

S. Lord 893

Chapter 893 Military Might

Expanding his territory hadn't been as challenging as Michael expected. He had been certain to encounter countless challenges to claim the Sacred Desert, but it was rather simple. Of course, the situation wasn't all that rosy. Michael might have conquered the Sacred Desert, becoming its Region Ruler, but there were still more than a dozen Lords bordering the Sacred Desert.

If the neighboring Lords considered Michael a threat at some point, he would have to defend his territory from all sides at once. A situation like that was unfavorable, so Michael paid much attention to his territory's military might. He and his people trained more than 1.5 million Combat Summons, ensuring the barracks at the Border Fortresses would always be occupied.

Michael had enough Combat Summons to deploy all over the 22 Border Fortresses in the Sacred Desert, occupy the barracks in the other settlements, keep the population in order, and protect the Pentagon Forts in the Untamed Jungle.

The Combat Summons could be permanently assigned to their settlement, but most were in a rotation, allowing them to travel freely through Michael's territory whenever they were off-duty. On duty, they would train meticulously to refine their Energy Pillar and stay sharp at all times, but off-duty, they didn't have to do such a thing. But that didn't mean they wouldn't train. Off-duty Combat Summons were often seen training even harder than the on-duty Summons. They could be found in the Untamed Jungle, training the hardest in the Sacred Knight Temple, the Hunter Academy, or with people like Legion and Master Tigris. Their reasoning was simple: They might be Combat Summons and treated very well, but their ambition wasn't satisfied. A portion of the Combat Summons wasn't happy being 'mere' 1-Star Summons. Not only did they want to increase their star rating, but their ambition pushed them also to refine their Energy Pillar and reach a higher Tier.

Michael focused on that kind of Combat Summons by granting them more resources. He was fairly open with that. For the records, every hard-working Summon – and Awakened – was given more resources than the batches of subjects who did the bare minimum to complete their jobs.

Others might dislike this behavior, but Michael felt it was obvious. Of course, he would favor those who worked harder than the rest. The most hard-working Summons and Awakened were the batches that would transform into his territories' strongest powerhouses and most influential assets. The only problem was that Michael had fewer means to promote his Summons to a higher star rating. While it was fairly easy to push Starless Summons to 1-Star Warriors, Hunters, Blessed Squires, and a wide variety of non-combat occupations, the difficulty to promote 1-Star Summons against – or train Mages with elemental attunement – increased exponentially. That was not only because the dormant potential of Starless Summons was usually not high enough to promote them twice, but it was also owed to the lack of specific resources.

Michael's trading cycle might have expanded slightly in the last two years, but training grounds like the Sacred Knight Temple were rare and hard to find. But even if they weren't rare, it would be difficult to create many 2-Star Summons – let alone 3-Star Summons. Fortunately, Michael had multiple Awakened with Soultraits that aided Summons and stimulated their star rating promotion. Creating Awakened with Training-type Soultraits had been one of the first things Michael did when he noticed his Summons' struggles, but that was only the beginning.

Michael procured 6,915,000 SoulStar Fragments and 1019 Soultrait Symbols from the Blaze Patriarch, the remaining family members, and their Subordinates. That type of fortune was enough to hire more Awakened and train them meticulously. The number of Subordinates – Awakened connected to him – increased to more than 3,000. Almost a third of them were Silverfangs, which was how Michael reached such a high Subordinate count. After all, the Silverfangs' Links of Loyalty didn't burden him. They burdened Caesus and Tiara instead.

One way or another, Michael had a fortune of SoulStar Fragments and Soultrait Symbols, and he utilized them well. He upgraded Spirit Eyes to 7-Star, transforming his first fused Soultrait into something called [Seer]. By upgrading Spirit Eyes to a 7-Star Soultrait, its powers skyrocketed.

First, Michael's vision improved by leaps and bounds as the Soultrait's star rating improved.

Second, the golden-silver marks covering his eyelids and subtle vein-like marks spread around his eyes extended. At this point, the marks reached his ears, further augmenting his hearing sense.

Third, his powers like Spiritual Domination, Spirit Sight, and Prognosis evolved. Their powers intensified as the potential reached new limits. Spiritual Domination transformed into Domination, creating attacks that harmed the target's mind, soul, and physique. Michael could focus on one damage type or use multiple types together. That way, he could unleash more power in specific ways to harm the target where it hurt the most. Finding out where the target was hurt the most was also fairly simple after Spirit Sight evolved into True Vision. True Vision's effect was both active and passive. Michael's passive ability to see his enemy's Energy Pillar and how much energy they'd accumulated stayed, but it grew stronger. He could also see his targets' weak spots much easier and black spots, which pinpointed old wounds that hadn't been healed perfectly. By actively using True Vision, Michael could see the black spots more easily. Other than that, Michael could now see how his targets' Soultraits affected their origin energy and physiques.

That, alongside Perfect Prediction, which was what Prognosis had evolved into, Michael could target his enemies' weak spots and kill them much faster.

He acquired all of that for a measly 360,000 SoulStar Fragments.

Following Spirit Eyes' evolution to Seer, Michael also upgraded Qi and Cosmic Stride. Neither of the two evolved, but their powers skyrocketed in response. Using Qi and Cosmic Stride was much easier than before; they consumed a lot less energy, and their upper limit increased by a multitude. Michael had yet to discover their limits, but he was fairly sure that it was only a matter of time and energy before he could travel through stellar systems using Cosmic Stride. Maybe if he used Soul Tears, Greater Enhancement, and enough Energy Stones to overclock 7-Star Cosmic Stride, it would be enough to cross the borders of stellar systems.

That would be interesting, but Michael wasn't planning to end up dead-tired from experimenting with Cosmic Stride and space jumps of such a high level. He'd much rather upgrade Cosmic Stride to 8-Star, reach a higher Tier, and jump through stellar systems nonchalantly in the future.

Qi was a confusing Soultrait. Upgrading didn't unravel more powers, but it decreased the energy consumption and the strain it put on his mind. At this point, Michael shouldn't have any issues manifesting 1,000 average-sized Qi Swords with enough lethal power to kill Peak Tier-3 powerhouses. By going all out with Qi, even High Awakened would have difficulties surviving the barrage of 1,000 Qi Swords.

Either way, Michael spent a small fortune of 225,000 SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Qi to 7-Star and 775,000 SoulStar Fragments to do the same with Cosmic Stride.

It cost more than one million SoulStar Fragments to upgrade three Soultrait Symbols to 7-Star, but Michael wasn't done yet. He had been more than willing to invest a great fortune into upgrading his Soultraits to 7-Star.

That was exactly what he did.