

Supreme Lord 191

Chapter 191 Starting Point

[Zara (SC Elyra): Zara accepted your request. Michael Fang has been given permission to receive an auto-update about Daniel Fang's Lord ID. Current status → Intact Lord ID/ Tier-3 Lord]

"That is great..." Michael mumbled quietly to himself. He was relieved that his brother was fine.

A few minutes earlier, Alice told him that the supercomputer in Elyra accepted his request and that he would receive a notification whenever something about Danny's Lord ID changed.

That was everything Michael wanted to know for now.

He finished his chat with Alice after a while. The Real Combat assessment was not yet done, and he had a few more battles to fight.

Until lunch the day after, Michael fought a total of ten times – just like everyone else.

The number of battles was no problem for Michael. However, the issue was that his opponents grew increasingly more difficult to deal with after his fight with Lincoln. It felt like everyone turned into a monstrous genius all of a sudden.

Michael had to face Zeke Lavita as well. Unsurprisingly, Michael lost this battle miserably. It was even more of a humiliating defeat than his fight with Lincoln.

Zeke caught him in an illusion, three seconds after their fight began. Despite knowing what was going to happen, Michael couldn't avoid getting trapped in Zeke's illusion. It was terrifying.

Unguarded against Zeke's mental attack, Michael could only lose. What was he supposed to do? He was at a lower Tier and didn't have a technique that protected his mind from mental attacks like Zeke's!

Other than that, Michael lost a few more battles as well. The only battles he won were against the opponents before Lincoln, and one more young guy after Lincoln. Michael had been pumped up for the battles, but he was humbled real quick.

He fought with all his might against everyone, but their techniques, Tier, Soultraits, and Artifacts overpowered Michael. Fortunately, Michael didn't lose miserably anymore after fighting Lincoln and Zeke. On the contrary, he forced his opponents to struggle desperately to defeat him.

His opponents were on the verge of losing more than once, forcing them to unleash some of their hidden trumps in front of everyone.

Unfortunately, the final ranking didn't pay much attention to the severity of the battle. It noted down whether you won or lost, and created a ranking accordingly, irrespective of how much effort you put in.

That was also why Michael didn't make it into the Top 500 at last. He felt absolutely gutted by his performance. He was strong enough to fight a bunch of people, who'd made it into the Top 500 in the end, but his battle records weren't good enough to push him into the Top 500.

It was a hassle, but also another reason to strive for more strength.

Michael's progress in the last 30 days was not exceptional, but it was still great. He received some Sapphire Points at the end of the second assessment, which Michael used up immediately to apply for some academy courses.

He joined the Limit Breaker course from Silverian Schild again, and he was fortunate enough to grab one of the last few spots for Memory Lane. Memory Lane required Sapphire Points to join, which was why everyone tried to pick it hurriedly once the first batch of Sapphire Points were distributed. Luckily, Michael was swift enough to join the course.

Other than that, Michael also enrolled in the special courses Old Tongues, and Ancient Ruins. Michael also picked Individual Teaching since Alice was willing to teach him.

Interestingly enough, all of his courses were special courses. The Mainstream and Secondary courses were interesting, but Michael was keen to find out more about the Temple of the Forgotten. Thus, he

chose two courses that would most probably help him conquer the Temple of the Forgotten in the future.

Old Tongues and Ancient Ruins were mostly self-study courses. The Researchers would hold 2-hour classes twice a week to speak about the students' progress, and to answer questions. Other than that, it would be much easier to read the study material the researchers shared than listen to boring lectures four times a week. It was a waste of time with the advantage of the Origin Expanse's time ratio.

Memory Lane was a two hour class at the start of the week. The students had enough time to self-practice for the rest of the week until the Professor would hold a Question-and-Answer session at the end of the week.

Alice's Individual teaching was thrice a week for two hours each. Michael had yet to pick the dates but he was likely to shuffle his schedule a bit and adjust them along with his other courses. As long as it was not immediately after the Limit Breaker Workout session that would be held daily early in the morning before the sun rose, Michael would be fine.

In total, Michael had to spend around 34 hours in the Saphirelake Military Academy every week. That was less than Michael expected for a total of five courses.

But that was great.

His schedule didn't force him to spend too much time outside the Origin Expanse. That meant, he could use the advantageous time ratio of the Origin Expanse to workout, study, reinforce his mastery of his Soultraits, and much more.

The Origin Expanse was the perfect environment to study. It was quiet in his territory right now, nature was flourishing, and the amount of origin energy in the Untamed Jungle was more than enough to keep him energized. It was perfect!

Once the Real Combat assessment ended for him, Michael separated from the rest. He left after exchanging contact details with the Barscht Triplets, Zeke, and Lincoln.

After stepping inside his room, Michael didn't waste any time. He manifested the Runic Gate and returned to the Origin Expanse.

Michael was ready to change a lot in his territory. All preparations had been completed, leaving only Michael to dish out the final command.

"Let's split up the army. It's nonsense to run around with several hundred combatants in the Untamed Jungle. It's too densely grown to fight with such large numbers on one battlefield," Michael told Tiara, who agreed at once.

They'd already been planning the split-up of the army for a few weeks. The arrival of the Forest Elves changed a lot, but it made things a little easier as well. I think you should take a look at

Creating several Combat Units ensured better security in the territory, and it improved the hunting progress by a lot.

But Michael didn't come back to the Origin Expanse merely to split up his territory's army. He ordered the expansion of the canopy bridges and gave the first orders to focus on the Workshops in the Underground Ecosystem.

The Underground Ecosystem would turn into a quiet workshop for the blacksmiths, and a home for the miners, who were willing to stay underground and near the ore deposits.

Michael focused on the production of low-level armaments for the time being. It was his best source of income, and it helped the Forest Elven tribe a lot. That way, Michael could earn a fortune and further improve his relationship with the Forest Elven tribe. There was no disadvantage.

Other than the production of goods, a few new lives were born in the Origin Expanse in his territory.

A few Bilrox younglings hatched from the eggs of the female Bilrox Michael bought a while back, and more were bound to follow soon enough.

The Bilrox Ranch was bound to be bustling soon enough, just like the rest of the territory did.

More treehouse complexes were constructed on a daily basis and more subjects joined the territory after emerging from the Summoning Gate.

The territory grew rapidly, and as of now, it didn't seem like trouble awaited them.

That was great, and it gave him the opportunity to spend the rest of the week studying religiously and working on more plans to focus on in the future.

His first week in the Sapphirelake Military Academy didn't feel different from his time in the Dekalos-Class spaceship.

The Memory Lane course was jam-packed with students. The study material was more detailed than it had been in the spaceship, but the content of the first week's lesson wasn't too different. In fact, it was a summary of the lessons Michael had already attended in the Dekalos-Class spaceship to ensure that everyone was at the same starting point.

On the other hand, the Limit Breaker course was pretty interesting. Only a few students picked the course, and most actually only picked it due to the benefits one would receive.

A Jumbo Meal and one medicinal solution ticket were given to everyone – but only after they were present at the workout session. The condition was made to ensure that nobody could receive the benefits of certain courses without actually attending them. It was also why many freshmen would soon quit the Limit Breaker course.

But Michael didn't care about that. He was quite satisfied having the Barbaric Couple, and Kaleb as fellow students in the course. Kaleb was registered as a special case, which is why he was allowed to attend some of the special courses without being officially accepted as a freshman at the Sapphirelake Military Academy.

He would only become an official student of the academy once he manifested his War Rune.

Interestingly enough, the Barscht triplets and a bunch of other Minor Nobles chose to join Silverian Schild's Limit Breaker Course as well.

At this point in time, Michael could tell that his life in the Sapphirelake Military Academy would become increasingly interesting. He made a bunch of friends and got to know more people.

But most importantly, Michael was given the opportunity to grow stronger and learn more about the Origin Expanse and the extraterrestrial.

It was simply too exciting and much more pleasant than his time in school in Elyra.

How could he not be happy about his current situation?

Meanwhile, his individual teaching with Alice started only after the first week ended. Alice had been busy all week, which was why they could only start now.

But that was something Michael was fine with.

In fact, he felt good spending one week adjusting to the new environment and studying more about Ancient Ruins and Old Tongues. It was quite interesting even if it may sound extremely boring for others.

Because it sounded rather boring compared to "Advanced Warfare", "Magic Warfare", and so on, not many students picked the Ancient Ruins and Old Tongues courses. Fortunately, that made it easier to get to know the other freshmen and create a harmonious study group where the researchers were more like friendly guides than strict teachers.

Unfortunately, not all courses made him feel as comfortable as the Ancient Ruins and Old Tongues courses. In the Memory Lane course, everyone felt anonymous. Even though not a single seat was unoccupied in the course, Michael didn't get to know anyone. On the other hand, the Limit Breaker course had a sense of familiarity in Michael's heart.

He knew most people in the Limit Breaker course and felt that it was quite nice to be suffering alongside them. Seeing their suffering eased his mind to a certain extent, telling him he was not the only one who was struggling.

It was weird but nice.

However, his first lesson with Alice was everything but nice.

In fact, it was horror.

"Escape, or die!"

Chapter 192 Ice Prison

Alice's individual teaching was a little bit different from what Michael expected.

He thought that Alice would set up a training course according to the information from his second aptitude assessment.

Other than Spirit Whip, which he had hidden, the information of his second aptitude assessment was correct.

However, Alice didn't seem to trust the information, or she simply didn't care about it.

The two of them met up in a large training hall, which Alice had emptied for them to use.

The hall was more than a hundred meters long and wide, giving the two enough space for their training.

Michael stood in the center of the hall as Alice told him to stand there and wait.

What Michael didn't expect to experience was what happened afterward.

"Escape or die!" Alice shouted from a distance before she began utilizing her Soultraits, Frozen Kingdom.

It was the first time Michael witnessed the power of a Tier-5 powerhouse. He would have been excited to see a Tier-5 powerhouse using her 6-Star Soultrait because it was something one couldn't see every day. It was a rare occurrence to witness the precise utility of a high-ranked Soultrait with the usage of a tremendous amount of energy.

However, this was the first time in his life that Michael wished he wouldn't have to witness Alice's display of power. After all, he was forced to not just witness it but experience the whole thing.

The entire hall turned into a domain of ice. Everything froze in an instant, glistening faintly.

The next moment, pillars of ice shot out of the ice covering the inside of the hall.

The ice pillars shot out of all directions. They moved around like glacier dragons, slithering through the air with a horrifying velocity. At this moment, time seemed to freeze around Michael. He instinctively used Lesser Enhancement on his eyes and the Eagle Eyes Soultrait, which he exerted as well.

Yet, even after using all of this, Michael could hardly follow the rapid movements of the ice pillars around him.

The temperature in the vicinity dropped far below zero, and Michael began to shudder. Michael felt like his body started to freeze even though Alice had yet to attack him directly. The domain of ice was more than enough to affect him that much.

Michael subconsciously summoned the Onyx Dragon Armor Set, and he began to use Lesser Enhancement on the Armor Set's protection enchantments. He imbued origin energy into the protection enchantments to shield himself from the cold, but it was far less helpful than he'd hoped.

'So fucking cold!' Michael screamed in his heart. He instinctively entered his consciousness and used 25 SoulStar Fragments to increase Lesser Enhancement from a 2-Star Soultrait to a 3-Star Soultrait.

In his fight against Lincoln and Zeke, Michael didn't get the chance to enhance Lesser Enhancement and he simply forgot to enhance Lesser Enhancement afterward.

He felt a little foolish for forgetting about the 121 SoulStar Fragments revolving around the white pillar of his War Rune, but he was glad to recall them right now.

Lesser Enhancement became a 3-Star Soultrait, and its potency increased by a large margin. The white hue around his Artifacts and eyes intensified and the enhancement of his Soultrait increased from 20% to 35%

Michael's presence grew stronger and the freezing cold in the hall became easier to endure.

However, with the change in Michael's presence, the ice pillars reacted.

The pillar of ice shot up through the ground all around Michael, restricting his movements. Before Michael could even think about reacting, the ice pillars covered the ground, and air around him. creating a tightly sealed ice prison all around him.

Michael could barely move in the tightly sealed ice prison, but that was not the most worrisome aspect.

He felt like he was on the verge of death.

The ice pillars exuded a chilling aura. It was colder than anything Michael had ever felt before.

'Fuck!' Michael screamed in his mind.

'Is she serious about killing me?!?'

For a moment, Michael's mind blanked out. It was too cold to gather his thoughts properly. The only thing on his mind was the chilling aura that spread through every cell in his body.

He felt that he was getting weaker by the second and could only respond by manifesting Seron Voulge. Thus, the next second Seron Voulge moved through the narrow space and collided with the ice pillar closest to him, yet nothing happened.

Not even the upgraded version of Lesser Enhancement was strong enough to cause a tiny scratch in the ice pillar.

But what did he expect? Did he really think that he could damage the ice prison manifested by a Tier-5 Lord using her 6-Star Soultrait?

Was he dumb? Probably a little.

His fingers were ice-cold, and it felt like his feet were frozen to the ground. Michael couldn't tell what was going on anymore. Everything around him was glacier-white, and his body temperature dropped quickly.

His entire body began to shudder, and it grew increasingly more difficult to stay awake. His brain seemed to be malfunctioning as thinking became more and more difficult.

He did his best to come up with a plan to escape, but neither his physical attacks with Seron Voulge nor Spirit Whips seemed to work out.

Spirit Whip dispersed the moment it collided with the ice pillars, while Seron Voulge's collision caused Michael's hands and arms to shake violently.

By now, Michael could clearly tell that the origin energy inside him oozed out of his body much faster than usual. Something was wrong and Michael quickly figured out what it was.

The chilling aura exuded from the ice pillars all around him was rapidly draining his origin energy!

Michael tried to seal his body from the ice pillar's chilling aura, but he was too weak. His mind could barely perceive that something was going on when he was already nearly out of origin energy.

At that point, Michael knew that Alice would either leave him to die or that she would terminate her Soultrait when he was close to death.

But he didn't want to end it like this. Even if Alice wanted to teach him a lesson and would release him from the ice prison before he froze to death, Michael didn't want to give her the gratification of being able to overpower him so easily.

Michael didn't know what was going on in Alice's mind, but he knew that he couldn't give up like this. I think you should take a look at

He desired to escape the ice prison and surprise her with his comeback. Michael wanted to be the protagonist!

At that moment, Extraction was activated.

If he couldn't destroy the ice pillars around him, he might as well just extract them all!

The entire hall was frozen and he was covered in several layers of thick ice pillars.

Even if Alice could see, or sense him, she wouldn't be able to tell what he was doing. After all, Michael willed the golden streams of Extraction to coil around Seron Voulge's white hue.

He used Lesser Enhancement on the Symbol of Extraction to give it a white touch, before coiling the streams around the white hue shrouding Seron Voulge's blade.

Then he slashed out once again, using the last bits of strength and energy inside his body.

Considering that Michael had already three Soultraits, it was more likely that the golden hue was a special effect caused by the combination of multiple Soultraits – rather than it being a fourth Soultrait.

One way or another, the voulge's blade collided with the ice pillar. Michael's hand felt like it was crumbling apart like ice shards, but he kept using more strength to cut into the ice pillar. When Extraction's whitish-golden streams came in contact with the ice pillar, shards of ice split apart.

It looked like Seron Voulge dug through the ice pillar at last. Yet, in reality, it was Extraction that merely removed three grain-sized shards of ice before his entire energy was drained at once.

The chilling aura intensified the moment Seron Voulge's blade scratched the ice pillar, and Michael blanked out.

The next thing Michael remembered was waking up to a soothing feeling that spread through his entire body. He groaned in exhaustion and from the pain of nearly freezing to death, but he savored the soothing warmth that reached every nerve of his body.

It showed him that he was still alive.

Michael opened his eyes, just to see the hall's ceiling.

Nothing was frozen anymore, which made Michael feel like Alice's Frozen Kingdom Soultrait had merely been a nightmare – a terrifying and bone-chilling nightmare.

Unfortunately, Alice's beautiful face looking down at him showed quite clearly that the terrifying nightmare had been nothing but the brutal reality.

It made him feel bitter – especially because he recalled only now that he had used Extraction.

On one hand, he was a little frustrated about having used Extraction, but on the other hand, he was also a little surprised about the way he'd utilized Extraction.

'If I utilize Extraction like this in a life-and-death battle...what would happen?' Michael wondered.

The thought of extracting his opponents' blood and organs mid-battle made his heartbeat wildly.

Michael had once attempted to use Extraction mid-battle. It didn't work well because his opponents' willpower restricted the utility of Extraction. However, there were certain ways to create a loophole. Michael just had to find them.

'It drains too much energy to use it in the middle of the battle if I combine it with Eagle Eyes, Spirit Whip, and Lesser Enhancement. Using 3 Soultraits is already too much...'

Michael was deep in thought. He felt that new opportunities were slowly unraveling themselves in front of him, and he wanted to grasp them all.

"So that is your current level? Looks like your determination is your best trait. You won't give up even if it's impossible to escape," Alice noticed while blowing air on her nails. "That can be good, but it can also be disastrous. It's a double-edged personality trait in all honesty."

"Double-edged?" Michael asked in between two heavy breaths.

He was exhausted and drained of all his energy. The mere thought of using his Soultrait caused him to feel like vomiting on the spot.

Nonetheless, he was glad that Alice didn't seem to have noticed anything odd about Extraction's golden streams that had appeared at the end of his desperate escape attempt.

"As an individual, your personality trait can save your life. It's something you need to survive in helpless situations," Alice praised, but her voice didn't sound like she was dishing out compliments, "However, as a Lord, you'll get your people killed because you believe that you can overcome the impossible."

Michael frowned as she continued, "At the end of the day, you will witness the miserable death of your subjects even though they could have survived if you hadn't been that 'determined' to win. There is a thin line between determination and foolishness, idiocy, stubbornness, and arrogance."

Alice dropped the bomb without showing any mercy.

There was a huge difference between being an Adventurer vs a Lord. First of all, the power of their Soultraits was different. But that was not all. The most important difference lies in their responsibilities, and numbers.

"Your determination would suit an Adventurer. It is still great while being a Lord, but we'll have to do something about it to make sure that you know when you're going over the top. After all, I doubt that you want to see your subjects dying miserably when you encounter a helpless situation!" Alice continued to speak.

The coldness in her voice dispersed slowly, and she let out a disappointed sigh.

'Did I crush him too much just now?' She wondered as her gaze landed on Michael.

To her, Michael looked like a lost child right now. It was not nice to look at.

However, Alice knew that someone had to tell Michael that certain personality traits were good for some people, while they could make his life miserable as a Lord. Lords were not the same as ordinary people. They had to protect their territory, their subjects, and being strong enough to know when to fight, and when to retreat.

"Alright, I get it," Michael said after a while. He thought that his determination was a good thing, and that it allowed him to achieve everything. However, thinking about the Blood-eyed Minotaur and a few other encounters he had in the past, Michael could only acknowledge that things could have gone south real quick.

The fight against the Blood-eyed Minotaur had already been miserable, but much more could have gone wrong. Thinking about it gave him the chills and he could only thank his subjects and his luck for a close shave with death.

"Your Soultraits are not bad, and it looks like you have yet to comprehend a few unique features about your Soultraits. Your last strike was pretty good. I didn't expect you to inflict a scratch upon the Glacier Pillars. You are still young, Michael. Just learn and improve. That way you'll be ready for the battles that await you in the Origin Expanse, and when the war in the extraterrestrial starts!"

Michael nodded his head meekly. It seemed like Alice didn't notice anything about Extraction.

"Wait...war in the extraterrestrial? What was that about again?" Michael blurted out, his expression filled with confusion.

'Wasn't the upcoming war a rumor? Why does it sound like a war will erupt the day after tomorrow the way Alice speaks about it?'

Chapter 193 Lesser Dimension War

"What exactly is this upcoming war? Who are we fighting, and why are we fighting them?" Michael asked.

"I heard some rumors and read some 'news' from semi-professional platforms on the Lord Network, but there hasn't been an official announcement or anything like that."

Michael had heard about the possibility of an upcoming war from his brother, but it had never been confirmed. Not even the information in the forums of the Lord Network said anything specific.

Until now, Michael's life outside the Origin Expanse had been rather relaxed. He might have spent his time working out and studying all day, but he never had to fight a foreign race outside the Origin Expanse. He didn't even kill anyone outside the Origin Expanse yet.

Was all of that about to change?

"Won't extraterrestrial wars mostly be fought with warcraft? In fact, even if the Awakened fight as well, freshmen shouldn't be affected for quite a while, or will we?" Michael added two more questions, while fully prepared to throw more questions at Alice.

Only by advancing to Tier-4 would Awakened be able to survive in space. The vitality of Tier-4 Awakened would evolve, turning the Awakened into a higher life form. However, that was something most people wouldn't attain until they reached the age of 30. In fact, most would not even make it that far, in the first place.

Thus, Michael wouldn't be affected by an upcoming war for quite a while. So why did it sound like the war would reach them soon?

"I understand that you might be a little bit confused, but you should calm down," Alice said, her voice sharper than intended.

She regained her composure and looked at him with a neutral expression, trying to read what was going on inside his mind.

"Your lack of knowledge is understandable. It's necessary that you start studying more about the extraterrestrials. Only then will you realize how much impact the Origin Expanse has on wars in the extraterrestrial? Those are very complicated topics, and it is unfortunate that nobody taught them to you until now," She explained before adding, "It seems like I need to adjust the schedule of our individual teaching. Watching you fight made me forget that you...well, whatever..."

Michael was unsure if it was because of the way Alice spoke to him or something else, but her words made him feel really stupid. It was the first time he felt like that while talking to Alice.

For a moment he wondered if he was an illiterate child, whose knowledge was not even equal to a single droplet of water in the ocean.

"Either way," Alice murmured while regaining Michael's full attention with a simple gesture, "I assessed your strength, determination, and the prowess of your Soultraits just now. I will further adjust our training regime and we'll be able to start for real during the next session."

She cleared her throat and continued speaking,

"For now, I can tell you a few things about humanity. Precisely, I will give you a short explanation about how the Tritan Alliance came into existence, and why we're in preparations for a war."

After the last words escaped Alice's lips, she retrieved two chairs from her War Rune. She gestured to Michael to sit down, meaning that her 'summary' would be anything but short.

Alice prepared herself shortly to prepare throwing a 60 minute long summary at Michael, "Let's start with the extraterrestrial..."

...

Exactly one hour later, Alice finished the summary - if one could call it such, in the first place.

She expected Michael to bombard her with questions, but he was deep in thought, trying to digest every piece of information he had been given. He remained motionless for a few minutes, and only began to move when he finished organizing the newly added information Alice had given him in the last hour.

"So, to keep it really short. Artifacts, certain devices, and other objects from the Origin Expanse influence the battles outside the Origin Expanse. These items can create spaces that can only be entered by beings beneath a certain Tier. That way, Awakened of a lower Tier will be forced into battle...that's weird" Michael mumbled, recalling that he had heard some of that before.

However, it didn't really make sense in his opinion.

"I don't really understand how politics work, or how politics are involved in the increasing importance of Artifacts from the Origin Expanse, but let's put that aside for now..." Michael mumbled before his mind moved to the more important part of Alice's one-hour-long summary.

"Now this is a part I don't really understand... A race called Tekur manifested a Portal on one of the planets in this stellar system a decade ago. The portal anchored on that planet by chance – which led to the first conflicts between the Tekur race and the citizens of the said planet. Both Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs lived there, and given that they're war-loving races, they didn't hesitate to attack – I presume." Michael added, looking over to Alice, who nodded in affirmation.

Michael was just about to continue summarizing what Alice had said within an hour when she intervened.

"You don't have to repeat everything I've said. It's pretty simple. The Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs lost the first few clashes with the Tekur. Then mankind appeared on their radars. We landed on Kelta with the intention to colonize it but encountered a few injured members of the Berserker and Warlock Centaur race. They were on the verge of death after fighting a small cohort of the Tekur race. I think you should take a look at

Our healers tended to their wounds, got to know more about the situation, and one of the strongest powerhouses of mankind decided to take a look at the Portal. The Tekur returned to their planet at that point, thought we are not yet certain why. The Soultrait of the human powerhouse was related to spatial manipulation, which was why he could temporarily seal the portal, preventing the Tekur from entering the Lumina Stellar System.

The help we provided initiated the first steps to the creation of the Tritan Alliance."

Michael heard her saying the same words the second time, but it felt much clearer now, "And because it was only temporarily sealed, the seal continues to grow weaker, right?"

Alice nodded once again, "Last year, the Tekur changed something about the portal from their side. They altered the portal, turning it into a Lesser Dimension Gate, which allows Awakened below the 3rd Tier to enter it. The Tekur race then challenged the Tritan Alliance, saying that they had three years to destroy the Lesser Dimension by shattering the six Dimensional Pillars in the Lesser Dimension before they would initiate a full-blown attack on the Lumina Stellar System.

The words and challenge of the Tekur were proven to be correct as the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs conquered a part of the Lesser Dimension, destroying one of the Dimensional Pillars. The Lesser Dimension Gates on both sides grew weaker, allowing lesser Tekur and members of the Tritan Alliance to enter it at a time. Once all Dimensional Pillars are destroyed, the Gate would disperse on its own."

Alice was very frustrated when talking about the Tekur. It was intriguing to look at since Alice was known for being cold and void of emotions.

Michael never really felt that she was void of emotions, but he heard rumors about the genius of the Zenovia family often enough to know that many feared her.

However, Michael could understand her agitation to a certain extent. To ensure that the Tekur would never be able to reach the Lumina stellar system the Lesser Dimension had to be destroyed. It was the only Gateway connecting the Lumina Stellar System with the Tekur, after all.

Fighting the Tekur head-on was not feasible either. They were an older race – even older than the three races of the Tritan Alliance combined. One of their Divine Lifeforms was enough to conquer the entire

Tritan Alliance. That was why Alice was so worried and angry; the Lesser Dimension Gate had to be destroyed, but none of mankind's powerhouses had been able to achieve that so far. They couldn't even help destroying it.

All they could do was to support the younger generations to grow stronger as quickly as possible. The strongest Awakened beneath Tier-3 had to be nourished to grow strong enough to fight against the Tekur – a superior race with stronger techniques, better Artifacts, and Unique Racial Abilities.

Michael could clearly sense the way Alice's mood worsened while having this discussion. It was not fun to look at.

"But do you think that I will have a chance to participate in the battle against the Tekur? If in the next two years the remaining five Dimensional Pillars must be destroyed, I would have to reach the Peak of the 2nd Tier before that, while ensuring that my combat prowess is high enough to face the Tekur – whose combat prowess is bound to be extraordinary," Michael wondered aloud.

Alice just smiled when she realized what Michael was thinking about.

"Let's just hope that you won't have to enter the Lesser Dimension. One way or another, you should grow stronger to ensure your territory's safety. You never know what will happen in the future!" Alice lectured.

Michael was interested in older races, and he would have loved to talk with the Tekur race. Unfortunately, it looked like they were enemies. It was unlikely that he would gain the opportunity to talk to them about the Origin Tongues, or other topics he would have loved to discuss.

It was a shame, but there was nothing Michael could do about it.

Maybe, the situation revolving around the Lesser Dimension Gate wouldn't affect him. But even if it wouldn't affect him, Michael thought that it was good to know what was going on in outer space around mankind's territory.

After Michael finished organizing his thoughts, Alice told him about a few more things before she called it a day. Michael's mind was already flooded with information. Continuing their training now was no short of torture.

The evening after their first training session, Michael received a list of questions from Alice.

The questions were pretty simple but about topics that were considered rude to ask under normal circumstances. Alice asked him what techniques he was using, and details about his Soultrait.

However, Michael answered the list of questions without any qualms.

He knew that Alice needed as much information as possible to create the most efficient training course for him.

Nonetheless, some questions were confusing. The questions caused Michael to think a lot, and he quickly found himself losing focus of the list of questions.

His mind went astray.

"How is it even possible for big families to ensure that their children will be compatible with their Inheritance techniques?"

Chapter 194 Purity

The next time they met a few days later, Alice finished Michael's training course. It was very detailed and entailed various study sessions.

Michael was already in possession of tons of study materials from other courses, yet Alice easily topped that amount by a few times.

In addition to the huge mountain of study material, Michael was given a technique that enabled the refinement of his mind.

"Since you don't have an Ice-related Soultrait with a high star rating, I cannot give you the Zenovia family's inheritance technique. Even if I hand it over to you, you won't be able to use it," Alice said nonchalantly, "The Caesurium Menta mind refinement technique is the best technique I could procure in the last few days."

Michael's eyes gleamed brightly while staring at the Mind refinement technique. Compared to a body refinement technique, Caesurium Menta was tens of times harder to procure. With his authority, Michael would have to wait several months before a low-ranked Mind refining technique was up for sale, but Alice procured a Mid-ranked technique quite easily.

That was how influential Alice Zenovia was!

"You shouldn't be too happy yet. Most High Nobles, Supreme Families, and Big Clans have much better techniques. Their Inheritance techniques refine their body, mind, and soul simultaneously to create perfect synergy. They create a perfect vessel for specific Soultraits to strengthen them and unravel the hidden potential of their Soultraits by modifying their body, mind, and soul accordingly," Alice explained seriously.

"Meanwhile, your techniques don't have an advantageous effect on your Soultraits!"

Michael's good mood was deflated like a pin-pricked balloon by Alice's heavy words.

"I get it. Most Inheritance techniques have been customized for certain types of Soultraits since children often manifest Soultraits, which are similar to their parents. But how can the High Nobles and other families ensure that their children won't awaken another type of Soultrait? It should be quite difficult to—...." Michael said, realizing too late who he was speaking to. He shut his mouth abruptly.

He didn't want to say anything rude to Alice, but Michael could tell that she was having a hard time keeping a poker face. Michael didn't need to be smart to understand that he said something wrong.

He broke into a sweat and began to make wild gestures in an attempt to figure out what to say now. But Alice just smiled.

"It's only obvious to be curious about that since you're new to all of this," Alice said, much calmer than Michael could have hoped for.

"Actually, it's pretty simple. I have an Ice Soultrait simply because my entire family has Soultraits related to ice. That includes my parents and grandparents. Kaleb is highly likely to awaken an Ice-type Soultrait as well."

'Everyone has an Ice-type Soultrait? Isn't that a little bit too much of a coincidence?' Michael wondered.

"You might think that it is an odd coincidence," Alice said exactly what was on Michael's mind, and his eyes widened in surprise.

His gaze was fixed on Alice, whose expression turned emotionless as the next words tumbled out of her mouth, "Unfortunately, it's not an eerie coincidence. My grandmother married my grandfather only because of his Ice-type Soultrait, and the patriarch of the Zenovia family is the same. He married my mother only because she had a powerful Ice-type Soultrait."

Alice made it sound like she was stating the obvious facts, but Michael was fixed on her as she spoke. He noticed the pain that was sealed deep inside her eyes, where nobody ought to see it.

'Huh?' Michael nearly blurted aloud, glad that he could control his body enough to keep his mouth shut.

"By bearing children with a partner, whose Soultrait is similar and compatible with yours, you can ensure that the child will awaken a Soultrait of the same type. That is enough to ensure that the Inheritance technique won't have to be altered after the new generation awakens. The entire focus can stay on the improvement of the Inheritance technique, which will ensure that the big families stay at the top and that they continue to grow stronger."

Alice's voice grew colder as she shared her knowledge and wisdom with Michael. Her eyes turned blank as if there was no willpower inside them, and it looked like she was about to turn into an emotionless robot.

Michael had never seen Alice like this. Her body exuded a frigid aura, and her presence turned freezing cold. It was near impossible to even think about approaching her. And for the first time since Michael

got to know her, Alice turned into the cold and distant person everyone talked about when they mentioned the Frozen Duchess, Alice Zenovia.

'Is that why most big families have arranged marriages? To ensure the purity of their Soultraits...for real?!?'

Living with a partner, sharing good and bad times equally...Loving each other, and living happily until death parted them... If there was no love between two partners, what was the point of marriage?

Michael felt bad for Alice, and Kaleb at this moment. He realized that if they followed their family's orders, they would never get to marry the person they truly loved. They would have to bear children with strangers, whom they didn't love. Maybe, they wouldn't even like each other, in the first place.

Michael couldn't even begin to imagine how that must feel. He didn't want to imagine it. It sounded too heartbreaking.

It made sense to improve the Inheritance techniques to ensure that their family could grow stronger to compete against other big families and to gain enough strength to fight older races in the extraterrestrial. Nonetheless, it was also quite sad to think that the descendants of High Nobles, Supreme Families, and Great Clans wouldn't be able to choose a partner they truly loved and wanted.

That was the sacrifice the strongest people of the human race made to make sure that they would stay near the top.

'Are Minor Nobles also like that? They shouldn't care too much about the purity of their Soultraits...right?'

Michael knew that Frederik and Jacqueline were engaged from a young age, but they loved each other. At least, that was what Michael was certain about when he saw them together.

Furthermore, their Soultraits were not of the same type, or compatible either. I think you should take a look at

'But then again...aren't they engaged because their parents have been working together for years? Even if love is involved, isn't their engagement a means to ensure that no party can even consider betraying each other?'

Michael was at a loss. Even if Minor Nobles and influential families weren't interested in keeping their Soultraits pure, it was not unlikely that they would use their children as assets with great political value.

"It's better if you don't think too much about it. Just know that the investments of our families come with a heavy price. They're never free," Alice explained coldly.

Seeing Michael's expression, Alice could only sigh heavily. Sometimes, she envied ordinary people. But then again, she wouldn't be who she was without the Zenovia family and their tireless efforts to nurture them.

"If you say so..." Michael murmured, not really feeling happy about what he heard.

"Just know that nothing is free in this world. Unconditional love is nothing more than a dream," Alice said while some color slowly returned to her face.

"Let's just get started. Read through Caesurium Menta's first stage and we can start!"

Michael could tell that Alice didn't want to continue talking about this topic, so Michael complied. He was a little bit uncomfortable as well.

Michael opened the mind refining technique and started to read.

However, Michael found himself getting absorbed in the pages quite easily.

The mind refining technique was much more interesting than he initially thought, and he found himself spending the rest of the day reading.

He hadn't forgotten how sad Alice looked, and what she'd said. Nonetheless, his focus stayed on the study of the Caesurium Menta's first stage.

The technique ought to enhance his comprehension ability, memorization, and every other factor revolving around the brain. This included the control and precision of Soultraits. After all, the Soultraits were activated and controlled with the mind.

The next few weeks were rather ordinary. While he focused on refining his mind, his comprehension of the Memory Lane technique improved rapidly.

The improvement of Memory Lane made studying much easier, especially since he reached the technique's second stage.

Nonetheless, all of that was not fast enough for Michael. He wanted to study faster and become stronger as quickly as possible.

'I wish I had a Memorization Soultrait or something along those lines ...' Michael thought at one point.

He had so much to learn, while simultaneously attending all courses that he felt overwhelmed every now and then.

Nonetheless, he still managed to spend most of the time in the Origin Expanse.

The time ratio advantage had to be abused as much as possible. Thus, Michael spent most of his time in the Origin Expanse. But even there, Michael was mostly focused on the expansion of his territory, including his sources of income and the betterment of his subjects.

Weeks passed and he didn't even realize how time flies away.

Kaleb meanwhile awakened his War rune.

It was nothing surprising that Kaleb manifested his War Rune. However, it was an extraordinary event.

Michael witnessed the manifestation of Kaleb's War Rune, and it was something he would never forget.

Michael had never seen Kaleb that happy. The moment his War Rune manifested, Kaleb's expression changed significantly.

He was overjoyed.

The excitement was far more intense than the excitement he felt when he awakened.

Michael hoped that Kaleb would awaken a powerful Soultrait, and that his friend was fortunate during his summoning of the Fortune Summoning Scroll.

He wanted an overpowered rival who was strong enough to force him to his limit and beyond.

That way, he could grow the fastest.

Chapter 195 Awakening

Michael didn't even realize how much time had passed until Kaleb's War Rune manifested.

At one point, Kaleb rushed over to visit Alice during her individual teaching session with Michael.

Kaleb walked over to his sister, grinning from ear to ear as the War Rune formed on the back of his right hand.

His Soultrait had not yet awakened since he had yet to enter the Origin Expanse, but he came over to retrieve Tigerfang from Alice.

"You know what you have to do when you finish binding Tigerfang, right?" Alice asked both excitedly and worriedly.

Even if Kaleb worked hard for this moment for his whole life, the Origin Expanse was unpredictable. That was also why Alice was happy to see that Kaleb's expression turned more serious.

"I know what to do, sister. I'll bind Tigerfang, and spend the rest of the day practicing the Chilling Phoenix energy absorption technique," Kaleb said in a serious tone while retrieving a small pouch from his belt. A handful of marble-sized pills entered Michael's view as Kaleb opened the pouch.

"High-Purity Energy Pills..." Michael mumbled and understanding dawned upon him.

Instead of entering the Origin Expanse immediately, Kaleb would spend the next 23 hours preparing himself for the start of his journey inside the Origin Expanse.

"Take this as well," Alice said, retrieving a small vial from her War Rune, "It's an Origin Elixir."

Michael had heard about Origin Elixirs from Alice before. They were upgraded versions of energy pills and had a medicinal effect that helped in the absorption of raw energy.

Even the lowest-grade Origin Elixir was tens of times better than a High-Purity Energy Pill. It was quite amazing. But so was the price. It was extremely expensive due to the medicinal effect that guided the raw origin energy through the body.

Kaleb took the Origin Elixir from Alice and downed it immediately. Afterward, he sat down cross-legged. He closed his eyes and started executing the Chilling Phoenix energy absorption technique.

Kaleb's body exuded frigid air over the course of the next four hours. Once he was done digesting the potent effect of the Origin Elixir, Kaleb received Tigerfang from Alice. Kaleb bound Tigerfang to his War Rune in the next ten minutes, and a vivid smile blossomed on his face once he was done.

While feeling the surge of energy and power from binding a powerful Artifact to his War Rune for the first time in his life, Kaleb was overwhelmed. He looked over to Michael, who nodded subconsciously. Michael could fully understand how Kaleb felt. It had been the same for him, after all.

"Even after refining my War Rune a bit, I could barely bind Tigerfang," Kaleb murmured, only to look Michael straight in the eyes with a bit of confusion, "Didn't you feel like bursting apart when you first bound Tigerfang?"

"It was uncomfortable, but that was it. I have yet to get to know how it feels when Artifacts are too potent and powerful," Michael responded lightly.

That was enough of an explanation for Kaleb.

He spent the next 19 hours refining his War Rune using the remaining High-Purity Energy Pills. Kaleb immediately advanced to Low Tier-0, which was enough to expand his War Rune's storage space quite a bit.

By the time Kaleb reached the Low-stage, Alice retrieved a platinum coin from her War Rune.

"Use the Storage Expansion Token."

Kaleb did as was told. He accepted the platinum coin from Alice, which led to a drastic reaction of his War Rune. Several tentacle-like streams of white energy shot out of Kaleb's War Rune. They coiled around the platinum coin and pulled it inside the War Rune, without giving Kaleb enough time to react.

The next moment, the War Rune began to shine faintly.

Once she realized that everything went according to plan, Alice began to retrieve a bunch of things. First, she retrieved more than 100 Mythic Summoning Scrolls, followed by 1000 Named Combat Summoning Scrolls, hundreds of blueprints, and countless necessities that ensured survivability in any territory, no matter how dangerous it may be.

At that point, Michael couldn't control his eyes from widening.

'Is every descendant of big families given that much? 100 Mythic Summoning Scrolls right off the bat, and 1000 Named Combat Summoning Scrolls...blueprints, a higher degree of refinement, a powerful Artifact...' Michael ticked off the items in his mind, shocked to the core.

'It makes so much sense that these descendants are usually arrogant jerks. I would feel like the king of the world with all those benefits as well!'

Michael was shocked, but he wasn't jealous of the things Kaleb had been given. In fact, Michael was happy that Kaleb received so many things.

Finally, his friend would enter the Origin Expanse. Kaleb would grow quickly given the enormous investment he had received from his family. There was the Zenovia family's Inheritance technique as well.

It was a nice challenge to see how long Kaleb would take to catch up to him since Michael was certain that Kaleb would give his utmost to charge up to Michael and overtake him as quickly as possible.

Michael was certain that Kaleb would catch up to him. The only questions were how long Kaleb would take to overtake Michael, and how long Kaleb could keep the lead.

'Rivalry, it is? Well, I like it!!' Michael thought without an ounce of jealousy.

Earlier, Michael often felt envious when he saw how much most families spoiled their descendants, and how many great opportunities they'd been given. The young men his age who had to do nothing to receive what he strived for months to lay his hands on would often make him jealous. I think you should take a look at

However, that wasn't the case anymore.

The day Alice told him about the purity of Soultraits, Michael's views changed drastically.

He realized that the investments from their families came with a heavy price and many responsibilities.

Michael wouldn't want to carry their responsibilities, nor did he desire the same kind of investment the big families provided.

Michael would rather strive hard and give his utmost effort every single day, instead of having it easier by allowing his family to turn him into their marionette.

Thus, Michael's focus returned to his training when Kaleb disappeared through the Runic Gate.

It was hard to speak to Alice for the next two days. She was too busy thinking about her brother, wondering how Kaleb was doing and when he would come back.

Michael tried to ease her worries by distracting her, but his attempts were hardly of any help. At the end of the day, Michael had to spend the next two days focusing on his Limit Breaker training session, and the study of the Caesurium Menta mind refining technique.

His progress was slow, but he was slowly getting more adept at refining his mind. It was incomparably harder to refine his mind than the refinement of his body. Michael had to follow a more complex thought process to understand how the refinement of his mind worked.

Not only was it necessary that Michael understood the anatomy of the brain, but he had to comprehend how the mind worked. A low understanding of the mind was not enough to practice Caesurium Menta. The higher the comprehension the easier it was to refine the mind. That was also why Michael was so slow right now.

He was not bad at multitasking thanks to his constant training with multiple Soultraits, and his control of origin energy was already precise enough to use the third stage of the Caesurium Menta. The only missing factors were a better understanding of the mind and brain, and more origin energy.

Michael fixed his lacking understanding of the mind and brain by studying a lot. Most others didn't like studying, but Michael felt great knowing that he could broaden his horizon. He spent only two months in the Sapphirelake Military Academy, yet his knowledge and understanding of the Origin Expanse improved exponentially.

Before, he had been a newborn, who had little to no knowledge about the Origin Expanse. Michael had been taught a lot in school, but it was easy to tell the difference between an Academy focusing on Awakened and the Origin Expanse, and the curriculum of an Elite High School.

The Elite High School was exceptional compared to other high schools, but it taught only little about the Origin Expanse and the various problems one faced as a Lord of a rapidly growing territory.

The curriculum in Elite High Schools focused more on training with all types of weapons, the study of the Origin Language, and less on minor subjects such as psychology, basic territory development, how to survive in the wilderness, and so on.

Combat was the most important.

One way or another, Michael was happy. His life both inside the Origin Expanse and outside could hardly be better.

There was hardly anything that irked him. His peers grew stronger by the day, but Michael didn't grow weaker.

It may look like he was hanging behind because his War Rune's refinement degree didn't improve as quickly as everyone else, but that made sense.

Michael didn't focus on the refinement of his War Rune at this point in his studies. His approach to a perfect foundation was different.

Furthermore, he couldn't keep up with the refinement degree of others even if he wanted to. That was why he chose an approach that allowed him to grow stronger and keep up with others without mindlessly improving the refinement degree of his War Rune!

Thinking about his life in the Saphirelake Military Academy and home, Michael felt that there was only one thing bothering him; he missed his brother.

It looked like Danny had not set foot outside the Origin Expanse for the past three months. In the past, Danny spent several months in the Origin Expanse without leaving it even for a second.

However, at that time, Danny's territory had been on the verge of destruction. Recalling this event in the past, and the fact that his brother had looked like he was on the brink of starvation when he stepped out of the Origin Expanse for the first time after months, Michael was worried and a little frightened.

His worry wasn't eased at the sight of Alice tiptoeing in the large training hall. It caused the opposite effect.

Fortunately, one of the two worrywarts didn't have to keep worrying anymore.

Two days after Kaleb stepped through the Runic Gate to enter the Origin Expanse for the first time in his life he returned.

The moment the young man with blue hair and ocean-blue eyes stepped out of the Runic Gate, Alice rushed over to hug him tightly.

Kaleb's hair was disheveled, and his clothes were frozen, but his eyes screamed in excitement, and a vibrant smile blossomed on his face.

He allowed his sister to hug him, and looked at Michael, unable to control his emotions anymore.

Kaleb showed Michael the peace sign before he dropped the bomb.

"I awakened a 7-Star Soultrait!"

Chapter 196 Frozen Nova

The moment Kaleb entered the Runic Gate, everything around him turned pitch-black.

He couldn't see anything, and his other senses felt disoriented as well.

The only thing he could feel was a strong force pulling him somewhere. The pitch-black scenery around him began to change as time passed eerily slowly. Dazzling white points dotted the black scenery around him. Stars emerged all around him, but before Kaleb could focus on the scenery, space twisted and he had to close his eyes.

A bright light at the end of the Runic Gate dazzled him.

For a moment, his sense of time disappeared. Kaleb was not sure how much time had passed, but when he opened his eyes again, he felt great.

Finally, he had arrived in the Origin Expanse!

"I can catch up to you now, Michael!!!" He shouted aloud as a strong gust of frigid air brushed past his face.

He felt like he was about to freeze to death and began to shiver uncontrollably.

Recalling what his sister told him, Kaleb accessed the storage space of his War Rune. He retrieved a coat that had been made out of monster fur. It blocked cold naturally and repelled it, ensuring the wearer stayed warm and cozy.

Once he wore the coat, Kaleb could finally take a look at his surroundings.

It was cold, and the first things that entered his sight were frozen trees, a white wooden manor, and the beautiful appearance of the Basic Summoning Gate.

It stood grandly in the midst of the small snowstorm with its simple yet imposing appearance. Kaleb stepped closer to the Summoning Gate, his eyes gleaming brightly. The Summoning Gate's metal ring looked ordinary from afar, but the various symbols inscribed on its surface showed the metal ring's true value. They allowed the Summoning Gate to work, and to manifest the shimmering pool of energy in the center of the Summoning Gate.

"So beautiful..."

Kaleb touched the cold metal and smiled foolishly.

Tens of minutes passed without him moving from the spot in which he stared blankly at the Summoning Gate.

He only regained his focus when he heard someone stepping through the snow behind him.

"My Lord, I've been waiting for you," A young man wearing a suit greeted him with a deep bow.

"I am the first resident of your glorious territory and your personal butler. My name is Killian, but feel free to call me whatever you like. My mission is to serve you until death, my lord."

Killian retrieved a tattered leather scroll and a fist-sized crystal from the inner pocket of his suit and held them out for Kaleb to take.

"My Fortune Summoning Scroll, and the Soultrait Awakening Crystal!" Kaleb exclaimed, his eyes gleaming in joy.

He has been waiting way too long for this moment!

Kaleb didn't want to wait any longer. His hands shot forward to take both items at once.

"Good job, Butler Killian. I'm Kaleb Zenovia, your Lord. Remember the start of our legend!" Kaleb said as the fist-sized crystal in his hand began to glow brightly.

The glow was extremely bright, dazzling Kaleb and Butler Killian.

The Soultrait Awakening Crystal had been triggered, and its miraculous power was unleashed!

Streams of information flooded Kaleb's mind, and he closed his eyes to enter his consciousness where a bright white light appeared in the deepest part of his being.

The white light shone brightly. It seemed to pulsate as a symbol with complex lines and overlapping patterns manifested inside it.

More information streamed inside his mind, as the symbol was being completed, revealing a glacier blue supernova.

The moment the symbol was completely formed, Kaleb's mind couldn't take the information anymore.

Blood gushed out of his pores and everything around him turned black.

Kaleb collapsed as his knees buckled under his weight.

The next thing Kaleb could remember was waking up surrounded by a fortress of ice.

His entire territory was covered in ice. The wooden manor collapsed, and the frozen trees crumbled.

Huge tree-sized ice spikes shot up the area around the protection barrier. Some of them were covered in blood, while others had impaled rabbits, white deer, and other monsters grazing next to Kaleb's territory while shooting up from the ground.

Only Butler Killian was unscathed. He was on the ground next to Kaleb, trying his utmost to help his lord.

"My Lord, please wake up!" He had been shouting repetitively, yet Kaleb couldn't move.

His entire body was drained of all its energy.

He just wanted to use his Soultrait to test out its prowess when his entire energy was drained in an instant.

"I am awake..." Kaleb said weakly while trying to not pass out.

After Kaleb took a few deep breaths, Butler Killian helped Kaleb up. Yet, Kaleb's mind was somewhere else.

He was confused and over the moon.

'Frozen Nova...a 7-Star Soultrait....'

Only his Soultrait was on his mind, nothing else. Kaleb wished to activate his Soultrait once again. He took a deep breath and began to utilize the Chilling Phoenix energy absorption technique right away.

In a cold environment, the energy absorption technique was exceedingly powerful. It allowed Kaleb to replenish his energy in less than half an hour. I think you should take a look at

Yet, using up the energy he had replenished over the course of half an hour didn't even require five seconds. Kaleb activated his Soultrait with the desire to destroy the ice he had manifested unintentionally.

Cracks formed all over the ice instantaneously and it burst apart the next moment, creating millions of tiny shards that shot in the same direction, where they compressed.

A small ball of ice was formed from millions of tiny ice shards.

Intrigued, Kaleb willed the ice ball to shoot toward the nearby mountain wall. It burst forth and crushed into the mountain wall, which froze at once. The next moment, Kaleb hoped that the ice ball would burst apart – and that was exactly what happened – destroying the mountain wall that was reduced to smithereens.

His Soultrait drained all of his energy once again, depriving him of his consciousness a second time.

But this time when Kaleb awoke, he was giddy with euphoria.

"Powerful!"

Controlling his Soultrait was extremely difficult, but that was only obvious. Even the lowest form of utility required a tremendous amount of energy. Kaleb hadn't amassed enough origin energy to utilize the lowest form of Frozen Nova's power. He had yet to learn how to further control his Soultrait to use only a portion of its weakest form, otherwise, he wouldn't be able to use Frozen Nova until he reached the 3rd or 4th Tier.

Frozen Nova was that powerful.

Practicing the Zenovia family's Inheritance technique would allow him to utilize Frozen Nova much easier, while certain techniques would give him clues and patterns that could be replicated to use the ice element of his Soultrait in a simple way.

As long as Kaleb worked hard enough, he would be able to create icicles, ice spikes, and other ordinary elemental attacks.

Creating ordinary elemental attacks would be much more difficult than creating a powerful attack that was strong enough to sweep through his enemies. This would change with increased proficiency and increase in strength, but that was not important for the time being.

What was important was only that he had awoken a 7-Star Soultrait; one of the rarest and strongest Soultraits in the entire human race!

It was exhilarating.

In excitement, Kaleb picked up the Fortune Summoning Scroll.

He looked at the golden seal with glimmering eyes and broke it.

No matter what kind of Summon he would obtain from the Fortune Summoning Scroll, Kaleb wouldn't complain.

With a Soultrait like Frozen Nova there was no reason to feel like complaining even if his summon would turn out to be Starless - which was highly unlikely.

Despite his low expectations, Kaleb was confused when nothing happened after he broke the seal of the tattered Fortune Summoning Scroll.

After one minute passed without anything happening, Kaleb began to wonder if Alice and everyone else lied to him about the usage of Summoning Scrolls. Maybe he did something wrong?

But just before he let irritation and confusion get to him, the Fortune Summoning Scroll unrolled itself and shot inside the Summoning Gate's shimmering pool of energy.

In response to the Fortune Summoning Scroll disappearing inside the shimmering pool of energy, the intricate engravings all over the Summoning Gate's surface began to shine brightly.

In an instant, eight out of ten stars etched on the Summoning Gate began to shine brightly as well.

A ninth star lit up a moment later. The star was bright golden, but something was wrong.

The golden star devoured the light of the other stars, which dimmed down slowly.

Only the golden star remained as the outlines of Kaleb's first summon appeared in the pool of energy.

The outlines showed a large bird standing tall and proud. Its body was several meters long and it looked sleek and muscular.

"A Greater Eagle?" Kaleb mumbled his thoughts aloud, but he shook his head.

The mythical aura that was seeping out of the pool of energy set the bird apart from any earthly creature.

Bathed in the dim light that penetrated the icy surroundings, an extraordinary sight unfolded in front of Kaleb as the creature emerged from the pool of energy.

The creature broke free, revealing its majestic figure. From the tip of its perfectly sculpted beak to the end of its long, slender tail, everything seemed otherworldly about his first summon.

Each individual feather appeared meticulously crafted, reflecting the utmost attention to detail of the creator. The edges were outlined in a shimmering hue, glimmering with shades of sapphire, giving the creature an ethereal glow.

Its feathers shimmered with a radiant blend of icy blues and ethereal whites, casting an otherworldly glow in the frozen surroundings.

With graceful movements, it stepped onto the frozen ground, its talons gripping the frozen surface. A cold breeze swept through the vicinity of the summoned monster, carrying a scent of the Eternal Ice and the winter in its wake.

The majestic creature spreads its wings widely, causing the sound of cracking ice to echo in the surroundings. It screeched out loudly while continuing to spread its wings, revealing intricate frost patterns etched onto the transparent membranes of the creature's wings.

The mythical creature surveyed its surroundings, its crystalline eyes gleaming with ancient and eternal wisdom.

It looked straight into Kaleb's ocean-blue eyes.

'Eternal Ice Phoenix...'

The Link of Loyalty formed as they looked into each other's eyes.

Time seemed to stop as Kaleb stared in awe at the Eternal Ice Phoenix that soon became Kaleb's second subject.

Kaleb's journey was just about to start, but he was already in possession of a mythical summon.

A Summon capable of growing infinitely.

Chapter 197 Perfect Physique

As he stepped out of the bathtub, the embodiment of strength and power revealed itself in the form of a man with a perfectly trained physique.

His entire body looked like it came right out of a factory; chiseled to perfection.

Veins snaked their way across his bulging muscles, pulsating with vitality and the undeniable proof of Michael's hard work. Beads of sweat clung to his broad shoulders that had been sculpted and defined by countless hours of training.

Michael had pushed his body to the limit and beyond. With each breath he took, his chest expanded and contracted.

His muscles rippled with every movement, hinting at the tremendous strength he possessed. His hands, calloused and hardened, bore witness to countless repetitions and heavy lifts, displaying the determination Michael gained after learning about Kaleb's first experience in the Origin Expanse.

His face was flushed with the exertion of his workout, but he exuded a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. Finally, he finished the second stage of the Berserker Physique!

Despite being far from advancing to the 2nd Tier, Michael's physical strength now rivaled Tier-2 Monsters. His physique had been refined to the extreme, unraveling every bit of hidden potential in him.

Not even a full month passed since Kaleb returned from the Origin Expanse the first time, but Michael felt increasingly confused.

In the last two weeks, Michael began to understand how terrifying the combination of great investments, a powerful Soultrait, and an Inheritance technique could be. Kaleb had everything, and his progress was exceptional.

The youngest member of the Zenovia family advanced to Tier-1 within a week of his Awakening. By then, Kaleb had a much easier time using his 7-Star Soultrait, Frozen Nova.

Being the 10th human with a 7-Star Soultrait – who was still alive –, Kaleb's awakening attracted lots of attention. Everyone considered Kaleb one of the 10 Heavens, and the Zenovia family's image and goodwill increased exponentially.

Following this, Alice had been called and told that she should focus more on Kaleb. That was also why Michael's Individual teaching had been reduced to two sessions a week. Even then, Kaleb was always around them.

With Kaleb by his side all day around, Michael knew best how fast his friend progressed.

It was only a matter of time before Michael realized that their rivalry might turn into an endless pursuit from his side. He knew that he couldn't wait any longer.

By then, his tireless training began.

He increased the weight of his heavyweight combat suit in the Limit Breaker course, increased his intake of nourishing and nutrient-rich meals, and he began to practice the Pandemonium's Requiem energy absorption technique to always have enough origin energy to nourish the Berserker Physique as much as possible.

At last, his tireless work bore results. He was still at the Mid-stage of Tier-1, yet his physical strength and speed were much higher. It was an exceptional achievement. Despite that, Michael knew that he shouldn't get carried away by the temporary success.

His rivalry with Kaleb was just getting started!

Fortunately, the development of his territory was smooth. The expansion continued smoothly since he entered the Sapphirelake Military Academy, without facing any big setbacks.

That was even more surprising than Kaleb's awakening of the 7-Star Soultrait!

Michael expected a lot, but he could have never presumed that the Twin Lions and Senator Keltos wouldn't do anything about him, or the Untamed Jungle for the last 77 days.

But Michael didn't let the confusion bother him. His army hunted close to 200 monsters everyday on average for the last two and a half months, totaling more than 15,000 Tier-1 Monster corpses in less than three months.

All of that was possible thanks to the expansion of his military, their increasing hunting proficiency, and because everyone grew much stronger.

By now, everyone in the army had advanced to Tier-1. Michael invested a fortune to nourish his people, resulting in a rapid improvement of his military power. Their Tier increased alongside their equipment.

It was much easier to hunt in the Untamed Jungle, and the only restriction put on Michael's army was the decreasing number of monsters in the vicinity.

The Untamed Jungle was still overpopulated and flooded with fierce monsters, but that didn't apply to the vicinity of Michael's territory. Not anymore, at least.

Using Extraction on more than 15,000 Tier-1 Monsters during the last two and a half months was bound to give him great loot.

After he combined the Summoning Scroll Fragments, Michael gained a total of 11,930 Summoning Scrolls, 1873 blueprints, and 93 Artifacts from the Tier-1 Monsters of the Untamed Jungle. However, these were not the only gains Michael made.

He received three daily Summons, adding a total of 454 1-Star Summons, and 8 2-Star Summons to his territory I think you should take a look at

Since he entered the Saphirelake Military Academy, the population of Michael's territory expanded by around 12,400 subjects, of which 8 were 2-Star Summons, 1743 were 1-Star Summons and the rest were Starless Summons.

The addition of such a high number of subjects made it much easier to distribute the working force.

Michael's territory had many projects that required numerous helping hands, and it was good to have enough subjects to fill the gaps.

Now that Michael finished the Berserker Physique, he could switch to the Sacred Rectification body refinement technique whenever he wanted.

However, he felt that the refinement of his War Rune was of greater importance. He reached the Mid-stage only due to the big energy shares he received from his Summons' Links of Loyalty. He didn't even use energy pills for training purposes yet.

Now that his physique was improved to near perfection, Michael could pick up the pace of his progress. It may not look like this, but he progressed rapidly. Others would only see the refinement degree of his War Rune while missing out on the most important factors; his true combat prowess, and the depth of his foundation.

All of his money and time was invested to ensure a bigger and steady flow of returns. He invested to increase the efficiency of his income streams, making sure that he could focus on his advancement and the progress of his army.

The money he earned from selling monster corpses in the Bartholomew shop was used to buy equipment that allowed him to improve the quality and quantity of the low-level armament production – which he provided to the Forest Elven tribe.

The Forest Elves were in need of a high number of armaments of all levels. That was why Michael had been so heavily invested in blacksmithing, which had been proven correct for the last two and a half months.

Michael used tens of Blacksmith Summoning Scrolls, and he turned the Underground Ecosystem into a secret workshop for his artisans. It was one of his biggest projects since he entered the Origin Expanse, and it was certainly worth the investment he made. The hidden workshop turned into the blacksmith's workplace and doubled-up as a place to stay if they wanted to. The miners working in the lizard cave loved the place as well. It wasn't too far from their workplace, and they could live there with their families.

It was quiet and peaceful after the military cleared up the vicinity of the Underground Ecosystem.

The Large-scale Underground Forging Hall had been completed and the production of low-level armaments was at its peak.

In exchange for the low-level armaments he provided, the Forest Elves provided him with a big mountain of agricultural blueprints that were then sold to the Bartholomew Corporation.

The Bartholomew Corporation was very thankful for his hard work. Michael provided more rare agricultural blueprints in three months than the corporation could collect in half a year. It was ridiculous but also amazing.

The Department Head of the Bartholomew Corporation in the Sapphirelake Military Academy chose to strengthen Michael's connections with the Bartholomew Corporation even more. They went out of their way and gifted him something extraordinary; a 4-Star Tier-1 Spatial Pouch Artifact!

Ordinary Awakened didn't require a Spatial Pouch Artifact. Their War Rune's spatial space was more than enough to get through the day. However, many merchants required more space to travel around unhindered and carry a large number of items with them. They would always invest in Spatial Pouches and similar Artifacts because they were like the War Rune's hidden spatial space.

Under normal circumstances, Michael was sure that he wouldn't require a Spatial Pouch either. However, he faced more situations where his War Rune's space had been filled to the brim recently. He was wealthy enough to purchase all kinds of resources for his people, but he didn't have enough space to carry them around in one trip.

That was also why he had been forced to jump back and forth between the Origin Expanse and the Sapphirelake Military Academy more often than before.

Thus, Michael was grateful for the gift.

It was exceptionally useful and just what he required.

Interestingly enough, the Bartholomew Corporation was not the only group that worked on strengthening their relationship in the last few months. Michael's relationship with the Forest Elven tribe had improved as well.

There was no exchange of gifts, but Michael began to communicate with the Forest Elf Elders within the Origin Expanse.

A month ago, Lilica handed him a messenger talisman that allowed long-distance communication within the Origin Expanse. It used the surrounding origin energy to send mental messages through the messenger talisman.

Michael felt that it was very useful as well, especially since he could talk to the Elders about the Temple of the Forgotten.

The Elders were very interested in the Temple of the Forgotten, and they would have loved to visit Michael's territory to take a look.

Unfortunately, that was not within their possibilities. The Forest Elves had never heard about the Zentika Empire before Lilica told them about the Native Empire.

Even if they wanted to come to Michael's territory, they weren't sure how long they would have to travel through the Origin Expanse – forget about the direction they had to travel, in the first place.

Chapter 198 Big Problem

Other than the Underground Forging Hall, Michael focused on investing in his people – which included his army. After all the investments he made, some of his Starless Summons attained enlightenment! They became 1-Star Summons after putting great effort into their training and studies.

It was a rare occurrence for Starless Summons to attain enlightenment even among hard-working subjects, and it was an especially happy occasion since more than a dozen Starless Summons became Warriors.

Michael felt his spirits soaring high these days.

Even his smaller streams of income began to grow rapidly. The Bilrox Ranch expanded, the farmers created more cocoa farms, more Tiatcha trees were planted, and so on.

Every stream of income allowed him to earn more money, which would then be invested again.

Despite his vast income, Michael was not even close to purchasing the ingredients required for the short-distance teleportation array, and to upgrade his Basic Summoning Gate to the Intermediate rank.

Both projects required more funds. A lot more than his current income, in fact.

Michael was in need of more money, meaning that he had to continue expanding his business.

Thus, he visited Xiltra after a long time. He hadn't been in Xiltra for two months and he wanted to take a look at the market over there. Maybe, he could make a bargain.

Other than the possibility of making a bargain in Xiltra, Michael was also a little restless about the long stretch of peace. His territory had not been attacked and the Senator seemed to have gone silent.

Something felt off, and the thought was always troubling him at the back of his mind. Thus, he had to find out what was going on or find solid proof that his gut feeling was telling him nonsense.

Unfortunately, the solid proof he found proved his gut feeling to be correct rather than doing the opposite.

Xiltrā had changed a lot in two months.

The guards were more thorough in their inspection of the people entering the border city, and they stared long at Michael when he entered the city after a long time.

His identification record stated that Michael had visited Xiltrā quite often already, but the guards were still wary of him. They were vigilant of everyone, to be precise!

Inside Xiltrā, the atmosphere was just as heavy. The citizens were vigilant of everyone, and they hurried through the streets as if someone was pursuing them.

Everyone had grown more vigilant of the people around them, which confused Michael a lot.

He hoped to obtain answers in Xiltrā's guildhall, but the guildhall looked like a warzone. It was flooded with adventurers ranging from Tier-1 to Tier-3. It was impressive, but also worrying to look at.

'The number of Mercenaries and Adventurers increased that much in two months? Did something happen?' Michael wondered.

He knew that Xiltrā was the closest to the Untamed Jungle. Thus, Michael first thought that something must have happened in the Untamed Jungle to change the atmosphere in the entire Border City. The number of guards increased drastically, just like the number of Mercenaries and Adventurers roaming through the streets.

However, if something had happened in the Untamed Jungle, Michael would have noticed that by now.

'Something else is wrong...'

"It's so fucking boring here. Not even the women here are interesting!" A hoarse voice rang through the left half of the guildhall.

Nobody paid attention to the guy, who continued to bellow loudly.

"Just give us our fucking money, and we'll jump into action at once. Why do we have to wait? For what? This is so useless!!"

Michael's attention moved to the loud voice. He saw a Lionheart seated around a few Adventurers – evidently drunk.

"The Twins said that they're still waiting for someone. Just wait one more week," The Lionheart seated next to the drunk grumbler said in a reassuring way.

However, the drunk, grumbling Lionheart didn't want to calm down, not anymore.

"We've been waiting for weeks without any pay. They should just give us our fucking money instead of making us wait!! These Twins ought to receive a slap for telling us to rush to Xiltra for this shitty project, just to leave us hanging for weeks!!"

The calmer Lionheart sighed deeply and got up from his chair. He didn't want to stay with this idiot anymore.

"Just shut up before the Twins hear the nonsense you're spouting. Our mission is to clear the outer area of the Untamed Jungle once everyone is present. If you're bored or dirt-poor after wasting your entire fortune on women, you might as well complete some other missions like others. There are more than enough missions you can pick from!!"

'Clear the Untamed Jungle's outer area?' Michael almost blurted out loud. His eyes widened in surprise. I think you should take a look at

Was that why Xiltra changed so much?

'Are all of those mercenaries and Adventurers here because of the Twin Lions? To clear the outer area...'

Michael nibbled on his lower lip. He moved through the crowded guildhall and continued eavesdropping on the drunk Adventurers, trying to make sense of the situation.

Apparently, some of them had been in Xiltra for close to two months by now. They didn't dare to enter the Untamed Jungle on their own but were willing to enter the Untamed Jungle alongside a large group of powerful Adventurers and Mercenaries.

According to some drunk adventurers, the Jungle Expedition was also funded by the Empire's Council. To be precise, Senator Keltos was funding the Jungle Expedition. He advertised it as a first step to the Zentika Empire's expansion, and the removal of the big thorn in the Zentika Empire's flesh; the Untamed Jungle.

If they wanted to expand their Empire, they would have to remove the Untamed Jungle sooner or later. It was a humongous area that was presumed to be bigger than the Zentika Empire – and no one had claimed it yet.

Senator Keltos repeatedly said that this had to change. That it was time for the Zentika Empire to challenge the Monsters of the Untamed Jungle.

Thus, the Jungle Expedition had been funded, requesting the help of both Adventurers and Mercenaries ranging from Tier-1 to Tier-3.

'So he started to act? But he is still trying to cover up that he is actively searching for something in the Untamed Jungle, isn't he?' Michael concluded Senator Keltos' actions with a deep frown.

Michael figured that Senator Keltos connected the Lionheart Leader's distress signal with the disappearance of the aggressive Lionheart and the death of the six Adventurer teams...and it looked like he had had enough. That was pretty bad.

Michael got to know more about the Jungle Expedition, but the only good news was that the rewards weren't good enough to convince Tier-4 powerhouses to join the Jungle Expedition of the Untamed Jungle's outer area.

The benefits weren't high enough to convince many Awakened at Tier-3 either. But that wasn't necessary, in the first place. The outer area of the Untamed Jungle didn't have any Tier-3 Monster habitats to begin with. The border to the middle zone was where some of the more troublesome opponents created their habitat – but even these Monsters were not Tier-3.

'The rewards are too great for Tier-1 and Tier-2 Adventurers to miss out on...I think that means in a few weeks war will break out...'

War was close, and Michael knew that he would be dragged into it. His territory was still in the outer area of the Untamed Jungle. He may be close to the border of the middle zone, but that didn't change the fact that the Jungle Expedition affected him directly.

But the biggest problem was not the existence of the Jungle Expedition itself, but rather its sheer size.

'The Senator is definitely sick of hearing about his subordinates' failures...' Michael grumbled in his head when he heard how many Adventurers and Mercenaries found their way to Xiltra in the last two weeks.

At least, more than 10,000 Adventurers and close to 50,000 Mercenaries had gathered from the surrounding border cities and the areas around.

It was a mid-scale expedition into the Untamed Jungle; the first to be carried out in the last few decades.

"Fuck this shit," Michael cursed loud enough for others to hear him when he left Xiltra after he finished his research.

His final research stated that the Jungle Expedition consisted of 55,000 Tier-1 Participants, 11,000 Tier-2 participants, and a few dozen Tier-3 Awakened.

On the other hand, Michael's military power consisted of less than a thousand Tier-1 Combat Summons, five Tier-2 Forest Elves, a Peak Tier-1 Battle Maid, a powerful Peak Tier-1 Masked Saber, and himself.

It would be great if that was enough to handle the Jungle Expedition, but Michael didn't live in a flowery dream. No, he lived in a world where he had to work his ass off in order to make everything work out.

The numerical disadvantage and the fact that he would have to face Tier-3 Awakened were the biggest problems. As long as he worked really hard, Michael didn't think that 55,000 Tier-1 Mercenaries and Awakened would be enough to destroy his territory. He had literally spent his income like water to upgrade the defense of his territory so that anything below the 2nd Tier could not cause any serious damage.

Nonetheless, the terrific high number of the Jungle Expedition's participants was very worrisome.

On the bright side, he had only one advantage; he roughly knew when the Jungle Expedition would start.

After eavesdropping on drunk idiots the whole day, Michael got to know that the Jungle Expedition would start in roughly seven days. Unfortunately, that was the number of days inside the Origin Expanse, not outside.

It wasn't much, but it was not as if he could postpone the start of the Jungle Expedition.

So, what was he going to do about it?

He began preparing for war, obviously!

Chapter 199 Hunters

For a moment, Michael felt helpless.

Seeing the progress of his territory and imagining all of it getting destroyed by tens of thousands of enemies made him stare blankly ahead.

Fortunately, his helplessness subsided quickly. If he wanted to survive and ensure that his people wouldn't succumb to a miserable fate, they could not afford to sit idle.

The first thing he did was also the most difficult; he informed his people about the upcoming war. Michael revealed as many details as possible while trying to make the worst information sound nonchalant and less troublesome than other details.

Unfortunately, his subjects weren't stupid.

"What should we do?" Liopham asked when Michael finished his explanation.

The Forest Elf didn't sound desperate. He didn't even think about running away either. On the contrary, Liopham stared at Michael with determination.

Lilica, the other Forest Elves, and everyone else present turned to Michael as well.

"We expected something big to happen because it was silent for too long," Tiara revealed to which the majority responded with an affirmative nod.

"Oh really?" Michael asked in surprise.

He then changed his approach, thankful that everyone seemed to take in the news much better than expected. Given their reaction, Michael had been hit the worst by the news. That was a good thing though. It made the following steps much easier.

"We have seven days to install more traps and expand the canopy bridge. We'll halt all projects that can be postponed for a while and will focus on the transformation of the territory. We should start creating a jungle fortress," Michael said before he added a few more points.

"We have a bunch of ballista blueprints, large-scale catapult blueprints, and I can procure a few more poison potion recipes. As long as we render most of our opponents incapable of continuing the fight, they're dead. Let's use the Untamed Jungle's environment to use poison to the extreme."

The Untamed Jungle was the perfect environment to fight a large number of opponents. The densely grown flora and fauna made it increasingly more difficult to fight in big numbers. Large groups found it harder to move through the Untamed Jungle, which provided a major advantage to Michael and his people.

But there was more they could do. Michael sent Blaire Tracer and the other future Trackers out to scan the surroundings. Many Adventurers and Mercenaries were bored after staying in Xiltra too long. They started going on missions to ease their boredom.

These missions were inevitably related to the plains around Xiltra, or the Untamed Jungle. The plains didn't have too many monsters because they were easier to hunt, yet the Untamed Jungle had a large population of monsters that could be found at the borders to the plains every now and then.

That meant many Adventurers and Mercenaries would be completing their missions near the border, and Michael intended to hunt them down.

Decreasing the number of their opponents was a good way to start the battle against the Jungle Expedition.

First, Michael separated the Forest Elves to have one Tier-2 Adventurer as the leader of every group. Then, he distributed missions according to the specialty of every unit. Some would turn into the Bloodhounds, while others would focus on the protection of the workers, who would have to pay their full attention to the installment of traps and obstacles.

Michael then picked Icarus, Masked Saber, Tiara, and Lilica to create a powerful assault team.

After Icarus advanced to Mid Tier-1, the Greater Eagle grew in size and strength. He could now carry a total of four people on his back without a great negative impact.

Their group of five was strong enough to deal with a Tier-2 Adventurer team – which was exactly the kind of team Michael targeted.

Even if Michael had yet to come up with a perfect plan to obliterate the Jungle Expedition, he was doing everything possible to ensure his territory's safety.

Attaining unfathomable strength in seven days was not possible, but Michael could hunt Adventurers, and extract their Soultraits and SoulStar Fragments to increase his strength rapidly.

It was an opportunity and the most efficient way to become stronger in no time. Furthermore, the fewer Tier-2 Adventurers they had to deal with later, the better!

Blaire and her Tracker Unit returned less than an hour later with their reports. More than ten groups of Mercenaries and Adventurers had been found at the border of the Untamed Jungle, or near the Untamed Jungle.

Blaire showed them their location on the map, and the Hunters started moving.

Icarus shot in the air with Masked Saber, Tiara, Lilica, and Michael on his back. I think you should take a look at

They burst through the open area in the clearing and flew through the air with great speed. Less than half an hour later, they reached the border to the plains.

"The expedition will probably move through the Untamed Jungle in batches along the border. I should have a few days before they reach the territory," Lilica pointed out while tightly gripping Icarus' plumage.

She was scared witless to be flying at such a great height but tried to sound casual. Unfortunately, her trembling voice exposed Lilica.

Funnily enough, Tiara wasn't doing much better. Her hair stood up on its end, and her tail was fully tensed. Only Michael and Masked Saber were doing fine.

Icarus flew at a low altitude. The past trauma prevented him from flying too high above the Untamed Jungle, in fear that the mythical serpent would return to burn them alive. But luckily, no such thing happened.

They reached the plains where Michael exerted both Eagle Eyes and Lesser Enhancement to search the groups of Adventurers.

It didn't take long before they found a group of Adventurers making a campfire a little bit farther away. No group was close to them, which gave Michael and the others the perfect opportunity to strike.

As Icarus flew closer, Michael and Lilica prepared their bows. Lilica retrieved a Piecker and the Woodwoven Bow Artifact, while Michael manifested the Siltang Bow. He condensed the strongest energy arrow before utilizing Lesser Enhancement on the Siltang Bow and the energy arrow. Afterward, he pulled the bowstring back.

Lilica followed suit, ready to release the arrow at any moment.

Icarus observed the Adventurer team vigilantly. They didn't seem to notice Icarus flying above them until Icarus was less than 200 meters away from them. By then, Michael and Lilica were at a shooting range. Michael gave a subtle sign and both him and Lilica released their arrows simultaneously.

Afterward, they returned their Artifacts back into the War Rune before crouching down. Icarus shot downward the next moment, diving toward the startled Adventurers.

Once they were close enough to the ground, Lilica, Masked Saber, and Tiara jumped down from Icarus' back.

Michael waited a moment longer. He manifested the Onyx Dragon Armor Set and used Lesser Enhancement on his whole body before he jumped down as well.

He smashed into the ground which caved in from the heavy impact. The next moment, Seron Voulge manifested in his hands, and he charged forward in a flash.

The immense physical power of a highly refined physique was clearly demonstrated as he reached top speed in the blink of an eye. Lesser Enhancement's increase in strength boosted his physical strength by another 35%, giving him an additional boost in speed. Michael appeared in front of the closest Adventurer in the blink of an eye and slashed out mercilessly.

Simultaneously, he manifested a Spirit Whip, which he also enhanced with Lesser Enhancement before he lashed out.

The Adventurer jumped up and manifested his Artifacts to prepare for battle when the enhanced Spirit Whip hit him just as the Destor was about to unleash his own Soultrait.

His Soultrait was forcefully terminated, and his mind was hit hard, preventing the Adventurer from reacting in time. By the time he regained his composure, blood began gushing out of his throat. Seron Voulge had cut deep into his opponent's neck, lethally injuring him.

Michael further twisted the blade in his opponent's neck before he continued to move.

However, instead of mindlessly attacking. Michael exerted Spirit Whip a few more times. He was in range to strike all enemies with Spirit Whip, which was exactly what Michael did.

He whipped all of them twice, without another backward glance, and continued to move ahead.

A few arrows shot past his torso and head, but they didn't hit him. On the contrary, they drilled deep into their enemies' knees and mouths, killing one of their own.

By the time all Adventurers reacted, Masked Saber and Tiara had already appeared in front of them as well.

Icarus continued his rampage simultaneously. He'd smashed heavily on the weakest Adventurers before his talons did the rest, gouging out the opponent's eyes.

Less than two minutes after the start of the battle, Michael and the others departed once again.

The Adventurers' corpses were tightly secured in Michael's War Rune.

"One down, nine to go!"

Chapter 200 Dismembering Soultrait Symbols

Michael and the others left the crime scene quickly.

Their mission was to annihilate the remaining Adventurer teams as quickly as possible without getting seen.

Meanwhile, the other Hunter Units initiated their first attack as well.

Liopham used his Soultrait, Rage of the Primal, to manifest a Spirit Totem in a bush near the border to the plains. A large group of more than 15 Tier-1 Adventurers and Mercenaries had been harvesting herbs, and sneakily hunting smaller groups of monsters nearby.

With the use of Rage of the Primal's full potential, a large group of Tier-1 Monsters was attracted towards them. The Monsters lost their rationality sensing the bloody red hue of the Spirit Totem, and they went berserk. More than 60 Tier-1 Monsters charged toward the Spirit Totem that disappeared the moment the Monsters were about to pounce at it.

The Spirit Totem disappeared but the Monsters kept charging through the thicket where they smelled the Adventurer team. Still following their wild instincts, the Monsters changed their target and attacked the Adventurers and Mercenaries.

Simultaneously, Liopham and the group of Archers were close on his heels with their arrows nocked upon their bows and the string pulled back. When the two parties clashed the first time, Liopham and his people joined the battle from far away.

Their aim was precise and deadly. Liopham hit every single intruder, killing one Adventurer after another. Meanwhile, the Archers next to him aimed at their opponents' vitals, giving the Monsters a chance to taste blood before they were hunted down as well.

In less than ten minutes, the battle ended. None of the Monsters survived and neither did the group of 15 Tier-1 Adventurers and Mercenaries.

Liopham stored all corpses inside his War Rune's storage space before they cleaned up the bloody battlefield. Afterward, they disappeared to attack their next target.

The youngest Forest Elf went on a hunt with the Forest Walkers – one of Michael's most recent Summons. They were 2-Star Forest Elf Summons with the potential to turn into great assassins. The youngest Forest Elf led the Forest Walkers through the Untamed Jungle with nimble movements.

After spending several months in the Untamed Jungle, the youngest Forest Elf knew this place like his home. Every nook and cranny was engraved in his mind, providing him with the information he needed to find the best spots to lurk and initiate a deadly attack.

Three groups of Adventurers were located nearby, and the youngest Forest Elf moved close to the border before he waited patiently until the three Adventurer teams began to move.

Two went closer to the Untamed Jungle when they encountered a small group of Frenzy Deers grazing near the border. Meanwhile, the third took a short break to count the herbs they'd collected.

The youngest Forest Elf, Mika Zels, made his move then. He retrieved a Bow Artifact that was much larger than the Woodwoven Bow. It was a longbow with several spots to nock an arrow on. Yet, instead of retrieving several arrows, Mika retrieved only one.

Then, he used his Soultrait for the first time in what felt like an eternity.

[Arrow Duplication] A 4-Star Soultrait.

It wasn't a low-ranked Soultrait, but the power was simple.

It allowed the duplication of arrows for a short period.

But that was not everything. The duplicated arrows could also change their trajectory. The traces of energy inside the duplicated arrows allowed precise changes in trajectory using origin energy and the mental power of the user.

Mika didn't like his Soultrait because it required too much mental power under normal circumstances. However, he had to use it now. He created a total of five duplicated arrows, nocked all of them on the unique longbow and pulled the bowstring back.

Then he closed his eyes for a moment and held his breath.

When Mika opened his eyes again he released the arrows and focused on the utility of his Soultrait. The arrows flew through the air in a beautiful arc. They created a whistling noise that attracted the attention of the resting Adventurers, who turned around their heads in surprise.

However, it was already too late.

The moment they saw the incoming arrows, their deaths had been sealed. The arrows' trajectory changed subtly when the Adventurers moved, and they pierced deep into the necks of their designated targets the next moment.

But Mika was not done after the first batch of arrows reached their target. He used Arrow Duplication for two more batches of arrows to eliminate the remaining Adventurers of the resting team. Meanwhile, the Forest Walkers began to move as well.

Distracted due to the pained groans and fearful screams of the Adventures further behind them, the two teams closer to the Untamed Jungle were confused for a minute. They turned around to figure out what had just happened, only to lose their lives the next moment as a cold metal blade sliced across their throat.

The Forest Walkers had made their move, eliminating their threat with a single strike. I think you should take a look at

Once the resting Adventurer team was eliminated by the barrage of arrows under Mika's control, the youngest Forest Elf changed his target. He supported the Forest Walkers from high up in the air. Mika was high up in a tree close to the border. It was hard to locate him as he hid behind the thick canopy of leaves but he was still near his opponents.

After releasing his Soultrait a few more times to eliminate the remaining opponents, Mika ended up utterly exhausted. His mental power was drained and so was the origin energy inside his body.

"This Soultrait is such a drainer," He grumbled loudly as he climbed down the tree in a few swift movements. He collected the corpses of the adventurers and mercenaries inside his War Rune's storage and disappeared into the Untamed Jungle with his people.

In addition to Mika and Liopham, the two remaining members of the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team didn't hesitate to eliminate their opponents either. They finished them off in the blink of an eye and vanished into the Untamed Jungle as if they'd never been there in the first place.

Once all Adventurer- and Mercenary teams had been eliminated, Michael and the others took a second glance at the battlefields. All the traces of battle had been wiped out thoroughly, leaving no indication that blood had ever been spilled on that land.

Afterward, they returned to the Untamed Jungle where Blaire and more than a hundred Forest Elf summons were busy running around. They rushed alongside the border to the plains of the Zentika Empire to find more Adventurer teams.

With more than 60,000 Adventurers and Mercenaries sitting idle in Xiltra, it was only obvious that many had grown bored over the course of close to two months. So some of them decided to hunt on their own instead of waiting for the Senator's orders.

That was also how Blaire and the Forest Elf Summons found a bunch of teams, which Michael and the others began to hunt.

They continued the hunting tactic for three more days until the overall danger around them lessened and the situation was favorable once again. No more Adventurers and Mercenaries dared approach the Untamed Jungle.

Tiara and everyone else presumed that the authorities in Xiltru took note of the missing Adventurers and Mercenaries.

It was not long after the Adventurers and Mercenaries disappeared when Icarus sighted a bunch of scouts evenly spread out across the border to the Untamed Jungle.

The scouts were vigilant and didn't dare to come too close to the Untamed Jungle. Nonetheless, they used their abilities and Soultraits to scout their surroundings. Thus, Michael and his people chose to retreat for the time being.

Back in the territory, Michael used Extraction on the Adventurers and Mercenaries they'd hunted.

Most Mercenaries were Natives of the Origin Expanse. They were former Summons and didn't have a War Rune. Unfortunately, that also meant the Mercenaries wouldn't drop SoulStar Fragments.

That made a big difference in the number of SoulStar Fragments Michael extracted. Nonetheless, the final result was impressive.

He extracted a total of 2310 SoulStar Fragments from more than 180 Adventurers. Extracting a Tier-1 Adventurer provided him with an average of 5 SoulStar Fragments. Meanwhile, a Tier-2 Adventurer was much stronger. The lowest number of SoulStar Fragments extracted from Tier-2 Adventurers was 7. The highest was 19.

Of course, Michael also extracted a few Soultrait Symbols. Three fully intact Soultrait Symbols had been extracted as well. However, instead of fusing them, Michael used Extraction on the Soultrait Symbols to disintegrate the Soultrait Symbols into SoulStar Fragments.

The Soultrait Symbols were bound to give him Soultraits of a low star rating given his experience with Soultraits, but that was not the sole reason he disintegrated the Soultrait Symbols.

He was certain that it was better to have more SoulStar Fragments to upgrade his existing Soultraits than fusing with more Soultraits since he didn't have enough time to study new Soultraits and get more accustomed to them.

Using Soultraits he had never practiced before was a little bit difficult. It would be impossible to use them precisely in combination with his other Soultraits for quite a while. That required lots of practice.

He already had a few Soultraits for combat, and his experience in using them together was pretty high as well. It would be better to upgrade them to increase his combat prowess rather than experimenting.

Extracting the three Soultrait Symbols provided him with an additional 351 SoulStar Fragments. Adding them to the 2310 he'd extracted just now, and the remaining 96 inside his consciousness, Michael was now in possession of 2757 SoulStar Fragments.

That was most definitely enough to upgrade Extraction to a 5-Star Soultrait.

But was that really what Michael wanted?

Right now, Michael had five Soultraits. With 2757 SoulStar Fragments, any of them could be upgraded to a 5-Star Soultrait. But which one should Michael upgrade? Which Soultrait would provide the most benefits against the masses of the Jungle Expedition?

"Should I upgrade all Soultraits to 4-Star, and distribute the remaining SoulStar Fragments evenly?"