the thicket.

Liopham exerted his Soultrait to the fullest, manifesting a large Spirit Totem to lure the small pack of Horned Gray Wolves towards them.

Meanwhile, Michael, Tiara, and the Elves got into position, easily to be seen next to the Heavy Armored Elephant.

Tiara coordinated the melee fighters while Michael and the Forest Elves manifested their Woodwoven Bows.

The Forest Elves retrieved a Piecker each, nocked them on the bowstrings, and channeled energy inside them. Afterward, they waited for Michael's command.

The Horned Gray Wolves jumped out of the thicket; their eyes bloody red due to the influence of the Spirit Totem. They howled loudly and released their horrifying pressure as Tier-2 Monsters.

Each of the six Horned Gray Wolves was at the 2nd Tier. Two of them were smaller than the rest, and they seemed unable to exert the full prowess of a Tier-2 Monster. But that did not allow them to fall at ease. The opposing force was not something Michael's army nor the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team was willing to face under normal circumstances either.

The EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team eyed Michael from the corner of their eyes, and their expression turned into one filled with worry, but Michael remained calm as they pounced closer to them.

"The small one in the center is mine. Shoot the rest," Michael ordered barely loud enough for the Forest Elves to hear.

The next moment Michael's eyes began to shimmer golden, the Siltang Bow was shrouded in white light, and a thick arrow condensed on the bowstring that he pulled back smoothly.

He aimed just for a moment and released the arrow the next.

Michael knew that the arrow wouldn't land a killing blow. His combat prowess was high, and he could deal with Mid, maybe even Late Tier-1 Monsters by combining the strongest arrow of the Siltang Bow with Lesser Enhancement and his precise aim with Eagle Eyes. However, killing an agile Tier-2 Monster with a single arrow was a bit too much to ask for.

Fortunately, Michael never intended to deal a killing blow.

He had used Lesser Enhancement on his Soultrait Spirit Whip to expand his attack range and lethality by 20%. The Horned Gray Wolf he targeted barely entered the Spirit Whip's attack range when Michael released the energy arrow.

He struck the Horned Gray Wolf with the enhanced Spirit Whip, which was strong enough to break through its mental defense, even if it was just barely.

The Horned Gray Wolf struggled for a moment before it regained its senses. It moved aside the next moment to evade the energy arrow.

But what the Horned Gray Wolf didn't expect to happen was that the energy arrow would burst apart.

The Monster was not hurt but it was startled and moved aside, just to jump in the way of the second energy arrow, which Michael had precisely planted in the path of the Horned Gray Wolf.

It was struck in the eye and yelped in pain.

By then, the Heavy Armored Elephant, Tiara, and the other melee fighters arrived in front of the injured Horned Gray Wolf.

It had just recently advanced to the 2nd Tier and was now faced with its biggest crisis.

Meanwhile, the five remaining Horned Gray Wolves didn't have it easier, at all. A barrage of arrows poured down on them the moment Michael's energy arrow whizzed through the air.

The Forest Elves had yet to shoot and were impatiently waiting for Michael's signal.

However, that signal didn't reach them until the wet soil beneath the agile Horned Gray Wolves gave way. Their paws disappeared deep in the ground the moment Michael's signal rang out.

Five Pieckers shot through the air like missiles, piercing the sides of the Horned Gray Wolves, just as Michael had instructed.

A single Piecker was not enough to kill Tier-2 Monsters. However, Michael didn't want to waste five of them nor was he okay with the high energy consumption just to kill a single Tier-2 Monster.

Hence, he ordered the Forest Elves to inflict a large wound on the sides of the monsters, which created enough unprotected space for hundreds of arrows to impact.

The Pieckers were released – one for each Monster –, tearing apart the Horned Gray Wolves' side. Now that the highly durable wolf fur had been removed and the raw flesh beneath exposed, the projectiles

with weaker force, such as arrows, crossbow bolts and elemental attacks were released at those spots where they inflicted severe wounds.

Then, once the Horned Gray Wolves grew weaker, the melee fighters shot forward with their sharp blades to join the battle, helping the rest of the group to restrict the Horned Gray Wolves while ensuring that no one would die – or get unnecessarily injured.

Of course, the Forest Elves didn't stop attacking after they used the Pieckers. Their fight had just started as well.

They began to assess the battlefield and retrieve ordinary tempered arrows, which they smoothly knocked. After that, the Forest Elves began to bombard their opponents' vital spots, and the deep wounds they had inflicted on the flesh of their opponents first.

Their arrows impacted hard, causing the Tier-2 Monsters to struggle after a few attacks reached them. However, there was nothing the Horned Gray Wolves could do about it.

Close to 200 projectiles poured down from the treetops, and the close combat units emerged from the thicket around them. They were attacked from all sides, and the Forest Elves restricted their movements even further.

At last, the barrages of projectiles ceased. The close combat units moved closer to the battlefield – after avoiding the Horned Gray Wolves for so long. The Forest Elves joined Michael's charge. They retrieved daggers and helped Michael and the others to finish off their opponents by slowly wearing them down.

All it took was 20 minutes to take down six Tier-2 Monsters, and they didn't face a single casualty.

Michael's Spirit Whip and the Forest Elves' Pieckers might have been the MVPs, but every single participant of the battle deserved some credit for his or her contribution.

If even a single one of them had made a big blunder, the entire plan could have gone south.

Finally, after seeing the six monster corpses, and the bright smiles on everyone's faces, the Forest Elves couldn't help but start smiling as well.

They joined the cheers of their comrades without even realizing that their minds had subconsciously begun to consider Michael and his people as one of their own.

At last, they became part of the territory.

Chapter 170 Revelation

At first, the Forest Elves didn't want to acknowledge that Michael's strategy worked better, but they had to put their pride aside, and agree reluctantly.

Michael was quite happy about that – especially because he could feel that the Forest Elves' Links of Loyalty grew stronger. Despite their constant verbal fights and conflicts, Lilica and the others did not hold a grudge against him. Their only problem was that they didn't like to be told that they had been wrong.

They were too prideful of their skills and capabilities.

The firmness of the Link of Loyalty was not only an indicator of the increase in the Forest Elves' trust, or the fact that they could clearly tell that Michael cared about every single one of his subjects, his surroundings, and their health. It was also related to the respect Michael earned from them, his subjects, and even their Elders.

The Elders of the Forest Elven tribe praised Michael's low-level armaments, his generosity for taking in the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team after the problems they had caused to him and his territory, and the fact that he didn't try to exploit the tribe by demanding more goods in exchange for his qualitative low-level armaments.

The Elders were known for worrying about the tribe's children, especially those who spawned in a region far away from the rest. They had been worried sick when Lilica and the others told them that they became the subordinates of a human. But looking at the terms and conditions of their Links of

Loyalty, and Michael's actions of the past two weeks, they realized that they didn't have to worry too much.

Michael didn't mistreat anyone, and he didn't even think about exploiting the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team or their tribe.

Lilica was also fully aware that they had been somewhat of a nuisance until now. Yet, Michael never forced them to do as he wanted except when it was a life-and-death situation. He didn't make use of his Link of Loyalty to command them to split up either. Michael respected them and their words even if he personally did not like their decision, and the Forest Elves could clearly tell that.

All of these reasons combined together created the foundation for the Links of Loyalty's growth.

Michael sensed this as well.

The improvements in their Links of Loyalty were also part of the reason Michael decided that it was time to tell the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team more about his territory...and his Soultraits.

Of course, Michael wouldn't reveal everything at once. However, there had been too many instances in which Michael had revealed three Soultraits in battle.

Furthermore, the population of his territory expanded by close to 2500 subjects in the two weeks since the Forest Elves became part of his territory.

Michael could have been purchasing the subjects all this time, but that would mean he had money to spare after investing most of his hard-earned money on purchasing ingredients for the production of energy pills and the expansion of his territory.

Some calculations would immediately reveal that Michael spent his money the moment he earned it.

However, what Michael hated the most were three points.

First, he didn't like to lie to his people. It made him feel as if he did something he wasn't supposed to do.

Second, it was inconvenient to keep the charade up. Hiding Extraction from the Forest Elves longer would grow more tiresome as time passed. It stressed him out, especially because the youngest Forest Elf was way too curious about his territory's secrets.

Third, the Forest Elves had been accepted in his territory completely now. Hiding something from them meant that he subconsciously thought of them as outsiders, and that was not the case!

Even if all those reasons didn't exist, everyone living in his territory would sooner or later find out about his Soultrait either way. Connecting all clues would slowly unveil the secrets of Extraction. However, that was a risk Michael had accepted the moment he decided to provide shelter to the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team in his territory.

Back in the clearing, Michael told Tiara and the others to bring the Horned Gray Wolf carcasses, instead of storing them until Michael found some spare time to use Extraction.

Tiara did as told and put the carcasses in front of him.

The Forest Elves eyed Michael's weird actions with great curiosity. They sensed that something big was about to happen.

"As you guys must have noticed, my territory is not that ordinary," Michael said while rolling up his sleeves.

The Forest Elves nodded their heads in unison.

"The reason is my Soultrait, which allows me to do this," Michael continued, and a golden light emerged from his right palm. He held it half a meter above the ground, and it didn't take long before pebbles shot up from the ground.

"I can extract the pebbles from the ground and do this as well..." Michael added at last, moving Extraction's focus onto the six Horned Gray Wolf carcasses.

In the next five minutes, they were fully dissected, and the spoils of war manifested in front of them. Seven complete Summoning Scrolls, five blueprints, 151 Summoning Scroll Fragments, and one 1-Star Tier-1 Artifact manifested.

"By extracting monster corpses, I can dissect them near-perfectly, and the drop rate of loot created by the Will of the Origin Expanse is much higher. There are even Summoning Scroll Fragments which can be combined into an Ordinary Summoning Scroll!"

As Michael spoke, he combined 150 Summoning Scroll Fragments to form six additional Summoning Scrolls, totaling 13 Scrolls from merely six monster carcasses.

Michael could have shown them a few more things, and he could have told them that he can extract Soultraits as well, but he didn't want to expose everything. The Forest Elves were not stupid and could connect the dots on their own. They were intelligent enough to connect the large number of Soultraits displayed in combat with Extraction soon enough.

Either way, the information he shared with the Forest Elves was enough to shock them to the core.

"So that's why your population grows so quickly," Lilica mumbled, while Liopham added,

"Killing many monsters allows you to grow even faster...doesn't that mean the Untamed Jungle is a perfect grinding spot for you?"

After Liopham spoke, the youngest Forest Elf began to jump around in excitement.

"Isn't that super amazing? That's crazy!!"

The youngest charged over to Lilica and began squealing around. Michael was not sure if the Forest Elf was intentionally exaggerating his reaction, but after looking at Lilica, he realized that she was slowly getting annoyed.

One action led to another, and the youngest Forest Elf ended on the ground, his face hitting the wet soil first.

The youngest groaned in pain, but Lilica ignored him. She clapped her hands as if to remove dust before her expression turned serious.

"Do you want us to keep this a secret from everyone, including our Elders?" Lilica asked with a deep frown on her face.

It was one thing to ask them to keep a secret from other races, but their Elders were their most trusted people. Exposing his Soultrait's powers in front of them meant that he trusted them. However, Lilica didn't want to lie to their Elders.

"I already thought about that issue. It's not necessary to hide it from your Elders. In fact, I really don't like hiding my Soultrait from my race either," Michael added lightly, before his eyes turned sharp, "Fortunately, I have some hostages in case your Elders reveal my secret to others."

Michael didn't shy away from threatening the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team.

The meaning of his words was clear; It was fine to tell the Elders about him and his Soultrait, but if they would make a mistake like their youngest they should be careful, otherwise, their head would roll on the ground.

The Link of Loyalty prevented Michael's subordinates from betraying him. However, there was also a certain gray zone, which couldn't be ignored easily.

Michael took care of that by threatening the Forest Elves with their Link of Loyalty, and that their Elders should be careful with his secret once they'd been told about him and his Soultrait.

It might not be a nice thing to do, but Michael didn't really care.

He was just glad that he could stop hiding his Soultrait in front of the Forest Elves. That had been way too stressful in the last two weeks.

"I trust our Elders. They won't tell anyone about your Soultrait," Lilica said confidently after she swallowed her saliva hard.

Michael's threat caused her to break into a sweat. She really couldn't get the hang of Michael's character. Was he kind, and generous, or was he usually a merciless man who hated inconveniences?

It was truly frightening for her.

Nonetheless, as the leader of the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team, she was their role model. She had to show her people how to stay strong, and how to respond. Thus, she cleared her throat and stepped forward.

"On the contrary, the Elders will probably work hard to keep everything a secret. They might even attempt to deepen our business relationship and advance it to the next level!" Lilica said knowingly.

She was behaving as if she had already exposed the remaining secrets of Extraction.

Maybe, she had already concluded that Michael was in possession of a Soultrait that allowed him to get hold of more Soultraits, and his revelation reaffirmed her suspicion?

Michael was not sure, but he wasn't worried at all.

On the contrary, he was a little hopeful of the future.

'Finally, I don't have to hide this shit anymore!'