

Supreme Lord 361

Chapter 361 The Idea

If put in simple terms the Soul Pact – no, Soul Pacts – affecting the Elemental Empress were a big mess.

According to the Elemental Empress, she was under the influence of a dozen Soul Pacts. One for each year she spent in the Origin Expanse – in the small black room, pinned to the wall.

She didn't recall the exact content of the first Soul Pact. It was completed even before her Soul had fully formed. She was under the Kitsun Lord's influence the moment she was born.

All the Elemental Empress could tell was that every new Soul Pact changed something inside her, and that she wasn't allowed to move without being ordered by the Kitsun Lord.

All in all, Michael figured out quite a bit about the Kitsun Lord's personality and attitude. He was cunning and merciless. A sly bastard to put it simple.

The first Soul Pact couldn't be anything special. It was formed even before the Elemental Empress' soul had been completed. As it was not fully formed yet moments after her birth, not even the soul of an Elemental Empress would be able to survive a tight-locked Soul Pact. In fact, Michael was already surprised that the Elemental Empress survived so far despite being bound by the Soul Pact. It was close to a miracle, even if it was more like a nightmare for the Elemental Empress.

'Even if the first Soul Pact didn't do much, multiple Soul Pacts means I have no idea which clauses are still valid, which clauses have been removed entirely due to the effect of the newer pacts, and which clauses fused forming more restrictive clauses for the Empress...what a mess.'

Michael was starting to feel irritated at the sight of the Elemental Empress. He wanted to help her but couldn't do anything without potentially killing her.

Multiple Soul Pacts meant that each new Soul Pact was less binding than the former. That was common knowledge – for someone with the knowledge of a whole library that had been constructed centuries

before the Second Epoch began. But Michael couldn't say with confidence that he knew to what extent were the new Soul Pacts less binding and predatory, how the new Soul Pacts affected the older Soul Pacts, and whatnot.

There were too many ifs and buts for Michael's liking.

The Elemental Empress was also not that helpful. The more she spoke the more questions flashed through Michael's mind. It truly made his head spin.

The only good thing was that Michael found out more about the Kitsun Lord. He was more of a merchant and a tyrant than a fighter. He expanded his territories through trickery and deceit rather than head-on fights.

Michael was aware of that but he didn't know that the Kitsun Lord was also a madman, a man willing to sacrifice his people without batting an eyelid. He was also extremely possessive. Nobody was allowed to see the Empress except for him, and it took him years before he allowed the Awakened working for him to come in contact with his elemental crystals and his elemental spirit seeds.

Everything in his territory belonged to him, whether it was animals, plants, or the Awakened. They ought to sacrifice themselves the moment he desired their death or deemed them useless.

The new intel was crucial for Michael in his war against the Kitsun Lord. Unfortunately, it didn't really help in the rescue mission.

'How about I use Extraction on her? But will I be able to extract her Soul Pacts, in the first place?' Michael wondered, frowning deeply.

Extraction was not omnipotent. It was a 6-Star Soultrait and using 10 layers of Enhancement on Extraction allowed him to strengthen Extraction to make it strong enough to increase its potency and efficiency to the next level. However, at the end of the day, Enhancement merely enhanced the existing power of the enhanced object, Soultrait or being. It was merely a catalyst, a pseudo star increase.

"I can sense something," The Elemental Empress said all of a sudden, breaking Michael's train of thoughts.

Michael didn't quite understand her.

"Sense what?"

"I can sense something about you," She said.

"About me?"

"It feels animalistic. A scent...no, a presence...it's attached to you, a part of you in a way. Yet, it's different from you. It's you but not..."

Michael's frown deepened upon hearing her. He stared at the Elemental Empress but was unsure what to say. He wasn't even certain he understood her properly. The Elemental Empress could speak in the Origin language, but she might be malfunctioning after being confined for a dozen years. Her words felt like gibberish to him at first.

But before he could say something he realized what the Elemental Empress had been talking about.

Sun Demos.

The Blood Oath Demon Monkey King, Sun Demos. The monster he tamed a few months back.

"Taming," He mumbled, tilting his head as numerous thoughts flashed through his mind.

Taming. True Link of Loyalty. The truest bond.

Even Sun Demos Soul had now become a part of Michael, to a certain extent. The bond of a tamed beast was something that couldn't be broken by any means but death. Being a 5-Star Soultrait, Taming's bond would be even stronger than the norm. It provided a supernatural connection. I think you should take a look at

"Use it on me," The Elemental Empress said in a tone that commanded attention and submission.

She didn't sound fragile and weak like she was on the verge of death at this moment. On the contrary, her entire being seemed to change.

'Taming?' Michael wondered with furrowed brows, only for the Elemental Empress to answer his thought.

"Tame me," She repeated herself, staring intently at Michael while still pinned to the wall.

"Are you craz—..." Michael began to curse her out when he stopped abruptly as he realized something.

He considered the possibility of taming the Elemental Empress. It sounded crazy, yet oddly plausible. The sheer amount of Soul Pacts made by the Elemental Empress weakened the pacts and put them in disarray. After all, a portion of the Soul was getting occupied by a Soul Pact's binding force. This was a measurement to ensure that the Soul Pact could punish the party that violated the pact by inflicting injuries through the occupied part of the Soul. The injury would be forward, thus harming the entire Soul and being of the party.

The only downside with Soul Pacts that occupied a portion of the Soul was that the 2nd Soul Pact – and those following – would have a smaller portion to occupy. A Soul Pact would always occupy between 5% to 10% of a soul. Therefore, the 2nd Soul Pact would only be able to occupy 10% of a Soul that had only 90% space left to occupy. Following that, the 3rd Soul Pact could only occupy 10% out of 81% of a Soul's space.

But that was not all. A Soul would grow more resilient to new Soul Pacts as the unoccupied space decreases.

Therefore, the latter Soul Pacts should be a lot weaker than the True Link of Loyalty, even though they affected the first Soul Pacts' clauses.

The bond of taming would alter the Elemental Empress' soul, which should – no, could –, turn the Soul Pacts invalid. After all, all Soul Contracts and Soul Pacts were signed with the Soul. If the Soul changed their signature would change as well.

'Should I tame her and order her to discard the Soul Pacts if they're still valid after the taming process? Will Taming overwrite her Soul Pacts? Or will the pacts kill her if she is tamed and her Soul is being altered?'

Since the Kitsun Lord was said to be a cunning person, Michael didn't doubt that some clauses in one of the dozen Soul Pacts would mention the possibility of the Elemental Empress' soul changing. A mutation in the Soul 'could' happen at any time even if it was highly unlikely to happen in a lifetime.

Michael seriously doubted that the Kitsun Lord would have mentioned specific cases, such as a Soultrait like Taming being used to tame the Elemental Empress. He was close to 100% certain that the Kitsun Lord would never imagine someone with a Taming Soultrait to appear in front of the Elemental Empress, let alone that a prideful Empress would be willing to get tamed – to become someone else's pawn.

"Taming you won't give you the freedom you desire," Michael stated as a matter of fact.

Taming her wouldn't give her the freedom she desired. It would just shift her prison and change her master from the Kitsun Lord to Michael. The taming bond couldn't be easily severed without consequences either. It would most likely scar their souls forever even if he used Extraction to remove the True Link of Loyalty that would be created between them. Even if he was not certain about that, Michael didn't want to risk injuring his soul by taming the Elemental Empress for a short period just to remove the bond by force again. It was not worth it.

"Anything is better than this..." The Elemental Empress said, a trace of desperation in her earlier commanding voice that sounded weak and fragile once again.

Michael wanted to say something, but he couldn't. Her argument was valid. Anything was probably better than being imprisoned in this dark place. Maybe even death.

"Are you sure that you want this?" Michael asked carefully, "It might not work and you may even die. I cannot promise you anything. I've never studied Soul Contract, let alone Soul Pacts. All I know is some commonly known facts."

"I am sure. Please do it," The Elemental Empress insisted, her voice growing weaker by the second.

If Michael didn't know better, he would guess that the Elemental Empress was on the verge of death. However, she couldn't die just like that. The Soul Pacts were at fault for her condition. They burdened her soul and weighed her down. That was also why she was still a Tierless existence even though she had been exposed to ambient origin energy for the last 12 years.

Michael did not immediately reply but looked at the Elemental Empress for a while. He thought about all known variables and calculated the probability of success.

The chance was low. It was extremely low, to be precise. The known factors were already enough to determine that the Elemental Empress was likely to die. Her survival rate wasn't even close to 1% in Michael's opinion.

Nonetheless, he wanted to give it a try.

Michael didn't like the Kitsun Lord after everything he had gotten to know about him. He pitied the Elemental Empress as well. However, he also wanted to tame the Elemental Empress because of the benefits he could obtain.

Even if Michael wanted to deny his ulterior intention, he couldn't. He wanted to obtain the Elemental Empress to make use of her powers and the fact that she could create more Elementals in the future. He could expand his army using the Elementals, and he could give them more than enough living space to create elemental crystals and elemental spirit seeds as well.

The only difference between Michael and the Kitsun Lord was that Michael wouldn't force the Elemental Empress to do anything she didn't want to. He would treat her well, and make sure that she could enjoy her life for the first time since she was born.

He hoped to see her smile, to rescue this innocent little soul.

"Alright, I will do it."

Chapter 362 Taming The Empress

The first thing Michael did was to use Extraction on the crystal chains to extract as many components as possible. He left only a tiny part of the main component hanging to prevent the crystal chains from breaking.

Why did Michael do that? He wanted to break the crystal chains simultaneously with little to no energy consumption once the taming process had been completed.

Once Michael replenished his energy storage, he conjured the magic circle of Taming for the second time since he procured the Soultrait. He weaved the magic circle meticulously and added as much energy as possible to fortify the taming circle. The circle's shape changed slowly, morphing into a crimson-colored pentagon as it moved below the feet of the Elemental Empress.

The Elemental Empress twitched once after the taming circle appeared beneath her, but she didn't reject it. The Soul Pacts weighing down on her didn't seem to affect the taming process either. Nothing seemed out of place. Step one of the taming process had been completed successfully.

Unfortunately, step one was the easiest step. Followed by the manifestation of the taming circle, the real taming process was initiated.

Michael's focus remained on the taming circle to keep it intact. Simultaneously, he used the taming circle to enter the Elemental Empress' consciousness where her soul resided. It hadn't been necessary to enter Sun Demos' consciousness when Michael used Taming for the first time. However, the same method as last time couldn't be applied here.

He had a dozen Soul Pacts to pay attention to while taming the Elemental Empress after all.

At first, Michael wanted to crush the Soul Pacts while taming the Elemental Empress, but he decided against this idea. Rather than doing something dangerous like that, Michael chose to tame the Elemental Empress first to alter her soul before waiting for the response of the Soul Pact. Afterward, Michael would still be able to enter the Elemental Empress' consciousness since the Elemental Empress would become a part of him; his second tamed monster.

The crimson pentagon, the taming 'circle', manifested in the Elemental Empress' consciousness. But instead of focusing on the taming circle right off the bat, Michael looked around. In the center of the consciousness, a thin, and fragile pillar of light could be seen. It was as fragile as the Elemental Empress, and it was restrained by chains that were tightly coiled around it in a vice-like grip.

There were a total of a dozen chains coiled around the pillar of light, preventing it from growing or expanding further. The pillar of light was unmoving. It didn't even respond to a foreign existence infiltrating its realm. Every trace of energy entering the pillar of light inflicted pain, forcing the Elemental Empress to distribute the energy to create new elemental cores to create new lives.

While staring blankly at the dozen chains and the weak pillar of light, Michael was once again reminded that the Elemental Empress was used as a breeding facility by the Kitsun Lord. It was disgusting and beyond cruel.

Michael came back to his senses and was filled with the mad urge to skin that bastard alive. But for now, he had an important task to do. Clenching his fist and gritting his teeth, he returned his full focus to the application of the taming circle inside the Elemental Empress' pillar of light.

Instead of affecting the Elemental Empress' pillar of light from the outside like each of the chains, the taming circle would influence the pillar of light from the inside. This particular fact was also the sole reason why Michael felt that it was possible to overwrite the Soul Pacts. The taming circle would be much higher on the list of priorities after all.

Time slowed down as Michael inserted the taming circle inside the pillar of light. It was a slow task that required a tremendous amount of energy, and focus. Not a single mistake was allowed as both tamer and the tamed monster would have to face the consequences.

Michael would survive it rather easily. He might end up with a bad headache for a few days, but that was it. However, the same couldn't be said about the Elemental Empress. Even if the backlash was not noteworthy, it would probably be enough to kill the Elemental Empress. She had been confined for too long and grown very weak.

As the taming circle was inserted into the pillar of light, the pillar of light began to ripple. Michael could hear the Elemental Empress groan in pain, forcing him to slow down. He didn't want to inflict pain on

her since he was pretty sure that the removal of the Soul Pacts' chains would hurt like hell. It was not necessary to torture her even more.

Realizing his mistake, he slowed down his speed of inserting the taming circle and observed the changes occurring in and around the pillar of light. The pillar of light continued to ripple but the Elemental Empress didn't wince anymore. Her breathing grew ragged but that was her only response.

After what felt like an eternity, Michael finished inserting the taming circle inside the pillar of light. Thereafter the changes revolving around the pillar of light became more prominent. The pillar of light was shrouded in a faint crimson hue as it began to expand ever so slightly. What followed next caused shivers to run down Michael's spine.

The Elemental Empress screamed out at the top of her lungs, the chains holding her back rattling wildly. She was in immense pain as the pillar of light expanded, pushing against the Soul Pacts' chains that ought to restrain her pillar of light. However, the pillar of light continued to expand. It was not affected by the Elemental Empress' screams. Michael froze in response, unsure what to do next. He had a plan, but he didn't expect the Elemental Empress to start screaming in pain so soon.

The Elemental Empress continued to scream for a full minute until she went silent all of a sudden. The lack of noise worried Michael even more than her screams. He worried that she might be too weak to scream and that she was actually on the verge of death now.

Suddenly, a faint crackling noise resounded in the eerily silent room. The pillar of light began to ignore the Soul Pacts' chains and expanded past their restrictions, resulting in cracks appearing all over the chains. I think you should take a look at

As Michael took note of the cracks, a sudden idea flashed through his mind. He closed his eyes and used Extraction. He was already inside the Elemental Empress' consciousness, and the True Link of Loyalty between him and the Elemental Empress was about to be established as well. Therefore, he could use Extraction inside her consciousness, and try to extract the Soul Pacts' chains.

It might work, but it was more likely to fail. Despite that, he wanted to give it a try. Michael wanted to weaken the chains if extracting them was not possible.

Extraction's golden threads shot out, a dozen at once. Each golden thread pierced through the Soul Pacts' chains, infiltrating the inside to extract it slowly.

Several hours passed as he focused on the task, but Michael didn't feel anything. A mere minute, an hour, or weeks could have passed, yet Michael wouldn't be able to notice anything as he focused entirely on extracting the Soul Pacts' chains.

At last, the cracks spread all over the surface of the chains. A loud noise reverberated throughout the Elemental Empress' consciousness as the chains grew even more weak.

Michael left her consciousness in response, but he was still using Extraction. He added another use of Extraction to reach out to the crystal chains that pinned the Elemental Empress to the wall and extracted the last main component.

In the next moment, the chains restraining the Elemental Empress' soul and body broke simultaneously.

Michael expected to hear the Elemental Empress scream resound through the small room, but all he could hear was a heavy sigh, a sigh of relief.

The Elemental Empress slumped down to the ground right after the crystal chains shattered to pieces. She stayed on the ground, panting heavily and unable to even think about moving around. Not having been able to move freely even once in her life, the Elemental Empress felt like she had plunged head-first into an entirely new world; a world full of things to explore.

She could feel that a connection between her and Michael had been established, a connection that would force her to obey Michael's commands even if it meant that she would have to sacrifice herself. But she didn't even bother thinking about that. After living in a literal hell her entire life, the Elemental Empress could only think that her situation would improve after today.

There was no way that her life could get worse.

Michael observed the Elemental Empress for a while and gave her some time to calm down. He expected that something would happen. The Soul Pacts' chains had been broken, indicating that the Soul Pacts weren't valid anymore. Thus, something should be happening now. The Kitsun Lord must

have noticed the termination of the Soul Pacts. He must be fuming in anger, initiating some sort of plan to get rid of Michael and take back what ought to belong to him.

And that was exactly what happened right after the Soul Pacts broke. The entire building around them began to tremble as a thunderous explosion resounded from above them.

A tremendous heatwave shot down the staircase, nearly burning Michael alive. He could barely react and manifest a thick layer of Glacicle around his body in response. The Glacicle lowered the temperature in his vicinity and took the brunt of the searing heatwave. A second later, the flames and heat were pulled toward the back of the room. Surprisingly, the Elemental Empress absorbed the flames and heat.

She converted the flames and heat into energy to replenish her vigor and strengthen her pillar of light. For the first time in forever, the Elemental Empress was able to use her power however she pleased. She felt energy coursing through every inch of her blazing body along with a newfound confidence.

Despite the joy of regaining freedom and being able to feel power for the first time in her life, the Elemental Empress didn't look happy.

A wave of sadness swept through her entire being.

"Thank you for serving me," She mumbled sadly, while a deep frown appeared on Michael's.

The Elemental Empress didn't speak to him. Her words were not directed at him at all. She stared in the direction of the Elementals - seemingly staring through the walls - and bowed down in gratefulness.

"What is going on?!?" He asked, a bad feeling resurfacing.

Chapter 363 Death Command

"What is going on?!?" Michael asked, clearly able to tell that something was wrong.

The Elemental Empress was staring at the flames she devoured while expressing her gratitude. The questions surfacing in his mind were simple; who was she grateful for, and who served her?

The answers were just as simple as the questions.

"The Baron of Fire died. He sacrificed himself to grant me his power before it was too late. He hoped that I could survive what's about to happen," The Elemental Empress explained as if it was obvious.

"What are you talking about??" Michael asked, his voice filled with frustration.

Michael was irritated and frustrated. He had a faint inkling of what was about to happen, but he couldn't help but feel irritated.

"Survive what?" He asked, taking a stride toward the Elemental Empress.

While towering above the Elemental Empress, he didn't look like the kind young Lord who wanted to give his utmost to rescue her. Quite the contrary, his eyes and presence were eerie. The Elemental Empress shuddered in fear when she looked up at him.

"I...was not the only one under the influence of a Soul Pact," She said, not daring to answer Michael's question directly.

"What do you mean?" Michael asked even though he could clearly tell what was about to follow.

The Elemental Empress hesitated for a moment. However, the True Link of Loyalty forced her to answer Michael's question even if she didn't want to.

"The strongest Elementals I've created were also forced into a Soul Pact. However, their Soul Pact is different. It was much simpler to ensure that they won't die from the aftereffect when the Soul Pact was established," The Elemental Empress explained, "I...forgot about the Soul Pact and its intricacies since I was too young when I created the nobility...I forgot...until the blazing flames of the Baron of Fire reached me. The flames were shrouded in his memories, so I recalled the Soul Pact applicable to him and the others again."

The Elemental Empress was still sad, but something was different. Michael was not entirely sure what it was, but his bad feeling intensified as more explosions resounded from above. They were weaker and much quieter, but their number was on the higher side.

"Plan B...Of course...If the Elemental Empress can escape the Soul Pacts, someone has to take action to either capture her or finish her off..." Michael mumbled to himself.

The Kitsun Lord was not only sly, but also possessive. If he couldn't have the Elemental Empress, nobody was allowed to have her. He would rather see her dead than with anyone else.

"The Baron of Fire sacrificed himself before the Soul Pact could force him to command the Lesser Elementals to self-destruct," the Elemental Empress said what was on Michael's mind using the flaming memories she had just obtained from the Baron of Fire.

"They were willing to sacrifice themselves to protect you. Why didn't they tell me about their Soul Pacts?" Michael asked loud enough for the Elemental Empress to hear, "...They could have warned me."

"They were scared...scared that you would abandon me. Scared that you would be unwilling to help me after finding out that they were under the influence of the Soul Pacts as well," The Elemental Empress revealed meekly, not daring to look into Michael's eyes. At this moment, the Elemental Empress could feel a tremendously heavy killing intent oozing out of Michael. His eyes were ice-cold and his voice cut through the room.

"So these bastards couldn't tell me that they will turn into suicide bombers after I succeed in rescuing you?" Michael growled, his hand lunging forward. He grasped the Elemental Empress' neck tightly and stared at her like she was dead to him.

"Aren't you lucky to have such loyal subordinates? They were even willing to risk my life, and the lives of my people just to save you," Michael said, slowly losing control of his emotions as he heard the sound of explosions ring through the entire cavern hall above them...alongside the sensation of dozens of links of loyalty disappearing.

"If they knew what was about to happen, they should have killed themselves before the situation escalated," Michael bellowed, his presence shrouding the Elemental Empress, "Your loyal dogs are

nothing more than cowards. They sought the help of others, aka me, hoping that I was naive enough to rescue you without asking any questions."

Michael laughed dryly, his eyes still as cold as ice, "Lucky you. You found the naive Lord. Aren't you happy?!"

Michael shouted the last words aloud. They resounded in the room, causing the Elemental Empress to shrink – or so it seemed.

He felt enraged that thousands of Lesser Elementals had been ordered to self-destruct through the Soul Pact of the Elementals' Barons and higher beings, yet the Barons and other nobility hadn't been willing to commit suicide to protect their Empress from the aftereffect of their Soul Pacts. They were willing to sacrifice others, but unwilling to kill themselves. They didn't deserve to live after having pushed his loyal subjects into the clutches of death.

Cursing in his mind, Michael wished them to die. If possible, he would cut his taming bond with the Elemental Empress and crush her core in front of her entire nobility. However, the worst was that he hated himself for believing every word the Baron of Fire had said. He didn't even question anything. Michael believed every word of the Elementals just because they had been chained to the walls and tortured for years.

Therefore, he missed noticing that they had been desperate...desperate enough to leave out crucial information that could lead to the death of thousands of his own...

All they cared about was their Empress' survival. She was all that mattered to them.

The only issue was that his army was still in the same cavern hall as the suicide bombers. They were taken by surprise and died alongside the Lesser Elementals, who self-destructed by unleashing every bit of their elemental energy at once after realizing that their Empress was now free.

"Did your idiotic, ignorant subordinates not even think about the possibility that I will torture you much worse than the Kitsun Lord after realizing that your rescue will result in the death of my people?!?" Michael roared, shaking the Elemental Empress.

She didn't dare to move, and Michael couldn't care any less about her at this point. He cursed under his breath and released the Elemental Empress from his grasp. I think you should take a look at

He turned around, ignoring the Elemental Empress' existence, and began ascending the staircase.

Hundreds of Links of Loyalty had been cut already, and the tremors caused by the thousands of explosions above him seemed quite dangerous. However, all that weighed on his mind was the desire to rescue as many of his subjects as possible. He didn't want to leave them behind. He couldn't, not after realizing they would die due to his naivety.

"I am sorry..." The Elemental Empress said all of a sudden, appearing in front of Michael through a golden sheen. She shrouded their bodies in a golden light, ignoring that Michael pushed her aside, "They just tried to rescue me. I...am sorry..."

In the next moment, the space around them twisted. Michael lost footing and the world began to spin.

He felt nausea and was just about to vomit when the fresh air of the Untamed Jungle swept past him.

The next time he opened his eyes, he saw the entrance of the Elementals Cave. The Elemental Empress was lying next to him with mere traces of energy left inside her body.

Teleporting them outside the cave had used up the entire energy she absorbed from the Baron of Fire, in addition to her last reserves. Just a faint trace of energy was left behind, barely keeping her alive.

"Fuck this shit," Michael cursed aloud as several dozen more Links of Loyalty disappeared.

Michael received the backlash of hundreds of Links of Loyalty getting cut. A fresh wave of pain and anguish hit him whenever a new link was cut. It spread all over his body, causing his emotions to be in disarray.

All of a sudden, the ground on the surface of the Untamed Jungle began to tremble. A heatwave shot out of the entrance of the Elementals cave, mere seconds before searing flames shot outward. Michael

was forced to erupt a large Glacicle which he shattered with a thought of releasing freezing mist in the surroundings.

It was barely enough to prevent sustained heavy burns. Forced to continue manifesting Glacicles to keep the flames at bay, Michael witnessed in terror as more Links of Loyalty were cut. He clenched his fists tightly until his nails dug deep enough into his palms to draw blood.

Then it happened.

The Elementals cave collapsed with a thunderous explosion that reverberated through the surroundings. The ground shook violently...and hundreds of Links of Loyalty were cut near-simultaneously.

Michael stopped conjuring Glacicles. He froze in his tracks and stared blankly at the collapsed entrance of the Elementals cave. His heart skipped a beat and his hair stood up to its end.

Death was all that remained inside the Elementals cave. Out of the 1,500 fighters he brought to the Elementals Cave...no one was left alive. 1500 Links of Loyalty had been cut, the remnants of their deaths lingering in Michael's heart and soul.

The backlash of that many Links of Loyalty being cut for the first time at once was not something that could kill Michael. The pain of his injured soul would heal quickly. However, the searing pain in his heart would not ebb for a long time.

Only his Adventurers, Sun Demos, the Demon Monkeys, and his monsters were alive. The vast majority of the army he built up with painstaking effort had been annihilated. The people who trusted him...just died while fighting for their lord, for him and he had been unable to do anything about it.

The Kitsun Lord lost a lot as well, but Michael knew very well that he would have never touched the Elemental Empress if he had known what was about to happen.

Maybe, he would have helped her after ordering his army to retreat. But he would have hesitated even then.

'Fuck fuck fuck!!!!'

Unable to control his emotions, Michael kept cursing in his mind. The flames around him dispersed in all directions before they died down. The next thing Michael remembered was that he stood in front of the Elemental Empress. He picked her up without a care for her well-being and shook her hard.

"You killed my people!" He screamed, despite being fully aware that the Elemental Empress was not at fault.

Michael knew deep down that the Kitsun Lord was at fault...and that it was his fault as well.

The Elemental Empress didn't do anything wrong. If possible, the Elementals nobility could have killed themselves to make sure that no Lesser Elemental would receive the command to self-destruct. However, then again, the Kitsun Lord was likely to have come up with several other plans as a backup to ensure that nobody would be able to get hold of the Elemental Empress – if he couldn't have her.

Michael was fully aware that the nobility acted in favor of their Empress, hoping that at least she could survive. They were probably not even allowed to talk about their Soul Pact and couldn't warn Michael and his people.

However, none of that mattered. All Michael cared about was the fact that 1500 of his loyal subjects died in exchange...for what? A fragile Elemental Empress?

Michael couldn't care less about the Elemental Empress at this point. If he could exchange her to resurrect his army Michael would do so without a shred of hesitation. He would throw her back at the Kitsun Lord and probably add a few presents of gratitude as long as he could resurrect his army.

But that was not possible, and Michael was fully aware of that.

"...It's all my fault..."

Chapter 364 My fault

The Elemental Mages, the Summoner, Knights, Berserkers...all of them died.

Not even the scouting teams – except the main team that stayed back to scout the territory had survived.

A meticulously trained army with nearly 2,000 combatants dwindled down to less than 500 fighters in the blink of an eye. All of a sudden, the vast majority of Michael's hard work went down the drain.

Realization struck him hard. He slumped down to the ground as his legs went limp, staring at the collapsed entrance to the Elementals cave. Michael couldn't believe how his glorious conquest turned out to be nothing but a trap, an illusion.

One moment they had been killing everyone, gaining a foothold in the enemy's territory, and in the next moment almost everyone was dead.

It was his fault.

He should have been more stubborn, forcing his people to stay behind like he planned initially. But he gave in. He listened to their pleas and allowed them to come with him. He ordered them to rescue the Lesser Elementals instead of getting rid of the potential threats first. He was gullible and didn't even verify the authenticity of the claims of the Baron of Fire. He was blinded by greed and the desire to play hero trying to save the Elemental Empress.

He...killed them all...

Staring at Michael on the ground, the Elemental Empress pressed her lips in a thin line. Despite knowing that everything was her fault to a certain extent, the Elemental Empress remained silent. She just wanted to be saved, and the Elementals she created also knew that. They did their duty and sacrificed themselves for her. It wouldn't be fair to give excuses and apologize for their actions either. After all, she was glad to have escaped the Elementals Cave, and the Kitsun Lord's grasp.

Apologizing and pleading for forgiveness might console Michael, but it wouldn't be sincere. The Elemental Empress knew that her Elementals would do the same again even if they were given a second chance. They didn't want Michael to leave in fright so they intentionally left out some information to make sure that he would stay behind and rescue her. That was not nice, but it had been necessary – or so did the Baron of Fire think.

At the end of the day, the Elemental Empress had no excuses. The Elementals did all of this for her, after all. They died to rescue her and give her back the freedom she deserved.

But even then, the Elemental Empress didn't feel good. She felt worse physically and mentally with every passing second. However, the worst was that the True Link of Loyalty created between the Elemental Empress and Michael allowed her to feel Michael's emotions like they were her own.

The True Link of Loyalty allowed him to sense the Elemental Empress' turmoil as well. She was on the verge of death. But Michael couldn't care less about that at this moment. He was far from reasonable at this point. The sudden death of 1,500 combatants, all of whom had firm Links of Loyalty with him, hit Michael extremely hard. He couldn't protect his people. He led them straight into hell.

He should have gone alone.

Michael got up from the ground after a while. His eyes were focused on the entrance of the Elementals Cave, almost like he was hoping to witness a miracle. Deep inside his heart, he hoped that his subjects would emerge from the collapsed cavern entrance. However, he knew that it wouldn't happen. It was nothing but wishful thinking.

At some point, familiar voices reached him from behind.

"That explosion was terrifying. What actually happened here?" Tiara's voice resounded in Michael's ears, followed by Mika asking curiously, "And who is this little girl...or Spirit...or is she an Elemental?"

Michael turned around to see Tiara and the five Forest Elven Adventurers. Seeing them felt like a thousand hot needles pierced in his heart.

He didn't want them to find out what had happened. However, he also knew that it was impossible to hide his failure, his idiocy.

"Everyone died," Michael revealed slowly.

Lilica, who had just approached the Elemental Empress with a few potions in her hand, stopped in her tracks. Her eyes widened and her head flicked to Michael. The disbelief and shock in Lilica's eyes was intense. It felt like her gaze was burning holes in his body.

"How?" Liopham asked, stepping past Lilica to force Michael to look at him.

Michael's eyes moved to the Elemental Empress, but he couldn't say anything. He wanted to say that it had been the Elemental Empress' fault and that the Elementals loyal to her were at fault. But was that really the case?

At that moment, the Elemental Empress' weak voice reached their ears as she attempted to answer, "The Kitsun Lord...tortured us all. He is obsessed with us...because we can give him what he needs...power...and wealth... He would never allow anyone other than himself to possess us...to possess me... He killed everyone..."

While listening to the Elemental Empress' voice grew weaker with every word she said, Michael cursed himself inwardly. He knew that all of this was actually the Kitsun Lord's fault. In fact, calling anything a 'fault' during war was foolish. It was a war act of Michael to attack his main settlement and conquer the Elementals Cave. The Kitsun Lord's meticulous preparations resulted in the destruction of the Elementals Cave, and the deaths of both most of the Elementals and Michael's army.

Michael took a deep breath and clutched his chest for a second or two before he began summarizing what happened.

"After reading the memories and thoughts of the Kitsun Awakened Tiara brought back as a prey, I felt like we could make use of the Elementals. It would have been the easiest to rescue them and combine our forces. That was also why I came up with the plan. So, while you guys acted as a distraction, I decided to...."

Michael was not sure how much time he spent summarizing the events of the last few hours, but he was very detailed. It was already noon when he finished – which was not further surprising because Michael spent the entire night and morning in the Elementals Cave.

"Finally, my people are free. They don't have to be tortured and chained until the end of their days," The Elemental Empress said all of a sudden, ignoring the fact that 'free' meant death.

Everyone turned to her, unsure what to think about the Elemental Empress and her attitude.

'Liberation through death.' Michael thought gloomily.

He hated the fact that so many of his people died, but he was also fully aware that he couldn't change anything about it anymore. He had known that the Kitsun Lord was sly and cunning so he should have expected a trap to be laid out for him.

He didn't expect this kind of retaliation, but it was not further surprising. The Kitsun race was considered treacherous, sly, and merciless. They would sacrifice their own people if it provided benefits. Killing the vast majority of Michael's army could be considered a benefit – even if the Kitsun Lord lost one of the most important resources in his possession in exchange.

The Kitsun Lord lost a lot, and Michael was fully aware that someone as possessive as the Kitsun Lord wouldn't stop before he killed him for good.

That meant he had to change his way of thinking, and his attitude while facing the Kitsun Lord.

"We have to leave."

Tiara was the first to speak after Michael finished summarizing the events. She was still shocked about what happened, especially since she had been out hunting with most of the fighters over the course of several months. Tiara might not have been extremely close to any of the subjects, but she had trained all of them and trusted them a lot.

Their death shocked her, but she couldn't allow it to affect her. Not here, not right now.

"We had to kill a few dozen Awakened, and hundreds of Kitsun Summons while you were busy rescuing the Elemental Empress. The Kitsun Lord should have returned to the Origin Expanse as well at this point. I doubt he will remain silent now that the Elementals Cave is destroyed. Let's retreat and come up with a new plan," Lilica suggested to Michael, who nodded absentmindedly.

"We attacked his main settlement as well. He will definitely respond to our provocation," Mika said, trying hard to suppress the sadness and guilt caused by the death of 1,500 combatants.

Mika – just like most people in Michael's territory, including Michael – had been too naive about the danger of the Origin Expanse. Since Michael became a Lord, he faced many dangerous situations. One problem after another was thrown at him, yet he survived all of them, with little to no casualties at that.

However, the Origin Expanse was merciless, and war and death were always following them like a shadow. Listening to Michael's summary made him, and the other Forest Elven Adventurers recall how they lost their territory back in the days. Their time as Lords had been short...and it had been one of the most terrifying periods in their lives.

Recalling their short stint as Lords, the Forest Elves sighed deeply. Fighting side-by-side with Michael made them forget the dangers of the Origin Expanse, and the difficulties of being a Lord. A Lord was not only responsible for himself but also his territory and subjects. Their freedom was restricted as well. They couldn't travel through the Origin Expanse, and selfishly escape their enemies alone.

No. As a Lord, you had to face your enemies head-on, otherwise, you would lose your territory.

"No, we cannot leave," Michael said, looking at Tiara, who was already ready to leave.

"Why? Are you—..." Tiara was just about to confront Michael when she saw the hatred and the thirst for blood in his eyes.

However, that wasn't what caused her to shut her mouth. Other than the hatred and thirst for blood, Michael's eyes were also filled with determination.

"We cannot leave because the Kitsun Lord will probably open gates to the beast ranches with bloodthirsty monsters soon. He should have already realized that the majority of my army died in the Elementals Cave. The Kitsun might be weaker than others, but he won't hesitate to combine his forces and charge at my territory. We have to restrain them and attack now," Michael pointed out, knowing damn well that his words made him seem suicidal.

So what? He was tired of being the reasonable one.

Tiara looked at Michael for a while and ended up nodding, "They won't expect an attack now that they've struck us heavily. Master is right."

"It might be worth a try, probably?" Lilica asked, a lot more uncertain about what was going to happen in the next few hours.

She fed the Elemental Empress with a few potions to tend to her wounds. Meanwhile, Michael began to strategize.

"But before we attack, let's gear up," he said, retrieving the corpses of the Awakened he'd killed in the Elementals Cave.

It was time to get stronger and take revenge on those sly bastards!

Chapter 365 Gear Up

Once Michael retrieved the corpses of the Awakened he and his people killed in the Elementals cave, Tiara and the Forest Elves realized what he was about to do.

They accessed their War Runes' storage and pulled out the Awakened they'd killed in the main settlement.

"Tiara. What kind of Soultrait do you need? You wanted to focus on creating a great synergy with Soultraits, but you never said what Soultrait you're looking for," Michael asked as several golden threads of Extraction emerged from his palms.

He began extracting the corpses, focusing on the SoulStar Fragments, and Soultrait Symbols. Michael hoped to strengthen himself and the Awakened working for him to create a small group that was strong enough to throw out the Kitsun Lord's territory from the Untamed Jungle and the Savannah. Of course, that was easier said than done, but Michael had to give it a try. The fighters left behind in his territory were not as strong as the rest of his army had been. They hadn't been summoned that long ago, nor had been promoted to 1-Star Warriors less than two weeks ago.

Therefore, fighting in the enemy's territory was a much better idea. It was especially useful considering that the Kitsun Lord's territory was humongous, while his settlements were located far apart.

The Kitsun Lord's army was spread out across his territory. Even if he wanted to attack Michael immediately, he wouldn't be able to gather his entire force, not without giving his other enemies a great opportunity to attack by leaving some of his territories vulnerable.

Michael had only one enemy to focus on right now. He didn't have to pay attention to his other borders that much at this moment. That factor was something Michael wanted to exploit as much as possible.

"I am very interested in Spirit Whip. My Soultraits should work well with a Soultrait like Spirit Whip," Tiara said after some consideration.

She had been thinking about this question since Michael had asked her the same thing a while ago. Being able to change her attack pattern all of a sudden using Inner Force to create feints before lashing out with several Spirit Whips – or one strengthened Spirit Whip – before once again changing her attack pattern to inflict lethal damage would give her a good advantage over her enemies.

Adding her transformation Soultrait to the fray, Tiara would have no problem fighting enemies of a higher rank. Once she learned to implement an ability like Spirit Whip into her attacks and use them instinctively her combat prowess would skyrocket.

A Soultrait that attacked the mind out of nowhere might not be perfect for Tiara, but it was as close to perfection as it could be. Fighting enemies on the same level as herself wouldn't even require her to use trickery to win a fight. She could use several Spirit Whips, or a strengthened Spirit Whip to lash out and charge at her enemies rapidly after using Silvarean Tiger to transform partially.

The more Michael thought about Tiara's decision to pick a Soultrait like Spirit Whip the better he found the idea.

He looked deep into her eyes and thought about something. By the time he made up his mind, Michael realized that he had finished plundering the Awakened corpses as well.

There had been a total of 135 Awakened, with five of them at Tier-3, 121 at Tier-2, and only 9 Tier-1 Awakened.

The Tier-1 Awakened had been new recruits, whom the Kitsun Lord had gotten hold of less than a year ago. They were pretty talented compared to the rest, but they still succumbed to the offer made by the Kitsun Lord. Michael decided to consume the Memory Orbs he extracted from their corpses, only to find out that the Kitsun Lord used his wealth to convince the poor and slightly talented Kitsun to become his subordinates through a Link of Loyalty and a Soul Contract.

Michael didn't feel pity for them even though he knew that they had been tricked into believing that they accepted a great offer. And as expected, all the young Kitsun Awakened obtained was endless work and little to no free time in exchange for a small fortune. The small fortune allowed their family to prosper, but was that really worth it? They ended up dying either way.

The Memory Orbs of the Kitsun disgusted Michael. Even though he learned a lot, he witnessed the memories of the Kitsun like he was the one doing all of the things they did. It made him feel nauseated. He offered the other Adventurers to consume the Memory Orbs if they wanted to because he wouldn't use the Memory Orbs of the Kitsun for himself, but he wouldn't strongly recommend them to do that either.

Tiara and the Forest Elves were curious how the Memory Orbs worked. Therefore, they consumed one Memory Orb respectively. Five minutes later, the Forest Elves shouted aloud, cursing themselves for not having killed more Kitsun when they had the opportunity.

Meanwhile, Tiara remained silent. She just clenched her fists and gritted her teeth in anger.

Michael could understand their reactions well. He felt similar.

He diverted his attention from his subordinates' reactions and moved on to the piles of SoulStar Fragments and Soultraits.

A simple scan with enhanced Eagle Eyes allowed him to take a proper look at his loot.

"3605 SoulStar Fragments and 13 Soultrait Symbols. Adding the 254 SoulStar Fragments I already have, we can use a total of 3859 SoulStar Fragments," Michael mumbled, not surprised about the gains they made.

Even a Tier-2 Awakened with a 1-Star Soultrait dropped between 15-20 SoulStar Fragments thanks to Extraction being a 6-Star Soultrait. The Tier-3 Awakened dropped roughly 100 each. That was actually less than what Michael expected. But that was probably because their Soultraits were miserable. I think you should take a look at

None of the Awakened Kitsun had a powerful Soultrait. The only Soultrait that intrigued Michael a little was the Soultrait of the Kitsun he fought in the Elementals Cave. The Kitsun's eyes pierced deep into his Soul, distracting him – even if it was just for a second.

He remembered having extracted the Soultrait Symbol of the Kitsun with the Soultrait that changed his eye color to silver, and it was not difficult to find the Symbol in the pile of Soultrait Symbols either. The emblem on the Soultrait Symbol was a pair of silver eyes, a dead giveaway.

For a quarter of a second, Michael reconsidered using his SoulStar Fragments to create a new socket for the Sphere of Light. That would allow him to bind a new Soultrait to the Sphere and to fuse his War Rune with it.

However, he changed his decision now that Tiara wanted a Soultrait like Spirit Whip.

If she wanted something like Spirit Whip, why couldn't he just give her Spirit Whip?

It had been a while since Michael began to doubt Spirit Whip's utility. His current fighting style was also quite questionable since he didn't use his Soultraits in an orthodox way. The utility of his Soultraits was rather abstract, which resulted in mixing Soultraits that ought to be used for close combat to become Soultraits with long-range attacks.

Unfortunately, Spirit Whip couldn't be used in as versatile a way as his other Soultraits. Thus, Michael used it less as the number of his Soultraits increased. Maybe, he would stop using Spirit Whip in the future entirely.

Therefore, Michael used Extraction on himself. He entered the deepest parts of his consciousness and accessed his Sphere of Light. Extraction shrouded the Sphere of Light in a golden sheen that moved toward the Symbol for Spirit Whip. Once Extraction reached Spirit Whip, Michael began to extract the Soultrait Symbol.

A severe headache overcame Michael instantly. However, instead of giving up extracting Spirit Whip, Michael continued. The headache grew more severe over time, but the Soultrait Symbol was finally extracted. This left the Socket that had been occupied by Spirit Whip empty.

However, Michael was not worried about that. He pressed the Soultrait Symbol with the silver eyes emblem against the back of his right hand. A large white tentacle shot out of the back of his hand, coiling around the Soultrait Symbol before pulling it back.

The Soultrait Symbol found its designated place with the empty socket in the Sphere of Light. This lessened the headache quite a bit. It allowed Michael to turn to Tiara with a faint smile.

"Here, use Spirit Whip. It's already a 4-Star Soultrait. It should be enough to increase your combat prowess considerably once your proficiency with Spirit Whip increases," Michel said as he handed Tiara the Soultrait Symbol. He closed his eyes afterward in order to digest the information provided by his new Soultrait.

The Soultrait's name sounded rather simple, and so was the effect. [Piercing Gaze] did exactly what the name suggested. It was a piercing gaze that stared deep into the Soul of the target. The information provided by fusing Piercing Gaze didn't even suggest that it was a Soultrait with the ability to harm the mind or soul. However, Michael was of a different opinion.

He instinctively used Eagle Eyes and Piercing Gaze together, creating a silverish-golden sheen in his eyes. His eyesight was enhanced drastically, and he could tell that he could create something similar to a shockwave that would affect his target at will.

It was a weird feeling to use Eagle Eyes and Piercing Gaze together. However, it was not an uncomfortable feeling. Michael felt rather good using these two Soultraits together.

Instead of hesitating to upgrade Piercing Gaze as it might be useless in the given predicament, Michael spent 392 SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Piercing Gaze to a 4-Star Soultrait. The cost to upgrade

Piercing Gaze was that high because it had occupied the empty socket located in the middle area of the Sphere of Light. Nonetheless, Michael was far from disappointed with the upgraded version of Piercing Gaze.

A flood of information swept through Michael's mind, informing him that Piercing Gaze had been upgraded to [Spirit Gaze]. A simple look with Spirit Gaze would be enough to intimidate those around him. If utilized with the intention to harm his enemies, the designated targets would feel a sense of inferiority upon looking at Michael. They would feel exposed and highly vulnerable as if their entire being could be read by Michael. Last but not least, Spirit Gaze could create an effect called 'Spirit Disturbance'. It could cause severe headaches to the target, and even knock them out if their defense was not strong enough.

It was very interesting and even stronger than Spirit Whip in Michael's opinion. First of all, Spirit Gaze enhanced his eyesight. It allowed him to see the origin energy permeating the air with much more precision than before. Other than that, it could be used to investigate his enemies' powers, and used as a means to strike them.

But there was even more that Michael discovered once all information about Spirit Gaze had been digested. The thin thread – a link – had been established between two Soultrait Symbols. Eagle Eyes and Spirit Gaze had established a connection with each other. Something like this happened to Michael for the first time. It was a huge surprise – a welcome one.

'So Soultraits cannot only develop and become stronger, granting them a 'new' name, but they can even create links? What does that mean? Will their powers be amplified if used together, or will they fuse in the future? What if they continue to develop? Eagle Eyes should regain its name as Divine Eyes once it becomes an 8-Star Soultrait...but will that still be the case now that it is connected with Spirit Gaze?'

Too many questions flashed through Michael's mind, but none of them was bothersome. The questions in his mind filled him with curiosity, and a sense of desire to find the answers to those questions in the future. They gave his gloomy heart a little bit of hope.

But for now, Michael had to deal with the Kitsun Lord first. The questions could be answered in the future.

After all, his future was bound to continue. It wouldn't end with an enemy such as the Kitsun Lord!

Chapter 366 Trust

Michael had never heard of Soultraits of a similar nature creating a connecting link, but that was only natural. Awakened rarely had more than one Soultrait, and even if they ever awakened two Soultraits, they were rarely of the same kind. Furthermore, even if they were of the same nature, creating a link between each other, nobody would share this find with the outside world. It would be kept a secret until the end of time.

Therefore, he was more curious about the effect of the link and how much it influenced the two 4-Star Soultraits.

Testing the power of Eagle Eyes and Spirit Gaze after the link between them had been established, Michael spent only a few minutes to realize that he struck the Jackpot. The two 4-Star Soultraits felt even stronger than an ordinary 5-Star Soultrait when used simultaneously. To test the potency and energy consumption of the Soultraits, Michael used it on Tiara, Lilica, and the other Forest Elves.

They told him how they felt after the Spirit Gaze struck them, providing crucial information that Michael could use later on.

Satisfied with the power of his Soultraits, Michael watched Tiara bind Spirit Whip as well. She smiled from ear to ear and rushed toward Michael to hug him tightly.

"Thank you so much, Master!!" She exclaimed in excitement.

Tiara kept bobbing on her heels while continuing to embrace Michael firmly. Her hug was tight and warm, causing a small smile to blossom on Michael's face.

Tiara thanked him profusely, but Michael's attention moved to the Forest Elves after the third time Tiara expressed her gratitude.

'What am I supposed to do with you guys?'

Michael's expression stiffened a little while staring at the Forest Elves. He was not sure what to do with them.

If he kept the SoulStar Fragments and Soultrait Symbols to himself, he could upgrade one of his Soultraits. If he was lucky enough, Michael might even receive enough SoulStar Fragments to upgrade a second Soultrait to 5-Star. That was if he crushed the remaining Soultrait Symbols.

The Soultraits harvested from the Kitsun Awakened were not that powerful, either way. Nonetheless, the Forest Elves might take a liking to some of them. Upgrading them could elevate the prowess of certain Soultraits drastically, after all. Last but not least, upgrading Soultraits from 1-Star to 4-Star was rather cheap for the Forest Elves. They didn't have the Sphere of Light that increased the cost of upgrading Soultraits, after all.

With the amount of SS Fragments and Soultraits in his possession, Michael could give the Forest Elves one or two new 4-Star Soultraits...but was that really what Michael wanted to do right now?

Michael kept looking at the Forest Elves for a while before he cleared his throat.

"I want to be honest with you. In fact, it shouldn't come as a surprise, but I cannot give the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team anymore Soultraits without adding a few clauses to the Links of Loyalty established between us. To be entirely honest with the lot of you, I am not comfortable trusting a mere Link of Loyalty if I keep handing out more Soultraits to you. I can upgrade your Soultraits as well in the future, after all," Michael revealed slowly, trying to make sure the Forest Elves wouldn't misunderstand him.

"At this point, the Link of Loyalty won't be enough for me. Providing you the second Soultrait in the past was to gain your favor, and to make sure that you guys won't run away from the danger of the Jungle Expedition. I needed you when they attacked, and your task was to ensure my survival. I am putting in a lot more than I receive. After all, finding out about my powers could change your lives, and the livelihood of the Forest Elven Tribe entirely.

I understand that you weren't completely business-minded when you helped me against the Jungle Expedition, but my powers should have played a role in your decision-making process, whether it was a major one or a minor role."

He took a pause to read their expressions and continued,

"But now I cannot keep investing in the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team if I cannot even be certain that you guys will stay with me and my territory. I don't want to invest in the entire team just to be abandoned when the Zentika Empire attacks or something similar happens. To be fair, it was already very foolish of me to give you Soultraits and enhance them, yet to never consider that you could leave me once the dangers in and around the Untamed Jungle increase considerably. I shouldn't be that naive, and I hope you guys can understand my point of view."

Michael tried to be completely honest with the Forest Elves. He didn't want to lie to them or lead them around with a carrot and a stick. That was not how he acted.

Michael knew that he was currently not that rational and that he was affected by the loss of a large number of loyal subjects today, but all of this made him realize that he had been too naive and gullible until now. He trusted others too much.

Trust was not a bad thing. However, it was bad if you trusted everyone blindly even if there was no reason to trust. I think you should take a look at

The Forest Elves listened intently to every word Michael said, and they realized quickly that the issue was not with them. It was more about the fact that Michael realized what one of his biggest flaws was. He was too gullible. He even trusted those who caused him harm without doubting them for a second.

Starting from Blaire making a big mistake the day she was summoned, resulting in a big fight against another Lord less than two weeks after Michael became a Lord, to the mishap caused by Mika Zels of the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team...Michael had given the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team several chances and favors. He had easily handed over the Gogi Lord's corpse, but they caused him harm and trouble, even though they didn't do so intentionally.

But instead of punishing Blaire, or hating Mika for what he did, Michael forgave everyone without a second thought. He continued to trust them – which could have caused various problems.

It was only today that Michael's patience and naive attitude began to change. The incident in the Elementals cave with the Elemental Empress, and her nobility caused great harm to his people. Michael couldn't afford to act foolish anymore.

That was something Lilica and her team understood very well. Therefore, they looked at Lilica who nodded her head to agree to Michael's standpoint.

"Don't give us another Soultrait for the time being. Focus on yourself and upgrade your Soultraits first. Once we're back in the base we can make a Blood Pact, undergo a Sacred Ritual, sign a Soul Pact, or whatever you want. I am quite certain that our Elders want us to stay with you, so we can talk about altering the Link of Loyalty, or doing one of the things I mentioned just now," Lilica said, not opposed to signing a binding Soul Pact – not anymore.

"To be honest with you, I like it in the Untamed Jungle, in your territory. It's very warm and welcoming in your territory and does not only entail the temperature in the Untamed Jungle. I also want to grow stronger, and I doubt that you will force us to sign the disgusting type of Soul Pacts like the Kitsun Lord did to his subordinates. So...I will be fine!"

"Same here," Liopham added.

"Ditto!" Mika joined.

"I also agree," Phelia chimed in, while Opars only nodded vigorously in agreement.

Michael was quite pleased with the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team. He might have been a little bit too trusting with them at first, but they didn't betray his trust. That was a good thing and it reassured Michael quite a bit.

He nodded his head subtly as well, only to turn to the Elemental Empress once Tiara released him from her tight embrace.

"Our bond allows me to feel many things, and I can tell that you didn't intend to harm me or my people. Unfortunately, your freedom came at an exorbitant cost. It cost the lives of your people and my people. What are you planning to do now?" Michael asked the Elemental Empress while trying to show little to no emotions.

The Elemental Empress was still weak, but Michael decided to give her a few Energy Nourishing Pills to fill her with vigor and allow her to grow stronger quickly. Even if the Elemental Empress ended up

causing him harm indirectly, it was not actually her fault. She had been the Kitsun Lord's pawn just like the Elemental nobility she'd created.

"I...can plan what I want to do? You are my master now, so there is nothing for me to decide...especially not after what happened..."

The Elemental Empress' voice was weak and low. She wasn't feeling well, not after her people sacrificed themselves to rescue her. And the worst was that they killed their benefactors as well. Even the Elemental Empress couldn't forgive herself for that.

However, Michael's voice pulled her out of the gloomy thoughts that flashed through her mind incessantly.

"I told you that I won't treat you the same as the Kitsun Lord did. My mind is still in a mess because my emotions are in disarray, but the bond established between us shows me quite clearly how you feel and that you didn't want any of that to happen. Unfortunately, it happened and we cannot change the past so I am asking you once again. What do YOU want to do?" Michael asked, staring intently at the Elemental Empress.

The Elemental Empress regained her vigor slowly. She got up from the ground and looked up to Michael, her eyes filled with a tiny trace of determination.

"I...I want to take revenge. Let me fight the Kitsun!"

Chapter 367 Ready for War

The Soultrait Symbols in Michael's palm began to crack. Small white cobweb-like cracks spread across the Soultraits moments before they burst apart, revealing hundreds of SoulStar Fragments.

Michael didn't hesitate to store all SoulStar Fragments inside his War Rune before he entered his consciousness.

He ended up in front of the pillar of light and the Sphere of Light, which he inspected for a while. While observing the link between Spirit Gaze and Eagle Eyes Michael felt that the link was oddly stretched out. Spirit Gaze was located in the middle area of the Sphere of Light, while Eagle Eyes was in the Inner area. They felt too far apart and distant from each other.

Feeling that the two Soultraits belonged next to each other, Michael began to use Extraction to remove a few Soultraits from their socket and relocate them to a different position. That was how Spirit Gaze ended up next to Eagle Eyes in the Inner area of the Sphere of Light, while Glacicle was relocated to the middle area.

Positioned right next to each other, Spirit Gaze and Eagle Eyes felt the most natural. It was like they were a part of a set that belonged to each other. It was truly miraculous.

Unfortunately, repositioning a few Soultraits in the Sphere of Light cost 1000 SoulStar Fragments. The cost was exorbitant, but Michael was certain that he would gain tremendously from this slight adjustment.

Now that Michael had the majority of SoulStar Fragments obtained from crushing a dozen Soultrait Symbols, he was only left with roughly 3,500 SoulStar Fragments. He first used 2500 SoulStar Fragments to form the fifth star on Spirit Gaze's Soultrait Symbol. It was upgraded to a 5-Star Soultrait, which resulted in a huge influx of information.

As he digested the new information about his upgraded Soultrait, Michael used the remaining SoulStar Fragments in hopes of upgrading Eagle Eyes. Michael had been spending SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Eagle Eyes every now and then in the past. Therefore, he could only hope that 1109 SoulStar Fragments were enough to complete Eagle Eyes' fifth star as well.

Several minutes of silence passed until a flood of knowledge and information burst straight into his mind. It was an overwhelming amount of knowledge that caused Michael's head to buzz loudly, but Michael barely felt the pain as his entire being was filled with euphoria.

"Yes!" He exclaimed, clenching his fist with a vivid smile on his face.

At some point, Michael began to doubt whether Eagle Eyes could be upgraded today, but it looked like the link between Spirit Gaze and Eagle Eyes created strong stimulations to both Soultrait Symbols. The stimuli affected the creation of Eagle Eyes' fifth star. It allowed the creation to progress faster and even required fewer SoulStar Fragments than usually required to be upgraded. The small discount was a welcome present, something Michael actually needed to complete Eagle Eyes' upgrade to a 5-Star Soultrait.

He succeeded in upgrading two 4-Star Soultraits to 5-Star Soultraits in a single go. Michael didn't even remember when he did something like this the last time. In fact, he never did that. His biggest accomplishment until now was to upgrade Extraction to 6-Star. But now Michael was not only in possession of a 6-Star Soultrait but also five 5-Star Soultraits, two 4-Star Soultraits and one 1-Star Soultrait. That was quite amazing.

The most amazing thing was that the link between Eagle Eyes and Spirit Gaze was strengthened and both the Soultraits grew a lot stronger.

Eagle Eyes' name didn't change but he could see the movements of the Forest Elves and Tiara in his vision even before they actually moved. It was barely visible and caused some mind-splitting headache at first, but Michael quickly realized that he could predict others' movements with much more precision than before. His eyesight was also several times more precise and sharper than before, and origin energy was visible to him even without having to activate his Soultraits.

Both Spirit Gaze and Eagle Eyes used together allowed him to enhance his eyesight even further, and the precision in detail of objects several hundred meters away from his position was frighteningly accurate. The improvement of his powers surprised him quite a bit, and he couldn't help but test out how powerful his Spirit Disturbance was now that both Eagle Eyes and Spirit Gaze were 5-Star Soultraits and activated at once.

He tested it out at Mika and Lilica before he had to stop his experiments. Mika collapsed the moment Spirit Disturbance hit him, while Lilica barely remained conscious. She was visibly struggling and would pose no threat to Michael if he decided to attack her. Lilica would die facing him alone without being able to do anything against him. That realization was terrifying.

Of course, the energy consumption was extremely high, but Michael didn't think of that as a problem. It was quite obvious that such powerful attacks would consume a considerable amount of energy. He would be more confused if he fully unleashed Spirit Disturbance with two 5-Star Soultraits and it would still not consume lots of energy.

After upgrading his Soultraits, Michael was done gearing up. He was ready to attack, and so were the Elemental Empress, Tiara, and the Forest Elves.

The first thing Michael did was to give the Elemental Empress a lot more Energy Nourishing Pills to consume and strengthen herself. His entire storage of Energy Nourishing Pills was handed to the Elemental Empress so that she could recover. Elementals could absorb most energy from the surroundings naturally and digest origin energy rapidly after all.

The Elemental Empress would quickly regain her vigor and grow much more powerful. Her natural fire affinity and the fact that she could control most elements to a certain extent would help a lot. It might not be equivalent to a replacement of his army, but her powers were certainly helpful in their conquest. Furthermore, the Elemental Empress loathed the Kitsun as well. She would give her utmost to eradicate them.

"The Heavy Armored Elephant returned home, Sun Demos and his subordinates are still in the northern part of the Kitsun Lord's territory, and Icarus...is here," Tiara informed as a screech filled the surroundings. Icarus and his lovely mate, the green-feathered Greater Eagle shot through the treetop and landed in front of them.

Icarus screeched a few times. He rubbed his head against Michael's chest and bumped against him afterward before stepping back. The female Greater Eagle only screeched, observing how Icarus showered Michael with affection.

Michael caressed through Icarus' silky smooth plumage absentmindedly. Icarus didn't usually act like that. The Greater Eagle was prideful and wouldn't allow anyone to see him seeking affection from Michael. However, today was different. Today, Icarus could sense that Michael was in a bad mood. Therefore he tried to console Michael.

Michael sighed lightly. His people were dead. Of course, that was shit, and he hated himself a little bit for his stupidity. But then again, Michael knew that he could only try his best to improve from now on. He could apologize to the people who trusted him when he returned to his territory after annihilating the Kitsun Lord. He could tell his people what happened and apologize for betraying their trust. That was the least he could do.

Slapping his cheeks with some force, Michael pulled himself out of the depressive thoughts that tortured his mind. Everything would be fine.

He was left with the Elemental Empress, Tiara, the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team, two Greater Eagles, the Golden Stinger Wasp, and Sun Demos' Monkey troupe. It was not a lot, but Michael felt that it was more than enough to wreak havoc.

A plan began to form in his mind, an idea to make use of their powers, abilities, and the advantages at their disposal together.

First, Michael sent Sun Demos and his troupe further north to travel to the western side near the borderline to the Kitsun Lord's territory. A mid-sized settlement was located in the Untamed Jungle's outer ring. It was located dozens of kilometers away from the main settlement and it was not that well known because it was more of a guard post that had been constructed to locate waves of monsters from up north.

Michael made use of the distance factor and the fact that Sun Demos and the Monkey troupe could travel quickly through the Untamed Jungle to initiate a surprise attack. The Kitsun and most other races had issues traveling quickly through the Untamed Jungle. Michael and his human Summons would have faced the same dilemma given that the Untamed Jungle was flourishing with thick plants, huge bushes and ginormous trees blocking the view and most paths. However, the canopy bridges created by the Forest Elves, the way they moved through forests and other factors allowed Forest Elves to move in straight lines where others would have to take a detour. It was the same with the Blood Oath Demon Monkeys.

Fortunately, Michael had an even easier method to travel; he flew over the Untamed Jungle and traveled on Icarus' back above the highest trees to cross dozens of kilometers within a few minutes.

Icarus and his lovely mate were large enough to transport Michael and the others to the settlement they targeted in no time. They prepared a few things while hiding far enough from the settlement until Sun Demos and his troupe arrived. By then the Golden Stinger Wasp had long since infiltrated the settlement. The monster released its golden energy stingers shooting the strongest Awakened within the settlement before returning to Michael and the rest.

Once the Golden Stinger Wasp was back, it switched places with one of the Kitsun it stung before; an Awakened who'd been having a hard time in the toilet.

The Golden Stinger Wasp disappeared, replaced by a golden light and a Kitsun with pants down – if he'd any pants, in the first place.

In the next moment, blazing flames engulfed the Kitsun, followed by several razor-sharp blades piercing through the ignorant Kitsun's body.

Chapter 368 Guard Settlement

Despite the broad daylight, Michael and the others didn't hesitate to attack the guard settlement. On the contrary, the broad daylight created various openings.

The Golden Stinger Wasp's golden sheen was harder to make out as it flew high above the settlement's walls to move back and forth, switching places with the Kitsun Awakened she stung every now and then.

The Golden Stinger Wasp could swap places with a total of three Kitsun Awakened before their disappearance was noticed. But at that point, Sun Demos and the Monkey troupe had already made their move. They attacked the settlement from north, and distracted the guards, who moved rapidly to up their defense and deflect the attacking monsters.

Meanwhile, Michael, Icarus and the others ascended into the air once again. Ignoring the potential dangers, Icarus and his mate began to circle above the settlement at an altitude of more than 200 meters with everyone on their backs.

Since all towering trees in the vicinity had been cleared to make space for the settlement and its wide-spread structures, Icarus and his mate weren't hidden. A single glance up in the air was all it would take to discover the two Greater Eagles. Fortunately, Sun Demos and his Monkey Troupe worked well as a distraction.

The lack of towering trees allowed the Guards to discover the threats in the surroundings more easily. Defending against Sun Demos and the Monkey Troupe was much easier as well. All attacking monsters had to cross a flat area void of trees and other hiding spots before they reached the settlement's thick walls.

That was a little annoying for Sun Demos, but it was not an issue that affected Michael and the rest. Icarus and his mate continued to circle above the settlement while Lilica, and the other Forest Elves retrieved their Bow Artifact. A bunch of arrows followed right after. Nocking their arrows on the firm bowstring, the Forest Elves moved in unison. They channeled energy into the arrows and twisted their upper bodies to peek right over the Greater Eagles' wide back.

It was not easy to stay still in the air while a few Forest Elves kept moving on their backs, but the Greater Eagles did their utmost to move as little as possible as the Forest Elves pulled their bowstring back. They aimed to the ground, the settlement's walls to be precise, and released their arrows in unison.

Mika Zels was the only one using his Soultraits just before he released the arrow. He used Arrow Duplication and Pierce together, ignoring the high energy consumption that followed up. His arrow that was coated in white light cut through the air. It dove downward with high-speed and split up into several dozen copies. A simple series of arrows turned into a downpour of deadly Pieckers that had been further enhanced by Pierce.

Michael witnessed the arrows' impact with Eagle Eyes fully activated. The Forest Elves' aim had been impeccable, creating a graphic image of death, blood and disbelief on the ground. Only a few seconds passed, yet Michael felt energy shares reaching him. The Forest Elves first batch of arrows killed more than 30 Guards. It was a good way to start the assault – a very very good way.

Following the Forest Elves first attack, they released a second batch of arrows in the same direction. They hunted the Guards stationed on the northern walls, creating the opportunity Sun Demos and the Monkey Troupe had been waiting for.

Following the Forest Elves' actions, the Elemental Empress began to move as well. She was still Tierless, but she had accumulated enough power to create a handful of fireballs. The fireballs revolved around her for a second before she released them on the settlement. However, her aim was not very precise. It was already hard enough to maintain the shape of the fireballs over a distance of 200 meters, and accurately hit the target. After all, she was merely Tierless.

Despite her inaccurate aim, the Elemental Empress' attack was far from useless. She aimed at the large wooden buildings and hit most of them. The buildings caught fire and were set ablaze in no time, causing more chaos and distraction.

Michael manifested the Wyverntooth Spear in his right hand and glanced at Tiara, who was holding her spear as well. In the next moment, Michael disappeared, replaced by a small, yet energetic Golden Stinger Wasp.

Michael reappeared near the barracks of the settlement. At the same time, the Golden Stinger Wasp began to move once again, moving Tiara down to the settlement.

Without waiting until Tiara arrived, Michael began to move. He released Extraction to cover his body in a golden layer while summoning the Spirit Armor Set. His strength increased in response and the energy in the surroundings was pulled in his direction.

Right after Michael sensed that Extraction absorbed the dense origin energy in the vicinity, he began to utilize Eagle Eyes and Spirit Gaze as well. His vision sharpened, the energy streams around him became more prominent, and even the minor details in the street opposite him were easy to make out.

Michael channeled energy through his lower body and kicked the ground. He dashed to the barracks' open gates where more than a hundred Guards put on their armors hastily. It was not their shift yet, but the alarm bells had rung, indicating they were under an unexpected attack. All they knew was that some monsters attacked from the north. Some said they'd seen arrows pour down from the sky, but all the Guards saw were two eagles circling above the settlement. I think you should take a look at

It was uncommon for aerial monsters to hover above the settlement, but it happened occasionally. Sometimes vultures from the savannah circled above the guard settlement, usually when a beast wave was about to occur, or when the smell of death lured them to the Untamed Jungle.

Thus, the guards didn't think too much about the news of the first batch of arrows. However, the second and third batch alarmed them. Most Guards had a bad feeling, which intensified when they sensed something approaching the barracks. Some Kitsun halted in their tracks with their armor in their hands when a terrifying presence encompassed the barracks. Their heads flicked to the left, where they saw a young human covered in a golden sheen rush in their direction.

One moment they saw Michael, and the next moment they groaned out loudly. A wave of indomitable force smashed into them out of nowhere. Their hearts' constricted and a sharp bolt of pain shot through their heads almost like their brains were about to burst apart. Not even a second later, most of the Guards looking in Michael's direction collapsed on the ground, unconscious and twitching like fishes pulled out of water.

Michael had consumed a considerable amount of energy to experiment with the power of Spirit Disturbance, but the result was quite satisfactory to look at. A few dozen Guards collapsed on the ground, attracting the attention of their brethren. They looked over to their brethren in shock, missing the most crucial timing to finish their preparations against Michael's attack.

He arrived in the barracks, manifesting six Qi Swords that revolved around his body as he began to wreak havoc with the Wyverntooth Spear. Michael observed everything in the barracks with great

precision. Nothing escaped his sight, not even the few Awakened, who'd retrieved some objects from their War Runes. Some retrieved metal balls, while others retrieved communication crystals from their War Runes. However, before they could do anything, Michael's Qi Swords propelled forward, piercing the heads of the Awakened, who were just about to throw the metal balls at Michael.

Michael switched his position on the ground and moved to the Awakened with the communication crystal.

"He arrived? That's earlier than predicted... Stall for some time until reinforcement arrives!" Michael heard through the communication crystal before he pierced the Wyverntooth Spear through the Kitsun Awakened's throat. He twisted the blade inside the Kitsun's throat and tore downward, ending the Awakened's life instantly.

'They expected us? Well, that is not exactly surprising,' Michael thought, turning around to see Tiara arriving.

"We have to speed up. Reinforcement is on the way," Michael said aloud.

Everyone in the barracks heard him, but the Kitsun, who were still more-or-less alive, weren't happy. On the contrary, fear filled their entire being witnessing how calm the attacker sounded when he announced that the reinforcement of the Kitsun Lord was about to come.

Michael's silverish-golden glowing eyes moved across the remaining survivors of the barracks, Spirit Disturbance activated with the lowest possible energy consumption. The Tier-1 Guards groaned in pain and nearly collapsed, while the Guards and Awakened at the 2nd Tier grit their teeth, trying to endure Michael's attack.

Unfortunately, they didn't expect another mental attack to strike them from behind. Tiara used Spirit Whips to strike the Tier-2 Awakened and Guards heavily, not without inflicting a few deep gashes on their bodies with her spear. Tiara changed her attack pattern every few strikes.

First, she struck everyone around her with Spirit Whips, then she moved around, using Inner Force to change her attack trajectory while thrusting forward with the spear. Her spear blade ended up in a different target than her previous one with every attack. She reaped one life after another, yet her thirst

for blood was not sated. She kept using one feint after another to attack straightforwardly without a change in her brute force or strength.

Moving through the barracks with rapid speed and nimble movements, Tiara never stopped smiling. Her smile widened as her experiments with Spirit Whip created much better results than she could have hoped for. It was extraordinary...It was addictive!

Learning new moves and using her new Soultraits to create entirely new fighting styles was difficult. At first, it took her a while to utilize her Soultraits efficiently, however, that was fine. It was definitely worth the effort.

Looking over at Michael, excitement mixed with a tinge of envy swept through her entire being.

'He is amazing...'

Chapter 369 Evil

Eliminating the Guards and Awakened in the barracks wasn't that difficult. No one had reached the 3rd Tier, and none of the Awakened had an overly powerful Soultrait to counter Tiara and Michael's prowess either. They were overwhelmed with brute force, unable to do anything.

Their only fortune was that their deaths came fast. The Kitsun didn't have to suffer too long before they died. Michael and Tiara didn't have enough time to reconsider letting the Kitsun suffer and draw out their deaths. They didn't know how much time they were left with before the reinforcement of the Kitsun Lord would arrive.

Michael didn't want to face the reinforcement right now. He didn't know the number of the opponents that would arrive as reinforcement, and how many powerhouses the Kitsun Lord sent over to get rid of the invaders. Instead of facing the Kitsun Lord head-on, Michael decided to change his tactics. He decided to use his brains and attack the Kitsun Lord where he least expected it. The only exception was the current attack.

Michael chose to attack the guard settlement north to the Kitsun Lord's territory intentionally. He figured out that the Kitsun Lord had realized by now that there was a connection between Michael and

the Monkey Troupe that had attacked the main settlement. The Kitsun Lord should also have noticed that the Greater Eagles were under his attacker's control as well.

Thus, instead of wasting time to order Sun Demos to retreat, it would be the easiest to cross a large distance with the Greater Eagles and attack the northern guard settlement. The Kitsun Lord expected his attack, yet he didn't fathom that Michael would attack so soon. The reinforcement was still moving through the Untamed Jungle's undergrowth, and making detours around obstacles while Michael moved swiftly.

'Since the reinforcement is focused on me, my territory won't be facing too many difficulties. The Kitsun Lord seems a little dumb... No, he just lost his reasoning like me after losing the Elemental Empress and thousands of Elementals.'

Michael was rather quick in regaining his composure. Slapping himself to get back to his senses had been successful. However, the Kitsun Lord wouldn't have it that easy. His hard work of 12 years had been destroyed just like that. The Elemental Empress was now free of his clutches, and both Lesser Elementals and Elemental nobility were dead. Nothing had been left behind.

The Kitsun Lord hadn't even been able to get rid of the trespasser and thief. It was the exact opposite. The thief was still in his territory, wreaking havoc, and the worst was that the Elemental Empress was by his side.

'It's really good that this crazy, sadistic bastard is extremely possessive,' Michael thought. He was grateful that the Kitsun Lord was overly possessive of the Elemental Empress.

The fact that she was alive and traveling with Michael would be more than enough to distract the Kitsun Lord from Michael's territory. The Kitsun Lord's full attention would be on the Elemental Empress' whereabouts and the most important question; how to get her back?

Since the Kitsun Lord lost his most important source of income, he wanted to retrieve it if possible. The death of a few thousand Guards and dozens of Awakened must have hurt quite a bit, but it was worth the investment as long as the Elemental Empress returned into his grasp of control.

Michael came to the same conclusion. That was also why he led the Kitsun Lord's army and reinforcement as far away from his territory as possible. Even if they wanted to attack his territory now,

the army and reinforcement would have to travel more than 100 kilometers through the densely grown Untamed Jungle. A few individuals could travel this distance in half a day, but what about an entire army? Forget about a few hours, even an entire day wouldn't be enough for such a large group to reach Michael's territory.

Thus, Michael had more than enough time to initiate his next plans after the northern guard settlement had been eliminated.

Michael spread his origin energy through the barracks with a wave of his arm. He stored the corpses and everything of value inside his War Rune's storage before he turned to Tiara.

Tiara stepped out of the barracks, where she saw a small group of citizens. They were either the family of some Guards or worked for the Guards to feed them and tend to their needs in the guard settlement.

Michael saw Tiara rushing toward the citizens, tightly clutching her spear. He was just about to stop her when a tinge of hesitation resurfaced. For a quarter of a second, killing citizens didn't seem okay. It felt wrong, but only for a moment.

He recalled the terrifying things the Kitsun Summons had done – and were still doing – to other citizens of the Origin Expanse. The Kitsun Lord had enslaved thousands of Summons after killing other Lords. The Kitsun Lord destroyed their territories and turned the Summons into slaves, just like the Lesser Elementals. The Kitsun then publicly tortured the new slaves almost like it was a tradition to do so whenever the Kitsun Lord came back from war – victorious, of course.

Now that he thought about it, Michael hadn't seen a single kind-hearted Kitsun in the memories he'd read until now. It was strange, but it was also why Michael believed that the entire Kitsun race might be sadistic and devilish. Some races were just like that – pure evil, without a shred of mercy. I think you should take a look at

The mercy and hesitation that shrouded Michael's mind for a moment disappeared, and he watched Tiara do what Michael ought to have done. She killed the Kitsun in front of her and stored their corpses after they dropped dead to the ground.

After killing the citizens in front of her, Tiara moved to the settlement's walls. She saw countless corpses littering the northern wall and turned to Michael.

"Mika is really a one-man-archery-unit. If he signs a Soul Pact, giving him some Archery-related Soultraits would be great, don't you think?" Tiara asked, the excitement of the countless possibilities Michael's Extraction unraveled spreading through her entire being.

She was already amazed with her own powers, and how much a single Soultrait changed her fighting style. And, watching Mika's rain of arrows pierce through dozens of enemies from more than 200 meters away was just as amazing. Mika's Soultraits had yet to be upgraded to 5-Star Soultraits, and he could fuse with a lot more Soultraits to further improve his prowess as an archer.

The more Tiara thought about it the more excitement filled her heart at the prospect of Michael creating powerhouses all around him.

As long as Michael was given the opportunities and enough time, he could turn weak Awakened into powerhouses and dominate other Lords. If he kept progressing at this speed he could even rule the Untamed Jungle and the Zentika Empire one day. It was truly amazing and made her feel giddy.

"I think so too. Creating my powerhouses from scratch seems like a good plan," Michael said, switching the Wyverntooth Spear with Zark. He condensed an energy arrow and released it alongside a barrage of Glacicles.

Since he wanted to keep most of his energy aside for stronger opponents, Michael used only as much energy as he could replenish with Extraction tapping into the energy streams in the surrounding area. Being able to see the energy streams, Michael could easily target them and drain the energy for himself to use later. He used as much energy as he annexed to keep Eagle Eyes and Spirit Gaze activated. Other than that, he used bits of energy for his Glacicles to target the Kitsun around him. Most non-combat Kitsun Summons had never received any special techniques to fortify their bodies or increase their ranks. They were either Tierless or Tier-1 without strong defenses.

Killing them was rather easy. A single Glacicle was enough to pierce their throats and freeze parts of their throat and neck. Meanwhile, Zark's energy arrows were released one after another to kill the Guards roaming through the settlement. Many Guards were trying to extinguish the fire on the buildings that had been set ablaze, but before they could even do something more fireballs poured down from the sky, setting more houses ablaze, and some got caught in the melee too.

The Forest Elves from above had been focusing on the guards stationed on the walls from the beginning. This resulted in a huge gap in the guard settlement's defenses on the northern wall, which Sun Demos and the Monkey Troupe had long since exploited. Sun Demos and his Blood Oath Demon Monkeys crossed the open area to the settlement and climbed up the walls. After reaching the top of the walls, they began to overwhelm their enemies with their numbers and tremendous power.

They retrieved some sharp stones they'd collected and put them in small satchels that had been given to the entire Monkey Troupe a while ago. Aiming at the guards, they threw the stones with tremendous force. After energy was channeled into the stones they turned into deadly forces – especially if thrown by Superior Existences at the Peak of Tier-1 and at the 2nd Tier.

The physical strength of the Blood Oath Demon Monkeys was not something Kitsun could go up against. Kitsun were physically much stronger, and their battle awareness was also much lower. All the Kitsun could do was use trickery and deceit to fight slyly. Unfortunately, the traps installed all around the settlement had not caught a single monster, or intentionally triggered beforehand. Almost no Blood Oath Demon Monkey died due to the traps, leaving the Guards and Awakened no chance but to face the Monkeys head-on – or to be shot and killed by a downpour of arrows.

Even if the Kitsun wanted to do something against the Greater Eagles and the Forest Elves, who attacked the settlement from above, they would have to reach the barracks, or defense towers first.

Unfortunately, the Elemental Empress turned the inside of the towers into blazing torches, while Michael and Tiara killed everyone in the barracks before plundering everything.

The guards didn't have the means to attack someone more than 200 meters away from their location now that the towers were about to turn into cinder and the barracks were filled with nothing but death...at least not since their enemies were located high above them rather than being somewhere far away on the same height.

All the Kitsun in the guard settlement could hope for was the reinforcement to arrive soon. They prayed and begged in their hearts, hoping to be among the fortunate to survive. In fact, many Kitsun were even daring enough to push their friends and lovers in front of their enemies to stall for a second or two.

However, all they received was death. That was all they deserved.

Chapter 370 Beast Ranch

Blazing flames burned everything in the proximity. The flickering flames spread rapidly, sweeping through the guard settlement like an inferno.

The attack on the northern guard settlement was a great success. The raid had been completed, everything valuable plundered, and no Kitsun had been spared. One moment the guard settlement stood strong in the outer ring of the Untamed Jungle and the next moment the settlement turned into a burning ghost town – void of life, and slowly being reduced to ash with the passing of time.

40,000 Summons had been killed which included 4000 combatants. Other than the Summons, there had also been 80 Awakened. They died first without a chance of survival.

Everyone had been slaughtered mercilessly and the raging fire was still burning brightly when Michael and the rest disappeared. Michael, Tiara and the Forest Elves traveled on the two Greater Eagles' backs while Sun Demos and his Monkey Troupe moved rapidly through the Untamed Jungle.

"Notify me if something goes wrong. I'll start extracting the Awakened corpses now," Michael told Tiara before sending a message to Sun Demos through their telepathic communication.

["Split into smaller groups and spread out a little. Observe the surroundings and inform me once you find the Beast Ranch, or more Kitsun."]

Their next target was not another settlement. No, Michael figured that it might be better to get rid of the beast ranches across the Kitsun Lord's territory first. The threat of starving, bloodthirsty beasts coming at them was a lot higher than some Guards, or Tier-2 Kitsun Awakened. The Awakened of the Kitsun race didn't have a great physical build, but that was not the sole reason why Michael was so calm and composed.

His biggest reason to feel that the Kitsun Awakened were not much of a threat was the fact that the Awakened who fell victim to the Kitsun Lord's scheme never had strong Soultraits. Those with somewhat decent Soultraits came from poor backgrounds and were desperate for quick money due to various reasons. One way or another, Awakened with 4-Star or 5-Star Soultraits were usually trained to become Lords. They were the pillars of support to the society and could protect themselves if necessary.

'Why am I even doing this?!' Michael asked himself a little bit frustrated as he looked at the Memory Orbs hovering in his palm five minutes into the Extraction session. He finished Extracting 81 Awakened corpses, rewarding him with a bunch of loot – including the Memory Orbs from two Peak Tier-2 Kitsun.

They had been old and stronger than the first Kitsun Michael had interrogated. That was also why Michael ended up swallowing the Memory Orbs, digesting the grotesque memories of the most devilish race he had ever heard about.

Only a few minutes passed after he began digesting the Memory Orbs before he began to curse loudly.

"These fucking bastards! How is it even possible to be that evil? Why, in the name of the Origin Expanse, is this race even alive? How is that even possible...like for real?!?"

Tiara and Lilica, who were both seated behind him on Icarus' back, looked at him with concern. They didn't know why Michael was torturing himself by digesting the Kitsun's Memory Orbs. It was not necessary for him to continue to suffer. Both women had had enough of the Kitsun's Memory Orbs after digesting just one of them, yet Michael had already digested close to 10 in total.

"Ahhhh....I really want to kill them all...Annihilating them should be considered a good deed and a huge favor to the whole Origin Expanse, maybe even the Universe..." Michael continued to curse and he didn't stop shouting insults at the Kitsun race for the next half an hour until they finally closed in to their destination.

However, before they arrived, Michael decided to reward Tiara with the SoulStar Fragments he had extracted from the 81 Awakened.

"Since most of the Awakened were Tier-2, but without any great Soultraits, I could only extract roughly 1600 SoulStar Fragments. I didn't crush the Soultrait Symbols yet though. The Awakened rewarded five Soultrait Symbols, but I want to put them aside for now. Maybe we can use them later," Michael said, still agitated and fuming in anger.

Tiara stared at the SoulStar Fragments Michael gave her with slight surprise. She didn't expect Michael to give her anything else after obtaining his Spirit Whip Soultrait. But from the looks of it, Michael wanted her to upgrade Spirit Whip to a 5-Star Soultrait quickly.

Michael didn't want to reveal his feelings after the death of his army, but Tiara could tell that her Master was worried about her well-being. He knew that he couldn't order her to stay back and return to the territory because he needed her, but he wanted to provide her with as many benefits as possible to ensure her survival.

"Thank you..." Tiara mumbled softly as tentacle-like streams of energy shot out of the back of her hand.

The streams of energy coiled around the SoulStar Fragments before retracting back into the War Rune. Tiara used the SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Spirit Whip as much as possible. It was not enough to form a complete star, but the outlines and a small portion of the inner area had already been filled with energy. Tiara wouldn't have to wait too long before upgrading Spirit Whip.

Once Spirit Whip was upgraded, Tiara would be in possession of three 5-Star Soultraits with great synergy. Her combat prowess was bound to skyrocket, yet Tiara was fully aware that all of this was merely the beginning. She knew Michael well enough to know that he would love to give everyone as many Soultraits as possible – if that meant that his people could overcome all kinds of ordeals.

Unfortunately, Summons couldn't use Soultraits. They couldn't fuse with them, turning the Soultrait Symbols into useless objects for the Summons.

Lilica's gaze moved between Tiara and Michael. She didn't say anything but a small seed of envy germinated in her heart.

Even though she knew that Michael would treat her the same if she signed a Soul Pact to ensure her loyalty to him and that she and her team wouldn't disappear at the first sign of looming danger after obtaining a few more Soultraits, Lilica wasn't satisfied.

Tiara wasn't forced to sign a Soul Pact either. Michael treated them differently, yet not. I think you should take a look at

Tiara didn't have a home to return to anymore. Michael's territory was actually her home. It was only obvious, but she would give her utmost to protect her new home. Meanwhile, Lilica and the rest of the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team could leave the Origin Expanse at the first sign of danger. That was the difference between them, and the reason why Michael gave Tiara the Soultraits she desired without batting an eye.

From a rational point of view, it made sense. Nonetheless, Lilica didn't like it and felt that Michael was playing favorites. It irked her.

"Let's get ready," Michael said loud enough for his voice to reach the back of the green-feathered Greater Eagle near them as well.

Liopham lifted his arm and gestured to Michael that they heard him and they changed their position.

Not wanting to wait until Sun Demos and his Monkey Troupe arrived, Michael ordered the Elemental Empress to get moving. Icarus lowered his altitude until they were less than 50 meters away from the Beast ranch.

The Beast Ranch was a ginormous structure. It was surrounded by humongous stone walls with the interior looking like an arena used by Gladiators in ancient times. Coarse sand covered in dried blood entered Michael's sight almost immediately. However, he didn't pay much attention to that.

Instead, he focused on the Elemental Empress and Opars. Opars released his Soultrait, Energy Imprint, to fill every strand of fire within the Elemental Empress' body with tremendous strength as she unleashed her blazing flames.

The Elemental Empress might only be a Tierless being for now, but she was on the highest level of a Superior Existence. Her existence was bordering the threshold of a Mythical Existence. This factor was the reason she could release blazing flames from the female Greater Eagle's back for several minutes, creating a circle of blazing flames around the Beast Ranch.

At the same time, Michael, Tiara, and Lilica waited until the Golden Stinger Wasp stung them with its energy stinger before they jumped down from Icarus' back.

They bypassed the stone walls and jumped straight through the open ceiling, entering the bloodthirsty Beast Ranch without hesitation. Michael and the others knew that the subdued bloodthirsty beasts were stronger, restless, and starving. That meant they would not hesitate to attack anyone around them once released, but that was no reason to be afraid of them.

On the contrary, Michael and the others felt much more comfortable dealing with enemies, who confronted them head-on. Nobody liked crafty, scheming enemies such as the Kitsun Lord. That was also why Michael decided to fight the combat forces of the Kitsun Lord head-on and force him to come out of his hiding to deal with him and his people.

'I hope you are even greedier and more obsessed with the Elemental Empress than these fucking memories in my head suggest.'

Michael jumped down to the ground, ignoring the Kitsun workers all around him. He heard their screams and shouts as Tiara and Lilica appeared next to him. The two women disappeared the moment they landed next to him. Their weapons cut through the air, drawing blood, and reaping the lives of the Kitsun working in the Beast Ranch.

Lilica and Tiara stored the corpses in their War Runes' storages before they rushed back to him. Involuntarily, their eyes moved to the iron fences located in front of them.

They didn't see anything at first, only for a tinge of surprise to appear on their faces as bloody-red eyes peered at them through the darkness of the huge hall behind the iron fences.

There was only one pair of bloody-red eyes glowing in the darkness in the first moment, but a second, third, and more than a hundred pairs of eyes followed soon after.

The moment the bloody-red eyes locked on the women, they broke into a sweat.

An overwhelming amount of bloodlust impacted heavily on their minds and souls.

Only Michael was able to stay calm facing the heavy bloodlust. In fact, he was not only calm but even smiled lightly.

"Eliminate the Kitsun while I pay attention to these small doggos."