

Supreme Lord 581

Chapter 581 Lions In The Jungle

Michael felt the loss of dozens of loyal subjects. Their Links of Loyalty had been severed. He instinctively knew that his subjects were in a deadly battle against the Council of Xylon.

The first Links of Loyalty severed suddenly...unexpectedly, but the following Links were more predictable. The severed Links followed a series of energy shares, or right before a single energy share with more impact reached Michael.

Several hours passed in the blink of an eye until Michael calmed down. No more Links of Loyalty were severed. However, almost a hundred Links of Loyalty had been cut in total, resulting in a wide variety of emotions surfacing in Michael's mind.

More subjects than he had anticipated died in the last fight. It was unexpected, though Michael could have expected it. He had been too positive about the battles against the Council of Xylon and didn't want to imagine the worst-case scenario or any scenario that was slightly worse than the best-case scenario.

He didn't rush to call Immortal Knight. Instead, Michael closed his eyes to sense the remaining Links of Loyalty. The Links of Loyalty were a direct connection to the souls of his subjects. He called for their souls and the Links of Loyalty reciprocated. An influx of information, emotions, and senses was sent to Michael, who could instinctively tell how Immortal Knight, the Forest Elves, Tiara, and the others were doing. The turmoil of their emotions and the extent of their injuries were no secret to Michael.

'Two Holy Knights sustained lethal wounds. That's all? No more severe injuries?'

Other than the two Holy Knights, everyone else who'd sustained severe injuries died on the battlefield. This was not an uncommon occurrence, but it was unfortunate. Michael's Savannah Expedition didn't have many Healers and Priests. They weren't very experienced either. It was a shame.

'The potions were not enough to secure more lives?'

Michael grunted in frustration. He received more than ten thousand small energy shares, which was great, but the loss of 100 subjects bothered him. If the Regional War continued like this, the Savannah Expedition's forces would dwindle until no one was left.

That was not acceptable, no matter how many enemies were slain for every casualty.

'Get your act together!' Michael reprimanded, slapping his cheeks firmly.

He got up from the chair, put the development plans for the territory aside, and left the wooden manor. His feet lead Michael straight to the Greater Nature Spirit. The Greater Nature Spirit's Link of Loyalty pulled him over to the spirit's main body. Something was going on again.

"Really? Again?" Michael groaned the moment his eyes locked onto the Pillar of Territorial Awareness.

A handful of red dots mixed into a batch of yellow dots appeared on the outskirts of the Greater Nature Spirit's domain. They escaped the Greater Nature Spirit's perception shortly, but Michael had seen the dots. He knew where he had to go, and could guess who to expect.

The Zentika Empire's camps were northeast from the first appearance of the dots. Furthermore, Sun Demos, Tatjana, and the Demon Monkey Unit were nearby. Tatjana and Sun Demos had informed Michael that the Zentika Empire's people made their move.

While he trusted Immortal Knight, Tiara, Zeroa, the Forest Elves ...basically everyone who volunteered to join the Savannah Expedition, Michael couldn't do the same on the other side of his territory. Sun Demos, Tatjana, and the Demon Monkey Unit were a little bit different.

They weren't weak, but the Zentika Empire was capable of sending Higher Lifeforms into the Untamed Jungle, potentially even entities at Tier-5. Of course, it was unlikely that the Zentika Empire's council members would attack the Untamed Jungle, but it was not impossible.

Sun Demos and the others were only at the 2nd Tier. They could hardly manage to deal with Tier-3 Summons by using the environment and their great teamwork to their advantage.

That was great, but it was not enough to reassure Michael. He traveled east and approached the border to the Zentika Empire once again.

Fortunately, the situation turned out much better than Michael had been hoping for. He called Tatjana, Sun Demos, the Demon Monkeys, and the Scouts back to meet up with him. Their reports contained enough information to bring Michael's knowledge up to date.

"The Zentika Empire's camp is located as far from your territory as possible, my Lord. Though, it is still near the border between the Untamed Jungle and the Zentika Empire's plains, it is nowhere near your territory," One of the Scouts said, only for Michael to interrupt.

"I heard that there is more than one camp. What about the other camps?"

This time, Tatjana spoke, "Currently there is only one fully equipped camp. There are two more camps under construction but they're right next to the other camp. Considering the three camps as a single, bigger camp seems more feasible."

Michael rubbed his chin.

"The Zentika Empire's forces are currently not a threat. Most of the people invading the Untamed Jungle are Soldiers. They're concentrated on hunting monsters. There are only a few Awakened, who accompany the Soldiers. The Awakened are very vigilant and they move around alone occasionally. It looks like they're searching for something while protecting the Soldiers."

Only the Adventurers of the Zentika Empire traveled deeper into the middle area. That didn't confirm Michael's suspicion, but by combining the red dots on the Pillar of Territorial Awareness with Tatjana's intel provided enough clues about the situation.

The Awakened were looking for something, his territory, or someone, him. Whether they desired to discover his territory to stay away from him until the issues within the Zentika Empire had been solved, or to confront him, mattered a lot. It was crucial to find out if he had to prepare for an all-out war against the Zentika Empire, or if the Zentika Empire would spend the next few months using the Untamed Jungle as a mere hunting ground to secure food.

["Master, I killed two of those disgusting Lions!"] Sun Demos intercepted in Michael's train of thought.

The Blood Oath Demon Monkey King disappeared in the woods and reappeared ten minutes later with the corpses of two Lionheart Adventurers.

Michael was pretty sure that he ordered everyone to avoid engaging in combat until they found out more about the Zentika Empire's actions. Sun Demos seemed to notice Michael's displeasure and responded swiftly.

["They found my subordinates and were about to kill them. As their King, I had to protect!"]

"Yes yes. You had to protect them, I know," Michael scratched the back of his head.

He gestured to Sun Demos to bring the corpses, which the monkey did. Sun Demos placed the corpses in front of Michael, who used Extraction on them. He concentrated Extraction on the Lionheart's Memory Orbs to procure as many useful pieces of information as possible.

Since Sun Demos killed the two Lionhearts, Michael might as well make full use of their bodies.

He extracted less than 100 SoulStar Fragments and two Memory Orbs. There was no Soultrait Symbol, but Michael didn't anticipate to procure one, either way.

He absorbed the SoulStar Fragments swiftly before his eyes fell onto the Memory Orbs. Michael devoured them with his eyes closed, his entire being concentrated on digesting the Memory Orbs.

Ten minutes passed in the blink of an eye, and Michael's eyes shot wide open, worry glimmering in his eyes.

"That...will be quite complicated..."

Chapter 582 Complications

The situation was so simple that it was complicated again. At least, that's how Michael felt.

The memories of the two Lionheart Awakened showed Michael that the Adventurers in the Zentika Empire's camps had been given special missions.

One of the special missions was to look for settlements in the Untamed Jungle and to watch out for the Lord of the Untamed Jungle while procuring food rations from the overflowing population of the Untamed Jungle.

Meanwhile, others were given other missions. For example, one of the Lionheart Adventurers heard from his friend to mark the Untamed Jungle with his Soultraits and install small magical objects that acted similar to the Orbs of Hostility and the Pillar of Territorial Awareness.

The quality and effectiveness of the magical objects were incredibly low, but that was what made it much easier to mass-produce them.

Michael compared the magical objects to security cameras in his mind, though they were not the same. The objects were a hassle, and it would be better to remove them soon.

It was a good thing that he knew what to look for with Spirit Eyes now that he got to know about the magical objects' existence.

Interestingly enough, only Adventurers were given those special missions. That was what made it so simple to solve the situation; Killing all Adventurers would remove the threats.

Unfortunately, that simple solution was also what turned everything far more complicated than it had to be. Killing the Adventurers would attract the Zentika Empire's attention. This was even more problematic since the Adventurers roamed around with the Soldiers of the Zentika Empire.

The Adventurers forwarded detailed information about their whereabouts and their movements for the day in case an 'accident' happened. That meant, killing more Adventurers would provide the Zentika Empire information about Michael's whereabouts.

The Zentika Empire's forces would slowly spread through the Untamed Jungle until they met with resistance, blocking them from further advancing. That would give them hints about potential locations of settlements, or monster hideouts.

'Annihilating their camps wouldn't be an issue, but the aftermath is not something I can handle. If the population's morale decreases further, the council might make a move. I might be able to handle a few Tier-4 Adventurers with shameless cheating, but I cannot deal with the council's members.'

Fighting Natives, or Adventurers at the 5th Tier was not something Michael could accomplish anytime soon. Therefore, he had to avoid pushing the Zentika Empire into a corner. It might be a bit easier to do something if the Savannah Region didn't pose any danger, but that was not the case. The Regional War in the Savannah Region was growing more intense by the day.

'If Sun Demos and the Demon Monkeys stir the predators up north it should be feasible to slow the Zentika Empire's advances without exposing myself.'

Instead of exposing himself openly, Michael felt that it might be better to play with the Soldier's psyche. He made a decisive decision by allowing the ordinary Zentika Soldiers to enter the deeper parts of the Untamed Jungle.

However, that didn't mean that Michael would allow them to return safely. Not without causing some mental trauma, at least.

The Untamed Jungle was already renowned as a fiendish existence, a magical forest born from ill intentions.

Michael's actions in the past, such as his merciless movements against the Jungle Expedition, the bloody murders at night, and the detonation of Chaos Pills that had terrific aftermath on the small city bordering the Untamed Jungle, had been more than enough to plant a small seed of fear in the hearts of the people all over the Zentika Empire.

Enraging the Untamed Jungle was not something the population wanted, but they would starve soon. The Zentika Empire had loans to pay back as well. They were in dire need of food, and resources. The Untamed Jungle was the perfect solution to all problems.

Michael understood their feelings. The Lionheart Awakened's memories showed him precisely how everyone in the Zentika Empire felt, what they feared, and what they were hoping for.

He could use their emotions and fears against them by relying on the Greater Nature Spirit's power, and the Elemental Empress' Nature Affinity to his advantage.

Michael was going to play dirty.

'Let's give it a try.'

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Several weeks passed since the large battle in the Savannah Region and Michael's meeting with Sun Demos.

The members of the Savannah Expedition managed to grow stronger. Their teamwork improved and their combat experience skyrocketed. Most Holy Knights managed to increase their rank, and many members that had been stuck at the Peak of the 2nd Tier achieved their long-awaited breakthrough to Tier-3.

This was only possible because the Trilance decided to take advantage of the momentum and attack several settlements of the Council. They managed to destroy two settlements that had been constructed not too long ago, therefore, pushing the Council of Xylon further away.

The Savannah Expedition lost a few members due to unforeseen events, but the casualties remained on the lower end of the scale. They didn't face another disaster like the death of 100 members either. The members of the Savannah Expedition learned from their mistakes.

Michael wasn't idle either. He managed to use Zeroa's Nature Affinity through Taming and Power Share. It took him a while to combine the Elemental Empress' lesser nature affinity with the Greater Nature Spirit, but it was possible to control the Greater Nature Spirit's roots to a certain extent.

His firm Link of Loyalty with the Greater Nature Spirit helped a lot. Using the firm Link of Loyalty and Zeroa's Lesser Nature Affinity, Michael managed to kill a few dozen Awakened and inflict mortal injuries upon others.

The forces of the Zentika Empire were quite annoying. They moved around in small groups, using small magical objects that cast shrouds of distortion around them. The magical objects distorted their presence, which made it much harder for others to perceive them.

Even the Greater Nature Spirit had a hard time finding the forces of the Zentika Empire.

The only good thing was that Michael grew tremendously in the last few weeks. He managed to use trickery to hunt the Zentika Empire's Soldiers and Adventurers. Roots burst out of the ground, swallowing Soldiers when they expected it the least, only for High Beasts to appear out of nowhere.

Michael didn't hunt any High Beasts, but combining Extraction, the dragon might, and his natural killing intent startled some monsters enough to push them closer to the Zentika Empire's forces. Startled, and enraged, the monsters attacked the nearby Soldiers and Adventurers.

It was a little bit difficult to control roots in the distance in the first few weeks, but with enough practice, effort and a lot of willpower, Michael managed to properly use his powers with the Greater Nature Spirit to attack the Zentika Empire's forces.

At first, the attacks were merely meant to scare the Zentika Empire, ensuring that the seed of fear in their hearts would blossom. However, the initial attacks were not enough to scare most Adventurers.

They had to be struck, pierced, and whipped by the roots, clawed, and ripped apart by the monsters before they comprehended that the Untamed Jungle retaliated against their invasion.

Once the Adventurers realized that the Untamed Jungle worked against them, the seed of fear infested every part of their being. Their minds and hearts were filled together with doubts and worries, which created it easier for Michael to focus on other tasks.

The Greater Nature Spirit, the Forest Pixies, Sun Demos, his Demon Monkey Unit, Tatjana, and the rest could take care of the scared forces of the Zentika Empire, while Michael could lean back...and torture himself by training tirelessly.

Torture was the most suitable word for what Michael did to himself. He spend nearly 80% of the day researching his soul in-

depth before attempting to practice Sanctum of Life. Unfortunately, his soul was a lot more complex than expected. Even after weeks of research, Michael couldn't practice Sanctum of Life without feeling constant pain.

Practicing Sanctum of Life wasn't supposed to be painful, but Michael had to accept that flaw if he couldn't comprehend the essence of his soul. And that was going to take a while.

IF he'd managed to comprehend the essence of his soul, it would require months, if not years of research. Why? Because his Soul was everchanging. Every single SoulStar Fragment channeled into the Sphere of Light or Soultrait Symbol altered his soul.

It was only a minuscule change, but the massive number of minuscule changes created a big impact. Even worse was the impact whenever he created a new Soul Socket, and upon fusing together with a new Soultrait. Even the Soultraits he'd removed from his War Rune had permanently marked his Soul.

Other than Sanctum of Life, Wisdom Breaker was also a self-

torture device. Michael felt stupid for being such a masochist, but he desired to develop stronger as quickly as possible. Thus, he cracked his mind, mended the wound, and cracked his mind all over again. The process was not physically painful, but it was mental torture.

The only advantage of cracking his mind and mending it all over again was the incredible effects of Wisdom Breaker. It refined his mind much faster than any other technique, mostly thanks to the additional portions of the Tekur's Elite Class Technique, but it also strengthened his mind.

Michael was certain that his mind might be capable of blocking various mental attacks together with his indomitable mind. Wisdom Breaker's intensity increased as his mind grew stronger, and more resilient, allowing his mind to develop stronger and stronger by the day.

Following the Mind and Soul refinement, Consirat of War was much more pleasant to practice, just like Primordial Pillar, Pantheon's Dawn, and Leviathan Diffusion. The only other technique that was painful

to practice was Breath of the Underworld. It was true torture, just like Wisdom Breaker and Sanctum of Life.

However, his strength was not the only thing that changed. His territory changed a lot as well.

Chapter 583 Territory Development

Michael used some of the resources he had amassed to expand his territory.

Following his orders, Michael's subjects constructed enough residencies for 150,000 subjects. The domain of the Greater Nature Spirit expanded and the farmland flourished. Small patches of farmland were created everywhere to plant and grow the rare herbs and plants Michael procured from the Tritan Alliance.

The Trilance imported some of their races' unique flora as well, granting Michael more access to resources. Due to the influx of herbs and plants, the Alchemists in his territory managed to come up with new recipes and practice some of the rare potion recipes that had been collecting dust for a while now.

The Mystic Alchemists found a way to replace some highly valuable gases with Kitsun Clouds, which had been stored for quite a while now. It wasn't an easy feat to experiment with Kitsun Cloud but most issues could be solved with some effort and determination.

The Mystic Alchemist's finds and experiments intrigued Michael. It was worth paying more attention to their work in the future, especially with their research into Chaos Pills and similar dangerous concoctions.

Michael was still at the Lowest rank of Tier-3 despite receiving a large number of energy shares from the Savanah Expedition's hunts. It wasn't going to be that easy to refine his War Rune. Once he upgraded Extraction and Soul Grimoire, his War Rune would require even more energy to breakthrough to the 4th Tier.

His ascension to a Higher Lifeform would take a while.

It was a good thing that Michael was not in a rush to become a Higher Lifeform. His foundation was far from perfect, and to generate the most benefits from his ascension, Michael would have to spend a lot more time, effort, and resources on his foundation, either way.

Other than the recently constructed residencies and the Mystic Alchemist's research results, many other things changed in Michael's territory. The canopy bridge network had been expanded. It spread across the majority of the Untamed Jungle's middle area and outer ring at this point.

The Enchanters ensured that the canopy bridges were well hidden, using Camouflage, and Presence Distortion runes to cover the canopy bridges with great precision. Even Michael would have difficulties pinpointing the canopy bridges with Spirit Eyes if he didn't know where to look for them.

The work efficiency within the territory improved drastically since it was not as cumbersome as it used to be to move through the Untamed Jungle.

Unfortunately, the renovation of the Sacred Knight Temple wouldn't finish anytime soon. This slowed down the progress of the Blessed Squires and Holy Knights, who stayed back in the Untamed Jungle instead of moving out with the Savannah Expedition. Even the number of newly promoted Blessed Squires decreased drastically.

That was a shame, but everyone knew that renovating the Sacred Knight Temple was going to bring more long-term benefits. It was not like the temple was going to collapse and disappear.

The Blessed Squires and Holy Knights were dedicated to their craft. They trained tirelessly and motivated the Warriors, Archers, Assassins, Vanguard, Knights, Berserkers, and other Summons to train hard even though they couldn't use the benefits of the Sacred Knight Temple right now.

It was nice to see that his Summons worked hard. Michael gained more motivation to work even harder watching his subjects.

Therefore, Michael used his now-vast knowledge about a wide variety of techniques to create some upgraded versions of the neutral techniques his summons used to refine their bodies and minds.

It was unusual for Summons to be able to refine their souls, but Michael opted to give his Summons a Neutral Soul Refinement technique as well. He heard that a few selected Summons could refine their souls. It was just that finding those selected few wasn't easy.

Michael would have loved to give his Summons his techniques, but Wisdom Breaker was too dangerous, and Consirat of War wasn't going to work on most Summons. Consirat of War required a strong, near-flawless, physique to show its true effect. Furthermore, the technique was too expensive for the masses. Michael's wealth of resources would disappear in a single day, maybe even hours if his Summons began practicing a technique like Consirat of War.

Techniques that were cheaper to practice, and highly efficient for unrefined physiques and minds were the most useful for Summons. Their strength increased drastically without the need to drain their Lord's entire fortune.

If his Summons showed talent toward Body Refinement or Mind Refinement, Michael could always upgrade their benefits and reward them for being dedicated and talented by giving them better techniques. These techniques would be more complicated and require more resources to practice but their efficiency and effects would be much better.

Since Immortal Knight was on the battlefield, the other Instructors had to work even harder to train the territory's military. Their training was not as efficient as the training regime of the Sacred Knight Temple's Leader, but it was better than letting the Summons do as they pleased. Some might be capable enough to train on their own, but others would learn certain movements wrong, turning the flawed movements into habits.

Habits were cumbersome to remove. It was an unnecessary waste of time to remove bad habits if one could learn everything properly from an Instructor instead.

The number of high-ranked Instructors in his territory was still a little low, but that was something Michael could solve over time. The Hunter Academy would open some spots to train higher-ranked Instructors to instruct the students of the academy thereafter.

The more training facilities Michael created in his territory the easier it was to train Instructors for specific occupations. It would take some time, but the Instructors required to fill the Sacred Knight Temple and the Hunter Academy were bound to be promoted naturally or summoned sooner or later.

The Greater Eagles and the Bilrox were also having a good time. Their numbers kept increasing, and so did their relationship with the remaining citizens of the territory.

Michael learned that a dozen mutated Bilrox joined the Underground Forging Hall to stay near the forges. Their mutation manifested a Seed of Fire deep inside their bodies, attuning them to hot environments.

The exterior of the Untamed Jungle was still suitable to the Pyro Bilrox, but they were even more comfortable near the burning forges. They supported the Blacksmiths of the Underground Forging Hall and received the best food, beverages, and a personal hut to sleep in in return.

The Underground Forging Hall Expanded. Grandmaster Smithies and antiquated forging methods reached the Forging Hall. The Blacksmiths studied the Grandmaster Smithy Blueprints and spent several weeks recreating them with the materials they had. The final result of the first Grandmaster Smithy was not as exceptional as it could have been, but the following Grandmaster Smithies were extraordinary.

The Blacksmiths hired some Lesser Elementals to become temporary Spiritual Flames for the Grandmaster Smithies. Spiritual Flames were ever-lasting flames that couldn't be extinguished. It was not impossible, but most researchers said that it was near impossible. Spiritual Flames could be bound to the Soul where they would grow alongside their contractor.

Lesser Elementals couldn't be bound to the Soul like Spiritual Flames, but the Blacksmiths could communicate with the Lesser Elementals, allowing the Blacksmiths to use several new forging methods that required precise control of the flames' temperature and properties.

The Pyro Bilrox, the Lesser Elementals, and the Blacksmiths developed into a team to utilize the Grandmaster Smithies' potential. They couldn't unleash the Grandmastre Smithies' full potential, but their working efficiency improved drastically. The results of their work were also much better.

Studying the antiquated forging methods Michael obtained from the Soultrait Symbol Auction wasn't easy. Most 1-Star Blacksmith Apprentices and the majority of 2-Star Blacksmiths had to give up any attempts to study the ancient methods because their comprehension was not high enough.

They were blacksmiths but they didn't understand the Heart of Forgers, nor the True Essence of Forging properly. If they ever managed to comprehend the Heart of Forgers and the True Essence of Forging, they might attain insight and understand the antiquated methods of forging.

Some 2-Star Blacksmiths were elevated to 3-Star Disciples of the Ancient Forge.

Michael had never heard of a name for a Summon's occupation like that, but he predicted that it was similar to 1-Star Blacksmith Apprentice, or 1-Star Enchanter Novice. Mastering the craft of the Ancient Forge to a certain degree would probably be enough for the 3-Star Disciples of the Ancient Forge to be elevated to 4-Star Summons.

That was very intriguing, and it was something Michael looked forward to.

Overall, Michael's territory expanded quite a bit. He managed to start more than a dozen new projects last week and finished more than a hundred mid-sized projects that had been bothering him for quite a while.

Some of the projects were related to his territory's defenses, residencies, and the supplies his territory would require once he started another summoning session. However, other projects were for younger and older subjects in his territory. He built a large-scale retirement home for older Summons, who wanted to help somehow, but were too weak to help anywhere. They shared their vast experience of life and their craft in exchange for being tended to until they died in old age.

The youngest received a kindergarten and an elementary school. The kindergarten helped families to go to work without having to worry about their child's safety. The children attending the kindergarten would socialize with each other and learn to live in the community before they would learn some basic knowledge in elementary school.

They would get to know more about the Origin Expanse and the necessities to survive in the world. Teaching the young generation would help the territory survive for eons to come.

Chapter 584 Monster Horde

["Another High Beast passed by our hideout. Monsters keep ignoring us."] Sun Demos reported.

It had been a few days since the monsters of the Untamed Jungle started ignoring Sun Demos, the Demon Monkeys, and Tatjana's people. Several High Beasts have been sighted in the northern area of the outer rings. They've been seen hunting the invading forces of the Zentika Empire.

Currently, the tension in the Savannah Region was rising, but Michael couldn't make a move. Too many High Beasts followed by thousands of monsters passed through his territory every day. They didn't attack his subjects and ignored his territory, but that worsened the predicament. Michael had a bad feeling about this.

The monsters of the Untamed Jungle started to ignore him. How could he not be confused and worried?

It didn't take long before Michael's premonition came true. The High Beasts, more than a dozen of them, lead more than ten thousand monsters outside the Untamed Jungle to obliterate the enemy, the forces of the Zentika Empire, who dared to invade their territories over and over again.

Michael didn't quite understand why the High Beasts reacted like this against the Zentika Empire while ignoring him and his subjects, but the turn of events was not great.

He traveled to the border close to the Zentika Empire's northern camp and watched as the Beast Wave bulldozed the camps.

A humongous truck-sized serpent that was dozens of meters long smashed head-first into the first camp's walls. It charged only once, but that was enough to destroy the camp's wall. The huge serpent released tremendous energy through its head, shattering the fortified camp walls at once.

Hundreds of arrows poured onto the humongous serpent, but they were repelled easily. The serpent's scales weren't even scratched. They glimmered faintly, looking like polished onyx in the afternoon sunlight.

It didn't take long until the polished onyx-like scales stopped glimmering, dirt and blood covering the deadly beauty. The humongous serpent charged into the camp, swallowing some Soldiers alive, while bulldozing others with its heavy body. It was attacked from all sides but the onyx-like scales seemed near indestructible.

It took more than a dozen Tier-3 Knights to inflict some scratches on the surface of the High Beast. The serpent barely noticed that someone tickled it before its tale swept the Knights from the ground. The Knights were flung through the air like they didn't weigh anything. One of them crashed heavily into a massive tree, breaking the unfortunate man's spine in one go. The other Knights were luckier. Their faces smashed heavily into the soil, merely dirtying it.

No bone in their bodies was broken and they had yet to sustain heavy damage.

The Knights jumped up, ready to block the serpent's next attack when they noticed that the High Beast wasn't paying attention to them. The High Beast slithered to the center of the camp where the Commander and other powerhouses were.

Before the Knights could even think about intercepting the black serpent, dozens of beasts appeared next to them. A huge Wolf appeared in front of a young Knight, pouncing at the young fella without mercy. The wolf's claws ripped through the young Knight's throat three times in quick succession. The Knight was trying to scream for help and raise his weapons, but the energy in his body dispersed rapidly.

It took mere seconds before the world around him turned dark. He died, just like that.

The wolf kicked the lifeless body away in disinterest and turned around to face its next prey. However, before the wolf could lock onto its next target, a bony Gorilla brushed past the large wolf. The Gorilla flung a corpse through the air, picked up the wolf's dead prey, and hurled it across the camp. The corpse smashed into a group of Soldiers, the impact pushing them to the ground.

The Gorilla roared, enjoying the scenery and death around it, and charged ahead. The wolf, who would have attacked the Gorilla back in the Untamed Jungle, ignored the monster. It kicked the ground and charged past the Gorilla with its superior speed.

The enemies teamed up to obliterate their common enemy...

A Lionheart Awakened could be seen coating his entire body in black flames. The flames spread through the surroundings and burned everything in its path, whether friend or foe. Two allies, who didn't heed the Lionheart's warning, approached him and were burned on the spot. They wanted to help the Lionheart as he dealt with a dozen monsters simultaneously, only to fall victim to the black flames.

The Lionheart burned the monsters around him to cinder and didn't hesitate to charge ahead.

He was just about to aid his friends and colleagues when a sapphire-blue panther appeared in front of him. The panther's sapphire-blue fur was coated in large streams of water that shot forth with incredibly high pressure. The Lionheart had to erupt a wall of fire to block the high-pressure water stream. He retreated, his eyes widening in terror when he realized that the water pressure was not the only issue.

The sapphire-blue panther's water possessed special properties. It was infused with energy which increased the water's qualities drastically, especially the property to extinguish fire. The panther was not slow either. It kicked the ground and appeared behind the Lionheart after making a small detour around the dying firewalls.

The panther released several high-pressure water streams from a close distance and pounced at the Lionheart. Awakened as well. The flames shrouding the Lionheart crackled loudly as the water extinguished them slowly. The black flames sizzled in despair and flared up again as the Lionheart unleashed his Soultrait once again. The black flames burst forth and enveloped the sapphire-blue panther, who hissed loudly.

In an instant, a bubble of water shrouded the sapphire-blue panther, the Lionheart, and his black flames, severing the flames' connection with the surrounding energy and oxygen. The sapphire-blue panther clawed the Lionheart, his fangs digging deep into the Lionheart's chest.

The Lionheart struggled to breathe. His muffled scream never reached anyone and it was only a matter of seconds before water entered the Lionheart's lungs.

The sapphire-blue panther willed the water around them to stream into the Lionheart's mouth, nose, and ears, filling the Awakened with water. The Lionheart's black flames flickered desperately but they grew dimmer. The flames evaporated some of the water around and within him, but the sapphire-blue panther's ability to conjure more water worked easily against the flames' weakening prowess.

The following seconds felt like an eternity to the Lionheart. His eyes widened in terror as he realized what was going to happen.

He was going to drown...die of suffocation tens of kilometers away from the closest river.

Many Soldiers and Awakened saw the disastrous scene in front of them. Their eyes were locked on their drowning comrade and superior, but they couldn't do anything. Their lives were on the line as well.

The situation didn't look good. The Soldiers were at a numerical disadvantage against the sudden Monster Horde. Even their strength was not on par with the monsters that attacked them out of the blue. The umpteen High Beasts would have been enough to annihilate the Zentika Empire's camps.

However, the High Beasts didn't move out alone. More than ten thousand strong monsters from the Untamed Jungle followed them.

'Is the Untamed Jungle trying to show the Zentika Empire that they're tired of its invasion? Or is there more to it?'

Before Michael got to know Sun Demos, Zeroa, the Bilrox Queen, and the Greater Nature Spirit, he would have compared monsters with ordinary animals. The only difference between monsters and animals was that monsters' bodies had been refined with origin energy.

They could grow stronger because their bodies could contain origin energy and absorb more to grow stronger. However, many monsters were more intelligent than Michael had thought before he entered the Origin Expanse. All monsters that managed to become High Beasts possessed the intelligence of a 10-year-old. They might even be more intelligent given that Zeroa and Sun Demos were still Tier-2 Monsters but intelligent enough to communicate.

Sun Demos felt like a jealous 8-year-old boy most of the time. However, at other times, Sun Demos showed a glimpse of more intelligence. Meanwhile, Zeroa was a Pseudo-Mythical Existence. She was a little bit smarter than Sun Demos, but she was still inexperienced and young. It had only been a few months since Michael managed to rescue her from the Kitsun Lord's grasp, allowing her to see the vast world of the Origin Expanse.

Michael took his experiences with intelligent monsters into consideration as he observed the umpteen High Beasts' course of action. The High Beasts attacked the strongest enemies, Awakened, and

eliminated them one by one. Their targets were usually at a disadvantage against the unique powers of the High Beasts.

The massive black serpent targeted the Awakened whose physical strength was higher than the rest, the sapphire-blue panther countered the Black Flame Lionheart, while the other High Beasts did exactly the same. Meanwhile, the weaker monsters chose to bundle together and overwhelm the weaker Soldiers and Awakened with their massive numbers and overwhelming strength.

They bulldozed the four camps of the Zentika Empire in less than a day. Everything was utterly destroyed, and not a single life was spared. But the High Beasts were not yet done. They didn't invade the Zentika Empire, but they did something to demonstrate the Untamed Jungle's anger.

They dragged the corpses of the defeated to the border of the Untamed Jungle and created a line of corpses with the Soldiers and Adventurers of the Zentika Empire.

Even Michael couldn't help but shudder when he realized what the line of corpses meant.

—Cross the line, and you will end up just like them; A nameless corpse —

Chapter 585 Trap

The rebellion of the Untamed Jungle, as Michael named it, was merely the beginning of a much bigger event. It triggered a domino effect of unknown extent.

Michael's earlier actions had already been enough to stagnate the progress of the Zentika Empire's invasion, however, the Monster Horde's attack and the annihilation of the Zentika Empire's camps was on an entirely different level.

Michael could have destroyed the camps as well, but he didn't want to attract more attention from the Zentika Empire. He had been hoping to reach a silent agreement with the camps to live peacefully alongside the camps, for a few months, at least. A few months would have been more than enough to focus on the Savannah Region and their Regional War.

He would have traveled to the Savannah Region once the situation allowed him to move freely, and attack the Council of Xylon alongside the Trilance and the Savannah Expedition. Unfortunately, that was not feasible.

The Scouts, which Michael had sent into the Zentika Empire, reported back to him, sharing that an army of the Zentika Empire gathered. One of the Zentika Empire's armies was deployed to the Untamed Jungle!

'They will arrive in a few days. More than 150,000 seasoned Soldiers...'

Michael didn't receive much valuable information. All he knew was that the Zentika Empire's army was called Heart of the Blazing Lion and that they had 150,000 seasoned Soldiers left after utterly destroying Taros' territory in the Southern Ice Mountains. It was not a lot, but the information made him recall something he'd learned in the past.

Since he digested many Memory Orbs from Adventurers who had been living in the Zentika Empire for years, Michael could tap into their memories to recall certain facts about the Heart of the Blazing Lion. It was a powerful army with many powerful Adventurers. Most native members were 2-Star Firebender, 2-Star Pyromatic Knights, or 2-Star Ashen Berserkers.

The memories were interesting but they didn't show him the Rank and Tier of his opponents. The Heart of the Blazing Lion could be an army with most members at the 2nd Tier, or they could be an Elite force with a vast majority of Tier-3 powerhouses. In both cases, Michael was certain that their Generals, Commanders, and Captains were Higher Lifeforms, otherwise, the Heart of the Blazing Lion would have never deployed to deal with a Monster Horde led by a dozen High Beasts.

'Since the Untamed Jungle ignores me...should I participate in secret as well? I can deal with the Monster Horde later if the High Beasts turn against me, but the Zentika Empire...I rather eliminate them and fight some monsters later...'

The current situation of his territory was certainly not bad, however, the strongest forces of the military were busy bashing some heads in the Savannah Region. Facing the Heart of the Blazing Lion army head-on was certainly not the best move.

He fell deep in thought, the cogs in his mind rattling wildly.

But before he could make a decision, Michael's heart began to thump wildly. Something inside him pulled tightly, inflicting pain and a burning sensation deep within Michael.

A flood of terror and pain passed through two Links of Loyalty, taking Michael's breath away.

'Fuck'

**

A few minutes earlier in the Savannah Region.

Immortal Knight emerged next to a Holy Knight, his heavy broadsword shimmering brightly as he cleaved down. The blade split the Awakened in front of him in two parts. The Awakened didn't even have the slightest chance to block the attack. His Soultrait was unleashed at full power, but Immortal Knight's Supreme Holy Sword cut through the Awakened's Armament Soultrait like it was nothing.

Hot blood gushed onto Immortal Knight's face and armor, drenching his armor in fresh blood. Dried blood covered his entire body at this point. He weaved left and right, evading the majority of incoming attacks while blocking the remaining attacks with the flat side of the heavy broadsword.

It had been a while since the Immortal Knight overflowed with this much adrenaline. However, he couldn't feel happy about that...not right now.

Siegfried Dragoon passed through the rows of enemies, eliminating a dozen Soldiers in a matter of seconds until he arrived in a small depression. Only a dozen Adventurers were in the depression, but those Adventurers were the most fearsome enemies on the entire battlefield. That was what Siegfried's gut feeling told him.

The Immortal Knight's eyes traveled to the bottom of the depression, his attention locking onto the only unmoving body.

It was a corpse. The Laprix Lord's corpse!

One of the Trilance's Lords had been taken out, and killed. The Laprix Lord was kidnapped right in front of his allies' eyes, pulled into the depression, and stabbed to death by the dozen Adventurers.

The Valkyr, the Immortal Knight, and the other Super Elite forces rushed into the depression, but they had been too late. The death of the Laprix Lord severed his Links of Loyalty, releasing the Laprix Summons and the Adventurers under his command. They regained freedom and were allowed to do as they pleased.

Every Laprix all over the Savannah Region sensed their Lord's sudden death, and they froze in their tracks. Nobody was sure what they were supposed to do now.

The Laprix Soldiers panicked. Some let go of their weapons and fled, whereas others remained where they were, their eyes widened in shock and disbelief.

"We have to eliminate them! They have a Soultrait that allows them to pull someone in their range toward them!" One of the Valyr exclaimed.

The others regained their senses as well and charged into the depression. The dozen Adventurers observed the charging Super Elite Forces and other powerhouses, the corner of their lips tilting upward.

Immortal Knight instinctively understood that something was wrong. He slowed down, his left hand lunging forward to stop the Holy Knight next to him from charging ahead.

"Stop charging!" He thundered through the vicinity suddenly.

The Holy Knights and other members of the Savannah Expedition listened to his command. They didn't hesitate and stopped at once. Some went a step further and stepped back as well. Their hearts were racing, and their bodies were telling them to charge ahead and eliminate the Adventurers given the opportunity, but they trusted Immortal Knight unconditionally.

"Holy Shield Formation!" Immortal Knight bellowed, churning most of his accumulated Holy Power through his body. He twisted the heavy broadsword and pierced it into the ground.

Both hands held tightly onto the broadsword's handle as he infused his Holy Power into it. The broadsword began to shimmer at once, however, there was more to it. The Holy Sword expanded. It grew wider and transformed into a shield, a Holy Shield empowered with Holy Power.

The Holy Knights arrived next to the Immortal Knight. They retrieved their shields and used the Holy Shield formation with their shields as a medium. Hundreds of Holy Shields manifested in the following seconds. They connected and fused into a humongous barrier that separated the Immortal Knight and his people from the depression.

All of a sudden, the 12 Adventurers, who'd been standing in the center of the depression, disappeared. They were in the depression one second and disappeared when the first Valkyr were about to reach them.

'Illusion? Teleportation?' Siegfried wondered, now certain that his course of action had been correct.

As the Adventurers disappeared, the scenery within the depression suddenly changed. Crackling noises resounded through the entire depression. At first, the crackling was quiet. Only a few heard the noises through the thunderous sounds surrounding them. However, the crackling grew louder by the second.

It overwhelmed the surrounding noises, forcing everyone to halt in their tracks.

All of a sudden, a burst of energy flooded the vicinity.

A moment later, the depression with everyone inside, erupted in fire.

A horrifying explosion reverberated throughout the depression, bursting the ground and everyone overhead apart. The Valkyr tried to respond timely, but they could barely cover their bodies with a firm membrane of energy when a blazing inferno ruptured through the ground, erupting in a bright pillar that burned everything within alive.

The Zynur and Laprix burned to death within seconds, whereas the screams of the Valyr reverberated through the surroundings.

The Immortal Knight and the others stared at the blazing inferno that erupted in front of them. They were safe and sound behind the Holy Shield formation, but their minds were in a mess.

Who reported that the Council of Xylon couldn't fight as dirty? They could play with fire as well!

Chapter 586 Space-Lock

The Laprix Lord's death and the deadly trap set up by the 12 Adventurers changed the situation in the Savannah Region at once.

The stalemate was intercepted the moment the 12 Adventurers appeared. One of them used Pull, a Soultrait that pulled a marked target through space. The Soultrait's range of effect wasn't large and the prerequisite to use Pull was to have marked the target beforehand. It was a complex Soultrait despite its rather simple effect.

Combining Pull with a wide variety of other Soultraits allowed the 12 Adventurers to set off two traps simultaneously. First, they managed to mark the Laprix Lord in one of the battles in the last few weeks, therefore, meeting the requirement to pull the Laprix Lord into the depression. Second, the other Adventurers had the power to seal and restrain the Laprix Lord. They managed to take him down mere seconds after he was pulled into the depression.

Third, the Soldiers working for the 12 Adventurers set up a trap in the depression with explosives, Pyro Stones, and complex runic engravings to trigger the trap at a specific moment.

The specific moment was when three Adventurers used their Space-type Soultrait to teleport the 12 Adventurers out of the depression. The three Adventurers were known as Teleporters, their Soultraits allowing them to travel through space and bring other people along.

The Space-type Soultraits triggered the trap, sealing the surrounding space right after the Teleproters moved everyone out of the trap's range. Even if the Super Elite force of the Valkyr and the other forces of the Trilance owned special devices, or Soultraits that would have normally allowed them to escape the trap, they weren't able to escape this time. The space around them was sealed and the trap erupted, killing everyone in the inferno's wake.

Siegfried Dragoon and the others outside the depression stared at the disaster in shock. They realized, at last, that the Council of Xylon shouldn't be taken lightly. Just because some plans worked out pretty well against the Council of Xylon didn't mean they were on the brink of destruction.

"Retreat to the next line of defense!" Immortal Knight bellowed. He was the first to regain his senses. His confident voice thundered through the surroundings, silencing the murmurs around him instantly. Even the Trilance's force who had been about to charge into the depression, only to watch their friends and allies burn to death, heed Immortal Knight's command.

They retreated together, changed their stances again, and prepared for the next course of events. However, the Council of Xylon didn't attack anymore. Their army retreated as well.

"Are they going back now that they killed the Laprix Lord?" Tiara asked, only for Lilica to frown deeply, "The morale of the Trilance is at its lowest, most Laprix are panicking, and half of the Super Elite forces have been eliminated. It doesn't make sense to retreat now. Their chances to overwhelm us are the highest right now. They wouldn't waste such an opportunity...right?"

Lilica's attention fell onto the Immortal Knight. Siegfried Dragoon was deep in thought. His eyes traveled across the members of the Savannah Expedition, his eyebrows furrowed.

"Didn't we fight one of those Adventurers before?" Pheli asked Liopham at this moment. She tilted her head, recalling to have fought against one of the 12 Adventurers two weeks ago.

"That's rig—..." Liopham's answer was cut in half as a golden hue engulfed him.

Tiara's hair stood up to its end when the golden hue entered her view. Her head flicked back to the battlefield where a particular set of 12 Adventurers stood calmly. The 12 Adventurers had emerged in the middle of the emptied battlefield. They were in the center between the forces of the Trilance and the Council of Xylon, watching the Savannah Expedition calmly as they retreated to the first line of defense.

Both armies retreated to their first line of defense, a gap of 1,000 meters separating them.

One of the Adventurer's arms shimmered in the same golden hue as Liopham. One moment, Liopham's sentence was cut in half, and in the next second, Liopham disappeared.

He reappeared in front of the 12 Adventurers, his eyes widened in shock and terror.

Tiara was already on the move. She ignored Immortal Knight's warning and dashed forward. Silvarean Tiger strengthened her physique while transforming half of her body. Simultaneously, Zeroa coated Tiara, shrouding her body in blazing azure flames.

Tiara's fur was set ablaze and her eyes burned fiercely, but she didn't care. She motioned Zeroa to manifest a spatial portal to close the distance to Liopham, but the Elemental Empress found herself incapable of setting up an anchor on the battlefield.

The 12 Adventurers had triggered the space lock again, restraining all uses of spatial affinities and abilities for the next few seconds. It was only a few seconds, but that was more than enough to deal with their enemy.

The Adventurers were already at the 3rd Tier. Each of them was strong enough to deal with Liopham on their own, yet, they charged at him together when he was pulled into their range of attack.

Liopham had no chance to defend himself. He used the Swiftess Soultrait in its strongest form to push back and flee, but the pulling force of the Adventurer with the Pull Soultrait was simply too strong. Liopham was pulled closer to his enemies. He retrieved his Spirit Dagger, ready to give his utmost. There was no way he would die without resisting.

However, it was helpless. The dozen Tier-3 Adventurers weaved around him. They circled him and unleashed six different Soultraits simultaneously, dulling Liopham's mind and body.

Liopham's mind blanked out for a second, but that was already enough. Something felt odd. He looked down at his body and saw a dozen blades pierce through his body.

His Spirit Leather Armor Set blocked many attacks, however, it was not strong enough to resist the combined attack of a dozen Adventurers with Tier-3 Weapon Artifacts. Their blades were razor-sharp,

sharpened through enchantments, and capable enough to pierce through Liopham and his Spirit Leather Armor.

Liopham coughed up blood. The strength in his legs left him. His legs caved in and he slumped to the ground.

A puddle of blood formed beneath his twitching body.

"Didn't they say that the reinforcement from the Untamed Jungle is powerful?" One of the Adventurers mumbled in displeasure, twisting his swordblade in the Forest Elf's body before ripping it out in disinterest. He clicked his tongue and locked eyes with Tiara.

"She's only Tier-2 as well. What a shame," The Adventurer mumbled, the glimmer of interest in his eyes dying down slowly.

Tiara's overwhelming fury and rage intrigued him, but no matter how angry a little kitten was, it would be impossible to harm a Tiger. That was the disparity in strength felt by the Tier-3 Adventurer.

He chuckled lightly and glanced at the compass, the space lock, they'd used to seal space around them. It was a Legendary Artifact, a national treasure they'd been given by the Council of Xylon to participate in the Regional War against the Trilance. All they had to do was one thing; Eliminate reinforcement from the Untamed Jungle.

It was a fortunate incident that they managed to mark the Laprix Lord, allowing them to set off a deadly trap. However, their main mission was to remove the most cumbersome enemies on the battlefield; the Savannah Expedition.

The Adventurer deactivated the space lock, which the man next to him used as a sign to use Pull once again. After Liopham had been pulled to the dozen Adventurers, everyone knew what was going to happen.

Siegfried shuddered at the thought of losing Liopham and Pheli, but he didn't have the means to protect Liopham. The sudden disruption in space and Liopham's transportation right in front of the Adventurers

was not something Siegfried could have prevented. It was unfortunate, but there was nothing he could do. He had to remain strong and protect those he could protect.

Therefore, the Immortal Knight altered his tactic and ordered the Savannah Expedition to charge.

"Charge ahead!"

He stared at Stinger, who stung Pheli and a dozen other powerhouses simultaneously. Not even a second later, Pheli was shrouded in a golden hue and transported to the dozen Adventurers. However, Immortal Knight, Zeroa, Stinger, and the rest were prepared.

Zeroa created a spatial portal to transport Tiara to the Adventurers, whereas Stinger switched places with Pheli. Stinger switched places a second time, allowing four Mid Tier-3 Berserkers and two Low Tier-3 Warlock Centaurs to take its place.

Zeroa conjured another large spatial portal right in front of the Immortal Knight, allowing him and the remaining Forest Elves to move toward the dozen Adventurers.

But not everyone handled to pass through the spatial portal before their enemy used space lock once again. The surrounding space was locked again, leaving eight Adventurers of the Council with the strongest powerhouses of the Savannah Expedition.

The Immortal Knight was the first to notice that the Teleporters disappeared, including the Adventurer with the space lock. He also realized that the remaining eight Adventurers panicked.

They had been calm and composed until a moment ago, certain that their Teleporter Comrades would pull them along. However, the Teleporters alongside the Adventurer with the Pull Soultrait disappeared, leaving their allies behind.

'They sacrificed their comrades to stall time!' Siegfried realized faster than the rest, his head flicking back where he saw the three Teleporters and the other Adventurer appear...right in front of Pheli.

Their Weapon Artifacts arced through the air, and fountains of blood spurted everywhere.

Pheli's body slumped to the ground.

Her severed head landed in the wet soil with a thud.

Chapter 587 Doubts

"Fuck fuck fuck!!"

Michael had no idea what exactly happened in the Savannah Region, but he sensed that Liopham and Pheli died.

What the hell happened?!?

Their death was completely out of his expectations and too sudden to ignore.

Their Links of Loyalty shook first and then...it was all over.

Michael was bombarded with a flood of fury, despair, and sadness. The influx of information overwhelmed him, forcing Michael to sit down and close his eyes. The Cursed Seals deep inside him began to rage and threatened to explode outward, but Michael forced them into submission with a mental command.

He focused on the Links of Loyalty among the Savannah Expedition's members and noticed that everyone was overwhelmed by their own emotions.

More Links of Loyalty were severed, but no more Awakened died. This time, it was mostly Warriors, Knights, and two Archers, who died. The Summoned had been overwhelmed and struck down one at a time. All it took was one strike to kill them.

Michael prepared his heart for worse, but no more Links of Loyalty were severed.

The battle ended as suddenly as it began when eight energy influxes reached him through his War Rune. The energy influxes were highly potent. They originated from Tier-3 Adventurers, providing Michael with more information to digest.

He could piece together what must have happened, but he couldn't believe it. It didn't make any sense.

Liopham and Pheli had been killed. Just like that.

He had the Orb of Resurrection...but it was of no use if he was not next to the corpses to use it right after their death. He couldn't resurrect them...

Even if he was present...who was he supposed to resurrect? Liopham? Pheli? What about his other Summons? Who deserved to live...and who deserved to die?

Michael's mind was in a mess. He was not particularly close to Pheli and Liopham, but it was a fact that the Forest Elven Adventurers had been with him the longest. Their Link of Loyalty had been firm as well. They trusted him the most, right after Tiara. His expression turned sour

He waited impatiently until Immortal Knight called him through the communication crystal.

Michael wanted to call first, but he couldn't be certain that Immortal Knight and the others had already retreated into a more secure location. Maybe, they were still in the middle of a battle, or they retreated just now. Calling them in such a situation would put them in even more danger.

It took Immortal Knight two more hours before he called Michael. These two hours felt like an eternity. Michael felt like cursing Siegfried for taking so long to call, but he quietly listened to Siegfried's report. He had to know what happened.

"Tell me what happened!" He said, his voice cold as ice.

"..."

Ten minutes passed in the blink of an eye.

"...The Teleporters and the Adventurer with the Pull Soultrait managed to flee. The combination of their space-sealing Artifact and their Soultraits was impeccable. I'm certain that these four Adventurers are the Council of Xylon's secret weapon!" Immortal Knight revealed at the end of his report, only to break into silence.

"I apologize for reacting too slow. If I had known that Liopham and Pheli had been marked I would h—...."

Michael cleared his throat, interrupting Immortal Knight. He was a mess himself and angry. However, his anger was not directed at Immortal Knight. It was directed at himself and the Council of Xylon.

The Council had to die!

"It's not your fault. I think you know better than anyone that wars are unpredictable," He said, trying hard to stay strong and composed. He wasn't on the verge of tears, but the pang of guilt in his heart was heavy.

"How are the Forest Elves doing? What about Tiara?..."

Michael was sad about Liopham and Pheli's death, and he could only imagine how terrible Lilica, the other Forest Elves, and Tiara were feeling. The EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team had been together for years. They were close comrades, friends, and family.

"We managed to calm them a little bit. They were not doing great and were about to charge into the retreating Council of Xylon's retreating army. Fortunately, I managed to stop them with the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs' help. I'm not sure if they can continue participating in the Savannah Expedition without endangering their lives or their allies. Not right now, at least."

Immortal Knight's words reached Michael, who fell deep into thoughts.

Due to the appearance of the Teleporters, the Regional War was bound to turn even more dangerous than before. It would be increasingly more difficult to apply their tactics, especially against the

Legendary Space-Lock Artifact. The Savannah Expedition was not prepared to deal with enemies like this.

The Teleporters' presence would lead to slower fights all over the Savannah Region. Michael was certain that the Council of Xylon would turn the Regional War into a war of attrition, while also using the Teleporters and the Adventurer with the Pull Soultraits to eliminate one powerhouse after another.

Michael was just about to ask something when Immortal Knight was interrupted. Michael heard only snippets from the other side of the communication crystal, but that was enough to get to know some details about the Trilance's future actions.

"The attendant of the Trilance's military forces notified me just now that more reinforcement will arrive from the Zynur and Valyr's Clans. Their higher-ups must be annoyed that a big portion of their Super Elite Unit had been killed that easily." Immortal Knight revealed.

Michael nodded but he didn't say anything for a while. The cogs in his mind rattled wildly, trying to digest the death of the pair of Forest Elves, and attempting to figure out a cost-efficient way to deal with the Teleporters without losing anymore Awakened.

An important factor in his train of thought was that it was quite obvious that the Valyr and Zynur didn't want to lose an entire Lesser Region to rule. The regions surrounding the Savannah Region were also useful given the abundant resources and rare monsters that could be found everywhere.

If the higher-ups weren't interested in the Savannah Region, they wouldn't send more reinforcement to aid the Valyr Lord and the Zynur Lord. Instead, they would tell everyone to pack up and leave the Origin Expanse before they would be killed mercilessly.

That was enough to create a decisive decision.

"The Savannah Expedition is not strong enough to deal with the Tier-3 Teleporters. They can go wherever they want before sealing the surrounding space. They will likely avoid the strongest enemies to deal with the most annoying enemies..."

which is probably the Savannah Expedition in their eyes," Michael nibbled his lower lip nervously and sighed heavily. He would love to trash the Council of Xylon right this instance, but that was not possible...not without endangering everyone else...

"I cannot join the Regional War in the Savannah Region either, not with the Heart of the Blazing Lion army moving toward the Untamed Jungle," He mumbled to himself before forwarding the final order.

"Return to the Untamed Jungle. Tell the Trilance that we will come back. Don't mention the Zentika Empire's army just yet."

Everyone was tired from fighting almost daily for two months. Michael knew that the Savannah Expedition members were exhausted, not only physically but also mentally. The death of Liopham, Pheli, and the two dozen members who'd been killed by the Teleporters crossed the line. Their deaths were a clear indicator that it was time to retreat, reorganize, and rest.

The Savannah Expedition members were much stronger than before but they were dead-tired

But the biggest reason for Michael to relay the order to retreat was that he didn't rely the Trilance. Their words, promises, and actions didn't align well. The Laprix Lord's death was too easy. It didn't create sense that the Trilance's Lords survived for months, only for one of them to die like this. It was anticlimactic and didn't fit well into the big picture of the Savannah's Regional War.

Michael's bad feelings about the Trilance's actions worsened when he heard about the Valyr and the Zynur receiving more reinforcement less than two hours after the Laprix Lord died. It might have been a coincidence, but Michael didn't want to end up getting fooled.

"It would be great if you manage to collect a few corpses of Laprix, Zynur, and Valyr Adventurers on your way back. Secretly, of course." Michael ordered, continuing to nibble on his lower lip.

Everything might have been a coincidence, but it was always better to research on his own. That way, he couldn't be fooled by those he considered his allies.

It was not the first time his allies betrayed him.

Thinking about Quinn, Michael's arms twitched. Trusting Quinn had been a fatal mistake, and he didn't want to repeat the same mistake all over again... not when he was responsible for so many lives!

"As you command, my Lord! We will retreat immediately!" Immortal Knight responded, "Since we have already a few corpses collected from the battlefield, including the corpses you want, we won't have to take a detour!"

Michael was not sure why they had already Awakened corpses of the Valyr and Zynur, but he didn't ask. He told Immortal Knight to be careful and come back.

Right after he ended the call, Michael sent some scouts to the border of the Savannah Region.

"Scout the border and pry into the Savannah Region now and then. Inform me about every little detail. If you think that something is weird, but you're not sure if it's important, tell me. Even if it's not of great significance, I want to understand about it!" Michael ordered the Scouts sternly.

He then notified Sun Demos to pay attention to the monsters in the Untamed Jungle.

The Monster Horde might have retreated into the Untamed Jungle after obliterating the four camps of the Zentika Empire, but the Untamed Jungle was growing restless as time passed.

'If the Untamed Jungle turns against me suddenly, I'll have to deal with opponents from three sides. I cannot even rely the Trilance anymore...what a mess...'

Michael grit his teeth and fell deep in thought. The current situation was not easy, but one advantage was that the Untamed Jungle's monsters ignored him, his people, and his territory. That never happened, and Michael was certain that it only occurred because the High Beasts were more annoyed at the Zentika Empire's invasion than the internal struggles within the Untamed Jungle.

The High Beasts must have considered Michael as a native of the Untamed Jungle, whereas the Zentika Empire's Soldiers were invasive forces.

The Untamed Jungle dealt with invasive forces before resuming to their internal territorial fights.

At least, that was what it looked like.

Chapter 588 Betrayed?

It was already late at night when Immortal Knight and the rest of the Savannah Expedition returned.

Michael ordered his subjects to prepare a feast for the Savannah Expedition and a humongous campfire to honor Liopham, Pheli, the Holy Knights, and everyone else who fell victim to the dangers of the Savannah's Regional War.

The Forest Elves weren't that hungry and Mika bawled his eyes out in front of Michael. He hugged Michael tightly and wept like a little child. Michael was younger than Mika – only a few months – but Mika considered Michael as someone who was much more mature and older than him. He cried his heart out while Michael patted his back lightly.

Michael expected that Mika and the others would throw a fit in their emotional turmoil. He was prepared to listen to their complaints and be shouted at for ordering them to join the Savannah's Regional War. However, nobody said anything.

The members of the Savannah Expedition were fully aware that their Lord gave them the chance to join the battle or stay behind in the Untamed Jungle. Everyone was given the opportunity to stay back. Michael never forced anyone. In fact, even if he had forced the strongest Soldiers to join the Savannah Expedition, nobody would have said anything. His course of action was correct. Michael didn't do anything wrong.

The casualties of the Savannah Expedition weren't that low. However, they weren't high either, considering that the Savannah Expedition participated in the Regional War for a while now.

Less than 200 members of the Savannah Expedition died, most of them in the first two large-scale battles. The casualties were a result of the expedition member's inexperience and impatience. They overestimated their strength and underestimated their enemy's combat prowess grossly, thus, creating prickly situations that resulted in severe injuries or death.

Fortunately, the mistakes of their fallen comrades turned into great lectures for those who survived. They learned a lot and improved rapidly. Their strength, tactical understanding, and combat awareness skyrocketed, improving their survivability on the battlefield drastically.

Michael didn't join the feast. He comforted Mika and the others, instead. Mika and Tiara clung onto Michael like leeches for the rest of the night.

He tried to carry them to their rooms to ensure that they would sleep, but when he tried to loosen their iron-tight grips around him, the pair of Awakened grumbled something incomprehensible.

At one point, they fell asleep while clinging onto him. Michael felt like throwing them into their comfy beds, but they wouldn't let go of him.

'That's a one-time thing...' He said to himself before he returned to his office.

Immortal Knight was supposed to be sleeping as well, but after today's miserable loss, Siegfried couldn't keep his eyes shut. The dull eyes and the pale faces of the Soldiers he'd failed appeared in front of him whenever he closed his eyes.

Michael found Immortal Knight cramming through a bunch of reports. He made notes on one of the Savannah Region's copies and pointed them out to Lilica, who was also awake and in his office. Opars was also present but he fell asleep after a Healer used up the Forest Elf's last bits of energy and nutrients to tend to his wounds. Michael moved Tiara and Mika next to Opars once he managed to loosen their iron-tight grips.

They huddled together and slept on the small couch.

Lilica sighed heavily when she glanced at them.

"I have yet to go back and report Liopham and Pheli's death. I'm...not sure what to tell their families..." She said at some point.

She tried to avoid talking about her friends' deaths but it was hard. Lilica saw them die right in front of her...and she couldn't do anything about it.

At one point, she'd wished that the Adventurer with the Pull Soultrait marked her instead of Pheli and Liopham, but then again...she didn't want to die either. It was a selfish thought, but Lilica didn't want to die. She hated herself a little bit for that selfishness.

Lilica retrieved three spatial rings. One of them belonged to her, whereas the others belonged to Liopham and Pheli.

"Immortal Knight told me that you asked for some corpses of the Valyr and Zynur. I collected some of their bodies after the Laprix Lord was killed. Before the trap of the Council went off inside the grove, I noticed that the Trilance split up. The strongest forces slowed down instead of accelerating and they stopped in front of the grove even before Immortal Knight ordered everyone to stop charging. I found that weird, so I collected their bodies after they had been killed later. Nobody should have noticed something."

"I forgot about that because of what happened...later...and only recalled it when Immortal Knight mentioned it." Lilica's voice crumbled. She choked and was on the verge of breaking out into tears.

Lilica didn't speak any further. She placed the three spatial rings in Michael's hand and turned back to the reports as if she hoped that the reports could drown her tears and sorrow.

Michael decided that it was better not to bother Lilica any further. Instead, he inspected the spatial rings. Michael channeled a trace of energy into the rings to see what was hidden inside and retrieved the corpses of four Valyr Adventurers.

The Valyr Adventurers were part of the Valkyrs' Super Elite Unit. Even now, hours after death, their bodies were still strong. Fickle flames flicked around their heads, but they died down quickly.

Michael raised an eyebrow when he saw that the four Valyr had been killed with a precise stab to their neck. There were no signs of resistance on their bodies. They had been stabbed to death with a razor-sharp blade before they could retaliate.

'Interesting.'

Michael used Extraction on the bodies, focusing on their memories to extract as many useful memories as possible.

It didn't take long before the first Memory Orbs formed in front of him. The extraction was completed within a few minutes, leaving Michael with a few dozen SoulStar Fragments, one Soultrait Symbol, and five Memory Orbs.

He was a bit surprised about the SoulStar Fragments and the Soultrait Symbol since neither he nor his subjects killed the Valyr, but he pushed that thought aside. The Memory Orbs were far more important.

Michael consumed the Memory Orbs at once. He ignored the oldest memories, stored the combat-related memories in a separate file to digest later, and put his mind entirely on the newest memories.

Shards of memories flashed through his mind. There were thousands of them, yet Michael's attention pulled toward a particular set of memory shards.

'There we are. Mere minutes before the Laprix Lord died.'

At first, Michael couldn't find anything useless. Certain clues made him doubt the actions of the Valyr and Zynur but most doubts were proven wrong quickly.

There was only one memory that attracted his attention. A memory showing the Valkyr slow down when they heard something through the Zynur's secret communication channel.

The Valyr Lordess would never acknowledge it openly, but she had infiltrated the secret communication channel of the Zynur and Laprix Lord.

The Zynur race used a special technique, not quite unlike Whispering Energy – just inferior –, to communicate with each other secretly.

The Valkyr learned the special communication technique as well. Thus, they heard when the reinforcement of the Zynur race told their people to be careful of the groves.

The Valyr were confused, but they were even more shocked when the Laprix Lord was slaughtered and the Council's trap went off.

The Valkyr were shocked and spun to the Zynur to question them. However, before they could confront the Zynur...they were killed.

The Valkyr didn't even know what happened. They died, and their memories ended.

"I cannot be certain...but I think the Zynur betrayed the Trilance. If I'm not wrong, they must have changed sides not too long ago. Or, all of this is a misunderstanding? But if it's a misunderstanding, and they used other means to find out about the Council's trap, I don't understand why the Zynur didn't warn everyone."

Michael was not certain what to make of the memories. It was highly likely that the Zynur Lord betrayed them, but he couldn't say so for sure. He didn't have enough pieces of evidence to prove his betrayal.

It was possible to inform the Valyr Lordess about the intel he had. However, Michael could not give her any hard evidence as proof of his suspicion. It was not possible to tell the Valyr Lordess about his suspicion without attracting the Zynur Lord's attention either.

The Valyr Lordess didn't have a great temper. She would definitely ask the Zynur Lord about what happened. That would either worsen the situation all over the Savannah Region, though Michael was not sure how much longer the Zynur Lord would keep the charade up.

'I should keep it for myself until I have more pieces of evidence.'

That was not a permanent solution. However, Michael had to avoid confronting an all-out attack from the Savannah Region for a while.

He had to take care of the Heart of the Blazing Lion army first, after all.

Nonetheless, Michael determined to prepare some memory crystals that contained the little pieces of memories that could be used as evidence and grounds to be suspicious of the Zynur Lord's actions.

He would be ready to throw the memory crystals at the Valyr Lordess once the time was ripe.

Lilica was raging while Michael was busy preparing the memory crystals. She didn't expect that the Zynur could have betrayed them.

It was totally unexpected and more than enough reason for her to feel like charging into the Zynur Lord's territory to question him.

Michael was understanding, but he had to calm down the furious Forest Elf.

"We will confront the Zynur Lord later. Calm down a little bit and take care of the tasks with higher priority first."

It was obvious that Michael was talking about Liopham and Pheli's families. Their families must have observed something by now. After all, most races had similar devices to mankind's Lord IDs.

Michael wished that Lilica would take care of the deceased's families first.

After that, they would have to deal with the Zentika Empire's army, and only then would they have some time to spare to confront the Zynur Lord.

That was...if the Regional War in the Savannah Region wouldn't escalate all of a sudden.

Chapter 589 7-Star

Even though Michael tried not to think too much about Liopham and Pheli, it was not like he could shut off his brain. The harder he tried to think about something else the more he was reminded about the two Forest Elves.

It was even worse since the sorrowful band of Mika, Opars, and Tiara stayed close to him. They clung to him as if he could drain their sorrow and pain. On the other hand, Lilica left the Origin Expanse for a while. She had to report Liopham and Pheli's deaths and meet their families.

Michael decided to distract himself by looting the spatial rings, spatial pouches, and other objects with isolated pocket dimensions. The first thing he did was transfer all Energy Stones and other useful resources into his War Rune's storage. Following that, Michael moved to the large complex of warehouses where he began retrieving the corpses of all Adventurers that had been killed in the last two months.

The Savannah Expedition worked hard, but the majority of battles were small skirmishes. It was also impossible to retrieve all Adventurer corpses. Despite that, Michael ended up with more than 3,500 Adventurer corpses that waited patiently to be looted.

More than a third of the corpses had been given by the Trilance. That was a little bit less than expected, which was another reason to start doubting the Trilance's sincerity, but Michael didn't let that doubt disturb his focus.

His entire attention lasted on the Adventurer corpses.

Michael summoned the Soul Grimoire and retrieved a Soul Tear to use on Extraction. The potency of Extraction's power increased temporarily in response. Following that, Michael spent the next few hours looting the Adventurers with Extraction.

Michael put the extracted Artifacts, blueprints, Summoning Scrolls, and Summoning Scroll Fragments aside for later. His attention lingered on the piles of Memory Orbs, Soultrait Symbols, and SoulStar Fragments.

'Damn'

Michael swallowed hard, his eyes lingering on the massive piles.

Since the drop rate for Awakened that hadn't been killed by him or his people killed was lowered, Michael didn't expect a lot. However, that was a grave mistake.

He ended up with 3,095 Memory Orbs, 283 Soultrait Symbols, and a total of 189,529 SoulStar Fragments!

It was the first time that Michael saw such a huge pile of Soultrait Symbols and SoulStar Fragments. Of course, he'd never seen so many Memory Orbs piled up in one spot either, but the Soultrait Symbols and Fragments shocked him the most.

Michael has accumulated 122,459 SoulStar Fragments and 188 Soultrait Symbols until now. All of a sudden, these numbers increase more than twofold.

Michael's mind went blank as he reached out to the piles of Soultrait Symbols and SoulStar Fragments.

"It's a good thing I procured a larger Sealed Container to keep the Soultrait Symbols," He mumbled at some point, retrieving the Emerald Box, where his old Soultrait Symbols had been squeezed into without anymore space to breathe, and a new container that was five times the size of the Emerald Box.

Michael stored all...471... Soultrait Symbols into the new container and sealed it with trembling hands. The next thing he did was to store all SoulStar Fragments. That was rather easy. Dozens of energy tendrils burst from his War Rune and devoured the piles of SoulStar Fragments rapidly.

The pile of SoulStar Fragments inside his War Rune expanded, slowly turning into a massive mountain with 311,988 SoulStar Fragments.

'I have enough to upgrade Extraction to 7-Star!'

Not only did he have enough to upgrade Extraction, but it might as well be enough to upgrade some other Soultraits. That was pretty great, and it was also why Michael didn't bother continuing to extract the corpses of the 200,000ish Summons that the Savannah Expedition brought back.

Extraction's potency would increase tremendously upon upgrading it to 7-Star. That also meant Extraction's drop rate would increase. Michael would be able to gain more loot after Extraction reached 7-Star. Thus, he chose to be a little bit more patient.

He was about to feed the Extraction Symbol with tens of thousands of SoulStar Fragments at a time when he recalled how painful it had been to upgrade Superior Constitution. The changes caused by upgrading Superior Constitution's Symbol were more drastic than the changes of other Soultraits since it affected Michael's physique directly.

However, Michael didn't forget that upgrading his Soultraits to 6-Star had always been rather painful. Upgrading a Soultrait to 6-Star changed his physique, even if it was only a slight alteration. Michael suspected that the same – just more intense – would happen once he upgraded Extraction to 7-Star.

Michael considered the pain and began infusing five SoulStar Fragments into the Soultrait Symbol of Extraction. He added five SoulStar Fragments every second and stopped whenever he felt that his body required more time to assimilate the SoulStar Fragments into Extraction.

He was not in a desperate rush. The Heart of the Blazing Lion army was on the way, but their army was massive. It would take a while before they crossed the Zentika Empire.

Several hours passed in the blink of an eye, yet Michael didn't feel any major changes in Extraction. Still, he could tell that the Extraction Symbol pulsed vibrantly and that it was full of vigor.

Michael felt like the Extraction Symbol was excited, but that might as well be him being excited about Extraction's changes.

He was going to upgrade his first Soultraits to 7-Star. How could he not be excited? Was that even possible?

More than half a day passed before Michael's body reacted to the assimilation of close to 200,000 SoulStar Fragments. The outlines of the 7th Star had already been completed and the incoming energy of the SoulStar Fragments was used up to fill the outlines.

However, it was only now that the cells in his body began to complain. Extraction's presence weighed hard on his cells. Michael began to shudder as an increasingly uncomfortable sensation swept over him. The pores all over his body opened and sharp pain spread through his entire body. It felt like someone was trying to rip out his internal organs.

But all Michael could see was dark spots mixed with blood oozing from the pores all over his body. His head thumbed violently all of a sudden and his heart skipped a beat. Michael began to bleed dark blood from his nose and ears. He coughed up clots of impurities and dark blood.

All of a sudden, Michael felt like he was freezing. The warmth of his body disappeared and his view blurred. He stopped assimilating more SoulStar Fragments into the Extraction Symbol for a while and breathed heavily. His condition improved the moment he stopped integrating more SoulStar Fragments with the Extraction Symbol. To test whether it was Extraction's fault or not, Michael rested a few minutes before he began to channel some Fragments into Extraction again.

The first few SoulStar Fragments didn't do anything to Michael. However, as the number increased, Michael felt a wave of weakness pass through him.

'My body cannot handle a 7-Star Soultrait? But that's not possible. Kaleb awakened a 7-Star Soultraits as a Tierless Lord. If he can do that, why shouldn't I?'

Michael wondered if it was a big difference to manifest a natural 7-Star Soultrait or upgrade a Soultrait with external help. However, he quickly disregarded that thought as he recalled something else.

'The Awakening Stone!'

Every Lord was given an Awakening Stone to ensure a secure manifestation of their Soultrait. It was widely known that one could only manifest a Ability trait with an Awakening Stone, but that might not be everything the Awakening Stone was capable of. Maybe, Awakening Stones protected the Lords from the discomfort and suffering one would sustain for manifesting a Soultrait that was too powerful to handle as a Tierless Awakened.

That was merely a theory, but Michael thought that it made sense. Even Awakened with 5-Star Soultraits were usually not powerful enough to unravel the full potential of their Soultrait as Lesser Lifeforms. Only by ascending to Higher Lifeforms would they be able to unleash their Soultrait's full potential and do magical things that were deemed impossible as Lesser Lifeforms.

This phenomenon was even worse for Awakened with 6-Star Soultraits. They knew that their Ability trait was extremely powerful, but they didn't possess enough energy to experiment and unleash their Soultraits' tremendous powers.

Michael sensed something like that with his Soultraits as well. However, even though he couldn't unleash the full potential of most of his Soultraits, the power he did manage to unleash differentiated vastly depending on whether he used his 5-Star Soultraits or 6-Star Soultraits.

Even if he couldn't unleash Extraction's full potential once it reached 7-Star, Michael was certain that it would help him grow stronger...and rescue his brother.

No matter how painful it was, Michael knew that he had to upgrade Extraction. His brother was waiting for him!

Michael grit and integrated more SoulStar Fragments into the Extraction Symbol. He channeled the Fragments into the Ability trait Symbol slower than before. He decreased the rate from five Fragments every second to two Fragments and slowed down even further once he couldn't bear the pain anymore.

It was good that enhancing Extraction removed some of the additional tenacious impurities that were stuck in some spots for a very long time. However, he didn't want to risk dying just to remove more impurities from his body. He endured the discomfort of upgrading Extraction as well as possible while coughing up more dark blood clots and exuding more dark blood all over his body.

Michael grew weaker as the hours passed, but he never succumbed. He continued to endure the discomfort until Extraction's 7th Star was filled.

Once Extraction was upgraded to a 7-Star Ability trait the world around Michael turned dark. He collapsed.

Chapter 590 Great Haul

Michael's eyes opened slowly. He was not sure how much time had passed but he felt much better.

His body was warm and overflowing with vigor. The energy surrounding him was highly compressed and purified. He felt great.

His eyelids were heavy, threatening to close once again, but Michael fought against it. He kept his eyes wide open and looked around to figure out where he was. It was only now that he realized that he was lying in a large bathtub filled with glimmering green liquid.

'Intermediate Nutrient Solution?'

Michael recalled the familiar smell of Intermediate Nutrient Solutions, but he didn't expect to be bathing in it. There had to be at least a thousand Intermediate Nutrient Solutions dissolved in the bathtub. However, more shocking was that the nutrients inside the Intermediate Nutrient Solution bath had...disappeared.

The nutrients had been sucked dry.

It was also interesting that the floor around him was covered in Common Energy Stones. There were at least 500 spread through the room, probably even more than that.

"You don't have to look so shocked. This is nothing compared to what you used up in the last two days. You consumed the energy within 11,000 Common Energy Stones and the nutrition from 2900 Intermediate Nutrient Solutions."

Immortal Knight's voice reached him from the side. Michael turned to the old man, whose complexion had improved a lot. The effects of the Bloodline Upgrade Token rejuvenated Immortal Knight a lot. He was doing much better.

Immortal Knight wasn't wearing his armor like usual. Instead, he wore ordinary clothes like most citizens. That was a rare sight to behold.

"You cannot imagine how shocked we were when your attendants told us that you collapsed and that you've been spitting out blood and other extremities for hours. We were worried until we found you collapsed on the ground in your blood. Well. It was mixed with lots of impurities and retched worse than my ascension to a Higher Lifeform when I was still alive and a Lord."

Siegfried teased Michael a little, but it did not take long before Immortal Knight turned more serious again.

"I think you should control your aura a little bit better. You almost killed the attendants who changed your water and added more Energy Stones and Nutrient Solutions. I had to jump in and protect them, only to end up replacing them because you started dissecting their bodies while they were still alive. I can tell you one thing. That was...creepy!"

Michael looked apologetic to some of the attendants. He saw their bandages and the shimmers of fear in their eyes and pressed his lips together. He lifted his arm and used Archangel's Grace. Michael added Heavenly Realm by swiftly converting Soul Power and Origin Energy into Soul Energy. His Soul Energy was drained rapidly but the attendants' wounds regenerated swiftly. The skin that Michael had subconsciously extracted regrew rapidly.

Thereafter, Michael sent the attendants away after giving them some rewards, including Warrior Enlightenment Potions. His attendants did great work. They stayed by his side even though they feared getting skinned alive.

Michael closed his eyes once the attendants left. He enters the deepest parts of his consciousness and glanced at the Sphere of Light. Extraction was at the center of the Sphere of Light. Seven vibrant stars had been etched on Extraction's Soultrait Symbol. Upgrading Extraction succeeded!

Michael's attention was pulled to the pile of SoulStar Fragments. Only 11,958 SoulStar Fragments were left.

'Upgrading Extraction required 300,000 SoulStar Fragments. That's an increase of more than 10x compared to Extraction's upgrade to 6-Star.'

Michael licked his lips. He was pulled out of his train of thought when Siegfried spoke up again.

"You were asleep for two days because you severely lacked nutrients and energy, you know?"

'Hmm?' Michael frowned deeply 'Upgrading Extraction shouldn't have required that many nutrients and energy. Is that why I felt so cold and weak? I thought my body was revolting against Extraction's upgrade...'

Michael recalled something and a flood of information about Extraction impacted heavily on his mind. He instinctively comprehended more about Extraction's uses, limitations, and hidden powers.

The information also told him that Extraction altered his entire body to release some of the impurities that had been stuck within him since he was young. Simultaneously, Extraction altered his cells to tune them better. His cells were adapted to fit better to Extraction.

Michael could use Extraction far easier now that it upgraded to 7-Star and his body used Extraction subconsciously. A passive effect of Extraction had been unlocked, creating an Aura around Michael's body. He had to pay more attention to Extraction to block the Aura, otherwise, he would dissect everyone around him without his knowledge.

Injuring his subjects like he did when he was asleep would happen more often if he didn't pay attention to the Extraction Aura.

The changes to his body and his increasing understanding of Extraction were terrific. Michael closed his eyes and unleashed Dome of Extraction to measure the dome's range of effect. He didn't extract anything with the Dome of Extraction, but Michael could instinctively tell that its power was tremendous.

Everything around him was clad in a golden hue, and Immortal Knight shuddered. The dome's presence was several times more terrifying than it used to be. Siegfried felt that if Michael wanted to kill him he could do so with a simple mental command. His hair stood up to its end at the thought.

Even Michael couldn't help but shudder as he retracted the Dome of Extraction.

'Powerful'

Upgrading Extraction to 7-Star was definitely going to help save Danny. Mixed with Soul Grimoire's Soul Tear, and Enhancement, Extraction's power should be enough to remove the weakened Curse before it could regain some of its former power.

'Now...all I need is to gather more Soul Tears to strengthen Danny's Living Soul and upgrade Soul Grimoire. Then...I can finally rescue him!'

Only slightly more than two months passed since his mother told him about Danny's Living Soul and the 1-year-period he had to rescue him. His mother told him that she would take Danny away two months before it was 'too late'. That meant Michael had more than enough time to solve his other issues and ensure his brother's safety!

A sigh of relief escaped Michael's lips, but his thoughts quickly traveled to the upcoming battles and threats he had to remove soon.

The Council's Teleporters were dangerous and Michael couldn't be certain that the Heart of the Blazing Lion army wouldn't have equally dangerous members. That worry drawn his attention to the 471 Soultrait Symbols and the remaining 11,000ish SoulStar Fragments.

But before he put too much focus on the Soultraits and Fragments, Michael decided to finish his other task first. He wanted to observe Extraction's power.

Michael stepped out of the bathtub, cleaned his body, and stored the remaining Energy Stones inside his War Rune's storage with a wave of his hand. He dried his body swiftly and put on a neat set of comfortable clothes.

Once he was ready, Michael left the room, ignoring that he had been exposed to Immortal Knight the whole time. He ordered Immortal Knight to follow him and made his way to the warehouse complex once again.

He retrieved some of the 200,000ish Summon corpses brought back by the Savannah Expedition and used Extraction.

'Should I focus on Mythic Scrolls this time, or will it be better to get some Legendary Scrolls to have some powerhouses to increase my chances against the Zentika Empire?' Michael wondered but he shook his head.

The Soul Power amassed within Extraction's Soultrait Symbol increased drastically over the last two days. As a Soultrait with a higher star rating, Extraction possessed a higher conversion rate than his other Soultraits. The conversion rate was directly related to the Soul Power every single Link of Loyalty provided.

If the Soul Power provided from the Links of Loyalty of a Starless Summon would be 0.001 Units at its strongest, a 1-

Star Summon could provide 0.01 Units at its strongest. However, most Awakened couldn't attain a higher conversion rate than 50% due to their Soultraits' limit.

There were multiple ways to exceed a Soultrait's limit via external means, but there was one particular fact that couldn't be shaken; The higher a Soultrait's star rating the higher the conversion rate.

Upgrading Extraction to a 7-Star Soultrait increased the conversion rate drastically, therefore, increasing the Soul Power provided from every Link of Loyalty.

That meant it might be more beneficial for Michael to increase his strength by summoning as many Summons as possible. Their Links of Loyalty would increase his Soul Power manyfold, granting him tremendous power to deal with the Zentika Empire's army.

Michael had enough residencies for 100,000 new Summons, but he shook his head quickly.

'First, I need to check what resources I have.'

It felt like an eternity passed but Michael was done extracting the loot from 200,000ish Summons.

The drop rate of Extraction at 7-Star didn't increase tremendously. Actually, that was not correct. Some drop rates changed drastically, while others didn't seem to have changed so much. However, the slight changes were enough to create a massive increase in gains since he had so many corpses to extract.

A few Summoning Scroll Fragments more from every corpse was equivalent to 1 to 2 Legendary Summoning Scrolls given the sheer mass of corpses he had looted.

He made a massive haul. The gains were enough to shock Immortal Knight to the core. He stared at his Lord, his hands trembling in excitement.

'I'm glad that you resurrected me,' Immortal Knight nearly blurted out loud.

Michael didn't see the glimmer in Immortal Knight's eyes. He was too excited and shocked about the gains he made. He incorporated the Scrolls, blueprints, and other loot he procured from the Awakened corpses and spread his entire energy through the warehouse complex to count his gains- Even though he gained a lot from extracting a portion of the Awakened's War Rune storage...it was nothing compared to the gains he made from the 200,000ish Summons.

He looted a total of 12,405 Artifacts. More than half of them were Tier-1 Artifacts, but even among those were a few interesting gains. One natural Epic Tier-1 Weapon Artifact, and close to 250 4-Star Tier-1 Artifacts. Other than that, Michael gained various Tier-2 Artifacts. Most of them were 2-Star Artifacts, but there were some rare finds as well. The overall haul from Artifacts was better than ever.

But the Artifacts were merely the beginning of Michael's great haul. He procured 124,580 Blueprints, 145,600 Ordinary Summoning Scrolls, and 6,001,430 Summoning Scroll Fragments.

He could combine the Summoning Scroll Fragments into 600 Mythic Scrolls, or 6 Legendary Scrolls!

The big question, however, was...what was he going to do??