

S. Lord 897

Chapter 897 Clash

Michael didn't harbor any ill intentions toward the Red Dragon any longer. He had been angry at the Red Dragon, but it wasn't like the youngling was at fault for the chaos in the Lord Rift. The Red Dragon had been an egg then and suffered as much as the others. It was abducted from its mother's nest.

A single use of Mind Reader showed Michael that the Red Dragon wasn't on Taros' side voluntarily. The Red Dragon hoped Michael would kill it and free it from years of torture and enslavement. But Michael didn't do that. Instead of killing the Red Dragon, Michael used Greater Enhancement at full power on Taming. Right after, he unleashed a Soul Technique he'd created following Taming's upgrade to a 7-Star Soultrait. It was a Superior Soul Technique called Unstoppable Taming.

Unstoppable Taming used all soul power accumulated within Taming's Soultrait Symbol to increase the potency and efficiency the next time Michael used Taming. Michael did that, using Taming on the Red Dragon.

Taros' eyes narrowed when a massive magical circle manifested underneath the Red Dragon. First, he was certain the magical circle would harm him and the Red Dragon. It would hit the Red Dragon first before coming his way. That was good. Using the Red Dragon to tank the damage would grant Taros enough time to assault Michael.

That was his plan, and he quickly realized it would fail.

Taros sensed the changes in the magical circle and the massive energy unleashed to empower it. Suddenly, the magical circle jumped into effect. It glowed vibrantly and coated the Red Dragon in a dense semi-transparent hue. The Red Dragon roared in pain but wasn't the only creature in pain. Taros groaned as a splitting headache filled his mind. His eyes widened, and he flicked to Michael, who smiled at the Red Dragon.

The Red Dragon stared back into Michael's eyes in a stupor. It shuddered, its scale clattering loudly, as it regained bits of freedom.

'It works.' Michael had used Taming in its strongest form to clash with whatever power Taros had used to force the Red Dragon into submission. He didn't know how well it would work or how difficult it was going to be, but Michael had to give it a try. He succeeded.

The crystal embedded in Taros' chest cracked. Paper-thin cracks spread through the necklace, telling Taros everything he had to know. The monstrosity of an Awakened changed his plan in a split second.

"You're of no use anymore, lizard," Taros grumbled, activating his Soultrait, Glutton.

Something within Taros stirred. Glutton's growing power surged through the abomination, and greed glinted in his eyes when he turned to the Red Dragon. [A Taboo. Interesting.] The World Serpent noted while Michael realized what Taros was going to do.

He accessed Cosmic Stride with spatial-attributed origin energy and teleported next to Taros. He reached out for his arm and teleported both as far from the Red Dragon as Cosmic Stride allowed him instantaneously.

His energy reserves didn't decrease significantly, but Cosmic Stride churned wildly. Taros wasn't prepared for Michael's move and upped his guard against spatial movements too late. He was teleported tens of kilometers from the settlements and the Red Dragon.

A primal roar escaped Taros' lips when he noticed where he was. His head flicked toward the settlement where the Red Dragon was still hovering. But before he could make a move, the crystal embedded into his chest shattered.

The abomination lost control of the Red Dragon. After years of forced submission, the Red Dragon regained freedom. However, its freedom didn't last long. A paper-thin connection between Michael and the Red Dragon began to form.

'That's not what I wanted...' Michael cursed, but he wasn't graced with the luxury to think about the Red Dragon's future.

Taros was already moving against him. To be precise, his Soultrait moved against Michael when Michael touched Taros.

Michael wasn't in any pain, but something was missing. He lost something.

His eyes flicked to his arm, which had been holding onto Taros, and he saw that his hand and a portion of his lower arm were no longer there. Glutton devoured Michael's arm!

Michael cursed and manifested the Cursed Seals and Serpent Seals simultaneously. He used Sacred Constitution at full power with Heavenly Beast Physique and kicked Taros in the chest with full power to increase the distance between them. However, Michael quickly realized that Taros' Tier was incredibly high and Glutton was still active.

He lost his foot from a simple full-power kick.

'He's not even losing energy from devouring my arm and foot. Glutton must be transforming my arm and foot into energy. It dissolves everything and turns it into energy. Why does this feel so similar to Swallow Domain and Permute?' Michael's mind was racing, but he didn't pay too much attention to his missing arm and foot. Instead, Michael used Greater Enhancement to unlock River of Vigor's dormant potential alongside a Soul Tear to regenerate his lost limbs quickly.

Taros grinned, "Looks like you're going to have a problem now—... Nevermind. You are already regenerating. Very interesting. You have multiple powerful Soultraits, and you are a Curse User as well. Consider yourself lucky. You are my first Curse User. I wonder what I can obtain from devouring you!"

'Did he just acquire curse power?' Michael wondered about it while unleashing True Vision to the fullest.

Taros' body was confusing to look at. Most Awakened could only hold onto neutral origin energy. Their Energy Pillar was filled with neutral energy. But there were also people like the Blaze Patriarch and many more with attributed energy. Michael had highly purified neutral energy in his Energy Pillar, but he could convert it into other attributed energies thanks to Spheres of Elements. Meanwhile, his curse power didn't stay in the Energy Pillar. It was located all over his body.

A similar scene seemed to happen within Taros. The only problem was that he possessed dozens of different types of energy that had spread throughout his entire body. Taros didn't possess an Energy Pillar either. No. His entire body was his Energy Pillar. 'Is that why he feels like a Tier-6

powerhouse? Or is he actually at the 6th Tier already?' Michael was unsure. He and Taros had a similar power level during their time in the Lord, but it looked like Taros had grown stronger than him. At least, the difference in their Tier was apparent.

Growing this quickly shouldn't have been possible, but Taros made it happen. No, his Soultrait did it.

'Shouldn't that be similar to the blood sacrifices made by the Supreme Human Alliance and the Blaze household? It's just...that Taros' foundation is much stronger than it should have been in that case... Glutton is a powerful Soultrait.' Michael realized.

[The Soultrait is on par with Extraction. If not for that bastard wolfie augmenting Extraction, I would have ranked Glutton higher.] The World Serpent explained.

'Oh wow... ' Michael cursed, only to grumble toward the World Serpent. 'So now you're back? Do you want to become a chatterbox snake again?'

[You are as annoying as ever. How about you kill that guy first? If you give me Glutton, I might tell you what we plan to do with you.] The World Serpent hissed, its words resounding through Michael's head.

The Wolf Curse growled.

[Jorm—...] It said, but the World Serpent interrupted the Wolf Curse.

[Shut it, bastard. Our paths might have crossed, but that doesn't mean I will acknowledge your existence!]

Michael raised an eyebrow. He had no idea what was happening, but listening to his Curses was interesting. Unfortunately, Taros didn't like the way he behaved. He thought Michael would panic after losing one arm and a foot. But his lost limbs regenerated much faster than expected.

'This power. It's compatible with Glutton.'

Something Taros hadn't felt before stirred in the deepest parts of his body. It was almost like something was awakening within him. But that shouldn't be possible. He didn't like this. Whatever was stirring within him consumed Michael's curse power to grow stronger against Taros' will. It strengthened Glutton as well, yet there was something else as well. It was unfamiliar and highly intrusive, trying to occupy his mind by slowly seeping into it.

'Maybe I shouldn't eat Curse Users.' Taros told himself while kicking the ground to appear before Michael.

His right fist was coated in darkness, while his left glowed brightly as he executed a series of wild punches. Michael hesitated for a quarter of a second. Touching Taros meant he would probably lose his arms or legs again. But Michael dispersed his doubts quickly.

He used more layers of Greater Enhancement on River of Vigor before facing Taros head-on. The Serpent Seals, Heavenly Beast Physique, and Foundation Break pushed Michael beyond what his body was supposed to be able to handle. However, by applying Greater Enhancement to his body to enhance the dormant potential of his body temporarily, Michael could maintain his state for several minutes before he would break apart.

A few minutes was all he needed. Either way, either he or Taros would be dead before Greater Enhancement's effect would wear off.

Michael's hand broke when their fists collided, but it didn't disappear. Taros stopped using Glutton to devour his limbs. Instead, he used it on his surroundings to empower his Soullife Arts, which transformed everything he transformed into raw power. Glutton was used on everything in his surroundings, including the ground, the energy-infused air, and some of the Energy Stones he retrieved to increase his Soullife Arts' output.

The power he gained was more than enough to deal with Michael. No matter how many techniques and Soultraits he had to strengthen his physique, Taros was the most confident in his raw power. He was certain to overwhelm Michael and kill him in no time.

However, his punches didn't create the desired effect. His darkness and light-shrouded fists broke Michael's hands, but the attributed energies didn't spread into Michael's body to inflict more damage. On the contrary, Taros lost control of the shroud of darkness and light energy as a thin golden aura oozed out from all over Michael's body.

Michael noticed what Taros had been doing, but True Vision required a second to determine the properties and effects of Taros' technique. But that didn't mean he couldn't block the bombardment of punches. Michael coated his body in the True Extraction Aura, absorbing the energy coating Taros' fists. He infused the energy into River of Vigor, which was still fully unleashed and working wonder, mending Michael's broken hands near-instantaneously.

Once Michael found out what Taros was doing and how strong Glutton's Soullife Arts was, he was surprised. Glutton had been so powerful, yet it wasn't on par with Extraction. It was 'merely' a 7-Star Soultrait.

Michael used Greater Enhancement to unleash Extraction's dormant potential after the Cursed Seals transformed it into True Extraction. After that, Michael applied a Soul Tear onto True Extraction, which surged out of him in a massive golden flood. The flood of extraction swept through the surroundings and overwhelmed the thinly spread aura of Glutton.

Michael could have left it at that, but he wouldn't give Taros the slightest opportunity to fight him. On the contrary, Michael did everything needed to provide Taros with as little time as possible. He unleashed Swallow Domain to devour everything in range of the True Extraction Domain, including Taros. At least, that's what Michael was trying.

It was anticipated, but Taros blocked Swallow Domain. However, it hadn't been as easy as Taros expected. Maintaining his Soullife Arts, Glutton at full power while blocking the power of a Major Seal, amplified by a fully empowered 8-Star Soultrait – one of the strongest he'd ever seen and felt – Taros had a challenging time surviving.

His eyes widened in utter shock. It had been eons since anyone in the Origin Expanse had been strong enough to fight him head-on, yet Michael Fang did that. Taros remembered Michael only from their short fight and that he had overwhelmed the Zantur in the Lord Rift. Taros had been stronger than both the Zantur and Michael. But now, after years had passed and he had grown into a mighty powerhouse, Taros was weaker than that weakling.

How could that be?

Taros didn't want to accept this. He couldn't take it! Something in the deepest parts of his body stirred again.

[I can help you if you let me out.]

Taros froze in his tracks as the words flashed through his mind. Michael didn't know what was happening but used the moment to punch Tarso square in the chest. He infused much Qi and Extraction power into Insert to flush Taros' body.

However, Michael quickly realized that something was wrong.

His curse power was drained all of a sudden! [That's problematic.] The World Serpent hissed, and even the Wolf Curse growled in frustration.

[He's breaking the Taboo again.]

'What taboo are you guys talking about?!?' Michael asked, not feeling all that great. His fists pulled back, and he retreated until no more curse power was sucked out of him.

[You will see soon enough.]

A moment later, a massive energy influx reached Michael.

His eyes widened in surprise, and his attention flickered back to Taros. He stared at the abomination of an Awakened and swallowed hard because of what he saw through True Vision.

Taros was dead, but his vessel was more than alive.