

Supreme Lord 211

Chapter 211 Curse Of The Jungle

When the first sun rays peeked over the horizon the life in the camp awoke slowly as well.

The first Adventurers and Mercenaries woke up with a headache after their heavy drinking session the day before. They got up with the intention to prepare for today's battle inside the Untamed Jungle.

However, what they didn't expect to hear was screams of horror and fear to sweep through the entire camp as more people awoke.

After the first screams resounded more Adventurers and Mercenaries woke up, and more screams filled the air.

Everyone was forcefully pulled out of their beds, while the tension all over the camp increased drastically.

In the following ten minutes, dozens of mercenaries rushed over to the infirmary, holding one of their eyeballs in their hands.

Their remaining lone eye was filled with horror and disbelief. They couldn't understand how they lost an eye without even realizing it.

But that was not even the worst.

They woke up in the middle of several blood puddles, and the dead bodies of their comrades. The mercenaries didn't even notice that their comrades had died right next to them. They continued to sleep soundly, unaware of everything that happened at night.

It didn't take long before the news reached the authorities of the Jungle Expedition. At first, they didn't believe what had happened. They thought that their Mercenaries and Adventurers were still not sober and were hallucinating.

However, it was not long after that they realized how wrong their thoughts had been. The corpses of the deceased were brought to the center of the camp, creating a heavy atmosphere all over the camp.

Fear slowly crept up in the hearts of the men and women who were oblivious to the happenings of the night before and all of the sleep had been wiped off their eyes.

"Nobody noticed anything? How can that be?" One of the Jungle Expedition's participants asked.

He sobered up the moment he heard about the death of their comrades-in-arm, knowing that it could have been him who lay dead on the ground instead of them. He had just been lucky.

"I only heard rumors about the dangers of the Untamed Jungle before...I didn't expect them to be true..." Someone else murmured quietly. He was not from Xiltra and had traveled through the Zentika Empire especially for the Jungle Expedition not knowing what awaited him.

"Is that the Curse of the Untamed Jungle?" A female Adventurer asked, her voice laced with terror.

"Are we bound to die like this as well?"

One after another, voices of discomfort, confusion, and fear filled the camp.

"I don't want to stay here anymore..."

"Can't we just leave? I don't want to die."

"...I will never sleep again."

The seeds of fear and terror took root in the hearts of the Jungle Expedition members.

It influenced their minds and battle morale, weakening their spirits drastically.

They slowly lost the eagerness to enter the Untamed Jungle.

It was just like Michael hoped but much better.

While terror swept through the camp like a blazing fire, Michael and his people had long since returned to the territory.

After a long and tiring night, everyone rested for a few hours, leaving the guardian duty to those who had stayed back in the territory.

When Michael woke up again, he got up and met up with Lilica and the others.

He took a look at the territory and realized that Tiara, Blaire, and more than 5,000 Starless Summons had yet to return from the mission he'd given them. Michael was not worried about their well-being. He could sense their intact Link of Loyalty, and the emotions from both Blaire and Tiara, whose Links of Loyalty were especially firm.

"I hope they'll return by afternoon, otherwise, it will be difficult to deal with the Tier-3 Adventurers..." Michael murmured.

He had a plan to fight the Tier-3 Adventurers, but Tiara and the others had to complete their tasks to achieve that. If they were to finish their tasks too late, it would become increasingly difficult to deal with the Tier-3 Adventurers.

Fortunately, Michael and the rest could deal with the other Jungle Expedition members until then.

16,000 members of the Jungle Expedition had been killed until now. Amongst them, 2,000 were at the 2nd Tier.

"9,000 2nd Tier members and roughly 41,000 1st Tier members are left...If we deal with the people at the 2nd Tier by tomorrow, we should have it much easier to finish up the rest..." Michael concluded quietly. I think you should take a look at

Last night, Michael scanned the whole camp within a few hours. Thanks to his high perception, and Enhancement further heightening his senses, Michael was able to figure out the current situation across the Jungle Expedition's camp.

Only after he analyzed the camp the night before did Michael finally comprehend why the Jungle Expedition didn't charge into the Untamed Jungle with all of their people toward his territory.

The Tier-3 Adventurers were still missing!

Initially, the Jungle Expedition was supposed to start three days later. But because Michael and his people attacked the Adventurers and Mercenaries all across the border of the Untamed Jungle in the last few days the authorities of the Jungle Expedition started the expedition without waiting for the most important participants to arrive.

Their impatience caused the deaths of thousands of participants, and it created a terrific opportunity for Michael and his team.

The night before Michael killed more than 500 Adventurers. He harvested their SoulStar Fragments and Soultrait Symbols before absorbing everything. The Soultrait Symbols had been extracted a second time to produce more SoulStar Fragments.

In a single night, Michael harvested a total of 2763 SoulStar Fragments.

He didn't use the SoulStar Fragments immediately, knowing that it might be better to leave the upgrade options open. Michael would upgrade one of his three 4-Star Soultraits based on the need of the hour.

Other than the SoulStar Fragments, Michael harvested hundreds of powerful Artifacts, Memory Orbs, and more valuable loot. His gains outweighed his warfare expenses by large.

That was great, but it wouldn't stay like this. After all, Michael was just about to start using their fortune to acquire another advantage.

"We will start using poison from today," Michael said to the others while giving Sun Demos a few orders through telepathic communication.

[Wake up the Demon Monkeys. It's time to initiate the Beast Stampede!]

Since he presumed that the Tier-3 Adventurers wouldn't arrive today, Michael thought that it was necessary to up their game.

It was unlikely that the Demon Monkeys could enrage the Tier-2 Monsters of the middle zone as well as the day before and repeat the pattern. Fortunately, that was not necessary. The Demon Monkeys didn't have to do that anymore.

Instead of enraging their enemies within the Untamed Jungle, the Demon Monkeys were now ordered to target the biggest hordes of Tier-1 Monsters in the outer area. Michael and his people had located more than 100 habitats with a large population of Tier-1 monsters in the last few weeks. But since he and his people weren't too interested in those monster hordes anymore, they left them alone.

That would change now.

The Demon Monkeys split up in small groups to scare off the monster hordes, essentially pushing them to the border of the Untamed Jungle.

Preparing for battle didn't require too long. However, it was necessary to wait until the Jungle Expedition would charge inside the Untamed Jungle.

"Do you think they'll still enter the Untamed Jungle?" Mika asked the group.

"I bet they will. The authorities won't allow the Jungle Expedition's participants to be frightened of the Untamed Jungle. If they allow that, their authority will be undermined, and they'll lose face in the

Zentika Empire. After all, the council invested heavily into the Jungle Expedition," Lilica explained before she added, "The moment they fail to deliver results, they will lose the opportunity to pursue a promising career in the Zentika Empire. They have to continue the Jungle Expedition now that they started it!"

"Furthermore, nobody knows for sure what happened the night before. We didn't leave any witnesses alive. That means nobody knows what will happen tonight. Nobody will be able to sleep soundly in the camp, scared that they might become the next victims of the 'silent reapers'," Liopham added confidently.

"I think they'll attack with all participants today. By sending all of them out, everyone will feel more comfortable, thinking that their chances of survival are higher." Another Forest Elf, Opars Zelk, added after Liopham.

Michael nodded in agreement. He couldn't tell for sure what the authorities of the Jungle Expedition were thinking, but the morale would dwindle the more days passed.

Michael was certain that the Jungle Expedition's members wouldn't be able to sleep soundly anymore, which would cause sleep deprivation and a severe burden on their minds. The combat prowess of the entire Jungle Expedition would decrease the more time passed while letting fear gnaw at their minds.

Thus, they had to prepare for an all-out war starting today.

Michael equipped everyone with various potions, ointments, and several types of poisons. He hoped that every attack could take out an opponent. That way, they could quickly annihilate their opponents and take care of the more terrifying enemies.

The territory's army went into position. They spread in a wide range around the territory, ready to attack at any moment. Afterward, they waited for the signal that would indicate the start of the all-out attack on the Jungle Expedition.

Meanwhile, Michael changed his position. Instead of joining the battle in the Untamed Jungle, he did something else. He jumped on Icarus' back before the Greater Eagle left the Untamed Jungle to circle high in the air above the camp.

Eagle Eyes' passive effect enhanced his eyesight enough to see clearly what was going on the ground even though Icarus was circling more than 500 meters above the surface.

Michael observed the situation clearly, and he gave Sun Demos the mental command to initiate the Beast Stampede once the Jungle Expedition set off to the Untamed Jungle.

The roars of the Demon Monkeys were the territory army's signal to stay vigilant and await the arrival of the Jungle Expedition.

On the other hand, Michael waited patiently to see how many would stay behind.

"It's about time to deal with the snake's head."

Chapter 212 Storm

Almost all remaining members of the Jungle Expedition charged inside the Untamed Jungle simultaneously.

Many were initially afraid of the Untamed Jungle's Curse and that they might die, but with the other veterans around them they gradually calmed down.

By entering the Untamed Jungle, the Jungle Expedition was forced to spread out and split up into smaller groups. The densely grown flora and fauna forced them apart. However, nobody was too worried about this. They knew that their comrades were nearby and that they would receive support the moment something unexpected happened.

They were also prepared to battle the moment they entered the Untamed Jungle. Given the information they'd received from the battles the day before, Tier-2 Monsters might appear in front of them at any moment in the Untamed Jungle.

However, none of that happened. On the contrary, the Untamed Jungle was silent for the first few minutes. They could walk through the Untamed Jungle without any issues.

Only when they were deep enough in the Untamed Jungle did something change. The sounds of desperate monsters resounded through the Untamed Jungle's outer ring. The noises didn't come from ahead but from all directions. They overlapped and grew louder by the moment.

The warriors tensed up and changed their stance instinctively. They changed into a defensive battle stance and prepared to face the monsters of the Untamed Jungle.

At the end of the day, the Jungle Expedition members would rather fight against an opponent they could see than not knowing what awaited them and stay in the dark. That was also one of the reasons that convinced them to charge into the Untamed Jungle.

Ready for battle, the Adventurers and Mercenaries waited patiently for the first monsters to barge through the thickly grown undergrowth and lunge at them.

It didn't take long until the first monsters arrived.

However, what the Adventurers and Mercenaries didn't expect was to see hundreds of monsters charging mindlessly at them. The fear and desperation in the monster's eyes was clear to perceive. It was intense enough to cause shivers to run down their spine.

The encounter with frightened monsters didn't end with hundreds of them charging through the undergrowth. No, that was just the beginning.

Hundreds of Monsters turned into thousands, and thousands became tens of thousands, all of them running toward them.

The Adventurers and Mercenaries were not sure how many monsters were charging at them, but they could clearly tell that all of them were frightened to death.

This realization, combined with the fear and terror that had taken root in their hearts caused the Mercenaries and Adventurers to feel goosebumps all over their bodies. Nonetheless, they clashed with the desperate monsters head-on. It was too late to move away either way.

Yet, before their weapons collided with the monsters, screams rang out in the back of their groups.

Some turned around, just to see that their comrades had been pierced by an arrow. Most arrows weren't lethal, but it was not difficult to see a dark greenish substance coating the arrow. The veins around the area of impact turned dark quickly and the screams of pain and horror grew louder and more intense.

Panicked and terrified, the Adventurers and Mercenaries, who had been hit, tried to escape. However, they lost control of their body real quickly and fell to the ground where they remained. Their movements slowed down and they couldn't muster the strength to get up anymore. Slowly but steadily they lost all sensation in their bodies.

More arrows whizzed through the air silently. Their sounds were muffled by the screams of pain, the monster's desperate noises and the rustling leaves all over the Untamed Jungle.

As the arrows impacted, the desperate monsters continued their charge. They were too focused on fleeing to focus on what lay ahead of them. Thus, they either bulldozed the paralyzed Adventurers and Mercenaries beneath them, quashing them to death or they ran straight into the blades of the unscathed Adventurers and Mercenaries.

Thus, a chaotic battle began.

The fleeing monsters continued charging ahead mindlessly, and the Demon Monkeys were revealed. Simultaneously, the bombardment of arrows continued. The downpour of arrows never ceased, and more people fell victim to the poisoned arrows.

Unable to hold it any longer, the Lionhearts unleashed their blazing flames. They chose to go against the orders they'd been given and began to burn down the Untamed Jungle's outer area.

Their blazing flames spread rapidly through the densely grown undergrowth. However, instead of panicking, the Demon Monkeys merely slowed down. They slunk back behind the cover of trees and disappeared in the Untamed Jungle.

Simultaneously, a strong pulling force drained the surrounding origin energy. It pulled in the direction the Demon Monkeys had disappeared to. Moments later, a dark cloud began to form above the Untamed Jungle's outer area.

The cloud was dark like the abyss, and bolts of lightning zapped through it ceaselessly.

When Michael saw the large cloud he nodded his head subtly.

"Let's hope that we collected enough Monster Cores to feed the Storm Orb," He mumbled, staring at the dark cloud.

Michael had made a deal with the Forest Elven Elders a few days prior to the battle. He promised to increase the production of low-level armaments and to continue focusing his investments on the Forging Hall within the Underground Ecosystem in exchange for the Storm Orb.

The effect of the Storm Orb was rather simple. It could create a storm using the origin energy in its surroundings, and the energy stored within monster cores. It was a rare item that controlled the weather in a certain range.

Initially, Lilica handed him the Storm Orb to use once the Lionhearts began to use their fire affinity to destroy the Untamed Jungle. But since Michael chose to attack the camp when most members of the Jungle Expedition left, he didn't have to keep it anymore. He gave it to Lilica in addition to more than 100,000 Tier-1 Monster Cores to use.

The investment he made to obtain the Storm Orb and empower it had been quite high, but Michael knew that the Untamed Jungle's environment had to be protected to ensure their victory.

'You guys can do it! The Lionhearts' fire is useless now, and the Untamed Jungle is even muddier than before.'

Michael believed that his people could do it. He was certain that the Elemental Mages would join the battle now, and that the lethality of the arrow barrage would increase further.

But that was not all. Most of the traps they'd installed worked better on a muddy surface. It was only a matter of time before the invaders would encounter those traps, and Michael hoped that they would take down as many opponents as possible.

'Just don't die, guys!'

He patted Icarus' back afterward, signaling the Greater Eagle to dive down to the ground.

Even though he was worried about his people's well-being, he knew that they would be fine. Hence, he went out alone to fight the remaining members of the camp and destroy the camp for good. I think you should take a look at

Michael summoned the Onyx Dragon Armor Set and Seron Voulge. He used Enhancement on his Artifacts once before jumping down from Icarus' back.

Icarus stopped diving down and ascended back into the air. The Greater Eagle would observe the surrounding area and dive down to kill the weak and injured Adventurers and Mercenaries that had been left behind in the camp so that no opponent was left alive.

Meanwhile, Michael's task was to kill the Twin Lions, and hopefully extract some of their Memories to gather enough information about the Tier-3 Adventurers that had yet to arrive.

Given the Memory Orbs he had already extracted until now, the Twin Lions were the heads of the Jungle Expedition. There were a few more Tier-2 Adventurers leading the expedition, but it was known to everyone that the Twin Lions had control of everything.

Searching through the memories provided by the Memory Orbs, Michael learned a lot about the Jungle Expedition, the hierarchy, and the tactics they employed. It gave him enough insights to counter their plans with various strategies.

That was also why Michael ended up separating from his group. He left the Untamed Jungle to attack the Twin Lions to cut off the serpent's head.

On the ground, a bunch of injured Mercenaries and Adventurers greeted Michael. They looked at him with wide-open eyes, their confusion clearly visible.

Michael used his near-perfectly refined physique to burst forward with terrific velocity. He appeared in front of the opponents and slashed the voulge horizontally, cutting open the abdomen of multiple opponents at the same time, freeing them of their misery.

Michael moved rapidly. He twisted Seron Voulge, lifted the weapon and cut down diagonally, delivering the killing blow for three Mercenaries.

Their energy influx flooded Michael's War Rune at once, invigorating his body and strengthening him little by little.

During the last few days, Michael's War Rune had been constantly working on high gears to refine the energy shares and influxes. Even now Michael was receiving a steady influx of energy share from multiple subjects that were killing the invaders of the Untamed Jungle.

If he continued like this his War Rune's refinement degree would increase to the Late stage until the end of the war. However, the degree of refinement of his War Rune was not the most important.

What was important was to ensure that his energy kept being replenished with the influx of energy shares. Most of the energy he received was devoured by the War Rune, but Michael could use his will to separate a strand of the energy shares to keep refilling his origin energy storage.

That way, Michael didn't have to focus too much on his energy consumption while fighting the injured Mercenaries and Adventurers.

He used as much energy as he replenished to stay fully empowered for the battle with the Twin Lions.

Michael killed every opponent in his sight. In the past, he would have felt guilty killing so many opponents. However, by now, Michael realized that it was either killing or getting killed.

The moment he hesitated, it would be game over for him, or his people.

And Michael didn't want to witness his people's death, especially not if their deaths were caused by him.

Thus, he left a trail of corpses in his wake as he kept slaughtering his enemies. Hot blood gushed through the air. It splattered on his face and dyed the vicinity crimson.

By circulating the Sun Soldier's Breathing technique, Michael stayed in top form as he slaughtered his way through the camp.

There were far more injured Adventurers and Mercenaries than Michael initially expected. Nonetheless, they found their way to hell quickly. Michael made sure of that.

He passed through the camp and paved his way to the tent of the Twin Lions.

On his way to the Twin Lions, he encountered the remaining authorities of the Jungle Expedition.

They were leaning above a map of the Untamed Jungle and kept talking to small stones that gleamed in a faint azure tone. The stones were short-distance communication devices. They were expensive and hard to procure.

'Are they stupid? How in the bloody heaven did they not hear me slaughtering everyone?'

Deep frowns were etched on their faces, showing Michael clearly that the authorities were not satisfied with the information they received from the communication devices.

'Looks like my people cause you lots of stress....it would be a lie if I were to say that I'm sorry though.'

The corners of Michael's lip curled upward as he kept glancing in the direction of the authorities. Since he entered the camp Michael made sure to kill his opponents as quickly as possible. Nonetheless, it was surprising that the authorities hadn't noticed his invasion yet.

Either they were too busy trying to come up with better plans to deal with the problems in the Untamed Jungle, or they felt too secure in the camp.

'Or...they're just...stupid...'

One way or another, Michael closed in on the authorities without any hesitation.

He created a second layer of Enhancement all over his Artifacts and the Eagle Eyes Symbol.

His strength increased considerably in response, and his eyes began to glow golden as Eagle Eyes was utilized.

The next moment, golden streams shot out of his palms, coating Seron Voulge's blade.

Michael began to utilize Extraction. Now was not the time to think about what he should do, and what he couldn't do.

It was about time to go all-out, and not hesitate!

Chapter 213 Beheading The Snake I

Dealing with the authorities of the Jungle Expedition should have been really difficult. However, it was a great fortune that most of them were Natives of the Origin Expanse.

It seemed like the Zentika Empire's council wanted to put Natives at the top of the Jungle Expedition's hierarchy to improve their image. The idea was good, but the issue was that Natives were naturally weaker than Awakened. They didn't possess Soultraits, or Artifacts to strengthen them.

They could only rely on the powers they were born with.

'I cannot find the Twin Lions.' Michael realized after he took a glance through the commanding base of the Jungle Expedition's camp.

'If I can tackle them separately that would be even better!'

He had already summoned the Onyx Dragon Armor Set and Seron Voulge. Two layers of Enhancement covered his Artifacts, and Eagle Eyes were also fully unleashed.

Following that, Michael also used Extraction to shroud Seron Voulge with the golden streams of Extraction.

Michael was not sure how strong Extraction would be in combat, but he hoped that it was enough to push him to the winning side.

Rushing forward with fast, but silent strides, Michael gave Icarus the signal to attack.

The Greater Eagle screeched out loudly before diving down from the other side of the camp. Icarus' screech pulled the attention of the authorities away from Michael.

It provided enough time to appear amid the five Tier-2 Natives, who unsheathed their weapons to clash with Icarus.

Yet, before they could inflict an injury to the Greater Eagle, Michael pierced out with Seron Voulge.

His physical strength was on par with a Lowest-stage Tier-2 Adventurer, and his Tier-1 Artifacts had been enhanced two times.

Being able to see every single detail and movement in his field of vision, Michael pulled back Seron Voulge just as it was about to pierce through the chest of the Native Lionheart.

Blazing flames burst forth from the Native Lionheart. He had instinctively unleashed a great deal of his power upon sensing an incoming lethal attack from behind. The Native Lionheart turned around,

slashing down in the most likely position for the unknown opponent to appear in. However, there was nobody.

Michael had already moved to the side while cutting the Native Lionheart's legs multiple times. The Native Lionheart groaned in pain, but he moved quickly, ready to end Michael's life.

Little did he know that Michael's golden streams had already entered the subtle wounds inflicted by Seron Voulge. He extracted a few drops of blood with great difficulty before he used Spirit Whip to inflict mental damage. The Native Lionheart didn't expect a mental attack, and he failed to protect himself against it.

He struggled and realized too late that something had infiltrated his body. A fountain of blood gushed out of the small wounds on the Native Lionheart's legs.

'Using Extraction on living organisms with strong willpower is really difficult. Maybe I should use Extraction differently in combat...' Michael concluded after he used a great deal of his power to extract some of the Native Lionheart's blood.

Instead of continuing to waste his mental power and origin energy on something that hardly helped him in battle, Michael chose a different approach in the utilization of Extraction.

He expanded his range of Extraction and extracted the soil beneath two other Natives. Before they could realize what was going on, a small pit opened up beneath them. They fell less than two meters deep into a pit, but that was already enough to take away their whole momentum.

Michael twisted his body in an awkward angle to evade the incoming slash of the Native Lionheart before he changed his target quickly. He used Enhancement on Spirit Whip and lashed out at the two Natives who had been dragged down into a narrow pit.

They were just about to jump out of the small, narrow pit when the enhanced Spirit Whip impacted hard. They suffered a backlash and lost their momentum a second time.

Afterward, they required too much time to regain their composure. A cold blade pierced through the neck of the Native Destors just as he was about to look up.

Michael twisted Seron Voulge's blade in the Destors' neck before he dived to the right. His Eagle Eyes and high perception detected an attack from that direction. He avoided getting cut in half by a hair's breadth and simultaneously gained the opportunity to close his distance to the other Native in the second narrow pit.

Michael thrust Seron Voulge forward without hesitation, even ignoring the blazing flames that shot toward him dangerously fast.

Moving instinctively, Michael utilized Extraction to extract the oxygen around him. The range of his extraction was intentionally kept small to lower his energy consumption, but that didn't matter. He could extinguish the blazing flames around him in a short moment. And that was all he needed to thrust the voulge's blade deep into the chest of the Native in the second pit.

The blazing flames engulfing him slowly dimmed down. They were extinguished before hitting his skin, but that didn't mean Michael didn't feel like he was burning to a crisp.

He moved quickly.

'You cannot see me engulfed in blazing flames, can you?' Michael asked himself while dashing toward the Native Lionheart. I think you should take a look at

Certain that the Native Lionheart couldn't see or sense him properly, Michael accelerated. He slashed Seron Voulge horizontally through the air and felt the collision between his weapon and the Native Lionheart's sword just a moment later.

The Native Lionheart was strong, but it felt like the Lionheart was focusing on his proficiency with his innate fire affinity. His physical strength was not nearly perfectly refined like Michael's. Michael used this advantage to change his direction at once. He moved to the side while twisting Seron Voulge to change the trajectory of the Lionheart's slash.

Twisting Seron Voulge meant that its blade was pulled downward and that he had to retrieve Seron Voulge if he wanted to use the blade to cut the Native Lionheart apart.

Fortunately, Michael didn't have to rely on the voulge's blade. He still had the pole-like lower part of the voulge to use. Using the momentum he gained by twisting Seron Voulge, Michael used his entire force to crush the voulge's blunt end onto the Lionheart's head.

A pained groan escaped the Lionheart's lips and the unmistakable sound of something breaking reached his ears.

Michael used the enhanced Spirit Whip to lash out at the Native Lionheart before dashing closer to the Lionheart. He ended up right in front of the Lionheart, and raised his right leg with great momentum, kicking the Native between his legs.

Afterward, Seron Voulge disappeared inside the War Rune, freeing Michael's hands to deliver several heavy punches toward the Lionheart's head.

The Native Lionheart suffered and fell to the ground, blood gushing out of his nose and mouth, yet Michael didn't give him enough time to breathe.

Seron Voulge appeared in his hands once again. Michael spun his weapon and thrust downward with the razor-sharp blade.

The next moment blood sprayed through the surroundings.

Michael had successfully killed the third Native in charge of the Jungle Expedition, leaving only two more to deal with.

Until now, Michael caused considerable commotion. However, he had yet to find the Twin Lions.

His focus had been on the battle but Icarus hadn't screeched out loudly to warn him either. That was a little weird, and it impacted Michael's fight as he dealt with the remaining two Tier-2 Natives.

Since his physical strength was on par with theirs, and he had three combat-oriented 4-Star Soultraits, it was not further problematic to deal with the remaining two opponents.

Nonetheless, multi-tasking was not easy. Soultraits were stronger the higher their star rating, however, at the same time, they were more complex to utilize as well.

Enhancement was a rather simple Soultrait, and it was similar to Eagle Eyes, but Spirit Whip wasn't that easy to control.

Using all three Soultraits simultaneously, while also trying to gain an advantage with the utilization of 5-Star Extraction, Michael suffered a lot mentally.

He emerged victorious at last, but he had a bad headache.

It was his great fortune that the Twin Lions had yet to be found, otherwise, Michael would have a big problem to deal with.

He retrieved a few potions and pills to replenish his stamina, energy and to alleviate the pain killing his head simultaneously.

After that was over, Michael rested his mind for a few minutes.

A few injured Adventurers and Mercenaries approached the commanding tent in the camp, but Michael finished them off using the Siltang Bow. They didn't know what happened before it was already way too late.

Once Michael had no more enemies to deal with, he decided to use Extraction on the five Natives' corpses. Interestingly enough, he extracted one Memory Orb – which was a first.

'Now I can extract the memories of Natives as well?' Michael thought with a small smile on his face. Upgrading Extraction to a 5-Star Soultrait had been the right choice.

He stored the loot extracted from the corpses before devouring the Memory Orb.

A moment later, streams of memories flooded Michael's mind. The memories entailed information about the Jungle Expedition, a few secret tasks they had been given, detailed information about the Twin Lions' bad demeanor, and combat prowess, and more information Michael could make use of in the future.

Michael digested the memories slowly to imprint every little piece of it deep into his mind, but just as he was about to finish digesting the last bits, humongous blazing flames burned down the commanding tent of the Jungle Expedition.

At this point, Michael knew; The Twin Lions had arrived!

Chapter 214 Beheading The Snake II

Michael escaped the blazing flames by sneaking out through the back of the commanding tent. He rushed outside and found the exact location of the Twin Lions.

It was not difficult to find them since their roars could be heard throughout the camp's center.

They didn't seem pleased seeing Michael and began to utilize their Soultraits at once.

The left Lionheart's mane turned pitch-black as if all light had been taken away, while the right Lionheart's mane turned white. It exuded a faint shimmering light.

By utilizing their Soultraits, the Twin Lions' flames began to change as well. The Black Twin's flames turned dark like the abyss, while the White Twin's flames changed into a dazzling white tone.

'This seems more troublesome than the memories showed,' Michael could only think.

He frowned deeply, but he didn't hesitate to initiate an attack. He kept utilizing the Siltang Bow and released a few energy-condensed arrows.

Before charging straight toward the Twin Lions, Michael wanted to find out the exact power level of their dark and white flames. They were stronger than the blazing flames of ordinary Lionhearts, but he didn't know by how much.

Soon enough, Michael figured out that his energy-condensed arrows couldn't even get close to the Twin Lions. The energy-condensed arrows burst apart, and the energy dispersed in all directions the moment they entered the range of the dark and white flames.

The dark flames corrupted the energy arrows, decaying them while the white flames ended up burning the other arrows.

'That's quite bad.' Michael began to curse, only to realize something much worse.

Several Links of Loyalty were suddenly cut, indicating the death of multiple Warriors.

Michael was surprised about the sudden disappearance of several Links of Loyalty, and he immediately contacted Sun Demos through telepathic communication.

[What's going on over there?!]

[Guckuck. Guck. Guck Guckguck!!]

[The Beast Stampede was already stopped, and the Adventurers started counterattacking? Fuck!]

Michael didn't like the sudden turn of events. He'd hoped that the Jungle Expedition's main force would slowly weaken and that his people would annihilate them one after another. But since the Beast Stampede had been stopped this was very unlikely.

[Retreat if necessary. Exploit the traps and hunt smaller groups. Use the Untamed Jungle to your advantage!] Michael ordered Sun Demos, who sent a telepathic affirmation in response.

Other than giving a few orders, Michael could hardly do anything to help his people right now. By the time he returned, the climax of the battle was likely to have passed.

The only thing he could do was to hurry up and defeat the Twin Lions, which sounded easier than it was.

Time was running out, and Michael didn't have the luxury to think thoroughly about the choices he had. The best he could do was to follow his gut feeling and consider his choice of actions for a short moment before he would go ahead and act upon them.

Michael released three more energy arrows before he entered the deepest part of his subconscious. For a moment, he considered using the 3470 SoulStar Fragments he had left to upgrade Spirit Whip or Enhancement.

However, he changed his mind on a whim, investing every single SoulStar Fragment into Extraction.

The frame of a sixth Star formed on the Soultrait Symbol for Extraction as the Symbol devoured the SoulStar Fragments, but that was already it.

Not even a tenth of the 6th Soultrait Star had been formed.

If Michael desired to upgrade Extraction to a 6-Star Soultrait, he would need an additional 40,000 to 50,000 SoulStar Fragments – maybe even more.

Nonetheless, the creation of the 6th star's frame was enough to strengthen Extraction considerably. It grew stronger and easier to control than before. His will was enough to use extraction in a range of ten meters.

Using Enhancement on the Extraction Symbol three times in a row, Michael further enhanced the potency of Extraction without increasing the energy consumption.

Michael shot forward, replacing the Siltang Bow with Seron Voulge before activating Eagle Eyes as well. Two layers of Enhancement were put on his Artifacts, and Michael went up another notch by manifesting two enhanced Spirit Whips.

Given his current strength and mental capacity, utilizing Enhancement many times while unleashing three more Soultraits was already above his limit.

Michael knew that very well. He could also sense blood trickling down the corners of his eyes, his ears, and nose. However, there was nothing Michael could do about it. It was evident that he had to go all-out and beyond his limit to defeat the Twin Lions.

They spotted him, summoned their Artifacts, and shot forward immediately. Their blazing flames burst forth as well. They covered the entire center of the camp, burning down everything in their sight. The flames were unstoppable and continued to expand, destroying the camp much faster than Michael could ever do.

But Michael couldn't feel grateful. If he felt anything, it was the terrifying pressure and heat the holy and abyssal flames caused.

It didn't take long before the flames reached him as well. Yet, just as they were about to burn him down, and turn his body into ashes, white-golden streams shot out from all over his body. I think you should take a look at

The white golden streams sucked away the oxygen wherever they went. And without oxygen, not even the holy flames and abyssal flames could survive.

Michael could clearly feel that the dark and white flames were eating away at the white-golden streams shrouding him, but that was something he had already expected.

Thus, he lashed out with the Spirit Whips, creating severe mental attacks that hit both of the Twin Lions hard. Their flames dispersed for a moment as they lost control of both their Soultraits and their innate fire affinity.

Despite losing control of their Soultraits and the blazing flames around them, the Twin Lions didn't struggle too much due to the Spirit Whips. They slashed at Michael from both sides nearly simultaneously. Michael watched their movements precisely, ducked, and created a deep pit for the Twin Lion to his right.

The pit was more than five meters deep, yet barely wide enough to fit one of the Twin Lions.

After the pit was created, Michael lashed out with the Spirit Whip at one of the Twin Lions while retrieving a large tree trunk from his War Rune's storage space.

The tree trunk weighed several hundred kilograms and Michael could barely lift it by retrieving Seron Voulge. He threw it down the narrow pit, hoping that it would kill the Twin Lion by crushing him under itself.

Even if it wasn't enough to kill the Twin Lion in the pit, Michael was certain that it would restrict the Lionheart a little bit. Michael merely wanted enough time to deal with the other Twin Lion on the ground.

'If I cannot deal with both of you at the same time I can just split you up!!' Michael shouted in his mind, manifesting Seron Voulge once again.

He slashed Seron Voulge to the side while expanding his range of extraction to ensure that the Twin Lion couldn't manifest his blazing flames.

The expansion of his range of extraction worsened his headache, however, Michael couldn't help himself. More Links of Loyalty were cut since his battle with the Twin Lions started, and he felt his impatience increasing rapidly.

The impatience burning in his heart was set ablaze, putting him into a situation he would rather avoid under normal circumstances. After all, a life-and-death battle could only be won by staying calm and composed...usually, at least.

Michael knew that he was often impatient and that his course of actions were often far from logical and rational. Nonetheless, impatience was one of the worst feelings to feel mid-battle.

The lack of patience often resulted in mistakes, and mistakes in a life-and-death battle meant death.

Michael knew he was risking a lot and his actions increased the chances of his death, but he didn't want his subjects to die either.

He knew he had to take bold risks and also survive in order to protect his subjects. Dying miserably meant that he wouldn't be able to help his people anymore.

Taking that into consideration, Michael gradually calmed down. His impatience dispersed in the wind as he issued a quick rally of slashes and thrusts. His attacks were rapid, and greatly timed with the utility of his Soultraits.

Using four Soultraits simultaneously in combat, Michael gained an inevitable advantage over his opponents. He attacked the mind of the Twin Lion, restricted his usage of the native fire affinity, and he could see his opponents' movements early enough to react rapidly. Simultaneously, he could enhance his strength, and the potency of his Soultraits, using Enhancement.

Unfortunately, Michael noticed quickly that his combo of Soultraits were taking a toll on his mind. His entire face was smeared with blood, and he found himself stumbling after he cut the Twin Lion in front of him thrice.

The injuries he'd inflicted weren't even deep. They could barely be considered minor wounds.

But the situation grew even worse when the other Twin Lion returned back to the surface. The tree trunk had failed to kill the Twin Lion.

If it did anything useful, it was enraging the Twin Lion.

Both were focused on him, snarling viciously as they prepared themselves to initiate another all-out attack.

Just as Michael felt like he would collapse at any moment, the Twin Lions froze in their tracks.

They had been fully focused on Michael, certain that nobody else was left in the camp. After all, it was void of life when they returned.

Michael and the Greater Eagle in the sky were the only sources of life that had been left behind.

Unfortunately, a silver streak cutting through the air proved them wrong – terribly wrong.

Blood gushed out of the Twin Lions like fountains, and a faint smile blossomed on Michael's face.

"Took you long enough to arrive..." He mumbled just before he lost control of all of his Soultraits.

They were terminated as Michael's legs caved in.

He collapsed on the ground and couldn't muster enough strength to open his eyes as the familiar figure of a masked man holding a saber in his hand.

The next moment, everything around him turned dark.

Chapter 215 Hazy

Masked Saber appeared behind the Twin Lions, his saber coated in dense silver energy.

He slashed through the empty air and released a crescent-shaped silver energy blade that cut through the Twin Lions' necks, beheading them with a single strike.

The intense white and golden hues and energy streams circulating around Michael dispersed in all directions as he saw the Twin Lions' blood gushing out of their necks like water fountains.

"Took you long enough to arrive..." He mumbled before he collapsed on the ground and stayed there, unmoving.

Masked Saber stared at the Twin Lions with a deep frown.

"Why would you fight them alone? Is the situation that bad?" Masked Saber asked himself, unable to understand why Michael would barge into the enemy camp without anyone's support.

Icarus shot down next to them, screeching loudly. The Greater Eagle wanted to show that Michael was not alone, but the monster's screeches did not awaken his master.

Meanwhile, Masked Saber dashed toward Michael and bent down to feel his pulse and the circulation of origin energy within his body.

"He still has some origin energy left, and his pulse is fine. That's good. He was just mentally exhausted," He mused to himself, picking up Michael to put him onto Icarus' back.

Afterward, he took a look at Michael's belt, where he found the spatial pouch.

Masked Saber didn't think long about what he had to do. He picked up the Twin Lions' corpses, injected some of his origin energy into Michael's spatial pouch, and accessed it to store the corpses inside. Afterward, he retrieved a few fist-sized stones from the inside of his tunic. Masked Saber stored them inside Michael's spatial pouch as well.

Once Michael was secured, Masked Saber jumped on Icarus' back behind Michael and they ascended into the air to return to the territory.

There was nothing else they could do. The entire camp had turned into a huge campfire, and Michael was not in a condition to fight anymore. Bringing him back to the territory before Masked Saber and Icarus would join the battle in the Untamed Jungle was the best option.

But what neither Masked Saber nor Icarus knew was that Michael was under the constant influx of energy shares. They entered his body, eased his tense muscles, and aided the refinement of his War Rune. Simultaneously, they provided support for the replenishment of his drained mental power.

Michael woke up less than half an hour after he collapsed in the camp. His head hurt like hell and he felt like he had been pulled into pandemonium, but he was awake.

'Where am I?' He wondered, feeling a familiar soft cushion beneath his head.

Opening his eyes slowly, Michael found a familiar wooden ceiling above him. He turned his head left and right and came to a realization.

"The wooden manor. I'm back in my territory."

He got up from the bed he had been lying in, ignoring his heavily aching head. Every step he took required monumental effort and pain shot up from every part of his body, but that was not important. Michael could still feel energy shares reaching him, and Links of Loyalty being cut, which worried him.

The war against the Jungle Expedition was not yet over!

His mission was not yet completed. Michael couldn't rest just yet!

Michael left his room, hurriedly climbed down the staircase, and left the wooden manor. Outside, he was greeted by dozens of Starless Summons. They saw their Lord's pale face and his unsteady steps and rushed over without hesitation.

"Lord, please return to bed. If you don't rest, you may have to face severe consequences!" One of them blurted out in worry.

"Your health is the most important, Lord! Take rest and leave the rest of the battle to us! We will take care of everything!" A young Warrior, who had returned to the territory earlier to receive medical attention, shouted out loudly.

He looked confident in his Lord's eyes, pride and reverence shining brightly inside his blue pupils.

However, Michael could only frown upon hearing what his people said.

Their war was not yet over, so how could he abandon his people to rest instead of joining them in a bitter fight until the very end?!

"Give me something to eat, and I will be fine," Michael ordered, his expression and tone making it clear that he wouldn't accept anymore attempts to convince him to rest.

The Starless Summons around him lowered their heads instinctively. Some rushed straight to the kitchen and began filling several plates with all types of food.

They rushed back once the plates were filled and handed them to Michael. I think you should take a look at

Michael, whose head was still throbbing in pain, sat down on a nearby chair before pointing at the table in front of him. The plates full of nutritious dishes were put down, and Michael began to devour them.

Ignoring the pain in his head, Michael spent the next 20 minutes finishing more than ten plates that had been filled to the brim. He could feel his body brimming with energy and the pain in his head slowly subsided after he consumed a large amount of nutrition.

He got up and began telepathic communication with Sun Demos to find out the position of the enemies, and the situation on the battlefield.

Sun Demos responded instantaneously, providing Michael the information he needed. Michael listened to the intel while rushing to the battlefield.

'The traps have been triggered, killing close to 3000 enemies, and the Beast Rampage allowed us to reap the lives of more than 20,000 invaders...that's decent, but it leaves more than 27,000 invaders who are rampaging the Untamed Jungle...'

[Guckuck!!]

'Hmm? Masked Saber and the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team killed more than 4,000 Adventurers and Mercenaries in the last hour? Good. Very good.'

[Fight passively. Make kills whenever the opportunity arises. However, don't even think about attacking mindlessly!] Michael ordered Sun Demos, who responded with silence.

A frown appeared on Michael's face. He knew that Sun Demos had to listen to his order because of their Tamer–tamed monster relationship, but Michael could also tell that the Demon Monkey King didn't want to heed this kind of order, not anymore.

[If you can ensure your survival, go ahead and attack head-on then. But, if you and your underlings die, don't even think about cursing me in your afterlife!] Michael thus changed his order after a while.

If the Demon Monkeys and their King desired to sacrifice themselves, who was he to deny their request? Michael didn't know much about the Demon Monkey kind, but it was pretty obvious that they weren't noble Samaritans. On the contrary, he was pretty sure that the Demon Monkeys were one of the biggest nuisances in the Untamed Jungle's middle zone.

They wouldn't die that easily.

[Guckuck!!!]

'Don't thank me for that, idiot!' Michael cursed in his mind, accelerating further to reach the battlefield faster.

By now, the battle had spread across most parts of the Untamed Jungle's outer ring, trampling several plants and bushes. That meant Michael couldn't help everyone in need of help. He was only one person and couldn't split himself into thousand parts to fight alongside every single subject across the several-kilometer-long battlefield.

But what he could do was pretty simple. He could ensure that his people were safe and sound wherever he was!

'Since Masked Saber came back already, he must have finished his mission,' Michael thought, recalling that Masked Saber appeared in front of him when he needed him the most.

Initially, Michael ordered Masked Saber to join the battlefield once he brought back the items from the deeper parts of the Untamed Jungle. However, it seemed like Masked Saber had instinctively realized that his Lord had been in grave danger.

'Without him, I would be dead now.' Michael realized.

It left a bad taste in his mouth, but Michael had to acknowledge that he would be dead without Masked Saber. The Twin Lions might not be the strongest on their own, but their techniques and powers hadn't been weak either.

However, the biggest issue was that Michael couldn't continue using so many Soultraits while fighting simultaneously. Fighting and killing several Tier-2 Natives in the camp using the same tactic had already been a nuisance. Clashing with the Twin Lions shortly after worsened his condition further.

'I cannot use too many Soultraits right now, otherwise, I will collapse again...' Michael thought, feeling a headache creeping up his brain at the mere thought of utilizing the full power of four Soultraits simultaneously.

In his current condition, utilizing the full power of two Soultraits simultaneously was already a far cry, forget about three or four.

Fortunately, the Siltang Bow and Enhancement were everything Michael needed to aid his people in the remaining part of the battle.

Drained and exhausted, the Jungle Expedition members feared to face an attack from all directions wherever they went.

Their opponents sometimes appeared next to them, sometimes they charged ahead, and sometimes they arrived from above. There were even times when a small group of people appeared from behind, cutting down a few invaders before they disappeared in the Untamed Jungle's dense undergrowth.

It was hard to stay calm and composed facing ghost-like enemies in the Untamed Jungle, especially after the seeds of fear and terror that had been planted in their hearts from the happenings of the night before had taken root.

However, the situation grew more and more tiresome after the Demon Monkeys changed their approach from a passive stance into an aggressive attack tactic. They dived down from high up in the trees and squashed an invader beneath them. After that, they began wreaking havoc amid their opponents, using all of their limbs, and their lengthy tails to massacre everyone in their way.

Not long after, the downpour of poisoned arrows began once again.

Chapter 216 Over?

"They're fleeing!"

Michael's memories of the battle were hazy. He didn't know how much time had passed since he returned to the battlefield to aid his subjects, but the news of the Jungle Expedition's retreat woke his mind.

He regained his senses, allowing him to clearly assess the current situation.

"They still have 15,000 members left, but their mental strength has been crushed. The Invaders don't even know how many enemies they've killed and how many are left behind to jump upon them at every corner. They've been scared witless, and the seeds of fear and terror have blossomed," Lilica murmured next to him.

Michael nodded his head faintly. Ever since he returned to the battlefield after his short break, Michael could only remember to have been constantly running around and shooting hundreds of energy arrows. Despite that, he could tell that his subjects did an amazing job utilizing the guerilla warfare tactics to the peak.

Not many of Michael's subjects died after he returned to the battlefield. He was not sure whether that was because of his presence, or because he had already been late, and that the invaders had already been forced to retreat.

Either way, the invaders fled, and Michael could tell that the vast majority of his subordinates rushed behind them in an attempt to kill all of them.

"Let's follow them as well," Mika shouted loudly. His clothes were drenched in sweat, his wet hair stuck to his temples, and his breathing was rough.

Despite being clearly exhausted, Mika desired to pursue their opponents, "They've witnessed our power. Let's crush them to make sure that they enter a state of horror whenever they think of the Untamed Jungle again!"

The more frightening the Untamed Jungle was to the outsiders the better. It would ensure that fewer people desired to enter the Untamed Jungle ever again as tales of this battle spread across the empire.

Michael felt like pursuing the remaining survivors of the Jungle Expedition as well. Their willpower and strength had been crushed entirely, decreasing their combat prowess drastically.

However, he also knew that pursuing the Jungle Expedition's survivors for too long would create problems. Desperation could be used as fuel to attain unpredictable power – even if it was just temporarily – and Michael was certain that some of the survivors would go ballistic and end up killing his subjects so as to take down as many as possible with themselves if death was the only outcome.

If not for that, the Guards within Xiltra might take note of their pursuit once the distance to Xiltra grew closer. Thus, Michael decided that it wouldn't be a good idea to pursue the desperate survivors of the Jungle Expedition for long.

Of course, that didn't mean Michael would allow them to leave without giving them another slap on the back of their heads.

"Give a signal. Let the cavalry have some fun," Michael ordered, smiling faintly.

Mika and the others stopped in their tracks almost instantly. They'd planned to pursue their fleeing enemies as well, but upon hearing what Michael said they slowed down.

"I will catch up with our people at the border. Don't worry about them. No more of our brave warriors will die today!" Lilica said to which Opars and the other Forest Elves responded with a confident nod.

"Alright then. Take care of everyone. I will tend to the wounded," Michael instructed and the Forest Elves disappeared a moment later.

Seconds after they left, a loud horn echoed through the outer ring of the Untamed Jungle. Afterward, the Heavy Armored Elephant, the Cavalry Riders, Spearmen riding on Bilrox, Iglisis, and Icarus attacked the fleeing survivors of the Jungle Expedition.

They slaughtered the fleeing survivors and deepened the terror in the hearts of those who were fast enough to escape the pursuit.

Meanwhile, Michael helped his injured subordinates back to the territory.

The remaining Starless Summons within the territory rushed over to help as well, collecting the corpses of their friends, and comrades, as well as the corpses of their opponents, knowing that Michael will be able to use them to the territory's advantage.

Hours passed in the blink of an eye and the Heavy Armored Elephant, the Cavalry Riders, and everyone else returned to the territory. A large feast was prepared to celebrate the victory against the Jungle Expedition's attack and to honor the bravery of the deceased, who died to protect the territory and its citizens.

The vast majority of the Demon Monkeys died, in addition to half of Michael's army. The number of their casualties was actually quite low compared to the tens of thousands they killed, but that didn't decrease the pain and agony sweeping through the hearts of those who lost their comrades, friends, or even lovers.

"Do you think it's over now?" Lilica asked late at night. She was tired, just like everyone else. Yet, Lilica didn't even think of going to sleep before having a talk with Michael.

The past few days had been tiring, they fought a lot, and they experienced both joy and agony. Despite that, something about the Jungle Expedition felt off.

Lilica couldn't really put it in words, but defeating the Jungle Expedition seemed much easier than they first presumed.

"You're probably worried about the Tier-3 Adventurers, who never arrived, right?" Michael responded with a question rather than answering Lilica's doubt.

She nodded weakly while poking a branch in the embers of the burned-down campfire.

No matter how she looked at it, the situation was weird. It may be an exceptional achievement to defeat a group of 65,000 Adventurers and Mercenaries – something she would have never been able to achieve if she was the Lord of the territory – but Michael told them that they would have to face a dozen Tier-3 Adventurers.

A single Tier-3 Adventurer in the group of 65,000 Adventurers and Mercenaries would have been enough to turn the tides of the battle, yet there had been no sign of them throughout the battle.

"Was your information wrong?" She thus asked at last. I think you should take a look at

"I don't think so," Michael answered after a while.

"I think the Tier-3 Adventurers were still on their way to Xiltra when the Twin Lions chose to attack the Untamed Jungle. They were probably restless because we attacked the adventurers and mercenaries who approached the Untamed Jungle to complete missions," Michael added with a shrug.

"Actually, I don't know their reasons, but I doubt that the Twin Lions or the other authorities of the Jungle Expedition expected to see their people die so quickly. Maybe, they wanted to explore the Untamed Jungle and familiarize themselves with the surroundings to strike once the Tier-3 Adventurers arrived...though I am not too sure about that either."

At the end of the day, Michael could only try to predict their reasoning. The Memory Orbs he had absorbed didn't give him any clear reason for the Jungle Expedition's rushed movements.

Michael's only clue was the bad relationship between Natives and Adventurers. The Native Mercenaries seemed to hate the Adventurers, and the Adventurers didn't take the Natives seriously. This was clearly evident given the Twin Lions' arrogance when they faced the Native authorities.

They weren't even friendly with each other.

If anything, they felt more like hostile arch-enemies.

"The big question now is whether the Tier-3 Adventurers will attack the Untamed Jungle, or if they'll be called back," Opars said, joining the conversation between Michael and Lilica.

Michael agreed with a nod.

"Even if they attack, Masked Saber has already returned with the stones. As long as Tiara, Blaire and the others return with their goods, we should be able to face some Tier-3 Adventurers head on..." He said, just for Lilica to add quietly, "...probably..."

"Yeah...probably..." Michael said with a faint smile on his lips, "We never know what will happen. All we can do is give our best to grow stronger and prepare for the worst case."

"Which means that we will prepare for the attack of a dozen Tier-3 Adventurers," Opars murmured.

Once again, Michael nodded.

They spoke for a while until everyone was too tired to think straight. They went to bed and slept soundly for the first time in a while.

Michael woke up late the next day. It was already past noon when he groggily opened his eyes.

He was still tired and had the urge to fall back on the warm bed to sleep for a few more days, but he had to get back to work. If a dozen Tier-3 Adventurers were truly about to attack them it was necessary to reinforce the territory, reinstall the traps, and build up everything that had been destroyed.

One of the most important tasks was to extract the corpses of close to 7000 Adventurers, and around 27,000 Mercenaries.

Michael and the others chose to extract the loot of the Origin Expanse's Will, and everything else that was of value before returning the corpses to the Untamed Jungle. The Untamed Jungle would devour the corpses and use them as a nourishment to grow faster and bring back the flourishing flora and fauna that had been destroyed during the battle of the past few days.

That way, the Untamed Jungle would not sustain heavy losses, and Michael gained even more benefits.

The more densely grown the Untamed Jungle, the easier it would be for him and his people to fight a large number of opponents.

Using Extraction on tens of thousands of bodies was certainly not something that could be rushed.

Fortunately, Michael's origin energy had been fully replenished.

Extraction was also a 5-Star Soultrait by now, enhancing the power of the Soultrait.

Over the next few hours, countless Artifacts, SoulStar Fragments, Soultrait Symbols, Memory Orbs, Summoning Scrolls and Summoning Scroll Fragments piled up around Michael.

Michael, however, didn't pay any attention to the loot he had obtained. He focused on Extraction until he finished the last corpse.

Only then did he notice a phenomenon occurring within the mountain of Summoning Scroll Fragments around him.

10,000 Summoning Scroll Fragments burst into the air when Michael's attention moved to the trembling pile of fragments.

They swirled around each other, forming a small tornado that was compressing itself over and over again, slowly changing shape.

Michael's eyes shot wide open in surprise, and the people around him reacted similarly.

"Isn't that..."

Chapter 217 Council Meeting

"What is going on in the Untamed Jungle? How is it possible for more than 50,000 participants of the Jungle Expedition to die just like that? The Jungle Expedition shouldn't have left Xiltra until tomorrow?!" An old man of the Destors race thundered through the humongous marble hall.

He pointed at a Lionheart with silver fur, demanding an explanation.

"Explain to me why your idiotic subordinates decided to start the Jungle Expedition before the Tier-3 Adventurers arrived, Senator Keltos!!" He shouted at the silver-furred Lionheart.

Senator Keltos, the silver-furred Lionheart, shrugged nonchalantly.

"Everyone here said that it was unnecessary to hire Tier-3 Adventurers for the Jungle Expedition. Thus, I decided to give my subordinates permission to act on their own accord if an unexpected situation was to occur. And that is exactly what happened since every Mercenary and Adventurer disappeared after leaving the security of Xiltra's walls," Senator Keltos said without seeming to care about the old Destors.

"But do not assume that I am happy with the Jungle Expeditions' results. My investment into the Jungle Expedition was the highest, so I'm the most annoyed about the failure. More than three-quarters of the Expedition members died, and the rest suffered a great mental setback. They won't be able to fight for the Zentika Empire until their mind has recuperated and their confidence renewed."

The old Destors slumped back onto his seat. He had nothing else to say since it was true that Senator Keltos used his own wealth to fund the Jungle Expedition. Only some of the funds had been added from the Zentika Empire's treasure vault.

"How about we stop fighting for today? I think today's council meeting is held to take care of a few more important things," A middle-aged Jeglaw – a woman with certain charms – said calmly. The warmth in her voice shattered the tension in the room, soothing the anger of the Destor and Lionheart.

"I heard rumors about a Lord in the Untamed Jungle. Some reports said that they saw Forest Elves and Humans fighting side-by-side with the monsters of the Untamed Jungle," She revealed what had been reported to her not too long ago before she carefully added, "If the reports can be trusted, the Lord is presumed to be living near the outer ring, and to have reached the 2nd Tier not too long ago."

When the Jeglaw's words rang through the marble hall, some of the older members of the council began to murmur. The two dozen seats around the round table squeaked as the old men and women turned to each other to speak quietly.

"I've heard about Forest Elves. They're quite intelligent and strong combatants within any kind of forest. Dealing with them is definitely a hassle. But...Humans? I have never heard of that race," A Zantur mumbled quietly – barely loud enough for every council member to hear – before he gave it a shrug. It was not really important whether he knew the human race or not.

"The undeniable fact is that the Jungle Expedition failed, miserably at that."

Senator Keltos sighed upon hearing this. He knew that it was true and that he had grossly underestimated the enemy in the Untamed Jungle.

Until now, he presumed that the Forest Elven Adventurer team in Xiltra had been at fault for his subordinates' continuous failure. Senator Keltos thought that the Forest Elves tricked his subordinates into believing that there was a Lord in the Untamed Jungle who was hunting them down one after another. However, that couldn't have been further from the truth.

The Forest Elves never lied to his subordinates. There had actually been a Lord in the Untamed Jungle, and it was the incompetence of his subordinates that led to one failure after another.

The Jungle Expedition had been an attempt to conquer the Untamed Jungle's outer ring and get one step closer to his final goal, yet it made him look like a fool.

It was about time to change something.

Senator Keltos cleared his throat loudly. He accessed his War Rune and retrieved dozens of tattered documents that he spread across the large round table.

His action attracted the interest of the remaining council members, who picked up some of the tattered documents.

"Initially, I didn't want to reveal these documents because they're the result of decades of research. I found some of those documents in ancient ruins, while others were procured from all over the Zentika Empire. My subordinates found them in rifts, dungeons, and mazes within the last 50 years. But since it seems like my subordinates are too incompetent to do the job, I decided to stop hiding the documents. I think it's about time that the council works together to deal with the Untamed Jungle – and these ancient documents should be more than enough motivation for everyone here!" I think you should take a look at

Senator Keltos' voice was calm and composed as he spoke. However, the glint in his eyes clearly depicted the greed that had infested his entire being. Senator Keltos was unwilling to share the gains of the treasure he'd been looking for even now. Nonetheless, he was not stupid.

Greed may have turned him into an impatient man, but he didn't turn into a brainless fool – not yet.

The council members read the ancient documents swiftly. Their comprehension was high from decades – if not centuries – of experience, and they quickly understood what kind of treasure trove Senator Keltos had revealed to them.

"You're telling us about this...NOW?!?" The old Destors who had barely managed to calm down earlier, exploded again. He jumped up from his chair and smashed one of his hands flat down on the large table.

Senator Keltos' attention moved to the old Destors, whom he stared at with an unperturbed expression.

"So what?" He asked calmly. "Am I obliged to tell you about the personal gains I make using my own wealth? If you really think that, you should question your own intelligence."

The old Destors saw red when Senator Keltos' provocation rang through his ears. However, a single motion from the upper side of the table was enough to calm the old Destors.

His eyes widened slightly and he sat down immediately, looking over to the old man, who had lifted his hand earlier.

"Calm down, Gerald," A hoarse voice echoed through the marble hall, silencing all noises in an instant.

"It looks like we'll have to continue dealing with the Untamed Jungle," The hoarse voice continued. He added, "Let's send out the 13 Paladins. Since they spent several weeks traveling to the Untamed Jungle to join the Jungle Expedition we might as well let them loose."

"They can collect intel about the Unknown Lord in the Untamed Jungle, or maybe finish him off immediately."

The words of the oldest council member resounded through the marble hall. It was the first time in years that he participated in a council meeting, and it was a first for him to show interest in the Untamed Jungle.

"How insightful of you, Lord Targes. Your Paladins are Tier-3 Adventurers. They're certainly strong enough to deal with the Unknown Lord, and the Untamed Jungle's outer ring as well.... IF ONLY these idiots of the Jungle Expedition had waited until the arrival of your 13 Paladins, we wouldn't have been embarrassed like this..." The old Destors said respectfully to the oldest member of the council, Lord Targes while taking a dig indirectly at Senator Keltos.

Lord Targes didn't pay attention to the provocation thrown at Senator Keltos. He was more focused on the documents spread out in front of him. His bony fingers tapped against the large table rhythmically as he fell deep into thoughts.

"Let's wait for the report of the 13 Paladins. If they fail to find and kill the Unknown Lord, we can always change our approach. A large-scale battle against the Untamed Jungle is unavoidable if we want to raid the ruins with peace of mind. And these ruins seem quite interesting. I want to find them."

"I agree with Lord Targes. I support the preparation of a large-scale attack against the Untamed Jungle. It's about time that we take care of this annoying jungle!" The Jeglaw woman said, clenching her fists tightly, "We should start preparing for the large-scale battle immediately. The earlier we start our preparations the earlier we can attack!"

However, the man next to Lord Targes shook his head faintly. "For now we'll be focusing on the Lord Rift. It will open soon, and we've yet to collect all entrance tickets."

"Once the Lord Rift has been raided, we can focus on the Untamed Jungle. Let the 13 Paladins take care of everything first!"

Chapter 218 Loot, Loot & More Loot

In the midst of the clearing in the Untamed Jungle, Michael and dozens of people stared blankly at a black leather scroll that had been sealed with golden wax.

The scroll hovered in the air above Michael, exactly where the 10,000 Summoning Scroll Fragments had disappeared a moment ago.

"Isn't that a Mythic Summoning Scroll?" Mika asked, his eyes widened in surprise.

"Yep. This is definitely a Mythic Summoning Scroll..." Liopham nodded in affirmation, causing Mika's jaw to hit the ground.

His eyes flitted to the small mountain of Summoning Scroll Fragments and back to the black leather scroll.

"Michael can turn these Summoning Scroll Fragments into Mythic Summoning Scrolls? I thought he can only create Ordinary Summoning Scrolls from them," Mika murmured.

This time, Liopham had nothing else to add. He was also quite confused by the outcome. However, he was not the only one. Even Michael was stupefied.

'Was that always possible? That's...amazing!'

A tinge of excitement spread through his body. The tens of thousands of corpses had given him 10,000 Summoning Scrolls already. Creating enough living space for 10,000 new summons in a span of 24 hours was quite challenging. Thus, Michael had been a little worried, wondering what he should do with the 305,000ish Summoning Scroll Fragments he had extracted on top of the Ordinary Summoning Scrolls.

But given that 10,000 Summoning Scroll Fragments could form a Mythic Summoning Scroll, Michael felt that all his worries were unfounded. In fact, his worries turned into joy, knowing that he'll be able to increase his army by 10,000 New Summons in addition to 30 guaranteed 2-Star Summons.

That thought was enough to disperse his exhaustion and invigorate him with newfound power. He turned to the pile of Summoning Scroll Fragments and began to combine them into Mythic Summoning Scrolls.

Less than ten minutes later, Michael was only left with 5,000 Summoning Scroll Fragments. The rest had been turned into 30 Mythic Summoning Scrolls.

Michael stored the Summoning Scroll Fragments away. He then focused on the 10,000ish Ordinary Summoning Scrolls and the 30 Mythic Summoning Scrolls.

However, instead of being able to pay his full attention to the Summoning Scrolls, Michael's attention kept drifting to the other piles of loot as well.

A huge pile of close to 5,000 Tier-1 Artifacts, and 500 Tier-2 Artifacts entered his view before his focus was pulled over to thousands of blueprints of varying rarity. There were more than 6000 Blueprints, close to 300 Memory Orbs, and a total of 43,532 SoulStar Fragments.

Other than that, Michael also extracted a total of 19 Soultrait Symbols.

Each pile was worth a fortune, and all of this belonged to him – and his territory. All it took was a single huge battle for him and his people to earn a massive fortune of goods that some were unlikely to procure after spending years in the Origin Expanse.

"What should I start with?" Michael asked himself at this point.

Until now, he had never been confused about the loot he had obtained and how to optimize its use. However, looking at the various piles of loot, it was only obvious that Michael felt a little bit overwhelmed.

At the end of the day, Michael accessed his spatial pouch to store all Artifacts away. He would distribute some of them later before selling the rest either to the Forest Elven tribe or in the Sapphirelake Military Academy's shops.

The blueprints were already sorted by his Summons. They moved the duplicates into the warehouse where they would be kept in large boxes. Once needed, they would be retrieved.

This left Michael with the Summoning of countless new Summons, around 300 Memory Orbs, and both SoulStar Fragments and Soultrait Symbols.

Feeling a bad incoming headache, Michael chose to use logic. Since he had spent several hours extracting tens of thousands of corpses, it was already close to night by the time he was done. The sun would disappear beyond the horizon soon. Summoning more than ten thousand Summons would stress out everyone because they would need a place to sleep and rest.

Thus, Michael postponed the summoning procedure as the first task of the following morning.

Afterward, Michael followed his gut feeling. He was the most interested in upgrading Extraction to a 6-Star Soultrait. It was already quite powerful – even in combat – so Michael wanted to take a look and witness the power of a 6-Star Soultrait on his own.

He allowed the Extraction Soultrait to devour the 43,532 SoulStar Fragments entirely. The process was interesting to look at. The Extraction Symbol devoured the purple wisps of energy within the fragments instantaneously before slowly forming the 6th star of the Soultrait Symbol.

As such, two hours passed in the blink of an eye. The last SoulStar Fragment had been devoured, yet the 6th star hadn't been completely formed.

Michael was quite disappointed seeing the almost completed 6th star of his Extraction Symbol.

He didn't think much about it before he began utilizing Extraction on the 19 Soultrait Symbols he had extracted from the corpses of 7000 Adventurers. One Soultrait Symbol after another was extracted, dismantling into hundreds of SoulStar Fragments each.

Michael's Extraction Symbol devoured the SoulStar Fragments the moment they'd been formed, slowly but steadily completing the Symbol's 6th star.

When only two more Soultrait Symbols were left, a wave of energy spread through Michael's body. The origin energy within him began to feel more potent. It began to squirm, seemingly alive as a flood of information swept his mind.

Extraction had been upgraded to a 6-Star Soultrait!

Instinctively, Michael could feel a qualitative change in Extraction's utility. Extraction's potency had increased exponentially, but that was not everything.

Michael could clearly tell that the origin energy inside his body had been invigorated. It felt more alive and much stronger than usual. But there was still more. Extraction's upgrade to a 6-Star Soultrait improved Michael's perception drastically.

Everything around him felt different than before. It was almost as if his senses and perception had received an upgrade from 720p to 4k. The sudden change was weird, and it was a great discomfort at first.

However, Michael quickly adjusted himself to the changes within him.

Feeling the need to test out his Soultrait, Michael approached the Summoning Gate. He used Extraction while opening the hatches to the three Summoning Cores.

The hatches opened quite easily, almost as if the Summoning Gate knew what was about to happen. The next moment thigh-thick streams of golden energy shot out of his left palm. They burst forth and engulfed the Summoning Cores at once, extracting a large amount of impurities right off the bat.

In the next two minutes, Extraction extracted more impurities out of the Summoning Cores than Michael had extracted out of them during all of his Extraction sessions in the past, put together. It was a massive amount that made him wonder how many impurities a common Summoning Core could compress inside it.

The extracted impurities were collected and burned. Yet, Michael's curiosity hadn't been quelled.

He went to the warehouse where hundreds of monster corpses were stored. Using Extraction, Michael filled the entire warehouse with thick golden streams of energy.

'Higher efficiency, easier control, the ability to use Extraction on multiple targets, lower energy consumption, higher potency, higher drop-rate, and an innate enhancement of my origin energy, combined with a reinforcement of my perception...Is that the difference between a 5-Star Soultrait and a 6-Star Soultrait?'

Michael wondered and after a while thought that everything made sense now. A 6-Star Soultrait might be initially difficult to control, but it enhanced the user's strength drastically as well. Once the wielder of a 6-Star Soultrait gained a little bit of experience with the utility of the Soultrait it would turn into a deadly weapon.

All it required was some experience and the right state of mind.

Michael's experience with Extraction was already extremely high. Even though the Soultrait had merely been upgraded to the 6th star that didn't change the way it could be utilized, it was still the same, merely with a few additional functions.

This gave him an exceptional advantage; the ability to use a 6-Star Soultrait's power in a way most cannot do even after a year or two.

"I want to fight Lincoln and Zeke again..." Michael mused to himself, a faint smile blossoming on his face.

Then his attention moved to the remaining two Soultrait Symbols. They were not combat-related, which he presumed according to the pictures displayed on the Symbols engraved on the Soultraits. One of the Symbols showed a brain, another one a book.

'They should strengthen my brain and increase my learning capability...maybe...' Michael hoped secretly.

The only reason he didn't use Extraction on those two Soultrait Symbols before was because he hoped to fuse them with himself. If these two Soultraits allowed him to reinforce his brain and learning capability, Michael would have a much easier time multitasking in battle – using several Soultraits simultaneously at their full power –, and for studying.

Unfortunately, Michael's prediction was wrong.

While the two Soultrait Symbols weren't combat-related, they didn't strengthen his brain, nor did they enhance his ability to study more and faster.

He bound the two Soultrait Symbols and learned a lot that cleared his misconception.

Both Soultraits were 1-Star Soultraits. One was called [Mind Reader], and its power was exactly what the name suggested; one could read the mind of the target. While that sounded nice, it was far from easy. Mind Reader had various restrictions.

First, it required the user to touch the target, the closer to the head the better. Second, the energy consumption was enormous. Third, the target could use his willpower to resist his mind being read.

Michael could think of one or two instances in which Mind Reader was useful, but he'd expected something better. Upgrading Mind Reader was definitely not useful for the time being.

The second Soultrait he bound was also a little weird. It was called [Soul Grimoire], a 1-Star Soultrait that stored the souls of the deceased. It couldn't do anything else.

The Soultrait seemed a little weird.

Nonetheless, Michael was quite happy. It was not as if he lost anything by fusing these two Soultraits to himself.

In the worst case, he could just use Extraction on these two Soultraits to remove them.

"Well, whatever. Being able to upgrade Extraction to a 6-Star Soultrait is already more than I expected. I should digest the Memory Orbs and go to sleep. The Summoning Scrolls are already waiting for me!"

Chapter 219 Tiara's Return

Memory Orbs were a mysterious thing. Some contained only a few memories, which made it feel as if pictures had been imprinted into Michael's mind, while others were overflowing with massive memory streams.

After digesting the memories contained within the 300 Memory Orbs he had extracted, Michael could tell that more than half of them were useless to him.

The rest either provided him with important pieces of information related to the Zentika Empire, martial art experience, combat techniques, or other intriguing factors.

"The 13 Paladins...So those guys are coming?" Michael mused after digesting the Memory Orbs of the Twin Lions.

He finally found the answer to why the Tier-3 Adventurers hadn't been found until now, and that the 13 Paladins were still on their way to Xiltra. The memories of the Twin Lions also showed quite clearly that Senator Keltos was a greedy man, who was unwilling to share honor and wealth with others.

Senator Keltos invested the majority of his funds to gather 65,000 Adventurers and Mercenaries, so he wanted his subordinates to be the ones leading the Jungle Expedition to victory.

'You lost because you were greedy...again,' Michael thought with a smirk. He was quite amused, wondering whether Senator Keltos was too arrogant, thinking that everything would go according to his plan, or if Michael himself had been a too big unpredictable variable until now.

'He will be more careful now that he lost his subordinates. The death of 50,000 Adventurers and Mercenaries will probably influence the course of his decisions.'

Michael had been sleeping while digesting the Memory Orbs. His mind felt refreshed, and he was ready to break his head on how to defeat the 13 Paladins – if they chose to barge into the Untamed Jungle.

The memories obtained through the Memory Orbs were quite useful. Nobody knew a lot about the 13 Paladins, but their reputation and skill set was public knowledge. That was also why Michael had a much easier time concluding how powerful they would be upon entering the Untamed Jungle.

'I hope Tiara will return soon. It will take a while to finish preparing the concoction.'

Michael got up from the bed. He took a quick bath and ran a hand through his short black hair. After several months, his hair finally started to grow properly once again. He was not bald anymore!

That was great, but it didn't change the fact that Michael was confused.

'Lord Targes...the oldest council member, one of the strongest existences in the Zentika Empire, and the leader of the Sacred Paladins...Will you send your 13 Paladins inside the Untamed Jungle to eliminate me, or will your Paladins leave after realizing that the Jungle Expedition ended?'

Michael recalled a certain conversation between the Twin Lions and Senator Keltos. The memories of the conversation were hazy and unclear in several parts, but Michael could clearly tell that Senator Keltos respected Lord Targes. In fact, there was even a tinge of fear in Senator Keltos' voice when Lord Targes was mentioned.

Michael didn't like that his enemy feared someone else. That meant Senator Keltos, one of the few Tier-5 Awakened in the Zentika Empire, was not as powerful as Lord Targes.

Michael put on some clean clothes, left the wooden manor, and arrived in front of the Summoning Gate, where two 2-Star Knights were already waiting for him.

"Esteemed Lord, we've been waiting for you!" One of the Knights said, pulling Michael back into reality.

Michael stared at the two Knights before his gaze fell on a 2-Star Forest Elf Sharpshooter, holding a longbow that was larger than his body.

"You're my new Summons," Michael realized, blinking his eyes in confusion. "Welcome to the territory. I'm Michael Fang, the Lord of this territory."

'I have never received three 2-Star Summons from my daily summons before. Oh, wait...I extracted a big mass of impurities out of the three Summoning Cores yesterday. Looks like the probability to summon 2-Star Summons in the daily summon increased considerably!'

2-Star Summons were pretty powerful. Their combat experience, knowledge, and potential were good enough to put them on the pedestal in most territories. After all, the easiest way to summon 2-Star summons were Mythic Summoning Scrolls – which were extremely expensive due to their rareness.

Not many were lucky to possess many 2-Star Summons.

Interestingly enough, Michael could now produce Mythic Summoning Scrolls since he found out that 10,000 Summoning Scroll Fragments could be compressed into a Mythic Summoning Scroll.

He waved his hand to retrieve the Ordinary Summoning Scrolls and the Mythic Summoning Scrolls in his possession. Simultaneously, Lilica and the other 2-Star Knights in his territory rushed over.

The Knights were overjoyed upon seeing fellow Knights and greeted them heartily. They welcomed the new Summons into the territory. Lilica did the same, calmly explaining the situation and why the Elven Sharpshooter ended up as the subject of a human Lord.

Michael stared at the three 2-Star Summons for a short while before he averted his attention back to the Summoning Gate.

Since it was too bothersome to break the seals of more than 10,000 Summoning Scrolls, Michael circulated his origin energy through his body. He pushed the origin energy out of his body explosively, releasing a small shockwave that was barely strong enough to destroy the seals of the summoning scrolls upon impact.

10,000 Ordinary Summoning Scrolls and 30 Mythic Summoning Scrolls unfurled, shot in the air before they were pulled straight into the Summoning Gate.

In the next half an hour, Michael kept himself busy by watching thousands of Summons emerge from the Summoning Gate.

"9,000 Starless Summons, 1100 1-Star Summons, 27 2-Star Summons, and three 3-Star Summons," Michael mumbled when he received the final report written by one of his Summons.

He thanked his subject for working hard before taking a look at the more detailed reports.

"641 1-Star Combat Summons, 15 2-Star Combat Summons, one 3-Star Nightwalker Panther, a 3-Star Earth Elemental Mage, and a...3-Star cook? Seems like the territory's meals will become even better!" Michael rubbed his hands together at the prospect of having delicious food.

He didn't summon a 4-Star Summon this time, but that was not something he had expected, in the first place. The Nature Spirit and Masked Saber were Summons he obtained thanks to great fortune. Michael was already happy to have them by his side.

He might be greedy, hoping to obtain more and stronger Summons, but that didn't mean he could indulge in daydreaming for the development of his territory. Instead of being unreasonable, he may as well make use of the means at his disposal.

After all a big group of new Summons had been recently added to his team, they were introduced to their new Lord and the territory. Michael and his subjects gave the new members a quick introduction and orientation of everything thoroughly while also subtly mentioning that they had just won a pretty big battle.

The subtle hints also included the possibility of a 'few' Tier-3 Adventurers charging into the Untamed Jungle.

Michael would have loved to keep his new Summons in the dark and give them time to settle down first, but that was not reasonable. Everyone had to understand the current situation, and that the territory was bound to be in constant danger. The new Summons had to comprehend that they had to work hard to support the rest of the territory to grow and expand, otherwise, they would be swallowed by the Untamed Jungle, or the Zentika Empire's forces.

Despite the bitter reality, Michael didn't want to scare his new summons too much right off the bat. They could slowly get to know everything related to the territory, and the surrounding regions.

Thus, Michael spent the rest of the day getting closer to his new Summons. Some told him about their past life, and how they died. It was an interesting experience that provided great insight.

Once the sun disappeared behind the horizon, Icarus and Iglis returned with news.

"The 13 Paladins arrived in Xiltra just before we left. If they're going to barge into the Untamed Jungle, it will probably happen tomorrow!" Iglis explained calmly, while Icarus screeched in approval.

Michael and the others gathered in a circle. Most of them frowned at the news, but they remained silent – with their gazes lingering on Michael's calm expression.

"Should we prepare for battle?" Lilica asked, but Michael shook his head.

"What are we supposed to do then?" Mika asked, unsure how Michael could stay so calm.

"Tiara and the others are on their way back. She should arrive in an hour or two," Michael revealed with a sly smile.

He could clearly feel his connection with Tiara through their Link of Loyalty. The Battle Maid was on her way back, and so were the 5,000 Starless Summons that had been with her.

"I don't even know where you sent Tiara...will her return really change anything?" Mika asked impatiently and sounded a bit rude, which earned him glares from everyone else.

"It will change everything. Don't worry, you'll realize soon enough," Michael responded mysteriously, "If the 13 Paladins dare to enter the Untamed Jungle tomorrow, we'll welcome them with a...firework!"

There was no need for Michael to explain the situation in detail. Mika and the others should be able to tell what he was going to do once Tiara and the others returned.

As expected, less than one hour later, Tiara, Blaire and the Starless Summons finally returned. All of them were carrying a huge leather bag filled with something.

Oddly enough, the bags weren't still. They were moving and twitching, indicating that the things inside the bag were still alive.

This earned Michael glances filled with nothing but confusion.

"Welcome back. Is everyone fine?" Michael welcomed Tiara with a smile.

She put a huge leather bag down in front of Michael and returned a smile as well.

"Your plan was perfect. We caught them alive, just like your instructions, Master!"

The next moment, something gray crawled out of Tiara's bag, causing Lilica and everyone around to step back subconsciously.

"Are you serious...is that your plan?!?"

Chapter 220 13 Paladins

220 13 Paladins

Towering above others, the beacons of hope and guardians of justice embodied the essence of nobility and power.

Their physiques bore witness to countless battles fought in the name of righteousness, while their steps resonated with unwavering determination as their presence commanded attention and respect on the battlefield.

That was exactly what Michael felt while watching the 13 Paladins as they approached the Untamed Jungle. He was standing on the highest branch of the biggest tree at the border to the Zentika Empire's plains, his eyes glowing golden.

It was noon the day after Tiara and her people returned from their mission, and it wouldn't be long before he would encounter the 13 Paladins.

"No matter how I look at them, they look impressive," Michael mumbled, continuing to stare at their meticulously crafted armor, forming a seamless fusion of protection and grandeur. The gleaming plates of silver steel, and intricate divine symbols that caught the light and reflected an otherworldly radiance were clear indicators of high-ranked Artifacts.

Their weapons shone with divine luminescence, giving Michael the chills.

He really didn't want to fight the Paladins. They were Tier-3 Adventurers with exceptional Artifacts, great experience, and even better teamwork. The memories he obtained from the Twin Lions had given him enough information about the Sacred Paladins' organization to make him think of running away.

Unfortunately, running away was not an option. Michael couldn't afford to lose his territory. Even if he could afford it, he didn't want to.

[They're approaching the Untamed Jungle in a straight line from Xiltra. Finish your preparations and retreat once you're done.] Michael told Sun Demos through telepathic communication before he continued to observe the 13 Paladins' movements.

Five minutes later, Lilica and Tiara appeared next to him simultaneously. They looked at each other, and a faint smile formed on their lips seeing the exhaustion in the other's eyes.

Ever since Tiara and the others returned from their mission, nobody in the territory had rested for more than ten minutes. Everyone had been given several tasks to complete in less than 24 hours – with some of them being weird and confusing.

By now, Michael's territory exceeded a population of 25,000. That was a massive number for a young territory such as Michael's. Yet, Michael felt that the number was too small. The workforce was simply not enough to complete the remaining tasks.

"We finished relocating the traps," Lilica informed calmly, while Tiara added, "We're almost done as well. What do you want us to do once everyone finishes their tasks?"

"The Elemental Mages will stay with me. Bring everyone safely back to the territory and activate the Storm Orb when Sun Demos gives the sign. I will tell Sun Demos exactly when to give the signal, so don't worry," Michael explained as calmly as possible. However, his heart was thumping wildly. He could barely hear the two women next to him.

Was he insane to think that four people were enough to deal with the 13 Paladins? Most likely.

Did he have another chance? Not really.

Michael didn't have another choice. The only thing he could do was to use trickery in order to fool the 13 Paladins. He believed that their Artifacts were high-quality Tier-3 Artifacts, which meant that the external enhancements and enchantments on their Artifacts were strong enough to deal with Michael and his territory.

No living being inside the Untamed Jungle's outer area could deal with the Paladins. Even if Michael was to throw all of his people at the Paladins, they would grow tired – at most. Michael was certain that he couldn't even inflict a scratch onto their bodies now that he looked at them.

'I have yet to advance to Tier-2. Why am I supposed to deal with a team of 13 Tier-3 Paladins already? Isn't this a little bit over the top?'

Lately, Michael felt like the Origin Expanse was playing with him. It wasn't a great feeling, but there was hardly anything he could do about it – unfortunately. He had to accept the events happening in the Origin Expanse and adjust accordingly. That was it.

"Don't you think it would be better if the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team stays with you? We can protect you from one or two attacks to ensure that your plan will work out!" Lilica offered, and Tiara was about to add something to convince Michael to let her stay as well.

However, Michael shook his head before Tiara could say anything.

"It will already be too dangerous for me and the Elemental Mages. I cannot even ensure our survival, so how am I supposed to pay attention to you guys?" He asked in all seriousness, "Everyone worked hard for the last few days, and I will make sure that we won't give the Paladins the opportunity to strike us first. Don't worry and leave!"

Lilica and Tiara looked at each other. They felt like trying again to convince Michael, but they could also tell that he was telling the truth.

Given Michael's plan, it was truly too dangerous to stay near the border of the Untamed Jungle and the Zentika Empire.

[Guckuck!]

"Sun Demos and his Demon Monkeys finished their task. Leave with them once you're done, and don't forget about the Storm Orb!" Michael said, gesturing to the two women to leave quickly.

The two women sighed deeply and left together without saying another word.

Meanwhile, Michael retrieved a small marble-sized silverish gleaming pill from his War Rune.

"I hope they're as powerful as introduced," He mumbled to himself.

The small silver pill was one of many. It was the product created from the tireless effort of Masked Saber, Tiara, Blaire and the thousands of Starless Summons, who've given their best to collect the ingredients needed to concoct the silver pills.

The silver pill was not a healing pill, nor an energy rich pill. It couldn't be used to strengthen the body either. No, it was a weapon – and an extremely dangerous and fragile weapon, which Michael would've never produced if not for the 13 Paladins. A single mishap, and the entire territory would have ceased to exist even before the 13 Paladins reached his territory.

In fact, even holding the silver pill was dangerous. A single droplet of sweat trickling onto the silver pill would be all it required to end Michael's life miserably.

But it was exactly this silver pill, and many other silver pills that were the last hope for Michael and his territory.

Using Sun Demos' memories, Michael found out about the existence of a certain monster type in the Untamed Jungle's middle zone. Meanwhile, the memories of a few adventurers lead to the revelation of an ingredient that could be found in a small lake within the Untamed Jungle.

Masked Saber went alone, nearly dying multiple times to collect a handful of water source stones from the bottom of the lake, while Alice and her group returned with the living bodies of thousands of Chaos Ants.

Chaos Ants didn't possess high combat prowess. As long as one paid attention to their mandibles and stayed away from them, the Chaos Ants wouldn't even be strong enough to hurt an Unawakened. They weren't larger in size than an adult's fist either.

Despite their non-existent combat prowess, and size, Chaos Ants were considered as the most resilient pest of the Untamed Jungle's middle zone. Not a single monster in the Untamed Jungle's middle zone would be willing to fight – forget about eating – a Chaos Ant. They weren't suicidal, after all.

The blood of Chaos Ants was corrupted by chaos. The presence of Chaos Ants was enough to destroy the origin energy in the surroundings. Killing a Chaos Ant would cause a horrifying reaction from within its body, making it explode!

The Chaos Ants would burst apart, spreading their blood parts everywhere, corrupting and decaying everything they touched, even the hide of Tier-3 Monsters!

Their blood causes irritation on the skin of the living, and it would cause chaos within the body if their blood was to enter other beings.

While that sounded interesting, it was not the point. The point was that the Chaos Ants' blood and the water source stones were of immense value for Michael.

He spent the last 16 hours extracting the Chaos Ants' blood. As long as the Chaos Ants were kept alive they wouldn't burst apart. Thus, after extracting bits of blood from thousands of Chaos Ants, the territory's Master Alchemist had enough to concoct the Chaos Pills.

However, the Chaos Pills alone were not enough to deal with the Paladins. Michael was certain that the Chaos Pills could kill Tier-3 Monsters as long as they were struck directly, but the issue was figuring out how to strike a Tier-3 Paladin with several Chaos Pills.

The moment they sensed danger they would retreat or dive to the side.

That was also why Michael's 25,000 subjects worked tirelessly during the last 16 hours, and why he required the help of the Elemental Mages and the Storm Orb.

Michael's attention remained on the 13 Paladins while waiting patiently for the right opportunity. At one point in time, he sent a signal to Sun Demos who then forwarded the signal to Lilica, and she triggered the Storm Orb immediately.

In the next few minutes, stormy clouds gathered above the Untamed Jungle's outer ring, and it began to rain heavily.

The 13 Paladins tensed up at the sight of the storm. They'd received a report about the storm from the day before and understood that it had been created artificially.

Entering the Untamed Jungle, the 13 Paladins conjured a radiant aura that surrounded their entire being. The radiant aura emanated an ethereal glow that signified their divine connection, strengthening the bond to their allies, and enhancing their physical strength with the holy attribute.

The divine connection was a testament to the 13 Paladins' unwavering faith and unyielding commitment to their Lord and the people their Lord wanted to protect.

With their unyielding spirit, the 13 Paladins stepped into the storm, ready to face the Unknown Lord.