

Supreme Lord 421

Chapter 421 Appreciation

The Farmers and the Botanica Sorcerer were even more talkative than the Tamers. They asked Michael a lot about the notes, how he found them, and if he verified the truth about everything written in the notes.

Unfortunately, Michael could hardly answer any questions. He could somewhat verify the notes because he had some of the Kitsun Lord's memories in his mind, but that was already it. The Kitsun Lord failed at properly growing the Element Seeds because the Elemental Empress' Element Seeds were somewhat unique. They were even harder to grow than ordinary Element Seeds.

The difficulty in growing mythical plants such as Element Seeds was usually directly proportional to the preciousness and quality of the ripened fruits they could grow. Therefore, the harder the difficulty to grow them, the better the finished product. While that sounded extremely nice, it was also a tremendous challenge. It required time and effort to grow the Element Seeds. That was also where the Farmers and Botanica Sorcerer began to make requests. They requested special fertilizers, an elemental converter – a machine that converted neutral energy into elemental energy using elemental crystals as a medium –, various agriculture devices and tools, and a dozen more items and devices. Michael, who didn't really like where this was going, could only agree to the demands. He was the one who wanted the Farmers and Botanica Sorcerer to grow the Element Seeds. Thus, he had to give them what they demanded to ensure that the Element Seeds wouldn't wither once planted.

It would be quite expensive to grow them, but Michael was certain that the final results would generate a great fortune and make up for the investment. It would be as useful as the Beast Ranches, if not more. Once he handed the Element Seeds to the Head Farmer and Botanica Sorcerer, Michael looked at the other farmlands. The farmlands were built around the largest trees. They were rather small, but that was necessary because Michael couldn't clear the land and remove too many trees of the Untamed Jungle without destroying the environment in turn. It would start with just one humongous tree of the Untamed Jungle to make space for the farmlands, but would soon result in Michael removing more and more trees until his entire territory would be exposed to the enemies that would chance a glance upon it through the air.

Michael wanted to stay hidden in the Untamed Jungle under the dense canopy of the trees, unable for anyone to find him by observing the Untamed Jungle from above. At the same time, he would have to reconstruct the entire infrastructure of his territory if he were to start removing too many trees. The trees had turned into the residents of his subjects, after all.

It was also not that bad to have small farmlands. Michael had many fruit farms spread across his territory, and each of the small farmlands produced more ingredients than most could hope for. The Untamed Jungle's highly nutritious ground and environment aided the growth of most plants – including everything Michael had grown so far. Adding the effect of the Nature Spirit's Domain and the power of the Forest Pixie, most plants required a quarter or less than usual time and nutrition to germinate.

The small farmlands made it much easier to plant different herbs, plants, flowers, and other plant-based ingredients all over his territory. Every farmland had a different plant that required a specific method to be nurtured in the most effective way.

Michael learned a lot from the Head Farmer as he was led through the farmlands. He got to know more Farmers and learned about the methods they used to ensure that the plants would grow in the most efficient way. It was very interesting to learn new stuff.

Learning so many new things was also why Michael decided to help out in the kitchen. His cooking skills were below average. However, he was willing to learn. It might come in handy in the future. But before he went to the kitchen to help out cooking for the masses, Michael had to take a bath as he was covered in sweat. He thought about the events of the day and smiled to himself while letting himself soak in the water. His head was submerged in the cold bathing water, but his smile never ceased.

It was truly nice to be away from the battlefield, learn new crafts, and experience the expertise of veterans in their respective fields. Michael learned a lot more new stuff, and he decided that it was necessary to appreciate every craft a little bit more. Until now, Michael had been focused on his Alchemists, Blacksmiths, and Enchanters. These three jobs were considered the most commonly known lifestyle occupations in their territory. They were very important. However, they were not the only lifestyle occupations that had to be appreciated.

Cooks were very important to the territory as well. In war times a good meal was as valuable as some potions. A delicious meal could fill your stomach, provide enough nutrition to recuperate faster from injuries and it could release hormones in your body to heighten your morale. During cold nights, a warm jacket and a woolen blanket could turn into your savior. Feeling warm and cozy on a chilly night was a luxury, but it was also something his lifestyle occupations could provide to the territory.

The more Michael thought this way the more foolish he felt. He decided to use the next few days to learn more about his people, the other occupations, and their work. Michael wanted to make sure that everyone felt appreciated. This was not only a means to increase the loyalty of his subjects, which would

strengthen his Links of Loyalty and generate more Soul Power for his Soultraits to grow stronger, but it would mean a lot to his subjects as well.

Michael was still a Rookie Lord. He learned a lot and had considerable theoretical knowledge from various sources, but that didn't mean Michael was adept at using his theoretical knowledge in practice. As a young Lord, he had to learn a lot.

However, he was already aware of the most important aspect- His territory would be nothing but an empty shell without his subjects. Michael might be the exoskeleton of his territory, but his people were the heart, liver, brain, and everything else that turned his territory into a functioning, well-established society.

Michael merely held it together. That was all he did.

His train of thought went deeper and deeper as he stayed underwater. Only after he felt like suffocating did his train of thought disperse. He jumped out of the bathing tub, dried his body, and put on some ordinary clothes. Then he rushed to the kitchen where he began to help his people.

At first, the cooks felt a little bit weird to see their lord peeling potatoes, cutting carrots, and dicing meat, but they became accustomed to their Lord's new behavior quickly. Bright smiles appeared on their faces as Michael continued to praise his people every now and then, and countless Links of Loyalty grew firmer than ever.

The result of Michael's hard work was even more impressive once the first Summons returned from the training ground for their meal. They went to the newly constructed treehouse canteen, only to find their Lord distributing food. The young Summons saw their Lord, the enigma of power, who saved their territories and destroyed their enemies countless times against all odds and were taken aback. They had only seen him fight or work. But now he was standing right in front of them, joking around with the other cooks and volunteers while distributing food. I think you should take a look at

At first, the young Summons were shocked to the core. They only regained their senses when they saw the older Summons get their food. The older Summons were also a little uncomfortable in front of Michael. However, the veterans who had been with Michael for some time knew that Michael's presence and appearance were the opposite of their Lord's usual behavior.

Michael might be dangerous and a terrifying monster to their enemies, but he was an innocent and harmless sheep in front of his subjects. Realizing that Michael was but a mere human, who liked to joke around, make friends, and get to know his subjects, the younger Summons were both shocked and exhilarated. They never expected to be resurrected in such a territory, where they were granted the opportunity to grow stronger through the Immortal Knight, and with a powerful, yet kind Lord ruling over them. It was truly perfect.

Time passed slowly, and darkness enveloped the Untamed Jungle as the sun disappeared behind the horizon. However, Michael's territory was still bustling with activity. Crystal torches empowered with monster cores had been installed all over his territory to allow Michael's subjects to work, or play around at night. The night duty of Guards moved steadily through the territory while the muffled noises of Summons could be heard from all directions.

Tonight's atmosphere was a lot better than usual, and Michael knew exactly why. At the same time, he had come across as a little bit more distant and reserved after the incident with the Kitsun Lord, today's interaction with his subjects proved to be a much-needed icebreaker. Michael had finally been able to get closer to his people once again.

He told himself that he would get even closer to his people, not only to accumulate more Soul Power to strengthen his Soultraits, but mostly to get to know his people and learn more about the countless paths he could choose to develop his territory.

Michael learned a lot, and he was willing to learn a lot more. He had more than enough time to do so as well.

The only thing that bothered him was that he was still a participant of the Battle Exchange.

'The Battle Exchange can still wait a little longer. I am not in a rush. Once my War Rune finishes digesting the remaining energy within me, I can return. But...for now, I shall make use of my time here to get closer to my people!'

Michael clearly forgot that some people outside the Origin Expanse were worrying about him. They didn't know what was going on with Michael, or how he was doing. All they knew was that he rushed into the Origin Expanse because his territory had been attacked – or something like that.

But, of course, the news of the female Greater Eagle laying two eggs was of far more importance.

'Right, I have yet to name the little girl.'

Chapter 422 Naming

Michael had never been good at naming others. The only good name he came up with was for Icarus. However, now Michael had to name the female Greater Eagle, and the Elemental Empress.

The Elemental Empress had already bothered him a few times to give her a name, and it was about time that Michael fulfilled his promise.

"Mary, Tatjana, Zeroa, Hannah, Yvelta, Asura...No. None of these names sound nice with Icarus. The Greater Eagles are a set. A couple. It would be great if their names fit somewhat. Icarus and...and...I don't know," Michael cursed under his breath and approached the Greater Eagles' nest.

The nest of the Greater Eagle was close to the farmland. Icarus built it in the intertwined tree tops of five humongous trees that were close to each other. The nest was more than 20 meters in diameter, which provided more than enough space for Icarus' offspring to grow up until they could leave to create their own nest.

Michael, of course, hoped that the Greater Eagles would stay inside his territory, but they had to search for a mate as well. As long as Michael didn't summon more Greater Eagles it was unlikely that Icarus' offspring would stay in his territory. But then again, they might think of the Untamed Jungle as a great place to give birth to their next offspring. The Untamed Jungle had high energy density, the energy was filtered and purified and the monsters of the Untamed Jungle could be hunted to provide a large energy influx. It was a good region to grow up and grow stronger.

'I hope they will return once they find their mate,' Michael mumbled to himself after jumping from one branch to another until he reached the Greater Eagle nest. Icarus greeted him with excitement. He flapped his healed wings and rubbed his head against his Lord's chest. Michael caressed the Greater Eagle and smiled lightly. After Icarus stepped back, Michael's eyes fell on the two oval-shaped eggs. They were emerald-colored and looked quite exquisite. However, the most intriguing thing was that they were even bigger than a newborn human baby.

Staring at the eggs, Michael suddenly felt the urge to create an Aerial Combat Unit. Eagle Riders would be a great addition to his territory, allowing Michael to create far more tactics to overwhelm his enemies. Greater Eagles were fast, intelligent and not to be underestimated in close combat as well. They were perfect for an Aerial Cavalry. Unfortunately, he had to put that thought aside for quite a while.

He cleared his throat and looked at the female Greater Eagle with an apologetic smile, "I thought of many names for you but I am not sure which one you would like the most. I wanted to find something that suits you as an individual and as Icarus' partner. Unfortunately, that is easier said than done. That was why I decided to let you choose from the options. After all, the name is all about your identity, so you ought to make the final decision!"

The female Greater Eagle's interest was piqued. She moved closer to Michael by pushing Icarus away. A squeal was all Michael had to hear to understand that the female Greater Eagle was ready.

"So...I got a few names. Listen carefully," Michael said calmly before starting to list down the names he thought of, "Mary, Tatjana, Zeroa, Hannah, Yvelta, Asura, Lilith, Mira, Orevia, Ariadna, A—"

The female Greater Eagle shrieked loudly, and Michael stopped listing more names.

"You liked Orevia? No? Then you liked the name Ariadna?" Michael didn't expect the female Greater Eagle to like this name, but she flapped her wings excitedly when he repeated the name 'Ariadna'.

"Ariadna it is then. From now on you are not just a nameless Greater Eagle. You are Ariadna. Congratulations!" Michael said, smiling brightly. He was happy to see that the female Greater Eagle – no, Ariadna – was overjoyed and excited. She finally received her own name!

Michael 'celebrated' with the Greater Eagles a little bit longer after he gave Ariadna her official name. However, since there was not much else to do in the Greater Eagle nest, Michael could leave soon after.

["What do you think about Zeroa, Yvelta, Asura, or Lilith as your official name? You said you didn't want to be called Elemental Empress all day since that is more of a title that identifies your kind and status. So what do you say?"] Michael used telepathy to talk to the Elemental Empress.

She was busy dealing with the second sublevel of the large lizard cave and Michael met her not too long ago. He didn't want to bother her by rushing over to her again. Furthermore, there was still quite a lot he had to accomplish. Running around mindlessly wouldn't be helpful.

Michael didn't expect to receive a response less than half a minute after he informed her about his decision to name her officially. The Elemental Empress, however, was even more excited than Ariadna. She dropped all of her things and was about to rush to Michael only to recall that she had a lot of pending tasks to complete, and that Michael was even busier.

Therefore, she bombarded him with comments via telepathy.

.["A name...for me?!?!? Yes, yes, yes!!!! I want...I want...They all sound so nice! Hm m m m m m, maybe not Lilith or Asura...Zeroa and Yvelta sound cool and majestic. What do you think? I think Zeroa sounds more mysterious. Imagine someone asking who is 'Zeroaaaa~', just for me to appear. The Elemental Empress, a powerhouse amid powerhouses. Tehehehe~ I love it. Yeah. Let me have Zeroaaaa, pleaseeeee~"] I think you should take a look at

Michael raised an eyebrow. He figured that the Elemental Empress would be excited, but he didn't expect her excitement to be that intense.

But that was a good thing. The Elemental Empress made a quick decision, which made things a lot easier for Michael.

["Zeroa it is then. You picked a very good name. I think it suits you very well. Welcome to the team, Zeroa!"] Michael welcomed Zeroa into his team and territory. Zeroa squealed loudly via telepathy. Her voice was loud enough to cause a headache. However, Michael didn't say anything. Instead, he let Zeroa be happy. She deserved some joy in her life after everything she had to overcome after being confined and tortured for a whole decade.

Now that he had named both the Greater Eagle and the Elemental Empress, Michael wanted to name the other monsters in his territory as well. The Golden Stinger Wasp's name was also shortened to Stinger, which was a name that received the Golden Stinger Wasp's approval. Meanwhile, the Heavy Armored Elephant didn't want to be called any names. It was not intelligent enough to understand what Michael was saying, in the first place. All the Heavy Armored Elephant could do was to follow commands.

But that was fine. Naming someone should hold a special meaning – to some extent. Thus, Michael chose to name the Bilrox Queen as well. The Bilrox Queen was special and she deserved to receive a name.

'Fluff would be the easiest, but that is not really a good name. How about Raphelia? Shortened to Raph? Let's try that later.' Michael was slowly getting better at naming his monsters, or so he thought. Proud of his achievements, he decided to meet the Immortal Knight once again.

It was about time for him to start practicing combat without using his Soultraits! But Michael didn't even have the luxury to reach the training grounds. Many Summons found out that Michael had begun to visit all establishments spread across his territory to watch them doing their job and observe what they did every day. Therefore, the Tailors, Craftsmen, and dozens of other people were looking forward to receiving heaps of praises from their Lord, expecting him to generously brag about their talents and extraordinary work.

Michael was all-in for observing their work and analyzing their techniques, but he wanted to grow stronger as well. Unfortunately, he was too much of a softie to deny being an audience to their display of craft or strength and cheer for them.

Before Michael realized three days had already passed. In those three days, he never reached the proximity of the training ground. Instead, Michael felt like he was pulled farther and farther from the training ground.

It was only fortunate that he learned a lot from his subjects. They taught him thoroughly and answered his doubts with great detail. Spending three days being dragged through his territory felt a little bit weird, but it was also a great experience. It was something Michael wanted to repeat in the future. The Links of Loyalty of thousands of Summons grew firmer. In response to that, Michael could sense that his Soultraits grew stronger. They were nourished by the additional Soul Power that entered his body, granting him more power than he used to possess.

That was also a great feeling and even more reason to repeat this exercise of interacting with his subjects in the future.

But now Michael finally reached the training ground where the Immortal Knight was already waiting for him.

"Welcome back, my Lord. I heard lots of rumors about you, and I'm glad that you finally found your way to the training ground," The old man teased lightly. He turned more serious and added, "You did a really good thing in the last few days. I am glad that the Origin Expanse allowed me to serve you."

The Immortal Knight had yet to complete his analysis of Michael, but he was positively surprised about his Lord's actions and personality. Given that he heard many rumors about Michael's mercilessness when faced with enemies, Siegfried expected Michael to be a little bit stiff and arrogant, maybe even harsh. However, Michael was far from that. In fact, it felt like Michael had two personalities. One for his enemies, and one for his allies and subjects.

"I am also happy to be back. Finally, I can start training for good!" Michael said with a smile.

"That's right. But there is something else I must tell you. It's a small surprise," The Immortal Knight said mysteriously.

He pointed toward two Summons, which caught Michael's interest as he felt something stir within him.

"Please welcome the first two Blessed Squires of your territory!"

Chapter 423 Aether

"Two Starless Summons were promoted to 1-Star Blessed Squires three days after you started to train them...is that correct?" Michael asked the Immortal Knight, still not quite believing what he was seeing.

The Basic Level of the Sacred Knight temple hadn't even been constructed, yet Siegfried's teaching and guidance had already allowed two Summons to become Blessed Squires. The Summons received an influx of information that revolved around their new occupation. This influx of information included knowledge about Holy Power and basic-level mastery of the longsword. Even if they'd been unable to wield a longsword before, the two Blessed Squires were now able to perform some tricks with the longsword.

The influx of information about a promotion to 1-Star was usually worth 1-2 years of training. That was something Michael had been taught in school. It was also why many Lords were so focused on promoting Starless Summons to Warriors, Archers and so on. Even if they were talentless, being

promoted meant that they obtained knowledge and experience equal to two years of experience as Warriors or Archers.

Using promotions as a means to build an army from scratch was a commonly seen tactic for veteran Lords to make up for their casualties in previous wars.

"Actually, becoming a Blessed Squire is not that difficult. It would be easier with the Basic Level of the Sacred Knight Temple completed, but it is not impossible to become a Blessed Squire without the Sacred Knight Temple either. All you need to do is open your Holy Sea and hoard 10 droplets of Holy Power in your Holy Sea. Once the Summon meets the requirement they can decide whether they want to be promoted to Blessed Squires or if they want to hoard more Holy Power before accepting their first promotion," Siegfried Dragoon explained in simple terms.

"That's it?" Michael asked, not quite convinced.

"That's it. The requirements to become a Blessed Squire are not that harsh. But, of course, not everyone can achieve that. These two students of mine are exceptional. They opened their Holy Sea within six hours, whereas others would need a few weeks without the aid of the Sacred Knight Temple," Siegfried chuckled lightly.

If it would have been that easy to open your Holy Sea and collect 10 droplets of Holy Power, Michael would have an army of tens of thousands of Blessed Squires within weeks. Of course, it was far from easy.

Michael realized his foolishness, and also understood how important Instructors were. The Immortal Knight was on a whole different level than Archer Instructors, or Warrior Instructors, but that didn't change the fact that Instructors were extremely valuable. In fact, given that Michael had a book that could be used by Summons to potentially become Archers, and the Warrior Enlightenment Potions, he should be getting hold of a bunch of Archer Instructors and Warrior Instructors. But that was easier said than done.

Named Scrolls such as Archer Instructor Summoning Scrolls were not easy to procure. Most Lords would never sell them, in the first place. They would either use them to strengthen their own territory, or they would trade them for favors. Their value was only a tad lower than Mythic Summoning Scrolls even though these Instructors from Named Scrolls were usually only 1-Star Summons.

Compared to 1-Star Instructors, the Immortal Knight was hundreds of times better as a 6-Star Instructor. He had his own temple and the unique ability to accelerate his students' progress. That was extraordinary. It was amazing!

'Should I trade a few Mythic Scrolls for Instructor Summoning Scrolls? It would be a good long-term investment.'

Others might have difficulties procuring Mythic Summoning Scrolls, but not Michael. Their true value was not that high for someone like him. Instructor Scrolls seemed far more valuable to him in comparison.

'Even without other Instructors, I should be able to make up my losses against the Kitsun Lord once the Sacred Knight Temple's Basic Level has been constructed,' Michael concluded, 'I wonder how long Lilica and the others will need before they return. Hopefully, they got all the materials in their storages!'

Michael hoped that the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team would return soon. It would be even better if they decided to become permanent residents of his territory, and were willing to sign a Soul Pact to grow stronger alongside him. Michael also hoped that the Forest Elven Tribe was willing to pay a huge sum of money in exchange for the Soultrait Symbols and SoulStar Fragments he handed over to them.

Of course, Michael wanted to strengthen the Forest Elves in his territory, but that didn't mean he would hand over all of his Soultrait Symbols and SoulStar Fragments. Instead, they would receive a proper contract and a specific amount of SoulStar Fragments every month. There would be a special bonus for participation in warfares and other extracurricular activities, but those additional expenses were something Michael had to look through at a later time.

For now, Michael was in need of funds and materials to construct all levels of the Sacred Knight Temple, build several Beast Ranches, fill them with the livestock he needed, provide enough resources for the Bilrox Queen and her kind, nourish the Greater Eagles to make sure the offspring would return once they found their mate and much more.

Basically, everyone Michael had visited in the last few days requested more funds and resources. The only ones with enough work and tools were the leather workers and the butcher. Even the Craftsmen requested more unique materials to construct, and new tools to work more efficiently.

Thus, Michael had to make use of the 43 Soultrait Symbols in his possession. Even the lowest-ranked Soultrait could be sold for a fortune as long as Michael got hold of the perfect customer. This was even more true given that Michael had detailed notes about all types of Soultraits and their powers. He had a huge advantage and a headstart to bring his plans to fruition. I think you should take a look at

The only issue was that Michael had no idea how much to ask for. It was obvious but the demand for Soultrait Symbols was enormous. Everyone would want to obtain more Soultraits if possible. The only problem was that nobody could 'produce' them just like Michael. At least, Michael never heard about anyone being able to extract Soultraits as he could.

'If I sell the Soultrait Symbols to the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team, they can grow stronger and become the pillars of the Forest Elven Tribe in the future while simultaneously protecting my territory. I don't know how many enemies they have to face outside the Origin Expanse, but the Forest Elven Tribe would definitely pay a lot as long as any of them obtains more Soultraits. Therefore I should deal with the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team first.'

'Should I auction one Soultrait Symbol to the Tritan Alliance? I can auction it anonymously, or just say that I entered a dungeon and received it as a reward. Everyone knows that I have more than enough Soultraits already, so they might become suspicious, but they would also be consumed by greed and think more about purchasing the Soultrait Symbol that is up for sale rather than asking me too many questions... That is dangerous though... If I make a single mistake, I could end up kidnapped, confined, and turned into a guinea pig – exposed to countless experiments to figure out how I managed to get hold of so many Soultraits...'

The Forest Elven Tribe seemed like the safest option for the time being. Maybe, he could trust the Tritan Alliance and mankind enough in the future to provide them with Soultrait Symbols and SoulStar Fragments. But that was not the case for the time being. He didn't feel secure enough with his current strength. He still had loads to improve.

To solve that issue, Michael abandoned his useless thoughts. His focus switched to the Immortal Knight's teachings, and to Sacred Rectification, Caesurium Menta, and the refinement of his War Rune.

Ten days passed in the blink of an eye, and Michael's War Rune finally reached the mid-rank after digesting all Energy Influx and Energy Shares he had obtained since his first encounter with Kitsun. The feeling of vigor and energy surging through his body was addicting. His physical strength increased, his control of origin energy improved, and his senses heightened, reaching an entirely new level of sensitivity.

In the meantime, Michael did not only focus on the refinement of his body, mind, and War Rune. He also focused on testing a wide variety of weapons. Michael didn't use his Soultraits all this time, spending his first ten days without using any of his Soultraits – not even once. It felt weird at first, but Michael got accustomed to it, to a certain degree, at least.

The result of using various weapons was also a little bit confusing. Michael had several sparring sessions with others using sabers, katanas, battle axes, broadswords, daggers, longswords, shortwords, glaives, bows, lances, harpoons, crossbows, and more exotic weapons. Yet, it only increased his confusion to find out what weapon he was the most compatible with because Michael felt that his familiarity with all weapons was more or less the same.

Michael was unable to tell if that was because he was actually compatible with all weapons, or if that was an effect of consuming a hundred Memory Orbs. The memories of various weapon masteries were etched on his mind, after all. That might affect his compatibility with them considerably.

When he told the Immortal Knight about his worries, Siegfried Dracocon didn't seem too bothered.

"It doesn't matter where your compatibility stems from. The fact is that you are quite talented with every weapon you wield. It doesn't matter if this talent stems from the experience and memories of others, or if it is the talent you were born with," The Immortal Knight tried to calm him down with some basic facts, though he did not paint a rosy picture in front of his Lord. "The only slightly disadvantageous point is that we are not in possession of some Aether. Aether would solve all of our issues. Or a Soultrait similar to Aether. A Soultrait might be even better in your case."

"Aether?" Michael asked.

"Aether is basically a material that is said to be as old as the Primordials. It exists in a limited amount. But that is of no importance right now. All you have to know about Aether is that you can bind it to your War Rune like a Soultrait. You can nurture it with energy and precious resources to upgrade its quality gradually. Its' Tier will increase alongside your War Rune's refinement degree. Though the downside of possessing Aether is that your progress will be slower due to the high energy cost of upgrading it as it is an extraordinary material," The Immortal Knight revealed, his expression filled with melancholy.

"Aether can change its form according to your will, turning into any Armament you can think of in an instant. As long as you have enough Aether it can even morph into a mount or coat your mount to

protect it. There are near-infinite ways to use Aether. Even better is that you can give it specific forms with unique enchantments. Enchantments can be slotted to Aether. Though the slots are numbered, increasing the Aether's quality can increase the number of slots. I...used to possess some Aether. It was not much, but it was amazing.

Unfortunately, Aether is also the reason I died. Every powerhouse wants Aether. Even the true powerhouses of the Universe turned me into their target when they heard that I possessed some Aether...thus, I died..."

Michael didn't expect the Immortal Knight to talk about the past all of a sudden. He listened with great interest, but Siegfried didn't say much else. He just smiled at Michael knowingly.

"The old days were truly unique," He took a pause and looked at Michael before adding,

"But I think the future will be even more interesting."

Chapter 424 Shift Of Power

Time didn't stop while Michael was busy growing closer to his people. Everything continued to move on at its usual pace as the young Lord in the Untamed Jungle spent his time refining his body, mind, and War Rune.

While Michael was busy, the Valyr Lordess, the Zynur Lord, and the Laprix Lord began with the expansion of their territory. They divided the territory of the late Kitsun Lord equally and split up the assets evenly as well. Their armies conquered the territory, killing every Kitsun without a shred of hesitation.

In a matter of mere days close to 500,000 Kitsun were killed, their corpses burned or fed to the carnivores raised in their territories. Meanwhile, the slaves of the late Kitsun Lord were freed and given a choice to make. Either they would become part of the three Lords' territories by creating a Link of Loyalty with the respective Lord, or they would have to leave the territories and search for a new place to stay.

Most slaves didn't want to give up their newfound freedom. They decided to leave the late Kitsun Lord's territory or their new Lord's territory and search for a new place to stay. The three Lords accepted their decision. They provided enough food and water before giving the slaves a grace period of ten days. By the time the grace period ended the freed slaves had to be outside their territory, otherwise, they would be captured or killed on the spot.

Expanding one's territory was an expensive task. It was even worse if the claimed area was larger than their entire territory. To manage and protect their new territory, the three Lords had to spend a fortune to create new settlements, split up their forces to place guards across all the settlements, and send over civilians to reside in the newly constructed settlements. Watch towers had to be constructed and the network system had to be expanded rapidly. Information about the newly claimed area had to be collected and new ways to earn money were researched.

Last but not least, the three Lords had to find out about the threats within and adjacent to the new area.

The Valyr Lordess and the Laprix Lord learned a lot about new enemies. These enemies were both Awakened Lords and Monster Overlords, who had been reigning over a small area of the Savannah region for years. They sensed the changes alongside the border to the late Kitsun Lord and quickly realized that a new Lord claimed the Kitsun Lord's land. It was not long after that they began to test the combat prowess of these new Lords. All they wanted was to test how strong these new Rulers were and if they were capable of managing such a large piece of land as the Kitsun Lord had been capable of.

Forced to send their army deeper into their newly claimed region, the Valyr Lordess and the Laprix Lord had no choice but to act more vigilant. Their older settlements were not as well guarded as before since the army had been deployed. Therefore, their old enemies grasped the golden opportunity and attacked.

The Valyr Lordess and the Laprix Lord were able to hold their stronghold. However, they could only fight back against their enemies after the Zynur Lord chose to give them a helping hand. The Zynur Lord's territory was surrounded by the Valyr Lordess' land and the Laprix Lord's territory. Expanding his territory wasn't that troublesome because the only new border he received was the border leading straight to the Untamed Jungle. The only threats looming in the Untamed Jungle were Monsters, and they didn't leave the Untamed Jungle under normal circumstances.

If anything, the Untamed Jungle was a treasure trove for the Zynur Lord. After all, Michael resided somewhere inside the Untamed Jungle. The Zynur Lord hoped that Michael would soon message him through the communication crystal. He wanted to establish a firm business relationship with Michael. Being friendly and trading with each other was a much better option than fighting a crazy maniac, who

fought tens of thousands of enemies and a bunch of Peak Tier-3 Awakened while merely being a Low Tier-2 Lord.

The Zynur Lord hadn't witnessed Michael's combat prowess first-hand, but he'd heard enough from the Valyr Lordess' daughter and her Valyries – the elite troupe of the Valyr Lordess – to know that Michael Fang was not someone he should fight against.

Since the Zynur Lord didn't want the Valyr Lordess and the Laprix Lord to lose their territory either he decided to give them a helping hand when they faced attacks from multiple sides. He demanded some reimbursement for his help and simultaneously ensured that neither the Lordess nor the Lord bordering his territory would dare to attack him anytime soon. He used the Lordess and the Lord as protective shields against other Lords, and established three new settlements alongside his new land – with one of the settlements scratching the border to the Untamed Jungle. It was an invitation for Michael, a sign of trust, and an opportunity for the young Lord to establish a trading route with the Zynur Lord.

Over the course of three weeks, all Lords of the Savannah region found out about the death of the Kitsun Lord. Not many knew what exactly happened because the three neighboring Lords concealed the news about the truth as if their lives depended on it, but everyone realized that the Valyr, Zynur, and Laprix had joined hands to defeat the Kitsun Lord. Therefore, the Lords in the Savannah Region considered the three Lords allies. They presumed that they formed an alliance, and that the Alliance might continue to exist until the entire Savannah region was in their control.

Because of these thoughts, and worries infesting their minds, the Lords of the Savannah region began to change their tactics. They began to pay more attention to their defenses, summoned more Combat Summons, and communicated more with their neighbors to learn about their intentions and future plans. Some Alliances were formed, while others began to wage an all-out war due to complications and misunderstandings during their communication.

The balance of power shifted all over the Savannah region, chaos ensued slowly, and the first of many big clashes to determine the Ruler of the Savannah began. I think you should take a look at

The power shift all over the Savannah region was not the only change that would affect Michael. It was just one of many changes. Even bigger events occurred in the Zentika Empire. To pinpoint the precise location, the border between the Southern Ice Mountains and the Zentika Empire was where the bigger events occurred.

The Council of the Zentika Empire had faced various losses after the Lord Rift closed. The only survivor of the Zentika Empire's participants was Tac Lec. However, Tac Lec received his Lord Rift entrance ticket through hard work. He never signed a soul contract with the Zentika Empire. Therefore, he never had to pay the Zentika Empire with a percentage of the gains he made in the Lord Rift.

In the first place, Tac Lec escaped the Lord Rift barely alive. He was lethally injured and half-burned when he emerged from the Lord Rift. He barely escaped outside the Origin Expanse where his servants found him lying on the ground, writhing in pain. His life was on the line as he was brought to the medics of his race. But even they couldn't help him immediately. Tac Lec spent several weeks in a coma, and he had to recuperate for even longer. Even after so much time had passed, Tac Lec barely regained his former strength, allowing him to make use of the items he procured and earned in the Lord Rift.

The only participant of the Lord Rift who hadn't sustained any injuries was Taros. Taros was uninjured and he made most gains as well. Not only did rumors state that he was granted a powerful Soultrait Symbol as a reward for his contributions and achievements in the Lord Rift, but he brought back something else from the Lord Rift. Hushed but excited discussions of how he brought back a Dragon Egg – the egg of the Red Dragon, were ripe. It was the same Red Dragon that had wreaked havoc near the end of the Lord Rift's countdown.

Had Michael known about the Dragon Egg, he would have concluded that Taros stole the Dragon Egg, thus enraging the Red Dragon. Michael wouldn't hesitate to travel to the Southern Ice Mountains to wreak havoc in Taros' territory, killing him and his pet altogether. After all, Taros' actions were the sole reason Masked Saber – Daniel Fang – died in the Lord Rift.

Fortunately, Michael was oblivious to the truth. The Zentika Empire and Taros were engaged in a cold-blooded war for the last few months after all. From the day the Red Dragon youngling was born, Taros began to wreak havoc alongside the borders of the Zentika Empire. He first attacked some small villages and towns. He devoured them and used his Soultrait to grow stronger rapidly.

Simultaneously, he taught his Red Dragon to fight and hunt alongside him. The Red Dragon grew rapidly. As a Mythical Creature, even the weakest Dragon was capable of hunting Elite Tier-1 Awakened. Common Tier-2 Guards were not difficult to hunt as well. However, the most important aspect of Mythical Creatures was that their growth rate depended on the amount of energy they absorbed.

The Red Dragon killed thousands of enemies in its first battle. It absorbed the energy influx of those thousands and grew rapidly. Not even a full day passed before it advanced to Tier-1. Two weeks later it broke through the next barrier, reaching the 2nd Tier. By that time, the Red Dragon was already big

enough to carry Taros on its back. The Red Dragon, capable of fighting Elite Tier-3 Awakened, crossed hundreds of kilometers in no time.

Taros guided the Red Dragon across the Zentika Empire to obliterate two settlements. Both Taros with Gluttony and the Red Dragon with its unfathomable power as a Mythical Creature grew stronger at a much faster rate than anyone else. Their natural limits shattered and they advanced until they finally conquered one of the Zentika Empire's cities.

From that moment onward, the Zentika Empire couldn't ignore Taros and the Red Dragon anymore. They gathered their forces, and their magical devices and initiated their counterattack.

The Council forgot about the ancient ruins they had wanted to conquer in the Untamed Jungle as well as the young Lord residing in the Untamed Jungle. Since the Untamed Jungle wasn't a threat as of this moment, the Council focused on the extermination of Taros and the Red Dragon. They had to hunt both and get rid of them before it was too late.

Their full power was utilized and a fierce battle ensued against Taros, his army, and the Red Dragon.

Meanwhile, Michael could finally spend some time at ease. All while the Origin Expanse around him was set on fire, Michael spent his time growing stronger and getting closer to his subjects.

It was not yet his time to shed blood, sweat, and tears.

Chapter 425 Piloq's Battles

But the Origin Expanse was not the only place full of events and dangers.

Piloq, the city where all participants of the Battle Exchange had gathered, was full of intriguing events and fierce battles. After Michael rushed to the Origin Expanse to find out that another Lord resided in the Untamed Jungle, Kaleb and the others continued to fight other participants of the Battle Exchange in the hopes of increasing their ranking.

After all, a better ranking indicated that they would receive more resources and support to prepare for the Interdimensional Flag War. Some participants without a Flag War Token decided to return to the Origin Expanse where they used the benefits of the time dilation to train for several weeks. The growth spurt allowed them to fight specific opponents head-on.

In one such spar, a young woman, an Awakened at the Peak of the 2nd Tier, with a Weapon Manifestation Soultrait called [Cursed Dagger of the Vervail Queen] was studying her opponent, a Berserker at the Lowest rank of the 3rd Tier, with great detail and focus. She researched his combat tactic, the Soultrait he used and got to know that her Soultrait outmatched the Berserker's.

The Berserker's Soultrait [Crimson Blood], enhanced his Power, improved his natural regeneration, and he could churn through his blood to temporarily increase his physical strength drastically. Regenerating the blood his Soultrait used up would leave him weakened after the effect of Crimson Blood was unleashed to its peak, but the Berserker's naturally high regeneration ensured that the weakened state was not long.

Cursed Dagger of the Vervail Queen had two unique abilities. First, the dagger manifested through the Soultrait had a strong bleeding effect. Even shallow cuts would bleed for several minutes. Stopping the bleeding was too difficult. This was even worse for deeper cuts. However, the second effect of her Cursed Dagger was even more important. It strengthened the power of the bleeding effect by inflicting a curse upon the target. The Curse was not permanent because it drained too much energy from the wielder of the Cursed Dagger, but its effect was as strong as a Curse was supposed to be. It weakened the natural regeneration of the injured target, increased the target's sense of pain while dulling every other sense, and drained a portion of the target's power.

As the young woman challenged the Crimson Blood Berserker in a narrow alley late at night, the Berserker didn't hesitate to attack. The Battle Exchange allowed the participants to challenge their opponents wherever they were. Those who were challenged weren't allowed to reject the challenge, otherwise, they would lose their Flag War Token by default.

The Berserker used Crimson Blood at its full potential, increasing the Berserker's power quite a bit. A huge war axe manifested in his hands and he struck out without hesitation.

All the young woman did was to lift her hand and slightly bend her index finger sporting a silver Ring Artifact. The Ring Artifact hummed lightly right before the sound of something cutting through the air resounded behind the Berserker. The Cursed Dagger of the Vervail Queen propelled through the air, controlled by the silver Ring Artifact. It burst through the Berserker's right arm that was lifted high into the air to cleave down with the war axe.

There was nothing the Berserker could do. The Cursed Dagger had been too close and the Berserker didn't expect an attack from behind. He had been too focused on the young woman engulfed in the darkness of the narrow alley.

The young woman smiled as her Cursed Dagger sliced through the Berserker's arm. The natural power to worsen the bleeding and the Curse took effect simultaneously. It was only at that moment that the Berserker realized that it might have been a stupid idea to attack his challenger in a narrow alley. His war axe crashed against the walls of the building next to him and he lost control of his weapon as the pain in his right arm reached an unbearable degree. As the weapon slumped down from his hand limply, the Cursed Dagger shot out once again, piercing the Berserker's other arm.

The Berserker roared out and charged at the young woman, both arms covered in layers of warm, oozing blood. Two layers of the Curse had been applied, worsening the Berserker's situation even more.

The young woman pulled back. She used her Soultrait to retrieve the Cursed Dagger and manifest it in her hands once again. A mere moment later, she threw the dagger out again, piercing the Berserker's chest with a quick motion. The Berserker's senses were too dulled, his sight too hazy to perceive the Cursed Dagger as it plunged into his chest, digging deep inside.

Not even five minutes into the start of the battle the Berserker was lying on the ground – in a puddle of his blood.

"Is that the medic team? Yeah, I sent you my coordinates. Someone is bleeding out here. I already released the Curse, but I am not sure if that's enough to make sure that he can survive," The young woman called the medic team, following the protocol of an outside match. The injured party had to be tended to, and the winner was supposed to inform the medics even if their opponent was not badly injured.

The young woman followed the protocol before approaching the Berserker to retrieve his Flag War Token.

"That's mine now. If you want it back, challenge me once you're back at your peak," She said just before turning away, leaving the Berserker staring at her in shock.

Situations like this have been normal since the start of the Battle Exchange. Bloody battles of similar scale happened all over the cities. In fact, the battle between the Crimson Blood Berserker and the Cursed Dagger Human hadn't been that bad. They didn't destroy anything, which was completely different from the battles fought by Thaor, Lokai, and most other Berserkers. I think you should take a look at

Even the battles fought by humans were usually far more destructive. That was especially true for Lords like Killian Zeus. He didn't hold back against his enemies to instill fear in his opponents and not let them muster the courage to challenge him. Through this he conveyed a message that challenging him meant that they would end up in a state worse than death! That way he could ensure that no weaklings would bother him until the end of the Battle Exchange.

However, not everyone fought straightforwardly. There were also more unique situations happening all over Piloq.

While Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs were known for fighting head-on and challenging others in the open to honor their battle spirits and ancestors, not all Humans were the same. In fact, most humans had been taught that victory was all that mattered. To defeat opponents with higher combat prowess than oneself, special techniques and strength might not be enough. It required trickery, conniving tactics, and sometimes more than that to defeat the stronger party.

Humans didn't mind how others looked at them after they used trickery to win against their opponents, but Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs valued their morals and ethics more than their lives. They would rather lose than dishonor their race's values and ancestors.

That was something the human participants of the Battle Exchange decided to make use of. They formed groups to protect their Healers and Supporters and claimed several buildings to create a stronghold to defend. The Healers and Supporters in the groups were out of the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs' sight, which made it increasingly difficult for them to be challenged.

Only the combatants of the group could be challenged by the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs, but that was where trickery came into play. The rules of the Battle Exchange didn't forbid other participants from intervening in outside battles. Therefore, the human groups decided to team up against the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs to defeat them together. Using this tactic was more than enough to defeat the stronger Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs that had been ranked much higher than them. The groups of humans took their Flag War Tokens and returned to their stronghold to create a large barricade.

At one point, the Berserkers formed a group as well. The strongest Berserkers decided to charge into the fort and raze it to the ground. To their misfortune, they failed miserably.

The Berserkers didn't expect the stronghold to have several powerful Supporters and an even stronger Healer residing within. Whereas the Supporters aided their members to improve their combat prowess greatly, the Healer tended to the wounds of everyone mere moments after they had been inflicted.

After their first attack failed, the Berserkers cursed the Healers residing within the stronghold. The Healers of the stronghold were simply too powerful, and too many to deal with since the Berserkers didn't aim to kill their enemies. Killing the participants of the Battle Exchange was not desired. It could lead to more problems and split up the Tritan Alliance in the worst-case scenario. Yet, that nearly happened when the Berserkers charged into the stronghold the second time.

Two humans were nearly split in half by powerful battle-axe slashes. The battle halted for a moment and a beautiful young woman appeared from the center of the stronghold. She was the Healer residing in the stronghold – the only healer they needed.

There was no hesitation in her actions as she released her Soultrait's power to the fullest. A halo manifested above the woman's head as she tended to the lethally injured. The insides of the cleaved bodies squirmed as thousands of tiny little tendrils seemed to move within the injured. The tendrils connected to one another and pulled the cleaved bodies together.

They healed rapidly, clearly for everyone to see – to witness the miracle that happened right in front of them.

The woman looked at the two bodies and nodded her head faintly, "That was quite easy."

Her sonorous voice resounded through the vicinity as she got up. She looked at her surroundings calmly and did not seem the slightest bit exhausted from healing two lethally injured patients who had been on the brink of death.

No. The two humans had been more dead than alive, yet the young woman healed them and brought them back from death's door easily.

She was Maria Seraph, one of the 10 Heavenly Chosen, and the most promising healer across the Tritan Alliance.

Chapter 426 Losing Everything

Alice sat on a comfortable chair, looking at dozens of holographic screens. Each screen showed the location and condition of her students. They were either busy training to challenge Token holders in the future, or spread out across Piloq. A handful of students decided to stay in the Colosseum where official matches were held. Petty tricks were not allowed in the official matches, only straight-forward one on one battles.

Her focus had been on Kaleb for the last few hours. Since Michael left Kaleb was busy fighting against others. He once lost his Flag War Token against a Peak Tier-3 Awakened, but that didn't hinder his progress. If anything, losing against an older Descendant gave Kaleb the push he needed to move on and forget about his friends – even if it was just temporarily.

Kaleb had been worried about Michael. His friend left suddenly and hadn't returned for quite a while. Michael didn't even send them a message about his situation. That may not be uncommon but it left Kaleb worried about his friend's well-being.

And then there was Frederik's situation. While Kaleb was certain that Michael wouldn't die, Frederik and his family seemed to be buried neck-deep in never ending problems.

Frederik didn't leave the Origin Expanse in the last four weeks. He might still be in a fight with the enemies that invaded his territory, or he was possibly reconstructing his territory after a fierce battle. Or...he was running away from his enemy after losing everything. The last option was a possibility, but it was not something Kaleb wanted to think about.

He was not actually that close to Frederik, but Kaleb was certain that Michael liked Frederik though he had been a bit annoying in the past. Kaleb had to acknowledge that Frederik's unique personality was a welcome change. It was something he could enjoy every now and then. Nonetheless, Kaleb cared only a little bit about Frederik – mostly because Michael wouldn't want anything bad to happen to Frederik.

Unfortunately, Igor Kolbenheim, Frederik's father, lost his territory. He was unable to reclaim his territory against the forces that barged into his territory, leaving Igor no other choice but to retreat. Igor

Kolbenheim used his full power, and a large portion of his accumulated wealth to retaliate against the invading forces. But by the time he decided to use his fortune to fight back with everything he could it had already been too late.

Igor Kolbenheim's Intermediate Summoning Gate had been crushed, his wooden manor destroyed, and the majority of his trusted army had been annihilated. The damage he and his territory sustained was terrifying. Igor lost his powers as a Lord, and his subjects' loyalty in their former Lord plummeted. The string of events that followed Igor's defeat was even more terrifying.

The adjacent territories decided to initiate a large-scale attack against Igor Kolbenheim to take advantage of the easy opportunity. Despite being long-term business partners, the Lords ruling over the adjacent territories didn't hesitate to break their contracts and charge into Igor's territory with one goal in mind: conquest.

Karek Orlando's territory was situated right next to that of Igor Kolbenheim, his best friend. He had been exposed to the same attack as Igor Kolbenheim, but he could exterminate the evil forces with the help of the Orlando family's special force. The Orlando family deployed their Sacred Warriors to ensure the survival of Karek Orlando and the highly valuable Kingdom-level territory. In fact, Karek Orlando's territory didn't meet the requirements of a Kingdom-level territory. However, by putting Igor Kolbenheim's territory and Karek Orlando's territory together they barely fulfilled the requirements to consider their combined lands a kingdom.

This kingdom ruled by two kings crumbled because only Karek Orlando and his territory survived, while Igor Kolbenheim lost everything. Karek sent the Sacred Warriors to Igor's help, but by the time they arrived, the territory had been conquered. Foreign armies had claimed Igor's territory, forcing Karek to fight against the forces of several lords with the Sacred Knights.

After a fierce battle that lasted ten days and nights, Karek and his people won. But at what price?

Karek was able to reclaim Igor's territory, but he couldn't return the territory to Igor. The Elders of the Orlando family intervened. The Elders had never truly trusted Igor Kolbenheim, and they finally had hard evidence to prove that Igor Kolbenheim was not fit to lead a Kingdom-level territory alongside Karek Orlando.

Because Karek Orlando had been forced to ask for the aid of the Elder's Sacred Warriors, he couldn't even retort to them. The Elders had the upper hand and gained more influence in the Orlando family.

Using this influence, the Elders convinced the patriarch of the Orlando Family to reject Karek's proposal to return Igor Kolbenheim's territory to him.

Instead, Karek was ordered to claim the territory as his own and to allow the survivors to take refuge. In the span of several weeks, Karek became the sole ruler of the Kingdom-level territory, while Igor lost his earlier status and title. He became an Awakened, a cripple, who lost his eyes and an arm in his desperate struggles against the invading forces.

And now Frederik was forced to fight his own battle against the forces that had invaded his territory. He didn't want to end up like his father. If anything, Frederik wanted to win against his enemies and find ways to heal his father's eyes and regrow his arm. The responsibility for reclaiming his family's lost territory and glory was now weighing down on Frederik heavily, yet he struggled in one of his first large-scale battles.

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Kaleb was training hard with Thaor when he received a message from his sister. He first thought that Michael sent him a message to tell him that he was back, but that was just wishful thinking. It was Alice, who asked him to meet in her office.

'Can't she tell me what's going on through Starnet Messenger? Is it really necessary to run arou—...'
Kaleb's mind went blank at this moment. He just realized that something big must have happened if his sister told him to rush to her office as soon as possible. Did something happen to Michael? Or was there some news about Frederik?

Kaleb didn't know what the news was about, but he had a bad feeling. He stopped training and rushed over to his sister's office without showering or changing his clothes.

Drenched in sweat and gasping for breath, Kaleb reached Alice's office in no time.

"What happened?"

"Frederik lost his territory. He sustained heavy injuries and barely escaped the wrath of his enemy," Alice Zenovia read the message she'd just received in a loud and clear voice.

Those were the first words Kaleb heard from his sister. He stopped in the doorway and stared at his sister. I think you should take a look at

"Fuck."

Alice sighed deeply and nodded grimly.

"It would be great if that was all, but it's merely the tip of the iceberg," She added right before telling Kaleb what happened after Frederik returned from the Origin Expanse by escaping death by a hair's breadth.

"Jacqueline is going crazy right now. Frederik fell into a coma right after he returned from the Origin Expanse, and the Elders of the Orlando family are trying to force Jacqueline to return to her family's mansion. They want her to resign from the Saphirelake Military Academy and terminate her engagement with Frederik. The Kolbenheim family is much smaller than the Orlando family in reputation, which is also why the Elders of the Orlando family consider the Kolbenheims a lost cause. Frederik's Soultrait is not even that powerful, and it's not favorable for the Orlando Family to produce offspring with stronger inheritable Soultraits."

"That is even more fucked up," Kaleb cursed under his breath. He picked a chair opposite Alice's desk and sat down, his eyes focused on his sister. Kaleb was certain that his sister was not yet done telling him about the events revolving around the Barbaric Couple.

"Well, you know how politics work. We are from a different world than others, if you want to put it like that," Alice said, a sad smile plastered on her face, "Michael has it much better in that case."

Thinking about Michael caused Kaleb to let out a frustrated sigh.

"I guess so..." Kaleb mumbled in response, recalling his own engagement and how it had been canceled all of a sudden.

"The Orlando family wants to become a High Family and create the foundation to join the rows of Superior Families in the next few centuries. However, they're not that powerful yet. A large portion of

their fortune originated from Karek and Igor's territory as well. The sole reason they accepted Frederik as Jacqueline's spouse was because of Igor Kolbenheim's territory. It was a bonus that Frederik's territory was also in a unique location. He was bound to make a fortune...not anymore, of course. The medics don't even know if Frederik will be able to regain his full strength or if he will have to live with permanent injuries for the rest of his life."

"So...Frederik lost everything, even his fiancé?" Kaleb asked gloomily.

"Jacqueline is fighting against the Elder's orders, but from the looks of it...its likely, yeah."

"Michael won't like that," Kaleb blurted his thoughts aloud.

"Michael? It's not his business," Alice was slightly surprised about her younger brother's comment, but Kaleb just smiled wryly.

"Of course, it's not his business. But he likes to mingle in other people's business."

"Well, that...is true..." Alice had to acknowledge.

"And he likes the Barbaric Couple, no matter how weird and annoying they are."

"That...is also true..." Alice agreed, which led Kaleb's smile to widen a little.

"That is why I wonder what Michael will do once he finds out about Frederik and the Barbaric Couple's struggle."

"If he comes back you mean," Alice reminded Kaleb, which caused him to slump his shoulders.

"Of course, he will come back. You know how tenacious this bastard is!" Kaleb responded, shuddering as he recalled the tons of times Michael returned from the Origin Expanse severely injured but much stronger than before he departed.

Alice didn't say anything, but the corners of her lips curled upward.

'I wonder how he is doing.'

Chapter 427 Best Instructor

Michael was doing perfectly fine.

His biggest worry was to keep his subjects entertained, to refine his body, mind, and War Rune, and to study the techniques Immortal Knight was teaching his students. After ten days of hard work, 15 Starless Summons advanced to 1-Star Blessed Knights. They were promoted automatically, which accelerated their natural talent to absorb energy, their comprehension of the body refinement technique Siegfried taught them, and how to harness the Holy Power within their Holy Sea.

Michael learned a lot too. His biggest gain was that he finally learned a Standard Martial Arts technique. It was an Inferior version to the Sacred Sword style the Immortal Knight was teaching his students, but that was something Michael had expected. He didn't have any Holy Power so he had to use an altered version of the Immortal Knight's technique to substitute Holy Power with Origin Energy.

Practicing a proper combat technique was quite stimulating. Michael learned to move in ways he never expected to move. He was quite stiff at first, but his muscles obeyed his commands once he warmed up a little. Michael quickly learned that the practical knowledge he procured from Memory Orbs was getting in his way. The practical knowledge commanded him to move differently than suggested in the Inferior Sacred Sword style introduced by the Immortal Knight.

Michael told the Immortal Knight about his experience, but Siegfried didn't have much to offer.

"To be honest, I never came across a case like you. Your memories are trying to teach you techniques you've never practiced before. That's what it looks like according to your explanation. While that might be helpful in the future, it could harm you right now. I am currently teaching you some basic techniques that force you to use the majority of muscles in your body. You will quickly advance to the Novice Mastery with your high comprehension, but the Novice Mastery is where everything starts to get a little bit more complicated.

"Your mission is to practice the techniques I taught you to Perfect Mastery. Once you reach that point you will be extremely flexible. To be precise, not many Awakened at the 2nd Tier will be able to compare

to you in terms of flexibility. By then you won't have any issues differentiating the techniques from your practical experiences.

"However, if you practice the techniques from the Memory Orbs at a higher mastery than you're accustomed to, you might suffer great harm. Your muscles might tear, and you might face bigger backlashes as well. Thus, using and tempering your muscles and every part of your body to use it in various ways will be your top priority. That way, I can ensure that nothing bad will happen once we move to the second stage of your training!"

The Immortal Knight explained everything in a calm and composed manner. Michael understood most and agreed with no hesitation. It felt like he had struck a jackpot to have summoned the Immortal Knight with the Legendary Summoning Scroll.

Maybe some other Combat Summons would have been great as well, but the Immortal Knight was an exceptional instructor. He could quickly assess his students' strong points and their weaknesses. Once his assessment was completed, he came up with a customized training plan that forced his students to go beyond their limits. But the training plan was not over the top. It forced the students to go just beyond the limit; to exceed their limit by 0.5%, not drain them beyond measure. As long as the students followed the customized training plan, they would grow stronger naturally. Even if not all Starless Summons would become Blessed Squires, they would grow strong enough to become Warriors after consuming a single Warrior Enlightenment Potion.

But that was not all. The Immortal Knight provided his students with several paths to choose from. They could choose what type of Knight they wanted to become, and he would even aid his students if they didn't wish to become Knights. He always gave his utmost to give a helping hand, no matter what they decided. After all, not everyone was made to become a Warrior, a Blessed Squire, let alone a Holy Knight. It required strong willpower, loyalty, dedication, strength, and a tinge of craziness to overcome all ordeals and rise to the level of a Holy Knight from a nameless Starless Summon.

Michael almost forgot about his other worries as he was busy with his subjects and the harsh training the Immortal Knight pushed onto him. Unfortunately, his subjects reminded him a little bit too often about the promises he made. He had yet to leave the Origin Expanse to sell some goods and purchase everything needed to construct more Beast Ranches, and to provide more resources for everyone else.

But Michael didn't want to leave the Origin Expanse just yet. He was waiting for the EmeraldLead Adventurers. They had yet to return with the resources the construction workers required to construct the Basic Level of the Sacred Knight Temple. Once Lilica and the others returned with the promised goods, Michael would gladly leave to take care of his business outside the Origin Expanse.

He had yet to get hold of his own Flag War Token, and he missed the banter with Kaleb and Alice a little bit as well. Michael was also wondering what Lincoln, Zeke, and the Barbaric Couple were up to.

As for Thaor, and Lokai, they were probably fighting somewhere, thrashing each others' heads. Mekhaz was the only level-headed Warlock Centaur. Michael was certain that Mekhaz would be fine – as long as the Berserker siblings didn't drag him into trouble somehow.

Finally, on the 14th day after their departure, the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team returned. Michael received a report, finished his training, and met up with the five Forest Elves.

The Forest Elves looked dead-tired almost like they never received a chance to sleep outside the Origin Expanse.

"Did you guys even sleep?" Michael asked lightly, only to receive heavy sighs from the Forest Elves.

"I had to explain to my mother and the Elders that I used one of my heirloom arrows. They...were not too pleased about that," Mika said, scratching the back of his head, "But I don't really care. I fell in love with the heirloom arrows and I don't regret having used it. Though my mom said that I should become a Higher Lifeform to use its power to the fullest."

"I told the Elders about our fight against the Kitsun Lord. They now know that you tamed the Elemental Empress and also that you obtained dozens of Soultraits, in addition to tens of thousands of SoulStar Fragments. Of course, I didn't tell them anything I wasn't supposed to say. Since you gave us permission to reveal everything I've mentioned just now it should be fine, right?" Liopham added, also sounding a little tired. Michael could only presume that Liopham had been asked to repeat the story of his conquest of the Kitsun Lord's territory, the strategy they used, and the gains they made in excruciating detail.

The Elders and the Forest Elven Tribe were most likely trying to reassess Michael's worth – including the value of his territory and the gains it would bring them.

"My parents forced me to train my Soultraits until I collapsed. They said that I was useless in the territory warfare against the Kitsun Lord so I had to train a lot...like a lot lot," Pheli complained once before falling silent once again. She was as talkative as usual...so not that much...

Opars and Lilica had yet to say anything, however, it looked like Opars didn't really want to say anything. All he did was retrieve a ring from his finger and hand it over to Michael.

"You might not know about that, but my family manages the Forest Elven Tribe's fortune and goods. We decided to accept the trade you proposed before. The Artifacts you handed Lilica will be enough to pay for all the materials required to construct the Basic Level of the Sacred Knight Temple," Opars said reluctantly. He then sighed heavily and added, "That is the official answer. Unofficially, the materials are much more expensive than we initially expected. Everything is a little pricey, but the massive amount required is what is truly painful. The Forest Elven Tribe only accepted your proposal because you gave everyone a 4-Star Soultrait as a present."

"Of course, a single 4-Star Soultrait as useless as the ones you gave us is more valuable than the materials we've provided, but the Elders hope that you can give us a little discount. After all, they didn't ask you to give us these 4-Star Soultraits. You gave them to the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team because you wanted to...because you needed their strength. That is not what I think about the situation, but it's the words of two Elders...Elders I don't really like."

Opars lowered his gaze and studied the ground. He was visibly ashamed that he had to relay the thoughts and opinions of the two Elders he disliked the most. However, Michael didn't think too much about it.

"Well, they're not that wrong. I never expected you to pay me for the five 4-Star Soultraits I gave you, either way. It was a sign of my trust and hope that we could strengthen our relationship in the future. That worked out pretty well, so I'm quite happy. As for the materials, please thank your parents and the Elders for providing everything we needed to construct the Basic Level of the Sacred Knight Temple," Michael responded calmly, a big smile on his face.

He didn't care about the Elders' words. All he thought about was the Sacred Knight Temple. Therefore, he forwarded the spatial ring to one of his assistants whom Michael assigned the responsibility of starting and supervising the construction of the Sacred Knight Temple.

"But tell me about the last few days. How did it work out? Are you allowed to stay here and sign a Soul Pact, or are there some difficulties?" Michael asked, glancing over to Lilica who had yet to say anything.

Chapter 428 The Elves are Back!

Since Lilica hadn't said anything after they returned to the Origin Expanse, Michael's gaze flicked at her.

However, Lilica seemed a little lost in thoughts. She was staring straight-ahead with a blank look.

"Hellooo, Lilica?" Michael asked, waving his hand in front of her. Only then did she regain her senses.

"W-what happened?" She asked, which resulted in chuckles from behind her. The other Forest Elves looked at her smugly. At last, Opars decided to give Lilica a helping hand, "Michael asked if we're now allowed to sign a Soul Pact, and if we're allowed to stay in his territory permanently."

"Ahhh," Lilica murmured. She looked back to Michael and smiled lightly, "Sorry, I am a bit distracted. Talking with my family was a little bit...tense. Either way, we've been given permission to sign Soul Pacts, and to stay with you in the Origin Expanse. As long as we won't have to fight Forest Elven Lords in the Origin Expanse, that is. And there are some other clauses we need such as the permission to leave if something happens back at home."

"We also need to clarify the price for Soultraits and so on. That can also be done later because we don't want to obtain more Soultraits right off the bat. For now, we want to train with our current Soultraits, study them in-depth and incorporate them into our combat styles. Nonetheless, the price of Soultraits will be important at a later time," Lilica clarified.

Michael couldn't agree more, "Pricing Soultraits is something I have issues with as well. For now, I would like to change our Links of Loyalty to ordinary Links of Loyalty without any alterations. Then I would like to use Soul Pacts to act as business contracts. That means the Soul Pacts are like employee contracts. You will be given a certain number of SoulStar Fragments every month. Joining territory battles will increase your share of SoulStar Fragments according to your contribution after the territory battle ends. I am willing to give your team credits such as Soultraits and SoulStar Fragments. But, of course, you would have to pay back the credits later."

"As for pricing Soultrait Symbols, I am not sure how to price them. When you leave the Origin Expanse the next time, can you ask your parents what they demand for an Intermediate Summoning Core, and a Neutral Basic Summoning Core. I want to compare the Forest Elven Tribe's pricing with my kind's market, and that of the Tritan Alliance," Michael explained calmly.

Every race had their own unique market. Forest Elves lived in forests, and they spawned in flourishing environments in the Origin Expanse as well. Meanwhile, mankind was the opposite. Their spawn points in the Origin Expanse were mostly the Barren Lands, the Frozen Tundra and the Sacred Desert.

Therefore their market was different. Humans paid a lot for agriculture-type blueprints while Forest Elves had those blueprints stored away, numbered in millions.

"I can do that. But I doubt that we can provide you with the resources required for the Intermediate and Advanced levels of the Sacred Knight Temple. My parents told me that selling those materials would use up the stock of certain highly valuable resources, resources that our people require quite often as well. Maybe, I can negotiate a little bit and obtain some resources, but that will only be a portion and not everything," Opars said.

Michael fell deep in thought. He had been hoping to splurge a little bit with the 43 Soultrait Symbols in his possession to procure the resources needed to complete the construction of the Sacred Knight Temple soon. Once completed, the Sacred Knight Temple would become the holy training ground in Michael's territory. He was not sure how long it would take for the first Holy Knights and Sacred Knights to appear, but given that it required barely two weeks for 15 Blessed Squires to appear even without the Sacred Knight Temple's support, Michael was certain that he wouldn't have to worry about his heavy armored combat unit.

Now that the construction of the Sacred Knight Temple had begun, all Michael had to do was to make enough space for the foundation before waiting patiently until his subjects completed the task ahead. Michael deployed a total of 3,000 subjects to work on the Basic level of the Sacred Knight Temple. He hoped that it was enough to complete the Basic level within a month.

If his calculations were accurate, the construction of the basic level would be completed just before the Battle Exchange ended. Therefore, Michael would have two more months – four if the time dilation of the Origin Expanse was applied – before the Interdimensional Flag War would begin.

Until the Interdimensional Flag War started, Michael wanted to grow a lot stronger. He required more subjects, stronger subjects, and firmer Links of Loyalty to ensure that his Soultraits were stronger than the Tekur. After all, the Tekur were said to be a tough nut to crack.

Michael cleared his mind to stop the thoughts from overwhelming him. He discussed the Soul Pact with the Forest Elves for a while before they changed the conditions of the Links of Loyalty once again. The altered Link of Loyalty was removed, and an ordinary Link of Loyalty was created instead. Thereafter, Michael felt much closer to the Forest Elves. Whereas altered Links of Loyalty were good for ensuring fairness between the two parties, an ordinary Link of Loyalty was much stronger. It provided far more Soul Power to the Lord – the dominant force –, and it felt different.

The firmness of the ordinary Link of Loyalty was much more durable than the altered Link of Loyalty. That might be the usual for ordinary Links of Loyalty, but it also showed that the Forest Elves trusted Michael a lot.

"Since the Sacred Knight Temple is under construction and we've finished replacing the Links of Loyalty, how about I show you something before we write down everything for the Soul Pacts?" Michael asked, smiling slyly.

The Forest Elves didn't know what to expect, but they agreed nonetheless. Michael looked over to Opars, who recalled something. He retrieved a blueprint in addition to a handful of tendons originating from a Superior Tier-4 Monster.

"I nearly forgot about those. Actually, I don't really understand what you want to do with them. We can produce artificial 2-Star Tier-4 Artifacts with those...so my parents were reluctant to give them to me..." Opars mumbled, shaking his head to dispel his weird thoughts.

He handed the tendons and the blueprint to Michael, who gestured at them to follow him.

"I might not be able to produce a Tier-4 Artifact, but I am pretty sure that this will be at least as useful, if not better," Michael mumbled.

It didn't take long before they reached the basement of the wooden manor where the Relic of Draka was located. A bunch of recently forged Spirit Armaments were waiting to be collected. Michael put them aside, and replaced the installed blueprint with the one he obtained from Opars just now before he put the tendons and a large batch of wooden planks inside the metal cart located right next to the Relic of Draka.

The wooden planks were something Michael had extracted from the bookshelf that had once blocked the path leading to the cellar where the Elemental Empress, Zeroa, had been confined. The bookshelf had been extremely hard to extract. It was extremely tough and extracting it to obtain a wide variety of wooden planks hadn't been that easy either.

Ignoring the effort Michael put into the extraction, all he could hope for was that the Relic of Draka could also work with organic materials. Until now, Michael used ores and metals to have the Relic of

Draka forge stuff. But now he hoped that the Relic could produce a handful of bows for the Forest Elves. Spirit Bows would enhance the Forest Elves externally without being counted as an Artifact. That would give them an upper hand over others, especially if the Spirit Bow enhanced them as much as an Epic Tier-2 Artifact, or maybe even a natural Tier-3 Artifact.

Michael waited patiently to see if the Relic of Draka was about to start moving, but nothing happened. He waited ten minutes only to realize that he might have been a little bit too excited, thinking that the Relic of Draka could create Spirit Bows as well.

"It was worth a try, I guess. Sorry to disappoint y'all, but how about we write down all notes about the Soul Pacts now?" Michael could only say, leaving the Forest Elves a little stupefied. They were just about to turn around when Lilica pointed at the Relic of Draka.

"It began to move!"

"Yes!!"

His plan worked! Michael had no idea how the Magical Smithy would turn the wooden planks and tendons into a bow without crushing them into little pieces, but the Relic of Draka accepted it as a raw material and began to work. That was some good news!

"Now the Soul Pact!" Michael declared in excitement. He cleared his throat and led everyone outside. On the first floor of the wooden manor, they gathered around a table. Interestingly enough, Michael and the Forest Elves found Tiara who seemed to have been waiting eagerly for their arrival.

Tiara smiled, and the others returned a vibrant smile. They greeted Tiara like she was their sister whom they hadn't seen for years.

Michael was not sure if they were a little bit over the top, but it was fine. In fact, it was more than just fine. It was nice to see his people grow attached to each other.

"Let's start with the real deal now!"

Chapter 429 Weird Encounter

It took a few hours before they finally agreed on and finalized all the clauses required for their custom Soul Pact. After that, it was only a matter of minutes before the Soul Pact between the EmeraldLeaf Adventurers and Michael had been completed.

Now that everything was completed, Michael spent another day in the Origin Expanse to see if the Relic of Draka was actually capable of producing a Spirit Bow.

Fortunately, it worked out much better than Michael could have hoped for. The Spirit Bow was radiant and seemed fluid. It was near weightless to hold. The bowstring emitted a soft hum as Michael drew it back and glimmered brightly, almost as if stardust had been collected to forge the Spirit Bow.

The external enhancement provided by the Spirit Bow was not as powerful as that of the Legendary Ring Artifact, but it was similar to the enhancement his Spirit Armor Set gave him. That was what Michael had hoped for. It would enhance the Forest Elves' power significantly, especially Mika's.

'The strength required to draw the bowstring is quite high, but it should be fine with enough practice. The power it can exhibit should be more than enough to deal with strong enemies.'

Now that the first Spirit Bow was finally ready to use, Michael decided that it was about time for him to leave the Origin Expanse once again. It had been a while but it was definitely time.

After a quick stroll through his territory to ensure that everything was fine, Michael manifested the Runic Gate and stepped through it. Michael closed his eyes as space around him twisted. He only opened them after he emerged back in Piloq.

Taking a deep breath of Piloq's air was enough to understand that he had truly left the Origin Expanse. The origin energy permeating the air was scarce, almost non-existent, and it wasn't as fresh as the air in the Untamed Jungle. Michael had just stepped out of the Origin Expanse, but he felt like returning already.

But before Michael could reconsider returning again, he was bombarded with messages. Michael didn't think that anything was wrong when he saw that Alice and Kaleb messaged him. However, his danger senses rang wildly when he noticed that Jacqueline had left him a message too – more than once at that.

Jacqueline Orlando never sent him messages. She didn't like him because he always beat up Frederik. At least, that was what Michael picked up from her. That was why it was even weirder to see that Jacqueline sent him more messages than Alice and Kaleb together.

He opened the messages on Starnet Messenger and began to read through them slowly. Michael went through them one by one, reading each of them with full focus. In the meantime, he walked through Piloq, hoping that he would somehow end up near Alice's office – though he had no idea where it was actually located.

But that was fine since Michael's instincts led him straight to the Colosseum where he could ask others for more information. Michael finished reading through Jacqueline's chaotic chat when he reached the Colosseum. His expression was sour and his eyes filled with anger.

"What a fucking mess," Michael cursed under his breath without realizing that a small group of Awakened was standing next to him.

"I totally agree," One of the Awakened said. He was a young human, who was either his age or one year older.

Michael looked up just to see that the young Awakened and his group were looking at another group that stood near the entrance of the Colosseum and whispering among themselves. Their group consisted of more than 20 members, surrounding a young woman as if they feared that someone would kidnap her.

"I didn't mean tha–..." Michael said, but the young Awakened didn't pay attention to Michael's words. Instead, he stretched out his hand with a thin smile plastered on his face. It seemed fake.

"My name is Fernando Jochez. Nice meeting you ...?"

"Michael. I'm Michael Fang," Michael responded automatically.

"Nice meeting you, Michael. But I cannot recall having heard about your family before. Where is your family from?" Fernando asked with great curiosity. His hand reached out for Michael's hand, but Michael pulled back before Fernando could grasp him.

"I am not from any influential family," Michael answered, his discomfort increasing the longer he spoke to Fernando.

Fernando's hand pulled back and he clicked his tongue. From one moment to the next his kind and welcoming expression turned into disgust. Fernando looked at his hand, glad that Michael had not shaken it.

"At least, this nobody knows that he shouldn't shake my hand," Fernando mumbled, turning away to ignore Michael.

Michael nearly burst into a laughter hearing such nonsense coming out of the young Awakened's mouth. It had been quite a while since he encountered such an idiot.

"Michael! Why didn't you message us that you've returned?!"

Michael heard a familiar voice from behind him and turned around with a smile. He forgot about Fernando and looked at Kaleb, who rushed toward him with a relieved smile. Interestingly enough, Alice Zenovia was also there. Her pace had been slower than Kaleb's but seemed to accelerate suddenly to arrive in front of Michael before Kaleb did.

"Good thing I saw you on one of the observation cameras," Alice said, looking at the holographic screen next to him before adding, "You were too engrossed in some messages to see that we've been messaging you as well. Did Jacqueline write to you?"

Michael was a little surprised that Alice accurately guessed what he had been up to, but he gave her a nod. "Her chat is a mess, but I think I got the gist of her situation. I hope Frederik is doing fine now..."

Because of Fernando Jochez, Michael had momentarily forgotten about the Barbaric Couple's problems. Jacqueline's problem could be considered less troublesome than Frederik's issues, but it was still something that could decide her or their future.

Would the Barbaric Couple split up in the future, or would they elope and run away from the Elders of the Orlando Family? If it was in Jacqueline's hands, Michael was certain that they would run away.

However, Frederik would never be able to forgive himself for not being able to provide for Jacqueline. Jacqueline was a spoiled brat, and Frederik loved to spoil her. But now Frederik was still in a coma and had also lost his entire fortune. His father was also a cripple, and it was still uncertain whether Frederik would recuperate from his wounds, or if he would never be able to regain his former strength.

The only advantage was that Frederik's Pillar of Light and War Rune weren't injured. He could still refine his War Rune without issues. As for the rest...it was uncertain what would happen to Frederik, and how he would be able to handle everything.

As Michael chatted with the Zenovia siblings, Fernando Jochez and his colleagues turned around. They didn't care who called out for Michael because they believed that nobody of great importance would value someone as worthless as a nobody without a big family backing him up. However, the voices calling out for this nobody sounded extremely familiar. Too familiar to ignore.

Thus, looking back to Michael, who was now accompanied by an otherworldly beauty and a terrifyingly handsome young man, the group froze in their tracks.

"I must be hallucinating..." One of them mumbled, only for the second to add, "The Zenovia siblings. Is that for real?!"

Fernando stared blankly at the group of three for a few seconds. He tilted his head and wondered,

'Did he lie to me? He could have just said that he is affiliated with the Zenovias!!'

Fernando reconsidered joining their conversation, but he decided against it after weighing the pros and cons. It looked like the Zenovia siblings liked the nobody quite a lot given that they stood so close to him while talking. The siblings were fully invested in their conversation with Michael and didn't take note of anything around them.

Therefore, Fernando had to back off. Joining their conversation would backfire after just treating Michael like trash because of his non-existent family background.

Frustrated, Fernando entered the Colosseum, ignoring the comments of his colleagues.

Alice looked at Michael, precisely his bald head, and suppressed a laugh. Her glacier-cold facade nearly burst seeing that Michael lost his hair...once again.

Kaleb, on the other hand, didn't suppress his chuckle. He laughed aloud and teased Michael about losing his hair once again.

"Just keep your look like this. You can get an eyebrow tattoo. That way you don't have to worry too much about losing your eyebrows the next time you let your enemies burn your hair!"

For a moment, Michael considered actually tattooing some eyebrows, but he recalled that his skin burned way too often as well. His tattoo would probably burn alongside his hair.

'I should get hold of a healing Soultrait. If I cannot find one...at least give me a Soultrait that accelerates hair growth...' Michael cursed inwardly, while maintaining a poker face on the outside.

The siblings had fun for a few minutes, until Kaleb noticed something, "Wait! Since when are you at the Mid-rank of the 2nd Tier?!"

Michael pressed his lips together and stared at Kaleb as if he wanted to say 'Are you serious right now?.' But he then recalled that he had yet to tell Kaleb and Alice about the Kitsun Lord and the territory warfare.

"I just fought some enemies and advanced. Yay," Michael said lightly, fully understanding how curious Kaleb was.

"A few enemies? Advancing just like that? Don't fool me, Michael! Tell me in detail!" Kaleb demanded while Alice nodded eagerly as well.

She was also curious about what Michael had to go through to refine his War Rune so quickly. After all, she knew that Michael required more energy than most others. He had too many Soultraits, after all.

"Alright, Alright. So it started like this..."

Chapter 430 Supportive Friend

Michael grew stronger in a noticeably short time. Not even two weeks passed outside the Origin Expanse, yet Michael advanced one rank. Only people like Alice and Kaleb who were Descendants with high-ranked Soultraits, could fathom how much energy Michael must have obtained and refined in such a short time.

Kaleb knew that his progress would slow down after a while. In fact, it had already slowed down a little. Refining his War Rune up to the 2nd Tier had been simple thanks to the power of Frozen Nova in combat, and the generosity of his family. The Zenovia family provided him with mountains of potions and pills to accelerate his progress with the Inheritance technique, and thus also with the energy absorption technique integrated into the Inheritance technique. But now that he reached the 2nd Tier, Kaleb realized how difficult it was to continue progressing quickly.

The resources provided by his family helped a lot, but he consumed more resources with every day that passed as his War Rune's refinement progressed. That meant his family had to distribute more resources to him if they desired Kaleb to progress as fast as possible. In the future, he would consume resources worth billions of dollars to progress a tiny bit. That was not worth it, and it was certainly not something the Zenovia family would pay for. They merely focused on the early progress and gave their younger generation a headstart to prepare them for the dangers of the Origin Expanse before challenging them by saying that they were on their own now.

They would still support their Descendants if necessary, but they wouldn't do so for free. The Elders would ask for favors, favors nobody would want to pay back if possible. Alice always told Kaleb that he shouldn't ask the Elders for favors. Why? It was simple; The Elders would use the favors to their advantage and turn Kaleb into their marionette. If Kaleb was lucky, they would marry him off to a beautiful woman, someone he might learn to love in the future. If unlucky...well, nobody wanted to think about the worst case.

"So you fought this Kitsun Lord...A Lord at the Peak of the 3rd Tier, who had close to 50,000 Combat-trained Summons, and close to 1000 Awakened working for him all by yourself?" Kaleb asked, raising one eyebrow while staring at his friend.

"He said almost alone. He has...Forest Elves working for him...That seems weird as well, just saying," Alice noted, also staring at Michael. She was pretty sure that she had heard something about the Kitsun race before, but all she could recall was that they were one of the races with Inferior Combat Prowess that prevailed against Elite Races over the course of thousands of years – or so her rusty memories recalled.

"There is not much to hide. I requested aid from the three Lords who had been fighting the Kitsun Lord for years. After creating openings for them, they finally mustered their courage and came over. Once their forces arrived it was quite easy. But, of course, before that, I struggled quite a bit. That is also why I could increase my War Rune's rank so quickly."

Now that Michael thought about his fight against the Kitsun Lord and how stupid he had been, he couldn't help but laugh aloud. It was quite funny.

Alice and Kaleb continued to eye him, but they didn't comment anymore. It was quite obvious that Michael was a weirdo. But that was not breaking news.

"I should research the strength of the Token Holders for now," Michael said suddenly. He turned to the Colosseum and stepped in its direction, just to switch to a different topic, "Will it be possible to hire a healer for Frederik? Someone who can ensure that Frederik will recuperate fully? Even if he struggles mentally, I want to make sure that he has no physical restrictions. That would only burden him more."

Michael felt bad for Frederik. He lost everything, so suddenly at that.

"Hire a healer? It will be expensive, and I doubt the Zenovia family would allow us to use the family's connections to ask for a favor. If I use my personal funds it's possible, but people will still notice it. They will wonder what the Zenovia family has to do with Frederik Kolbenheim. It might cause more trouble for Frederik, and that is something he doesn't need right now."

"Can you still ask someone? I will pay. The price doesn't really matter too much," Michael insisted, ignoring the fact that his bank account was already empty and that he had way more expenses to pay for in the next few months than he wanted to acknowledge.

"I can do that. But it will be really expensive. Most don't even accept dollars as payment. They will probably ask you for Mythic Summoning Scrolls, rare resources, or other stuff."

"I will pay in Mythic Summoning Scrolls then," Michael said with a shrug, "That will be the cheapest option. I should test out extracting Summoning Scroll Fragments from purchased Ordinary Summoning Scrolls soon then."

"You...will have to prepare 20ish Mythic Scrolls...probably..." Alice said, but Michael just shrugged, "As long as it's not 100, I'll be fine, somehow. Don't worry too much about the expenses. There are more than enough Superior Existences in my surroundings. A few hunting trips might be enough to procure some Mythic Scrolls."

Michael felt a little bit guilty because he lied to Alice, but he couldn't tell her 'Well, I can produce my own Mythic Scrolls by using Summoning Scroll Fragments. You are asking what Summoning Scroll Fragments are? That is simple. I can use my Soultrait to extract a lot more stuff from my prey than others. Summoning Scroll Fragments and increased loot are just the appetizer. You ask what the main dish is? Well, how about Memory Orbs, Soultrait Symbols from Awakened, and some SoulStar Fragments as a dessert?' I think you should take a look at

Yeah, Michael could definitely not say that. He trusted Alice and Kaleb, but not their family. If anything, Michael felt more and more reluctant to tell any of his friends about the secret of his power as he learned more about the politics of the wealthy and influential. Michael might have met good people such as Alice, Kaleb, Lincoln, and Zeke, but that didn't mean their families were the same.

If he would tell his friends, they would have to sign a Soul Pact...probably. Maybe that didn't apply to Frederik anymore, but Michael was not too sure about that. Frederik could be desperate. He might be doing anything – literally – if that meant he could keep Jacqueline by his side.

One way or another, Frederik's situation was messed up and Michael wanted to help. He couldn't do much except hire a proper healer for Frederik, but that should be enough – to start with.

"If you say so, I will hire someone. I know someone from the Holy Sun guild. Well, she is the Guild leader. But whatever. I can ask her to send out a request to the healers of her Guild. It might take a few days but with a mission reward of 20 Mythic Scrolls, some healers should be interested in traveling to the Sapphirelake Military Academy to tend to Frederik. They should have Soultraits more suitable to Frederik's wounds than the healers hired by the Sapphirelake Military Academy. I guess." Alice said, giving in to Michael's request.

Actually, Alice wasn't quite sure why the Sapphirelake Military Academy wasn't using its resources to heal Frederik. Well...that was not the entire truth. Alice knew why they didn't do it, but she was a little bit disappointed in the reasoning they applied. Frederik's family collapsed before they could rise properly. Therefore, Frederik was nothing more than an ordinary Awakened right now. He lost his territory and

given his wounds it was unlikely that his enemy would allow him to step into the Origin Expanse ever again.

As long as Frederik didn't submit to someone else by becoming another Lord's subordinate, Frederik's chances of ever being able to return to the Origin Expanse were slim. As for the number of Lords who would hire Frederik, a youngling with a 3-Star Soultrait...there were many, but the number dwindled a lot if Frederik wanted a secure place to grow stronger, a Lord who paid well, and a Lord who would treat him well.

Frederik was likely to be consumed by anger and frustration, and no Lord needed an Awakened with anger management issues in their territory. They were more dangerous than useful. Frederik was well known for his anger management issues even before he lost his territory. Only some desperate Lords in dire need of strength would hire him, but Frederik wouldn't want to submit to them.

It was an endless cycle of despair and frustration, and likely the biggest reason why the Sapphirelake Military Academy was unwilling to spend a fortune to tend to Frederik's wounds. If he could get back on his feet on his own that was fine, but they wouldn't invest additional resources. Frederik had already received quite a lot from the basic set of resources provided by the Sapphirelake Military Academy, after all!

"Thanks a bunch. You are the best!" Michael said, giving Alice a thumbs up. Alice looked at Michael for a while before turning her head away.

She coughed once before walking past him to enter the Colosseum.

Kaleb chuckled before following suit, leaving Michael alone.

He was not sure what happened but gave it a shrug. With hurried steps, he followed his friends inside the Colosseum.

Michael rushed past the group of 20ish people that surrounded the young woman and stepped into the Colosseum.

Meanwhile, the group finally began to move.

They stepped into the Colosseum as well.