

Supreme Lord 351

Chapter 351 Territory Attack

Micheal didn't really understand how their discussion about his past, his sister being the War Empress who disappeared a long time ago, and Frederik's territory being under attack turned into a lesson for Michael and Kaleb.

Alice criticized their strategy and attitude in the Team discipline for more than half an hour before she ordered them to write a detailed report about their thoughts before the battle, their tactic, and what they planned to do now that they obtained one Flag War Token.

Michael felt that Alice had gone a little bit over the top with her critique, but he understood her main focus. The Best Mix team would have died miserably facing the Blazing Sun Team as enemies. If they had been real enemies, who were after each other's life, Michael's plan would have failed miserably, and all of them would have died.

But Michael's plan was created with that in mind. He knew that the referee would interfere before anyone would be harmed. That was also why he chose to combine Enhancement with the Legendary Ice Staff while Lokai used most of her energy to overclock Burning Fury to strengthen Kaleb's Frozen Nova.

It would have been even better if Michael could use Enhancement on Frozen Nova directly, but it was not like Michael could touch Kaleb's Soultrait Symbol. Even then, Michael was very satisfied with the result of the battle against the Blazing Sun team.

They had been a lot stronger than them, yet the combined efforts of the Best Mix team eliminated most enemies. Alice feared that Michael and Kaleb would be under the impression that the same tactic would work well against the Tekur race, but that was something she didn't have to worry about. Michael didn't really plan to use the same tactic against the Tekur either way. Even if he did, he would apply more layers of Enhancement onto the Legendary Ice Staff to ensure that all Tekur in Frozen Nova's range would be frozen in an instant.

For that, Michael had to store more Power of Enhancement in his Legendary Ring Artifact, but that was quite easy. There were almost three months left before the Flag War started.

Except for Alice's critique, Michael was quite satisfied. The fight against the Blazing Sub team was exciting, which was mostly due to the result he achieved from combining the effect of multiple Soultraits. It was interesting to apply the tactics he came up with in real battles and combine Soultraits to create miraculous effects and unleash their full power.

"What are we going to do now?" Kaleb asked him, looking at Michael with dead-tired eyes.

It looked like Kaleb had fought against a wave of monsters for three days straight even though they had only been listening to his sister's nagging for half an hour.

"There is nothing much to do. Mekhaz, Thaor, and Lokai said that they don't want the Flag War Token. They want to continue fighting others to obtain their own Tokens. I guess they still don't like that they could only reach the top 100 of the Team discipline with your support. You were our team's MVP, after all. That means you can take the Token," Michael responded with a shrug, "As for the Battle Points for entering the top 100, they've already been distributed."

"How about you take the Token? I will fight others to get my own token," Kaleb said, but Michael shook his head.

"I'll join the Survival of the Fittest discipline later. If I cannot enter the top 200 there, I will enter the Origin Expanse for a few weeks. I can buy some resources with the Battle Points from the Team discipline. I can grow stronger in the Origin Expanse with more time to use, and then get my own Token. You deserve this token since your contribution was the highest in the Team discipline," He said, patting his friend on the back.

Michael could have taken the Flag War Token, but he didn't want to take Kaleb's coin. Furthermore, he secretly hoped that he wouldn't make it to the top 200 in the Survival of the Fittest discipline because that meant he would have to stay out of the Origin Expanse most of the time. According to the rules, every Token Holder would have to leave the Origin Expanse once every day to receive challenges. Their schedule would be filled with challengers trying to take their Tokens, which meant that they had less time to spend in the Origin Expanse.

Michael would rather spend most of his time in the Origin Expanse and obtain his token at the end of the Battle Exchange than stay in Piloq fighting dozens of battles a day – even if that was also very helpful to gain experience.

"Hmm...okay, if you say so," Kaleb responded and accepted the Flag War Token.

"It's almost time for the Survival of the Fittest discipline. Are you ready?" He asked, trying to change the topic a little.

Kaleb was still tired, but too many things happened today. He felt like distracting himself a little bit.

"Of course, I'm read—...." Michael was about to agree when he stopped in his tracks.

Kaleb nearly ran into his friend, who looked at the back of his right hand, his brows furrowed.

"What's wrong?"

"I think my territory is under attack...probably?" Michael responded slowly.

The Links of Loyalty with his subjects told Michael quite clearly that some of his Summons had been injured.

Tiara and the EmeraldLeaf Adventurers were distressed. Their emotions were fluctuating wildly, confusion filling their connection with Michael.

Despite the injuries and chaotic Links of Loyalty, none of his Summons died...yet.

"First Frederik and now you? What the hell is going on here?" Kaleb cursed silently, staring at his own War Rune as if he was wondering if his territory was about to be attacked as well.

"Looks like I have to skip the Survival discipline," Michael said, trying to calm his emotions as he manifested the Runic Gate leading to the Untamed Jungle in front of him, "Maybe it's something minor. Nobody died yet."

"If you have some spare time, please inform Alice. I doubt that it's anything major but I might have to stay in the Origin Expanse for a while," Michael added before stepping into the Runic Gate.

Michael disappeared, leaving Kaleb alone in the hallway.

He reappeared in his room inside the wooden manor and rushed outside immediately. When he was back in the Origin Expanse and closer to his subjects, Michael felt the pulling force from the Links of Loyalty much stronger than before. At that moment he realized that he might have underestimated the severity of the situation.

Trouble awaited him. I think you should take a look at

The first subjects Michael found was a group of injured Warriors. Their armor was burned and burn marks covered their bodies. Michael kicked the ground and crossed 20 meters in an instant, emerging in front of the warriors.

"What happened to you guys?" He asked, ignoring their surprise.

Two Warriors wanted to kneel down in front of him to pay respect to their Lord, but Michael pulled them back up.

"My Lord, you're back!"

"My Lord!"

"You've finally returned!"

Michael rolled his eyes and pointed at the Warrior who had yet to say something, "Tell me what's going on!"

Nobody had died yet, but the situation felt urgent. Tiara and the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team's Links of Loyalty were filled with irritation, anger, and killing intent.

"M-Me?... My L-Lord...I am not sure myself," The young Warrior said hesitatingly before he revealed everything he knew, "We were training the whole morning when Commander Tiara and Captain Lilica received reports about Elementals wreaking havoc near our territory. We have never encountered Elementals before so Commander Tiara sent Blaire and the others to investigate the situation. I don't know what they found out but we were ordered to eliminate the Lesser Elementals, while Commander Tiara, Captain Lilica, and many others left in the direction the Elementals came from. While fighting the Lesser Elementals, we realized too late that the Fire Elementals explode once their Monster Cores are on the verge of drying up..."

Despite being intimidated by Michael and rather shy, the young Warrior recalled everything that had happened since this morning with enough details to give his lord a rough idea of the situation. Nodding his head grimly, Michael retrieved a handful of potions which he handed the Warriors.

"Take these and rest for today. You did a great job protecting the territory," Michael said and was about to step away when he recalled something. "In which direction did Tiara and the others leave?"

"T-Thank you, my lord! They left for the western part of the middle area, my lord!" The young Warrior exclaimed, saluting Michael as his lord left with a nod.

Michael channeled energy through his lower body to accelerate. He retrieved a small crystal and infused some origin energy into it to call Tiara via the messaging crystal.

'There haven't been any reports about Elementals. The Untamed Jungle shouldn't have any Elementals. If any, there should be Nature Elementals, Wood Elementals, and maybe Water Elementals...but what's that about Fire Elementals?'

Just as Michael was trying to figure out what was going on while rushing to the western part of the Untamed Jungle's middle area, the communication crystal glowed up.

Michael's focus split up as he continued to move nimbly through the forest while paying attention to the communication crystal.

"I heard that Elementals appeared. Tell me about your situation. Is everyone fine?" Michael asked loudly.

"Master, you're back!" Tiara's excited voice rang through the communication crystal.

The excitement in her voice calmed Michael immediately. Tiara wouldn't sound excited and full of vigor if she or anyone around her was injured. That was a good sign.

"We're perfectly fine...though the situation is a little bit confusing," Tiara began but was interrupted by a rustling noise beside her. Tiara squealed out, "That's mine! Let me talk with Master! It's not your turn yet!!"

Tiara groaned in the next moment and Lilica's voice rang through Tiara's communication crystal.

"Welcome back, Michael. You must have noticed that something was wrong with our Links of Loyalty..." Lilica said, sounding both excited and confused at the same time.

"It's uncommon for Tiara, and the entire EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team to create strong ripples in the Links of Loyalty. Furthermore, two dozen Summons sustained injuries almost at the same time. I was worried that the territory was under attack, so I came back," Michael revealed his worries though hearing their voices diminished some of those thoughts.

"The Lesser Elementals must have injured the Warriors. I hope nobody died," Lilica responded, but Michael reassured her, "They were only injured. But tell me about the situation. I'm already on my way."

"Well...actually, it is pretty simple, yet also confusing. We found a cave full of Elementals a few days ago. But the cave is not normal. Or should I say, the Elementals are not normal. They have been subdued and are enslaved..."

Lilica's voice rang out from the communication crystal, her words causing the cogs in his mind to work tirelessly.

"Enslaved...do you mean there is another Lord in the middle area?" Michael asked, a mix of confusion and excitement flashing through his eyes.

"Yes..."

And that was when Michael found out about the second Lord in the Untamed Jungle.

Chapter 352 Kitsun

After the initial confusion, Lilica summarized the situation once again to make sure that he could think of countermeasures as soon as possible.

"This morning, Blaire and her scouting team discovered a group of Lesser Elementals hunting in the western part of the Untamed Jungle's outer ring. But they were not ordinary Lesser Elementals. We noticed all of them wore chokers made from crystals. They were controlled by a group of beings which Blaire and her scouts determined to be Summons," Lilica began her summary.

However, Michael was a little doubtful. He was not sure how Blaire and her scouts could be certain that the beings controlling the Elementals were Summons, but Lilica gave him a quick explanation.

Blaire attained enlightenment from spending several days with one of the memory crystals Michael had prepared a while ago. She acquired the advanced Intuition of a Master Tracker, allowing her to gauge the strength, danger level and state of existence of most beings in her field of vision instinctively.

That was quite helpful, and Michael could already imagine how useful such a natural ability would become in the future. It would be even better if more scouts would learn from her to ensure that everyone could act more intuitively in the face of potential danger.

"These Summons look like a mix of hideous demonlings and spirits. Their upper body is mostly humanlike except for the monstrosity of their hideous head. Their head looks like that of a fox, just bigger, uglier, and they have one or two horns jutting from their forehead. Either way, their lower body looks like a cloud. It should be a black gas they expel through their torso to levitate in the air and move around," Lilica described the Summons in as much detail as possible. She thought about it for a moment, and carefully added, "They also seem to possess fox-like tails. The stronger their rank the more tails protrude from their rear."

Michael was pretty sure that he had never heard of such a race before, but Lilica's detailed description was more than enough to research the race. It was only a matter of time before he would know what race the other Lord belonged to, and how powerful the race was.

"Good job finding them. But tell me more about the situation for now. You told me about the Elementals wearing chokers, and that Summons controlled them. What about the cave you mentioned earlier? Are you in the other Lord's territory, or can you retreat? Give me some more information!" Michael commanded after throwing a barrage of questions.

"Blair and her scouting team retreated after encountering the Lesser Elementals. They split up to scout the surroundings and lead the Knights, Warriors, and Sun Demos' Demon Monkey unit to deal with the Lesser Elementals that were about to stumble upon our territory. Meanwhile, Tiara, and we, the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team, decided to find out more about the other Lord and his powers. That's how we found some Awakened working for the other Lord," Lilica explained but was quick to add, "Don't worry, we didn't hunt the Awakened. We decided to hide and, somehow, stumbled upon a cave. The cave I mentioned earlier."

Lilica was not yet done explaining everything, but before the Forest Elf could continue sharing more information about the current situation, Tiara fought valiantly against the Forest Elf to retrieve her communication crystal. Muffled screams and groans rang out from the communication crystal just before Tiara's voice reached his ears once again.

"Don't worry, Master. I will hunt one of these Awakened, and bring him back for you! Can I kill him, or do you want a hostage, master?" Tiara asked, her breathing rough from the excitement flooding through her entire being.

Michael chuckled upon hearing her excitement. He sometimes forgot that Tiara belonged to the Tigerfolk and that her wild instincts overwhelmed her every now and then. It was a nice change, and definitely much better than the scenarios he had imagined when he left Piloq to rush into the Origin Expanse.

Encountering another Lord in the Untamed Jungle might not be what Michael expected, but it might not be that bad either.

"Since we know nothing about the other Lord, we should collect information first. Capture one of the Awakened alive and return without attracting any attention. I don't want an army charging into our territory tomorrow morning!" Michael said, repeating himself a few more times to make sure that Tiara would be vigilant and stealthy.

"Consider it done, master. Just wait for us!" Tiara exclaimed before throwing her communication crystal back to Lilica.

"Ehh...Oof...My Lord, I am not sure if you should trust Tiara right now. She has probably one of 'those' days..." Lilica said carefully and hesitatingly.

She cleared her throat and added, "Either way...where was I? The cave is filled with Elementals, right? There are many Elementals in the cave, with the Lesser Elementals wearing these crystal chokers, and stronger Elementals, who have been chained to the wall using crystal chains. They're fully restricted, and cannot move an inch."

Lilica's voice cracked after she said the last bits. She quietly revealed that they couldn't enter the deeper parts of the cave because of the high security in the cave and that something was amiss.

"It feels...abnormal, and weird. Their existence in the cave is already against the laws of nature, but the cave feels unnatural as well... Something is very wrong here..."

As Forest Elves, Lilica and her team were very close to nature. They were quite familiar with the flora and fauna of all the forests. That also meant the unfamiliarity and weird feeling Lilica mentioned was quite concerning.

"There is no need to go deeper. Just return home. I will send Blaire and the others to scout the Untamed Jungle's western outer ring and parts of the middle area to find out more about the other Lord, his territory's size, and whatnot. Once I know more about the Lord, his race, and his attitude toward other Lords, we can initiate countermeasures. For now, make sure that you guys come back safely...including Tiara."

"We will return safely," Lilica said in all seriousness, "I don't know the Lord's race, but the Elders might know. You can ask the Elder. He will probably help him."

Michael nodded his head subconsciously. He had been talking to one of the Forest Elves Elders every now and then about old languages and future business prospects between him and the Forest Elven Tribe. The discussions had been quite pleasant, which was also why Michael retrieved another communication crystal from his War Rune.

He ended his call with Lilica and infused energy in the dark blue crystal he'd just retrieved. Putting one communication crystal back into the War Rune's storage space, Michael called the Forest Elven Elder.

"Good evening, Lord Michael. It has been a while since we chatted. How can I help you today? Do you want to talk about old languages with this old man again?" A sonorous voice filled with wisdom swept out from the communication crystal less than a minute after Michael infused energy into it.

"Hello Elder Silram. I hope you're doing well as always. Unfortunately, I'm not calling you to discuss more about old languages. We encountered a small problem ..." Michael greeted the Elder before jumping straight to the point.

He explained the predicament with as many detailed pieces of information as he had – which was not exactly a lot. The Elder of the Forest Elven Tribe listened intently and did not answer immediately.

Several minutes of silence passed before a heavy sigh escaped Elder Silram's lips.

"It looks like misfortune pursues you like a possessive lover, young Lord," Elder Silram said, trying to lighten the tension in his body with a little joke. However, the seriousness of the situation didn't allow any jokes.

Michael furrowed his brow in response to the Elder's comment, "I take that as a bad sign."

"A bad sign? That's for sure. I know the race you described just now much better than I want to. In fact, I fought them twice in the Origin Expanse, and it always ended disastrously even though I emerged victorious," Elder Silram's voice was devoid of his usual cheerfulness. Everything around Michael seemed to turn silent as he listened intently.

"You will have to fight them, the sooner the better. They're called Seven-tail Spirits, also called Kitsun. Kitsun are known for being a cruel, treacherous race, who cannot be trusted. In fact, they don't even trust each other if no Soul Contract has been established between them. Even then, the Kitsun will search for loopholes in the Soul Contract to take advantage of their brethren," The Elder told Michael everything he knew.

He spoke for more than ten minutes, making unease crawl up Michael's spine.

"They don't know mercy, and their strength cannot be underestimated either. Don't take them lightly!"

Michael could only curse his luck the longer he listened to the Elder's description of the Kitsun race. He already guessed that it would be pretty difficult to talk with the other Lord and that it was highly unlikely that they would end up on good terms, but the information he obtained was even more unpleasant than the worst he had imagined.

"I guess that leaves out the option for peace, and a friendly, business-related relationship. That is quite unfortunate," Michael mumbled, mostly to himself instead of Elder Silram.

However, Elder Silram heard what Michael said, and he couldn't help but frown on his side of the communication channel.

"You don't seem to be displeased about the change of events," He pointed out.

"Am I not displeased? How come you think I'm in a good mood?" Michael asked curiously.

"You're excited, aren't you?"

Chapter 353 Information

Just like Elder Silram thought, Michael was not in a bad mood. He was a little excited and felt that it was good to know that the Kitsun were treacherous and merciless.

Elder Silram's knowledge meant that Michael could fight the Kitsun without the need to hold back. There was no need for further questions, let alone considering approaching the Kitsun with peace and business prospects in mind.

Nonetheless, Michael decided to wait for Tiara and the Awakened she had promised to capture alive. It wasn't bad to wait for more information before taking action.

He returned home and waited for Tiara and the Forest Elves back in the wooden manor. At the same time, he met up with Blaire and several scouting teams to redistribute a handful of missions. They would

focus on the western part of the Untamed Jungle now, their main focus being the outer ring and the middle area.

'Maybe I should send a few scouts to the eastern part as well. Maybe there are also a few surprises waiting for me,' Michael thought before he sent one of the smaller scouting teams to the eastern part of the Untamed Jungle's outer ring and middle area.

Since the Untamed Jungle was ginormous, it was already hard to gain control of the southern part. Michael had been focusing on the southern outer ring since it bordered the Zentika Empire, which resulted in missing out on the Kitsun Lord in the western area. If the Kitsun Lord had found him earlier, he would have probably attacked Michael already. But then again, Michael wasn't even sure whether the Kitsun Lord had found him by now, or if the Kitsun Lord was still oblivious to his existence. After all, the Lesser Elementals and Summons who clashed with his Warriors and Knights were dead.

Blaire and the others said that there hadn't been any communication crystals, special signals, or scouts either.

'Let's wait for Tiara before jumping to conclusions.' Michael told himself while reading through the daily reports.

"I missed so many things...and I don't even have the time to focus on them now that I found out. How annoying," Michael grumbled, his eyes scanning through quickly as he finished the daily reports. Too many interesting events happened while he spent his time outside the Origin Expanse to grow stronger and get to know the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs.

Unfortunately, he had to deal with the Kitsun Lord first before he would have some more time to focus on the happenings in his territory. He was too busy for his own good, which was both amusing and frustrating at the same time.

Michael finished reading the daily reports that were pending for the last few days when Tiara came back with her prey. It was an unconscious Kitsun with a sturdy upper body and a large War Rune on the back of his right hand.

"You captured a Mid Tier-2 Awakened. Good job," Michael praised as he left the wooden manor to welcome Tiara.

Other than her disheveled hair and dirty clothes, Tiara was unscathed. She smiled brightly, flashing her white teeth as she threw the unconscious body in front of Michael.

"It's a small bonus. I caught him quite easily. He didn't expect someone to appear behind him," She bragged.

Michael bent down and pressed his palm against the unconscious Kitsun's forehead. He closed his eyes and used Mind Reader to read the Kitsun's memories.

All of a sudden, just as Michael breached past the Kitsun's mental defense, severe pain spread through his head. It felt like an electricity current wreaked havoc inside his head, making him unable to focus on anything.

He wasn't able to read the Kitsun's memories like that.

"Should I use Extraction? No, the Memory Orbs don't contain nearly as many memories as Mind Reader," Michael mumbled.

As long as the target was unconscious, Mind Reader could be used to read the memories hidden deeper inside the target's mind. Subconscious thoughts, even dreams could be read using Mind Reader – at least theoretically.

Michael started to use Extraction in an attempt to break through the Kitsun's natural mental defense against mind attacks. He used Mind Reader after that once again.

This time, he could read some of the Kitsun's thoughts without feeling any pain. Unfortunately, Mind Reader wasn't advanced enough to read everything in the Kitsun's mind while the target was still unconscious.

"In that case, I will upgrade you a little bit," He murmured, accessing the SoulStar Fragments that were waiting patiently to be used. I think you should take a look at

Michael had a total of 816 SoulStar Fragments, and Mind Reader was a 1-Star Soultrait. Upgrading it to 4-Star didn't even require 250 SoulStar Fragments, under normal circumstances. Unfortunately, Mind Reader was at the outermost area of the Sphere of Light. Advancing Mind Reader to the next level costs 2.5 times the price.

Despite the heavy price, Michael decided to follow his gut feeling. He spent 606 SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Mind Reader to a 4-Star Soultrait. Even though he cursed the expensive upgrade in his mind, Michael remained calm on the outside as he used Mind Reader once again.

The unconscious Kitsun was just about to regain consciousness when a powerful force infiltrated his head.

"Who is your Lord? How many combatants does the Kitsun Lord have? Does he know about any other Lords? What is his plan? How many Awakened are working for the Lord? How strong is your combat force? Provide me with as many details as possible!" An indomitable voice swept through the Kitsun's ears, one question after another. The Kitsun groaned in pain, and his entire being tried to retreat instinctively.

His mind tried to shut off and restrain the invasion of any kind of force. However, before the mind could shut off, Michael's Extraction tore down every little bit of resistance that was built. The Kitsun thought about the answers to Michael's questions subconsciously. It was only natural. He didn't want to answer the questions but he still thought about everything questioned as a reflex.

That was exactly what Michael had hoped for. He read the Kitsun's mind using Mind Reader, imprinting every bit of information in his mind while continuing to ask more questions. The Kitsun couldn't even resist as his mental defense was torn down the moment it was raised.

Almost an entire hour passed before Michael released the Kitsun, who crashed to the ground motionless.

Michael was not sure if the Kitsun was dead or not, but he couldn't care less about that right now. A sadistic bastard, who received pleasure from inflicting pain on innocent young girls and children was not someone who deserved to stay alive. Thus, Michael moved subconsciously, manifesting a Qi Sword that pierced through the unmoving Kitsun's head, eliminating the sadistic piece of shit at once.

An energy influx entered Michael's body, and he used Extraction to extract a few dozen SoulStar Fragments, a Tier-2 Artifact, a few more goods that were stored in the Kitsun's storage space, and a Memory Orb.

Michael stared at the Memory Orb in hatred and crushed it. He had seen enough through Mind Reader to know what the Memory Orb would show him...and that was more than enough to know that he had to eliminate the Kitsun Lord – the sooner the better.

One of the most important facts Michael found out while reading the Kitsun's memories and thoughts was that Elder Silram's information had been correct. The Kitsun Lord and his subordinates were all bastards and assholes.

The Kitsun caught by Tiara had been one of the oldest Awakened working for the Kitsun Lord. But he was not the strongest, which was something he compensated by torturing young and innocent children. He didn't even care whether the children belonged to other races, or if they were also Kitsun. The more thoughts Michael read and the more memories he saw the more disgusted he felt. It was definitely not enjoyable to read the thoughts of a jackass, sadistic bastard such as the dead Kitsun lying in front of him.

Either way, the Kitsun didn't have any real power even though he had been working for the Kitsun Lord for a decade already. According to the memories and thoughts of the Kitsun the Lord had tricked him and made him sign a tight Soul Contract holding him back from abandoning, or betraying the Kitsun Lord.

A Soul Contract was a more binding version of a Link of Loyalty. It was expensive to establish a Soul Contract between two parties, and it was usually used for important business deals between two parties rather than strengthening a Link of Loyalty to ensure that the Lord's subordinates wouldn't betray him.

However, the Kitsun Lord did exactly that. All Awakened working for him were under a Soul Contract in addition to the Link of Loyalty. That was also how the Kitsun Lord ensured that nobody betrayed him even after he became a Lord in the Untamed Jungle a decade ago.

The Kitsun was a rather old Lord in the Untamed Jungle. However, according to the Kitsun's memories the Kitsun Lord had been focusing on expanding his territory outside the Untamed Jungle because the inner area was way too dangerous for him and his people. Furthermore, the Kitsun preferred the savannah region adjacent to the Untamed Jungle's western side. The Untamed Jungle was the place he hated the most.

"So now he wants to expand his territory in the Untamed Jungle? So he wants to fight us...I see..." Michael mumbled, the corner of his lips curling upward.

He didn't have anything against a challenging battle. Defeating a Lord and many Awakened would allow him to grow much stronger in a short period. Tiara and the other Awakened in his territory would benefit a lot from the battles as well, just like his Warriors, who would earn experience and energy influx from every enemy they slayed.

But the most satisfying would be to get rid of a pest like the Kitsun Lord.

Being able to survive for a decade in the Origin Expanse might have been possible until now.

Now it was about time that the Kitsun Lord got a taste of his own medicine.

Chapter 354 A Bunch Of Birds And One Stone

By the time Michael finished digesting the memories and thoughts of the dead Kitsun, Blaire and the first scouting team had returned.

"My lord, we came back with the information you asked for," Blaire reported, her breathing still rough from running through the Untamed Jungle for the last few hours.

Blaire and the first scouting team scouted the area between Michael's territory and the territory of the Kitsun Lord to gather intel and to make sure that the Kitsun Lord couldn't initiate a surprise attack.

"Go on," Michael indicated to Blaire, who was still panting heavily to catch some air.

"We didn't discover any more Summons, or Elementals between our territories. However, the first scouting team told me that two of their members were able to infiltrate the Kitsun Lord's territory without being discovered," Blaire began her report. She took a few heavy breaths and continued.

"The scouts reported that they know where the Kitsun Lord's main base is located, and that the Awakened working for the Kitsun Lord didn't consider the death of a few dozen Lesser Elementals and Summons as unique. Either they don't know about our existence and think that a group of monsters killed them, or they don't consider us dangerous enough to act against us...."

15 minutes later Blaire finished her report. It was very detailed considering that her team and the first scouting team had only been sent out scouting for a few hours. Blaire only stopped talking during her report to breathe. Afterward, she stood in front of Michael, her back straightened and her eyes shining with an unwavering spirit.

"Good job. You, your team, and the first scouting team can rest now. Everyone in your team and the first scouting team deserves to be praised for your courage and stealthiness. Don't hesitate to request an additional Energy Nourishing Pill and a Body Strengthening Pill. You guys deserve it," Michael was generous with his praise of the scouts.

He rewarded them handsomely, which caused surprise, excitement and a trace of disbelief to appear on the faces of the people around Michael. Even Tiara and the Forest Elven Awakened were a little surprised at Michael's generosity. The pills he handed out so lightly were expensive and in high demand. Not even Michael had enough Body Strengthening Pills and Energy Nourishing Pills to use for himself.

Michael ignored the reaction of the people around him. Instead, his mind drifted to something else. Blaire's report affirmed that the dead Kitsun's memories and thoughts had been correct.

Michael had been a little worried that the memories and thoughts had been falsified through brainwashing, or the aftereffect of the Soul Contract between the dead Kitsun and the Kitsun Lord. However, that didn't seem to be the case.

Thus, Michael could confirm the truth of the dead Kitsun's information.

'Even if the Kitsun Lord's territory manifested in the Untamed Jungle at first, why didn't he move his headquarters to the savannah after he expanded his territory? Why was it better for him to create several settlements across his territory instead? They should have moved if they really hated the environment of the Untamed Jungle. It's not like his territory is small...'

Given the information Michael procured from the dead Kitsun, the Kitsun Lord had multiple settlements spread across his territory. However, there was only one big headquarters in the Untamed Jungle. The headquarters was also where the Summoning Gate and the wooden manor were located. It was also the place with the tightest security alongside the cave filled with Elementals.

Even though the headquarters and the Elemental cave were protected the best, the Kitsun Lord didn't neglect his territory in the savannah. It was also well protected – his people split up evenly to ensure that no other Lord could attack his settlements easily. The dead Kitsun informed Michael about various means of defense the Kitsun Lord had installed in the savannah, including thousands of traps and special monster ranches that breed bloodthirsty monsters trained to hurt everyone but the members of the Kitsun race after they were released for the hunt.

At first, Michael thought that it might be necessary to gather his forces immediately and attack the Kitsun Lord in a rush. But that wasn't the case apparently. According to the dead Kitsun's memories and thoughts, the Kitsun Lord knew about the issues between a Lord in the Untamed Jungle – Michael – and the Zentika Empire. However, the Kitsun Lord couldn't be bothered to interfere.

The Kitsun Lord didn't even bother to send scouts to check Michael's territory – not even after Michael emerged victorious against 50,000 members of the Jungle Expedition.

The disinterest of the Kitsun Lord was quite confusing until Michael learned that he commanded roughly 1000 Awakened Kitsun, more than 35,000 combatants and that he had a few bloodthirsty beast ranches spread everywhere across his territory with thousands of beasts that had been starved and were thirsting for fresh blood and flesh. I think you should take a look at

None of the Awakened Kitsun working for the Kitsun Lord was a Tier-1 Awakened at this point. Most were at the 2nd Tier with some being Tier-3. The only good thing was that none of the Kitsun – not even the Kitsun Lord – broke through the threshold to become a Higher Lifeform. None of the Kitsun was a Tier-4 Awakened, and that didn't seem to change anytime soon because the Kitsun Lord was more focused on his business than anything else at this point.

The Kitsun might be treacherous, merciless, and bastards, but they were not actually powerful either. That was also the reason why they let the Lesser Elementals fight the monsters in the Untamed Jungle – because they were too weak!

However, that was also a problem. The Elementals were the reason why Michael didn't charge at the Kitsun Lord's headquarters with his entire army right off the bat. After all, not even the dead Kitsun

knew how many Elementals had been bred, how strong the strongest Elementals under the Kitsun Lord's control was, and what exactly the Kitsun Lord was planning with the Elementals he didn't need.

It was commonly known among the Awakened Kitsun working for the Kitsun Lord that he ruled over the Elementals in the Elemental cavern. However, nobody truly knew how the Kitsun Lord brought the Elementals to the Untamed Jungle, or how he subdued all of them. Some rumored that the Kitsun Lord was the one who brought the Elementals to the Origin Expanse, but that was never affirmed or denied.

Michael felt bad for the Elementals. If he could avoid the Elementals' capture and slavery in the cave just to get rid of the Kitsun Lord he would do it.

Lilica and the others felt the same. She told him in detail how badly the Elementals were treated in the Elementals cave, and the things she saw had merely been the tip of the iceberg. The exhausted screams and desperate cries deeper down in the cave still made her shudder.

But the pity he felt for the Elementals was not the entire reason why he decided that it would be a shame to annihilate the Elementals enslaved by the Kitsun Lord.

Sure he felt pity, but Michael wouldn't endanger the safety of his army just for the sake of a noble cause of freeing the caged, after all. However, the benefits of keeping the Elementals alive and rescuing them exceeded the potential risk by far.

Elementals existed not only as monsters but also as intelligent lifeforms. Once their intelligence developed far enough they could learn how to communicate using the tongue of the Origin Expanse. They even created societies much larger than some civilizations.

Despite that, many considered Elementals as lowly lifeforms because they were formed from the elements. A simple rainstorm could devastate a society consisting solely of fire elementals, a drought could weaken water elementals, and so on. Their powers were exceptional, but their weaknesses were even more apparent.

Last but not least, most intelligent lifeforms couldn't help but consider Elementals as lowly lifeforms because they were not chosen by the Will of the Origin Expanse. Every race incapable of manifesting War Runes and entering the Origin Expanse on their own accord was considered a lowly lifeform – just like the human race more than 500 years ago.

But Michael didn't think like that. On the contrary, it was much better for him if the Origin Expanse didn't allow them to manifest War Runes. After all, that meant the Elementals living in the cave were desperate to survive and create their own foothold in the Origin Expanse – the Untamed Jungle to be precise.

The mere existence of Elementals in his proximity was already enough reason to give his utmost to save some of them from the Kitsun Lord's control. After all, their presence was already enough to create elemental crystals in caverns, and elemental spirit seeds. Both were common products for the Elementals and they were both helpful and valuable especially for Michael and his territory since many potions could be concocted from the ripened products of the elemental spirit seeds. Fertilizers could channel the elemental energy of elemental crystals to grow plants that would usually only grow in other environments than the Untamed Jungle.

And that was not even all. Elemental crystals could also be used for Armaments, and they could be given to Mages to amplify their strength in combat.

Last but not least, having amiable Elementals next to him would mean that Michael had to worry less about enemies. Elementals were quite powerful, and everything Michael read about them indicated that they would repay good deeds a hundredfold, and hatred ten-thousandfold.

Rescuing the Elementals and fighting side-by-side against the Kitsun Lord could propel Michael's territory development further ahead all while getting rid of potential danger.

A plan slowly formed in Michael's head – A plan to kill as many birds as possible with one stone.

Chapter 355 Night Attack

355 Night Attack

It was interesting that the Kistun Lord didn't seem to consider Michael and his people as a threat. Did he think that Michael was a pushover or was he confident in his own strength? If so, what exactly made him so confident?

Michael's army grew a lot stronger since the space shuttle arrived in Piloq. His own combat prowess couldn't be underestimated either. He grew a lot even if it was not directly related to the refinement degree of his War Rune. Thus, Michael was more than willing to test out the limits of his own strength, and his army's prowess.

"The downside of expanding your territory and creating multiple mid-sized settlements is that you cannot keep your entire army in one spot. You fight on too many sides and risk too much, Kitsun Lord," Michael mumbled, while continuing to rummage through the memories and thoughts of the dead Kitsun.

The Kitsun Lord had to defend four borders in the Savannah region, the eastern side of his headquarters in the Untamed Jungle was constantly endangered due to the existence of powerful monsters lurking nearby, and the northern side faced attacks every now and then.

Michael was not certain, but he predicted that the Kitsun Lord didn't have enough manpower to wage a war with Michael's people in the south of his region as well. He had ignored Michael's territory until now to avoid fighting him as well.

Unfortunately, Michael was not the type who avoided fights and waited for the opponent to make the first move. He called his army to arm up and get ready for the battle before waiting patiently until more scouts reported the situation in the western part of the Untamed Jungle.

Even if Michael didn't avoid fights, he was not reckless enough to charge inside the enemy's territory mindlessly. He called Sun Demos and his Demon Monkey Unit to infiltrate the Kitsun Lord's territory to stir trouble north-east from the Kitsun Lord's head- quarters. Sun Demos and the Blood Oath Demon Monkeys moved silently through the thicket of the Untamed Jungle, avoiding monsters and Kitsun until they reached the north-west part of the Kitsun Lord's territory.

This travel required most of the day, which was perfect as Sun Demos and his subordinates could immediately take advantage of the darkness enveloping the Untamed Jungle at night to attack. In the meantime, Michael read enough reports from his scouts to have a rough understanding of the Kitsun Lord's territory, his problems, his combat prowess, and much more information.

Using the newly acquired information, Michael came up with a small addition to his plan. He informed Sun Demos about the new order through their telepathic communication in addition to the permission to do whatever the Blood Oath Demon Monkey King wanted to do - as long as he made sure that his subordinates heed the orders.

Following the established plan, Sun Demos and close to a thousand Blood Oath Demon Monkeys attacked at night. They even included the youngest generation of Blood Oath Demon Monkeys to show them what they were made of and give them some real battle experience. They began wreaking havoc by massacring hundreds of Kitsun in the outskirts of the main settlement. They caused a bloodbath, creating enough commotion to wake everyone in the middle of the night.

Startled and unsure of what had suddenly attacked their brethren in sleep, the defending Kitsun that were still alive could only watch in horror as the leaves ruffled and they saw bloody eyes retreat into the darkness.

Seeing bodies that had been ripped apart mercilessly and squashed, the Kitsun defending the main settlement upped their guard. They tripled the guards and stared vigilantly into the Untamed Jungle that looked even more ominous and deadly than ever.

However, tripling their guard at the walls of the settlement was not enough. A pair of Greater Eagles shot through the darkness like black-emerald meteorites. Icarus and the female Greater Eagle dived down in the center of the main settlement. They attacked the barracks, and captured the drowsy combatants that were still half- drunk from drinking in the pub a few hours earlier, only to face death head-on in the middle of the night.

They died, their heads drilled with a beak, their chests torn apart from the razor-sharp claws of the Greater Eagles, or picked up and dropped from a high altitude.

But that was just the beginning. A golden flash shot through the air one moment, and the next moment a Heavy Armored Elephant with a weight of more than 12 tons appeared out of nowhere - almost as if the tiny golden flash had swapped places with the Heavy Armored Elephant.

Following the Heavy Armored Elephant that appeared out of nowhere, the golden flash reappeared from the darkness of the ominous Untamed Jungle once again. It flashed brightly, only to be replaced by an otherworldly beauty with silver hair. A beauty from the Silverfang Tigerfolk had emerged from the golden light, her eyes gleaming in excitement. The bloodlust in her eyes intensified as she activated her Silvarean Tiger Soultrait.

Tiara's body slowly transformed in the middle of the night. Her eyes shone brightly and she was just about to charge ahead when the golden flash appeared next to her once again. It was the Golden Stinger Wasp that had the ability to swap places with everyone it stung in the last ten minutes.

The Golden Stinger Wasp was replaced by Lilica, whose hand landed on Tiara.

"Calm down a little bit. We have only ten minutes. Our mission is to cause chaos and kill a few Awakened, who are either drunk or running around alone, nothing else. Michael will flog you if you stir trouble again!" Lilica warned Tiara, whose expression changed only when she heard Michael's name.

"Master will never flog me!" Tiara responded, but she became calmer than before nonetheless. She wanted to go for a hunt, challenge the Awakened enemies, and bring the prey back to Michael. However, Michael had given them another mission. They were instructed to wreak havoc in the main settlement for the next ten minutes until the Golden Wasp would switch places with everyone once again to safely and quickly transport them back into the darkness and protection of the Untamed Jungle.

The mission was as simple as that; wreak havoc and in the thicket of the Untamed Jungle until Michael returned.

Tiara and the five members of the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team had been sent inside the Kitsun Lord's main settlement alongside the Greater Eagles, the Golden Stinger Wasp, and the Heavy Armored Elephant. Sun Demos and the Demon Monkeys, on the other hand, would attack the weak spots in the settlement's walls to keep the Guards busy so that they couldn't abandon their spot on the walls and rush to aid their comrades even though a bunch of monsters appeared in the center of the settlement.

The guards on the walls didn't even realize that the six enemy Awakened were already behind them, combining their forces to release a few batches of arrows into their backs before merging with the darkness in the settlement's gloomy side alleys. A dozen guards died on the spot, signaling to Sun Demos and his subordinates to strike once again.

This continued for nearly ten minutes until the Heavy Armored Elephant disappeared all of a sudden, replaced by the tiny golden light that flashed through the darkness. The light shot out of the settlement, swiftly moving Tiara, Lilica, and the four other Forest Elves out of the danger zone. Simultaneously, the Greater Eagles and the Demon Monkeys disappeared as well, leaving the main settlement in a state of chaos and despair.

None of the Kitsun had expected a monster attack of this scale, let alone the infiltration of monsters and Awakened in the center of the settlement. They appeared simultaneously and disappeared at once after a few minutes. It had only been ten minutes in total, yet those minutes felt like an eternity to every citizen. It was horrifying...and it could happen again at any time.

Scared of the unknown, the guards requested backup from the Elemental cave's security. They informed the Awakened in charge who then left the Origin Expanse to forward the report to the Kitsun Lord. The Kitsun Lord was currently not in the Origin Expanse. In fact, he hadn't been present for several weeks according to the dead Kitsun's intel. Taking advantage of that, Michael came up with his plan.

The Awakened in charge ordered a third of the Elemental cave's security to aid the settlement's guards. After all, it would be bad for every Awakened if something happened to the wooden manor and the Summoning Gate. According to the Soul Contract established between the Kitsun Lord and the Awakened, nobody was allowed to touch the Summoning Gate and wooden manor other than the Kitsun Lord himself. Thus, the Awakened were worried that the invaders would attack the Summoning Gates and move their forces to the settlement - which was exactly what Michael was hoping for.

Using the Golden Stinger Wasp he could have teleported the Heavy Armored Elephant straight to the wooden manor. However, he didn't want 1000 Awakened to be informed about the breach of their Soul Contract simultaneously. Inflicting fear in the hearts of the Kitsun with the possibility that someone could invade the settlement and attack the Summoning Gate was much better.

It created an opening for Michael to enter the Elementals cave alongside his army.

Initially, Michael wanted to enter the Elementals cave on his own, but the scouts' reports stated that there would be more than 2000 Lesser Elementals alongside thousands of Kitsun Summons and close to a hundred Kitsun Awakened defending the cave.

The guards and protectors of the cave might be spread alongside the humongous cavern system, but Michael wouldn't be able to deal with them on his own.

Thus, he brought his army along and merged with them before disappearing completely from the radar of the people around him. With his energy concealed, Michael became one with his army.

Now all he had to do was to fight like his people and wait for the opportunity to strike and see whether or not he could help the Elementals.

Chapter 356 Cave Attack

After careful consideration, Michael decided to enter the elemental cave alongside his army. The information in his possession determined the cave system to be humongous with numerous intersections spreading out further as they went deeper.

Lilica and Tiara mentioned that the cavern entrance was already huge, and Michael could see it for himself now that he stood in front of the entrance hall. The hall was more than ten meters high, over a hundred meters in width, and even longer than that. It provided enough space for his army to infiltrate.

Only a few hundred had been left in the territory to protect his subjects from unpredicted attacks, whether they came from monsters or the Kitsun.

The remaining 1,500 combatants moved slowly inside the cavern entrance hall where they split up into five groups of 300 combatants to enter each of the five tunnels that spread out at the end of the entrance hall. The five cavern tunnels led deep underground where more intersections waited for them.

He split up his group evenly to ensure that everyone had enough vanguards, archers, and mages by their sides. Furthermore, every unit was given a scouting team to move deeper into the cavern tunnels to easily locate the enemies, determine their numbers, and alter their combat formations.

If the enemies were determined to be too difficult to deal with by a single team, Michael would rush back to the last intersection to join their forces as reinforcement. However, he hoped that wouldn't be the case too often. The security team of the Elementals cave had asked a third of their forces to leave their current spot and support the guards in the main settlement. Therefore the security team had to readjust their positioning in the elemental cave to cover every major intersection of the Elemental cave to some extent.

Despite the fact that they had to face fewer enemies at once, Michael was a little worried about his army. He might have allowed them to follow him inside the Elementals cave, but he felt bad. In fact, the members of his military force had openly expressed their desire to join the battle against the Kitsun

Lord. They were displeased at how little Michael thought about their prowess or strength when he came up with the plan to deal with the Kitsun Lord.

Michael understood their point of view, but he couldn't send them to the main settlement because the attack there was supposed to be a decoy. He couldn't deploy more than a thousand combatants as decoys – not if he didn't want anyone to die right there.

Thus, he reluctantly accepted the military force of his territory to join his mission in the Elementals cave. This decision played out much better than expected when Michael's unit approached the first security post. The 300 Summons readied their weapons while Michael merged into his group, retrieving the Spirit Armor Set and Zark.

With Eagle Eyes utilized, Michael's eyesight improved drastically. The dimly lit cavern tunnel didn't pose any hindrance to Michael anymore as he saw the manned security post where less than 100 Kitsun Summons, a dozen Kitsun Adventurers, and more than a hundred Lesser Elementals had been deployed.

The Lesser Elementals were mostly Fire Elementals, their bodies entirely made of blazing flames. They attracted quite some attention due to their blazing flames that lit up the entire security post, but Fire Elementals were also among the strongest types of Elementals when it came to destructive power.

"Aim at the chokers," Michael ordered just loud enough for every archer in his Unit to hear.

The faint rustling of a few dozen Archers, retrieving an arrow and nocking it on their bowstring reached his ears. In the next moment, Michael's voice rang out once again.

"Ready...set...shoot!" Michael ordered, moving alongside his archers, pulling Zark's bowstring back after he condensed an energy arrow, aiming for a second before he released the energy arrow as his last uttered word rang through the cavern tunnel.

A thundering twang echoed through the entire tunnel reaching the unaware security post a second after the arrows were released near-simultaneously.

Some Awakened reacted fast. Their danger senses tingled and they manifested their Artifacts without any hesitation. Their reaction was rapid, but they could only protect themselves with that. The Kitsun

Awakened were too slow to warn the rest of the security team. All they saw was a volley of more than 50 arrows emerge from one of the cavern tunnels in front of them.

Most Awakened utilized their Soultraits and Artifacts powers instinctively. However, what they realized way too late was that none of the arrows had been aimed at them. The realization struck them only after a second barrage of arrows followed. A white energy arrow cut through the stale air of the cavern tunnel four times simultaneously as the two barrages of arrows shot out of the cavern tunnel, each of them precisely aimed at the Fire Elementals – their chokers to be precise.

The best Archers with the highest accuracy such as Michael and most Elven Archers had a special mission; they were supposed to shoot the chokers that hung around the Lesser Elementals' necks rather than the cores that were barely visible in the center of their bodies. I think you should take a look at

Instead of killing the Lesser Elementals, Michael wanted to free them. He didn't want to fight the Lesser Elementals to death. Instead, they focused on restraining the movements of the Kitsun Summons and Kitsun Awakened while crushing the chokers with energy arrows and highly penetrative Pieckers.

It was a little bit harder to aim and destroy the Lesser Elementals' chokers, but the difference in difficulty between killing the Elementals and freeing them was not that huge – only the end result was. By breaking their cores, Michael and his team could kill the Elementals. However, by breaking their chokers, they could free them – adding a new ally to their team.

The decision was obvious, and the result was immediate.

Once Michael's arrows reached their targets, the crystal chokers burst apart. The Fire Elementals, who had just regained freedom, flared up in excitement. However, their excitement was short-lived. In the next moment, the Fire Elementals turned to their former masters to take revenge for the misery they had to go through because of them.

More chokers burst apart as Michael's archers continued to release barrages of arrows. They freed more Elementals, who either helped their own brethren by breaking their chokers, or joined the battle to attack the Kitsun Summons and Kitsun Awakened.

In the meantime, a handful of Kitsun Summons and Kitsun Awakened had made their way into the dimly lit cavern tunnel. Unfortunately, dozens of Warriors, a handful of Berserkers, and an Elemental Mage

were already waiting for them – other than Michael who enhanced Zark to release a powershot aimed between the closest Kitsun Awakened's brows.

After more than 20 Elementals had been freed, Michael and his Archers could divert their focus to deal with the Awakened and Summons. They determined the power of their enemies rapidly and killed the most annoying enemies on the spot – if possible –, or injured their vitals with a dozen arrows aimed at the same position.

By taking advantage of the surprise attack, Michael and his people turned a head-on battle into a war of attrition. The only downside for Michael's unit was the heavy price they had to pay for every barrage of arrows they'd released. However, that was something Michael could live with since he was forcing his Archers to use the Pieckers – one of the most expensive arrows in the barracks.

If not for the Pieckers lying around in their warehouses, Michael wouldn't have allowed his army to follow him inside the Elementals cave. After all, his army was not yet strong enough to deal with opponents at the 3rd Tier on their own. Even a powerful Tier-2 Awakened could prove troublesome for his people. That was where the highly penetrative Pieckers came into use.

Not even Michael was confident at blocking a barrage of more than 50 Pieckers all alone. He might not have problems evading them, but blocking so many arrows was not even something Thaor could do. He feared that even Mekhaz with his Living Armor couldn't ignore them – such was the might of the Pieckers.

Michael paid millions to have a few thousand Pieckers produced a while ago, but he was fine equipping his Archers with all of them. First of all, the Pieckers could be picked up and repaired for reuse if necessary, and it was always better to be safe and sound – especially with the weird feeling Michael got.

Taking a deep breath, Michael emptied his mind of the negative thoughts as well as possible. He condensed one arrow after another, shooting a Kitsun Warrior in the chest, drilling one energy arrow deep into the eye socket of another Kitsun Summon, and releasing a barrage of three arrows aimed at the wrists and kneecap of a Tier-2 Kitsun Awakened.

Afterward, Michael continued to release powershots with enhanced energy arrows. He killed one Kitsun after another, until the last of them was lying on the ground lifelessly.

Some Kitsun Summons and Awakened made it as far as clashing with his Vanguard, but none of them died in the exchange. The Vanguard used their numerical advantage to switch places and block one attack after another, while leaving enough space for the Berserkers, Warriors and Archers to deal damage.

Their armor and shields broke apart due to the heavy impact of some Kitsun Awakened, but that was a small problem. It was a monetary issue that could be solved easily.

Once the first battle was over, the Fire Elementals deployed at the security post were all freed. Michael stepped forward, releasing his Legendary Ring Artifact's dragon might as his lips parted.

"Free your kind, take revenge, or do whatever you want," He announced, his eyes turning ice-cold as he added, "But touch my people, and I will hunt you down until the end of the Origin Expanse!"

Chapter 357 Chained

Even though Michael was not sure if Lesser Elementals were intelligent enough to understand the language of the Origin Expanse, he gave them a fair warning. If his words were not enough, the ring's dragon might was certain to be threatening enough.

Furthermore, Michael and his people were the ones who had freed the Lesser Elementals. That should be more than enough reason for them to feel gratitude and not come to them for revenge. They were the Elementals' benefactors, not their enemies.

The Fire Elementals flared up, the flames shrouding their bodies reaching the ceiling high above their heads before they returned to their former appearance. They turned to the deeper parts of the Elementals cave and rushed inside, ignoring Michael and his people.

"It seems like we have some new scouts. Though...I doubt that they're harmless scouts with those bright flames," Michael murmured, spreading out his origin energy as he stepped toward the security post of the Kitsun. He stored the corpses of all Kitsun inside his storage space to extract them later.

Whether it was Memory Orbs, SoulStar Fragments, Soultrait Symbols, Summoning Scrolls or something else, Michael wanted to gain as much as possible from the Kitsun Lord. That was also why Tiara, Lilica and the others had been out hunting in the main settlement to lure the Kitsun Lord by acting as bait. If they were already in the main settlement hunting Awakened and Guards and risking their lives to distract them, they might as well take their corpses with them.

Why wouldn't they take everything if their enemy was giving them the opportunity to strike it rich? Wouldn't it be stupid to leave behind the corpses and everything else of value?

Instead of following closely behind the Lesser Elementals to join their forces, Michael entered the security post. It was a small barrack where the products of the Elementals cave were supposed to be stored until the couriers from the main settlement would come to bring them outside the Origin Expanse for sale.

The goods were stored in a secret vault. Fortunately, Michael found the vault at once, and opened it with ease putting in the password he had obtained from the Kitsun that Tiara brought him before the war began.

Being one of the oldest Kitsun Awakened in the Kitsun Lord's territory, he knew most of the Kitsun Lord's secrets – including his vaults' passwords.

Michael didn't spend a lot of time studying the goods he retrieved from the vault, but they were mostly elemental spirit seeds and elemental crystals. That was exactly what Michael had been hoping for. He stored the crystals and seeds in his storage and left the barracks with his unit, following the Lesser Elementals he had freed earlier.

At the same time, Michael retrieved a few smaller communication crystals to stay updated about the situation in the four other tunnels.

["Mylord, we completed your order. The surprise attack against the first security post allowed us to free a handful of Lesser Elementals, and kill two dozen Kitsun Summons. Following the second and third barrage of Pieckers, we were able to break two dozen chokers, resulting in an overwhelming victory against the Kitsun.

The Fire Elementals helped us avenge the three Warriors, who sacrificed themselves to protect the rest of the group against a Tier-2 Kitsun Awakened. They died an honorable death. We will always be grateful for their sacrifice. The Lesser Elementals moved deeper into the cave. We think that they're either after the lives of the Kitsun or that they want to rescue their brethren."]

Three reports stating similar events followed the second scouting team's report. Michael felt that a few Links of Loyalty had been cut earlier but hearing the same through the communication crystals hit differently. It made him nauseous.

'Will I ever get accustomed to the death of my people? Death is common in the Origin Expanse. War is normal. So why do I get so affected? Am I that weak-minded?' Michael wondered, shaking his head in frustration.

He considered moving back to the cavern intersection to store all corpses and loot the vaults in the other security posts, but he decided against it. Michael was not in a rush to collect the corpses and empty the vaults full of resources. There was no need to run around like a headless chicken. Instead, he should focus on the battles that lay ahead of him.

They had yet to reach the bottom of the Elementals Cave.

"Let's get moving," Michael ordered through the communication crystals before he gestured to his people to follow him.

They entered the next cavern tunnel and went deeper inside.

As their group ventured further into the Elementals cave, the path moved downward like a winding staircase. Their steps resounded through the cavern tunnel as they moved ahead, and the origin energy around them intensified. Vigor filled their bodies as the origin energy, altered through the elements of the Elementals swirled around them.

The element-attributed energy grew denser and heavier, making Michael feel that he and his units were approaching the secrets of the Elementals cave. The walls around them spread out further, and the air was growing heavier. The dimly lit crystal torches were hung on sconces on the walls at regular intervals across the Elemental cave, casting eerie shadows on the rocky walls. It revealed small, sparkling crystal deposits that glimmered brightly in the darkness. Michael considered harvesting some of the crystals for a moment to analyze them as they moved downward, but he ignored his inner insatiable greed and moved ahead.

Every step took them deeper into the hidden world of the Elemental cave, following the twisting trail as it led them further beneath the surface.

More than half an hour passed before Michael realized, and he checked up on the other units with his communication crystals. However, nothing special happened. They encountered small intersections that had been dug to harvest the elemental crystals in the Elementals Cave, but other than that there was nothing special.

It felt like hours passed until bright lights appeared at the end of the cavern tunnels.

At last, they reached another cavern hall, where the five units of Michael's army emerged near-simultaneously.

The cavern hall was even bigger than the hall with the first security post or the entrance hall. The ceiling was more than 20 meters high, and it was several hundred meters long and wide. No matter where Michael looked his vision was either filled with crystals sprouting out of the ground, hanging down ceilings, or growing out of walls, or Elementals pinned down to the wall with thick crystal chains.

These Elementals were much larger than the Lesser Elementals and their natural presence was stronger as well. However, they were weakened and their energy levels, which Michael could perceive were faint as well. Even if they used to be much stronger than the Lesser Elementals, their current power level was likely to be lower than that of the Lesser Elementals.

Other than the elemental crystals, and the larger Elementals, Michael also found a much larger security post. It resembled a thick pillar that was located in the center of the humongous cavern. Close to a thousand Kitsun Summons, and a few dozen Kitsun Awakened stood in front of the pillar-like security post, their full attention cast on the thousands of Lesser Elementals, who had been forced to attack a smaller group of Lesser Elementals – the group of Lesser Elementals Michael and his people freed earlier.

Michael wanted to rush to help the Lesser Elementals he freed earlier, but charging into a battlefield filled with Fire Elementals that erupted every now and then, creating an inferno that filled most parts of the battlefield for a few seconds would do more harm than good. Michael couldn't act recklessly.

He scanned the humongous cavern hall once again and noticed that the Kitsun didn't pay much attention to them. They were either too focused on the fight of the Lesser Elementals to realize that something was wrong, or they had already sensed that Michael and his people had infiltrated the Elementals cave and dismissed them as a lesser threat.

Michael turned to the other Scout team leaders when he thought about the latter.

"Any news about the Awakened that moved out of the Elementals cave earlier? Did anyone enter the cave after we invaded?" Michael asked them before he retrieved a few communication crystals from his War Rune.

"How is the situation? Did they return?" Michael asked into the first communication crystal before he moved on to call Tiara and Lilica's troupe.

"Move back and surround the Elementals cave. Look out for our scouts. Something might have happened."

He then moved on to the third communication crystal, the crystal that connected them with their home, and ordered, "Pay attention to your surroundings. I am probably just overreacting but send the Forest Whisperers out, and order the Nature Spirit to halt all tasks to scan the surroundings as far as possible. Increase the danger sense level of the Orb of Hostility as well. I don't care how much it costs, just make sure that you can find the Kitsun if they dare to invade our territory."

Michael was actually pretty certain that the Kitsun Lord hadn't predicted his attack. The reaction of the guard and Awakened had been genuine when he sent out the decoy at the main settlement. No Lord would deploy hundreds of Awakened and thousands of combat Summons to trick a 'nobody' like him.

If he wanted to trick him, the Kitsun Lord could have attacked Michael when he was outside the Origin Expanse instead of revealing his existence by sending a few Kitsun Summons and Lesser Elementals close to his border.

Despite that Michael's gut feeling kept telling him that something was wrong. Therefore, he told his people to increase their vigilance and up their guard in his territory. Sun Demos, his Demon Monkeys, the Greater Eagles, and the Heavy Armored Elephant were already on their way back home as well. His territory would be fine, leaving merely his task in the Elementals cave to be completed.

The communication crystal belonging to the scout that had followed the Guards and Awakened outside the Elementals cave rang out a moment later. However, the content brought up more questions.

["The Guards and Awakened the Elementals cave security deployed is...resting, and drinking beer... They entered the settlement half an hour ago and have been drinking since then. It doesn't feel like they're vigilant, let alone worried that the settlement might be attacked again."]

After the scout's communication crystal lit up, Lilica sent him a message as well.

["We've entered the Elementals Cave, and will guard it. The Golden Stinger Wasp stung us and will return to the territory. In case someone attacks, we can swap places with the Wasp at any time. Don't worry and finish your mission. Becoming the benefactors of the Elementals could prove even more important than annihilating the Kitsun Lord!"]

Michael nodded his head in agreement with that. The Elementals in the cave had been subdued if they were too weak-willed to resist the submission of the crystal chokers, or they had been pinned to the walls. But even then, their natural properties grew elemental crystals in the cave. Having the Elementals on their side would prove extremely valuable in terms of combat power and in terms of financial gains.

The warriors and fighters around him were also unwilling to leave. On the contrary, their eyes were vibrant, overflowing with the desire to defeat their enemies, grow stronger through their energy influx, and support Michael in the expansion of his territory by all means.

"Report immediately when something goes wrong on the surface okay, Lilica?" Michael asked. He received Lilica's affirmation not long after, which was everything Michael needed to get moving.

He split his army into two groups that moved around the battlefield. They kept close to the walls and slowly inched closer toward the cavern center where the Kitsun Summons and Awakened began to move as well. It might look like they were fully focused on the fight between the Lesser Elementals, but some of the Awakened further in the back rows decided to pay full attention to the movements of Michael's people.

However, Michael had long since noticed that. He split up from his groups and moved to the battlefield, releasing Glacicles to cover his entire body with tiny glacicles to keep his body cold even after the temperature around him increased.

He condensed an arrow and pulled Zark back all while approaching the battlefield.

Michael released the arrow that cut through the air, shattering one of the crystal chokers, and thereby freeing another Fire Elemental.

In the next moment, the 210 Archers Michael brought to the battle released their arrows simultaneously.

But they didn't aim at the Lesser Elementals to shatter their chokers. No, Michael's army focused on the Kitsun Summons and Awakened.

Meanwhile, Michael was given a few minutes to unleash his power to turn the tides on the battlefield.

Chapter 358 Essence Of War

He only had a few minutes to free the remaining Lesser Elementals on the battlefield before his subjects would be crushed by the Kitsun Summons and Awakened.

However, a few minutes was all he needed. As a matter of fact, it was more time than Michael required to take care of the subdued Lesser Elementals that ranged in the thousands.

There were roughly 3000 Lesser Elementals still under the control of the Summons and fighting against close to 500 freed Lesser Elementals.

The Lesser Elementals that broke free of their slavery ties thanks to Michael focused on shattering the chokers that forced their brethren into submission. That way, they were not that easily overwhelmed even though they had a huge numerical disadvantage.

Michael intensified the shroud of Glacicles around his body as he charged into the battlefield. He didn't mind the severe heat and the blazing flames in the most crowded parts of the battlefield. Instead, he charged right at them.

Michael didn't even think about holding back his strength as he conjured six enhanced Qi Swords around him. The Qi Swords revolved around his head and cut through the air with great velocity when Michael

released them with a burst of energy. The Qi Swords cut through the air, piercing precisely through the crystal chokers around the Lesser Elementals' necks before they continued their path, blasting through the Elementals' necks.

Michael didn't hold back since there was no need to. Elementals could only be killed by crushing their cores. Thus, bursting their heads alongside their chokers was not a major problem. On the contrary, Michael could crush several chokers with each enhanced Qi Blade before they dissolved. They could simply regenerate their heads, either way.

For every broken choker, Michael and the freed Lesser Elementals gained one more ally. Precisely controlled and conjured in batches of six, Michael spent half a minute breaking close to 200 crystal chokers. That was extremely fast, but it was not fast enough for Michael. The enemies' numbers were too high, and he could feel the heavy pressure weighing down on his subjects.

Their Links of Loyalty were filled with a burning passion to bring glory to their territory and Lord – to fight for their survival and the expansion of their territory. But, at the same time, Michael could also sense a tinge of worry in their hearts and Links of Loyalty through their shared connection. The enemy was not that easy to defeat without Tiara, the Forest Elven Adventurers, and Michael by their side. They had to injure their enemies by themselves and deal the finishing blow on their own as well. There was no powerhouse aiding them throughout the whole battle.

Michael sensed that his army was not yet in its prime state, but that was only obvious. He had yet to train vice captains and team leaders among his military force's Summons. The Summons followed his orders right now, but Michael wasn't by their side to boost their morale and calm them with precise commands in the middle of the battle.

Therefore, Michael continued to release enhanced Qi Blades while simultaneously releasing a thick golden thread of Extraction from his palm. The thread advanced toward the closest crystal choker in his vicinity, extracting the components within the choker one by one.

After the first choker burst into thousands of shards, Michael raised his eyebrow when he noticed something. He changed his focus to the next target, extracting a particular component of the choker – the part that held everything together. The choker fell apart the moment a tiny red grain had been extracted. That was more than enough for Michael to change his tactic.

He stopped conjuring enhanced Qi Swords. Instead, Michael released his Dome of Extraction with full focus on two tasks; one- extracting the origin energy in the air and the second extracting the red grain concealed within the crystal chokers.

Michael expanded the Dome of Extraction as much as possible without consuming more energy than he extracted from the surroundings. He then charged straight ahead into the army of Lesser Elementals to let the Dome of Extraction work its wonders. Dozens of chokers crumbled and fell to the ground in countless pieces after Michael passed by. He released several layers of Enhancement on his lower body and kicked the ground to turn into a flash amid the blazing infernos erupting around him.

Hundreds of Lesser Elementals were freed within the first minute, and the number easily crossed 1500 after three minutes. Post that, the freed Lesser Elementals overwhelmed their subdued brethren, breaking most chokers to regain their freedom. Michael broke the last few chokers with the Dome of Extraction before he decreased the size of the dome. He refilled his Origin energy storage by extracting the energy in the air before he unleashed the Legendary Ring Artifact's full dragon might once again.

His eyes glowed golden as he turned to the Lesser Elementals all around him before he shouted aloud, "CHARGE!"

The Lesser Elementals felt the pressure of a dragon sweep past them as Michael burst toward the enemies who had tortured them for as long as they could remember. Rage and the desire to take revenge filled their entire being and they charged, following their Savior onto the next battlefield.

Michael had hoped that his people could last more than three minutes against the Kitsun Summons and Awakened, but that wasn't the case. His army killed many enemies by using various potions and the Pieckers to their advantage. Nonetheless, Michael's army was not as powerful as Awakened who had received several years of experience and time to refine their War Runes, or the Kitsun Summons who'd been in the Kitsun Lord's territory for years, if not a full decade.

Only two enemies might be at the 3rd Tier, but that was more than enough to charge ahead and kill a few dozen Warriors and Knights in the first few minutes of the battle. I think you should take a look at

Of course, they were not overly powerful with their rather fragile constitution as a Kitsun, and mere 1-Star and 2-Star Soultraits. Nonetheless, their high Tier, high-ranked Artifacts, and their experience made up for their weak points. At least, they could deal with a bunch of Summons at the 1st and 2nd Tier – or so they thought at first.

Michael's army was a lot more resilient than the Kitsun Summons and Awakened assumed. They lost far more people on their side as the Warriors, Knights, Vanguard and Mages made sure that the Archers were well protected as they released one barrage of Pieckers after another.

The Berserkers and Knights at the highest Tier focused on stalling the Tier-3 Awakened. They trusted that Michael would come soon to help them out and they would survive. Unfortunately, some of them still died.

Michael felt more than 300 energy shares fill his body, but that didn't fill him with happiness. After all, he could also feel that more than 50 Links of Loyalty had been severed.

He couldn't remember having lost that many combatants in any battle. Even the fight with the Minotaur had fewer casualties. But Michael knew that this was the essence of war. He had already prepared himself mentally to lose subjects in the future.

Michael might have told himself that he would protect everyone, but was that even possible? The stronger he grew the more his territory would expand – the more Summons and combatants Michael would obtain. The dangers of the battles in the Origin Expanse would only increase, and the time would come when he would lose thousands of subjects in a large-scale war. That was bound to happen even if Michael didn't like the thought.

In fact, he hated the thought of leading his people in a dangerous battle. He would rather fight a single war with a certain victory than dozens of battles with pyrrhic victories. Unfortunately, that was wishful thinking and something that would never happen in the reality. The reality was cruel, and Michael knew that he had to be prepared for the worst case at any time.

However, now that Michael negated the worst enemy – the unknown threat the subdued Lesser Elementals could have posed to his army – he appeared next to the first Tier-3 Awakened. He was already restricted and covered in several cuts, allowing Michael to react swiftly.

He manifested a huge Glacicle, shaped it in the form of a sword, and used Reinforced Sword Qi and Enhancement to cover the Glacicle Sword. Reinforced Sword Qi's full potential was unleashed for the first time in a while. It increased the sharpness and durability of the Glacicle Sword, while also creating a silver layer that could be released into the enemy's body with a burst. And that was exactly what Michael did.

The Glacicle Sword burst forth with great velocity. It cut through the Kitsun Awakened's half-broken armor and pierced deep into his side before the layer of Reinforced Sword Qi was released inside the Kitsun's body. Too late to react because he had been restrained, the Kitsun Awakened hastily released his 2-Star Soultrait. His eyes glowed silver for a moment, stunning Michael for a moment as he felt an ominous presence staring deep into his Soul.

However, the effect of the Kitsun Awakened's Soultrait didn't last long. Michael was barely affected as he pierced the Wyverntooth Spear deep into the Glacicle Sword that burst into the freezing mist as Sword Qi shrouding it had been released.

The Kitsun in front of him was not yet dead, but Michael didn't have to be a medic to know that the Awakened was on the verge of dying. The Kitsun Awakened's condition worsened as one of Michael's Berserkers cleaved down with his humongous war axe. The war axe's blade sliced cleanly into the Kitsun's shoulder, severing the shoulder from the Awakened's body.

As Michael saw this, he turned away, understanding that the battle against the Tier-3 Awakened was over. The Knights and Berserker surrounding the Kitsun struck with all their might. They cleaved, stabbed and thrust their weapons, ending him. There was no need for him to interfere.

Instead, Michael could move ahead. He continued to enhance his lower body to move faster through the surroundings. Five Spirit Whips manifested around him and he began charging forward as he struck one powerful Awakened after another with the Spirit Whip whenever he passed by them. He sliced through their vital points whenever his position didn't allow him to slice their throat before invading their bodies with a trace of Extraction.

Michael extracted their origin energy and life force as the Kitsun began to fight desperately for their survival. There was no trace of their earlier overconfidence or ridicule left.

All they felt was terror and despair.

They didn't want to die.

But the same could be said about their victims. The Elementals had never asked to be killed and tortured.

Chapter 359 Baron Of Fire

The fury of the Lesser Elementals couldn't be underestimated. They didn't care about surviving and were willing to sacrifice themselves if they could eliminate as many Kitsun as possible. Even if their lives ended after they took down as many enemies as possible they would be satisfied.

But since there were more than 3000 Lesser Elementals, and Michael's army consisted of 1500 combatants, it was hardly a problem to kill a thousand Kitsun Summons and a few dozen Awakened. They used their numerical advantage to eliminate the Kitsun one by one, all while Michael focused his full power on eliminating the stronger Awakened.

The battle ended soon after the Lesser Elementals joined Michael's side, unfortunately a little bit too late for 51 of Michael's Summons. Michael and his subjects were sad about the loss, but everyone knew that something like that could happen on the battlefield. Death would always lurk near a battlefield so it was not a new experience, but it was also not something one could easily adapt to. Witnessing the death of their comrades would never be easy.

After the battle was over, Michael noticed that the Lesser Elementals split up. Most rushed to the larger Elementals with the intention to destroy the crystal chains pinning the larger Elementals to the walls. Meanwhile, the rest entered the security post that looked like a pillar. They sought more enemies to slaughter because they had yet to satiate their fury. Michael followed them to ensure that the Lesser Elementals wouldn't destroy everything. He still wanted to loot the warehouse located in the security post on this floor, after all.

The Lesser Elementals didn't mind him following them. Quite the contrary, they made sure to follow closely behind Michael instead of being disrespectful by charging ahead of him.

Michael was not too sure about the Elementals' culture, but he could tell that they revered the strong – just like everyone else.

He looted the warehouse and stored a few other things inside his War Rune's storage before gesturing to the Lesser Elementals. They were free to destroy everything now that he got what he wanted.

He left the security post, just to see that his people collected all the corpses for him to store. They didn't differentiate between the charred Kitsun that had been killed by the Lesser Elementals and the Kitsun that had been killed by them and piled all of them on one giant stash of corpses.

Looking at the charred corpses of an Awakened and a Kitsun Summon at the top of the pile, Michael grew a little curious. Something in the back of his mind told him to keep the corpses instead of discarding them. Therefore, he used Extraction on the two corpses, thereby extracting a handful of Summoning Scrolls, dozens of SoulStar Fragments and much more.

'Battles with allies count as contributions as well? Does the Will consider the Lesser Elementals as my allies now, or is it because I saved them?' Michael wondered, after confirming that neither he nor one of his subjects had inflicted any wounds to the two corpses that he had just extracted.

He came to realize that the Kitsun Summons and Awakened would still give him the same loot he would usually only obtain if he or his subjects made a contribution in the specific fight.

That was an interesting find, but it shouldn't come as a surprise now that he thought about it.

'I could loot the monsters and the members of the Jungle Expedition killed by the monster hordes and the Blood Oath Demon Monkeys as well. So why did I never wonder how the Will works? Does it consider my actions as a contribution to the battle, or does the Will consider the Lesser Elementals my allies because we fought the same enemy? Or was it because we considered each other as temporary allies since we didn't fight each other...though I burst their heads to break the chokers...'

Michael stored the corpses of the Kitsun away before moving onto the neatly laid out Human and Elven Summons' bodies. His expression turned grim upon seeing their corpses. A heavy sigh escaped his lips and a wave of sadness swept through him.

"My Lord, don't be sad. They wouldn't want you to be sad. Instead, we should be proud of them. Everyone who died today did so to protect their comrades, and their friends and new family back at home," One of the old Berserkers said somewhat informally, yet sounding respectful.

He was a real fighter, someone with great experience from before he died in the Origin Expanse.

A younger Knight came to the Berserker's side, agreeing with the old Berserker's point of view, "They were brave and loyal. Their death was an honorable one."

"Everyone here knew what they asked for when we made the request to join your conquest of the Elementals cave. You didn't want us to follow you into this battle at first, but we made the request nonetheless. That is also why we will take responsibility for our actions," The Earth Elemental Mage agreed, before adding with a faint smile on his lips, "We can tell how valuable the Elementals' combat prowess is, and I am pretty sure that these elemental crystals and seeds will also be very useful for our territory."

Michael nodded his head slowly. He clearly recalled having told his people that the Elementals cave was dangerous and that he would be more comfortable raiding the cave alone. However, his Summons pleaded with him to take them along with him. They didn't want to sit back at home when their master was risking his life. Besides, they needed and wanted some more real combat experience against tough opponents— not the little experience they gained in spars and against the weaker monsters in the Untamed Jungle.

They had to prepare themselves for real battles, and Michael knew that this was the bitter truth. The Zentika Empire wouldn't wait much longer for them to grow stronger either. The Empire had been silent for too long. Something would happen in the next few months. Michael and everyone else could feel that. I think you should take a look at

"Alright alright. I won't speak about it any further. Just make sure to retreat when I tell you to," Michael said, both glad that his Summons were willing to fight for his territory, and a little bit uncertain what to do once something far more dangerous and unpredictable than the encounter with the Kitsun territory would occur.

Trying to clear his mind of the doubts, Michael turned to the Lesser Elementals. Some had turned to him, gesturing to him, and then their necks before they pointed at the chains that pinned the larger Elementals to the walls.

"Since I'm already here, I might as well free all of you," Michael mumbled, moving to the first larger Elemental. A golden stream of extraction flowed out of his palm as he stepped closer to the crystal chain. The Lesser Elementals stepped back in response, giving him more space to complete the task.

He pressed his palm against the crystal chain and began using Extraction to dismember the crystal chain slowly. Contrary to the chokers that were held together with a red crystal the size of a grain, the crystal

chains were different. The chokers were used to subdue and control the Lesser Elementals. However, the chain's task was focused on restraining. The crystal chain was mostly composed of the same red crystal used in the choker. But it was not the chain's main component.

Michael spent more than ten minutes trying to find out what the main component was. Only after he extracted a small plate that had numerous engravings etched on its surface did the chain fall apart, releasing the larger Elemental.

The larger Elemental slumped to the ground. He was weak and could barely move.

Hundreds of Elementals gathered around the larger Elemental, their flaming body emanating terrific heat as they ripped their own bodies apart to offer them to the larger Elemental as a tribute and a means to invigorate him.

Every Elemental sacrificed a part of their body and strength to strengthen the larger Elemental. This surprised Michael quite a bit. He had never seen anything like that.

Reinvigorated, the larger Elemental's shape changed slowly. His size expanded by several times as the larger Fire Elemental's flames flared up. A flaming giant appeared in front of Michael, towering over him with great power. His presence was heavy, and his flames were searing hot.

However, all it took was a layer of Glacicles shrouding him to make sure that the flames couldn't burn him. Whenever the Glacicles started to melt, they burst open and released freezing mist which lowered the temperature drastically for a while.

The larger Elemental kneeled down with one leg and pressed his right hand upon his chest. The Blazing Giant Elemental lowered his head for a few seconds before lifting its body again.

Others might consider this action as a sign of submission, but Michael felt that it was more a sign of respect, and the Blazing Giant Elemental's way of thanking him for rescuing him and the Lesser Elementals.

The Blazing Giant Elemental waved his hand, releasing flickering flames that formed letters in the air.

Michael took a few steps back so as to not break his neck to take a look at the letters.

'It's not written in the origin language.'

That was the first thing Michael noticed upon seeing the letters. But instead of frowning deeply because communication would be much harder if the Blazing Giant Elemental couldn't speak or write in the origin language, Michael ended up breaking into a smile.

"To think that I will be able to use this so soon. I am quite lucky, aren't I?" Michael mumbled to himself before he switched to one of the languages he'd learned from digesting the Knowledge Wisps. At last, the books he procured from the Berserker Chieftain in Piloq's Library came to some use.

"Nice meeting you Baron of the Fire Tribe. My name is Michael Fang, and I'm glad that I could help you."

Chapter 360 Empress

[I can feel that our Empress is still here. Please rescue her by all means – even if you have to massacre the remaining Elementals in the process.]

Michael had been communicating with the Blazing Giant Elemental for a few minutes by now. He got to know a bunch of useful information. However, the most important piece of information was unveiled to him only now; an Elemental Empress was imprisoned in the cave.

He read the blazing letters in the air in front of him and nearly blurted his thoughts aloud as he reached the latter part of the text.

'Woah, calm down bro.'

"I will try to rescue her. Where exactly is she located? I cannot see a cavern tunnel leading deeper into the cave," Michael asked, feeling a little confused.

According to the memories of the very first Kitsun he killed, there was no Elemental Empress, or a way further down into the cave. The Kitsun's memories told him that this was the bottom of the cave.

[I can feel her presence from underneath the pillar.]

The Blazing Giant Elemental pointed toward the security, which was enough reason for Michael to step in the direction of the security post. He heard the steps of his army resounding behind him and stopped.

Turning around, he saw that his summons were still looking forward to keep fighting. They were a little tired but not completely exhausted. Unfortunately, there was no enemy to deal with right now. If not even one of the oldest Awakened working for the Kitsun Lord knew about the Elemental Empress, he doubted that the Kitsun Lord would be willing to share this piece of intel with anyone else. After all, hiding the Elemental Empress' existence was the best way to ensure that nobody could take her away even if the Elementals cave would be raided one day – which was exactly what happened today.

But the Blazing Giant Elementals knew this fact, and Michael as well, now that he received the intel.

'An Elemental Empress...amazing!' Michael exclaimed inwardly.

An Elemental Empress would be extremely valuable. The greatest Elemental societies came into existence because of Elemental Emperors and Elemental Empresses.

It was extremely rare for an Elemental Empress or Emperor to be born as they were in control of all elements. They had one main element at which they excelled, but they could control all elements to a certain degree. Furthermore, Elemental Empresses and Elemental Emperors had the innate power to expand their population rapidly by creating the cores of Elementals using any kind of element as a base.

[The Kitsun bastard caught our Empress when she was born. He forced her into a Soul Pact... We...do not know the clauses of the pact...please rescue her even if you would have to sacrifice all of us...We cannot let her die, no matter what...Even if it costs all of our lives.....rescue her]

New words manifested in the air in front of Michael as he looked at his subjects for a moment. The Blazing Giant Elemental was restless and definitely not the patient type. Michael was also not sure why

the Elemental had to talk about everyone's death so many times. It was almost as if the Blazing Giant Elemental was trying to manifest everyone's death by mentioning it over and over again.

"I will do what I can," Michael mentioned, his focus returning to his people.

"Instead of following me, how about you use your energy and excitement to harvest the elemental crystals?" He asked his army while retrieving hundreds of silverage pickaxes.

The pickaxes landed in front of him, creating a big pile for the Summons to stare at with a mix of disbelief and uncertainty.

They had rushed after him to fight, not to end up as laborers in the middle of the enemy's territory. But instead of complaining to Michael, they started to move. The Elemental cave was humongous and elemental crystals could be seen everywhere. Harvesting would definitely help the territory to advance. Unfortunately, it would take a while.

Nonetheless, the Summons began to move.

Michael turned to the security post where the Blazing Giant Elemental was already standing, burning down the wooden entrance gate. The Elemental entered the security post, his body flaring up to destroy what the Lesser Elementals had yet to obliterate.

Michael quickly followed behind. He entered the security post with Extraction released to clear the smoke he was about to inhale. Burning everything might not affect the Elementals, but Michael was human. He was still in need of oxygen to survive.

After entering the security post, Michael stepped closer to the Blazing Giant Elemental, who was surrounded by dozens of Lesser Elementals.

The Lesser Elementals released blazing flames at an inconspicuous bookshelf. The bookshelf ought to be turned into ash, yet it remained standing. It didn't even heat up and stayed unscathed throughout the blazing inferno that encompassed it entirely.

Once the Lesser Elementals were out of energy, the flames disappeared as well. Despite the blazing flames and scorching heat, the bookshelf didn't catch fire though it was made of wood.

After the fire died, the Blazing Giant Elemental got started. He began to do the exact same as the Lesser Elementals, releasing blazing flames with the intention to reduce the bookshelf to ash. Yet, not even the Blazing Giant Elemental's searing flames were capable of burning down the bookshelf.

The Blazing Giant Elemental's flames were several times hotter than the Lesser Elemental's flames, yet they were useless against the bookshelf.

Michael stepped forward, lifting his hand to gesture to the Blazing Giant Elemental to stop. He pressed his palm against the bookshelf and released Extraction. His entire energy storage was drained in the blink of an eye, but it was worth it.

The bookshelf was extracted and disappeared inside his War Rune where Michael would keep it for research.

Once the bookshelf disappeared from their view, a small door appeared in front of them. This time the Blazing Giant Elemental stepped forward and ripped the door out of its frame, revealing a staircase that moved deeper underground. It was a narrow staircase that was almost too small for Michael, let alone the huge Blazing Giant Elemental.

He would never fit into the staircase. I think you should take a look at

"Looks like I will have to enter alone. Don't worry, I will free her!" Michael said, not even looking at the Blazing Giant Elemental anymore as he approached the staircase.

He released the Dome of Extraction to extract anything that could act as a trigger for traps before he squeezed himself through the narrow staircase that moved downward like a spiral. Michael saw some blazing letters from the corner of his eyes, but he didn't pay attention to them.

Michael's full focus was on the Dome of Extraction. After all, a single mishap would be his death. He couldn't evade anything in this kind of narrow and uncomfortable space.

He was not sure how much time he spent climbing down the stairs, but he reached the end of the staircase at some point. The bottom of the staircase led to a small room made out of black material. Michael was not sure what the material was but it looked quite old.

It was not of great importance either way. The only important thing that was located in the small room was a small and fragile Elemental pinned to the wall through dozens of crystal chains.

Michael's mind blanked out for a second staring at the little Elemental. She looked human, if not for her body made of compressed flames. Only a few dozen strands of her hair weren't blazing flames. The dozen strands of hair were in different colors, with every strand having a distinct shade of the color spectrum.

Michael was not a pro at sensing altered origin energy, but he could tell that the Elemental Empress' main attribute was fire and that the few dozen strands of hair indicated her minor affinity toward the other elements.

After staring blankly at the Elemental Empress for a second or two, Michael regained his senses. He approached the Elemental Empress and began to use Extraction to destroy the first crystal chain.

The crystal chain was thinner than the chain that had pinned the Giant Blazing Elemental to the wall, but it was a lot more complex. Michael spent half an hour destroying the first chain.

At some point, the Elemental Empress noticed Michael's presence. However, nobody said a word. The Elemental Empress stared at Michael in silence and let him work until the first crystal chain crumbled.

Once the first chain crumbled, the tremendous force pinning the Elemental Empress to the chain loosened by a fraction. But that fraction was enough to change the Empress' expression.

An expression full of terror appeared on her face.

"NOOOO!!!!" She screamed at the top of her lungs – if she had something like that, in the first place.

Michael's ears rang loudly as her scream reached him, and he stepped back subconsciously.

"What's the issue? Do you not want to regain freedom?" Michael asked, not quite sure what was happening.

All he could tell was that the Elemental Empress was in pain, which shouldn't have been the case.

"I doubt you like it here."

"The...Soul Pact..." The Elemental Empress said weakly as if her scream from earlier drained her entire remaining energy.

"Ah. There was that. I forgot the pact for a moment," Michael mumbled, scratching the back of his bald head.

A Soul Pact was a special Soul Contract. It had a lot more restrictions than a Soul Contract – which was already more binding than an ordinary Link of Loyalty.

Only a True Link of Loyalty could be compared to the binding force of a Soul Pact. Even then, Michael was not sure if a Soul Pact might not be even more binding.

"Can you tell me more about your Soul Pact? Maybe we can find a loophole to get rid of the Soul Pact somehow," Michael offered.

If he was already standing in front of the Elemental Empress, he might as well try to help her properly. The Kitsun Lord and his Awakened might notice that something was wrong inside the Elementals cave, but Michael wasn't too worried. His army and the Lesser Elementals were above them, making sure that nobody could bother him.

Furthermore, it would leave a sour aftertaste to abandon the Elemental Empress now that he had gotten this far.

While he waited for a response, the Elemental Empress hesitated for a moment. She stared straight at Michael, whose eyes were clear and filled with determination. In the next moment, the Elemental Empress made her decision and began to tell Michael about her Soul Pact's clauses.

Ten minutes passed in which Michael listened intently before he spoke again.

"Fuck this Soul Pact"