

Supreme Lord 181

Chapter 181 Armament Soultrait

Michael's second fight was against one of the triplets; James Barscht.

James Barscht was still at the Mid-stage of Tier-1, but Michael had seen his War Rune up close and knew that he was on the verge of reaching the Late-stage.

Michael entered the combat ring quietly, while Jarg and Janus motivated their brother before they pushed him forward.

Michael manifested the Onyx Dragon Armor Set and the Siltang Bow before he got into position.

Meanwhile, James manifested a single Artifact- a set of gloves with various gemstones embedded in them.

The gemstones were connected to the enchantment arrays that covered the entire surface of the black leather gloves.

A single glance was enough to tell that the gloves were far from ordinary. They were exceptional Artifacts, and it looked like James could barely endure the pressure from the enhancements the Artifact provided.

'Is that an Epic Tier-1 Artifact?' Michael wondered, but he had no time to investigate anymore.

The referee initiated the start of the battle and a moment later, a golden headband appeared on James' head.

The golden headband was made out of pure gold and had a smooth and polished surface, reflecting the metal's golden color. It fit perfectly around James' head and released a large amount of origin energy which entered James' body through his head.

"An Armament manifesting Soultrait?" Michael blurted out, slightly surprised.

Soultraits capable of manifesting armaments were not only extremely rare, but the Armaments' effect was several times stronger than most Artifacts. The Armaments had a base strength according to the Soultrait's star rating, but it would grow further as the amount of Soul Power would increase.

Michael frowned but he activated both Lesser Enhancement and Eagle Eyes immediately. He released a few energy arrows with rapid fire. His accuracy suffered a little, but Michael compensated that by adjusting his stance to optimize his accuracy.

James responded to his attacks by moving to the side. Simultaneously, he conjured a small fingertip-sized fireball in his right palm. He released the small fireball to destroy the arrows he couldn't avoid.

Afterward, he condensed five small icicles in his left palm. James' left hand moved subtly and the icicles burst toward Michael.

Michael saw the icicles early enough and dived to the side to evade them. He retrieved the Siltang Bow back from the War Rune while he jumped to the side and manifested it again after he rolled on the ground to smoothly jump up.

'Three Soultraits? No, it's the gloves!' Michael analyzed while releasing more energy arrows.

James didn't move much from his spot even after multiple energy arrows were shot in his direction. He either moved slightly to the side or used his fireballs and icicles to destroy the energy arrows.

The fireballs and icicles were stronger than the energy arrows. Usually, Michael would be able to drain his opponent by continuing to release more energy arrows. After all, the [Energy Storage] enhancement of the Siltang Bow was drained to condense energy arrows, not Michael.

However, James had one big advantage; his golden headband seemed to generate a large amount of origin energy.

'Creating origin energy out of thin air shouldn't be possible. So what is the headband using to generate origin energy consistently?'

Michael knew that there had to be a limit as to how much origin energy the golden headband could generate, but he was not sure how high the limit was. In fact, the golden headband might as well be an origin energy storage device. Michael had too little information to come to a definite conclusion.

Too many important pieces of information were missing.

This irked him, but he didn't have enough time to curse loudly. He was forced to dive to the side again as a bunch of fireballs flew in his direction.

Following the fireballs, a barrage of icicles shot toward the position he landed after his dive. Michael replaced the Siltang Bow with Seron Voulge, and exerted Lesser Enhancement on the voulge before he slashed out twice.

He destroyed the three icicles that would have hit him while ignoring the remaining two. They flew past him, missing Michael by a hair's breadth.

His eyes were shrouded in a white-gold hue after Michael used Lesser Enhancement on his eyes as well. He predicted the trajectory of the incoming projectiles and destroyed the few he couldn't evade.

Michael's strategy changed, and he entered an attack stance. He lowered his upper body, moved Seron Voulge to the side while waiting for James to attack.

However, James didn't attack as expected. Instead, he moved around the outer area of the combat ring while manifesting fireballs in his right hand and icicles in his left hand.

Beads of sweat trickled down his temples as he continued to move, and he reacted only after Michael initiated an attack.

After waiting for the attack until he couldn't stay still anymore, Michael burst forward. He channeled energy through his lower body to enhance his burst speed slightly and closed in on James.

James didn't release the fireballs and icicles toward him. Instead, he smashed his palms upon the ground. The fireballs and icicles burst apart, and a wide pillar of water manifested.

Due to his high perception, Michael could tell that the water pillar required a tremendous amount of origin energy to be manifested and maintained. Yet, James didn't hesitate to condense the water pillar, fully aware of the energy consumption. I think you should take a look at

Michael grew more vigilant. He slowed down and began to retreat when he noticed that the water pillar was growing unstable. The next moment, the water pillar turned into a tidal wave that crashed down toward Michael.

He reacted quickly and rushed back, but he could barely react in time as both the tidal wave and a few icicles reached him.

Gritting his teeth, Michael threw his body to the ground.

The Icicles would have pierced his neck and vitals, rendering him incapable of continuing the fight. Meanwhile, the tidal wave was not that worrisome. He rammed Seron Voulge in the ground and held the staff with both hands in a deathly grip while the tidal wave crashed down on him.

pandasnovel.com Michael could barely see James' outlines behind the tidal wave as the water threatened to drown him. He could make out that something manifested in James' hands, and instinctively retrieved Seron Voulge back in his War Rune. Simultaneously, as he was pushed away by the tidal wave, Michael unleashed the protection enchantments of his Onyx Dragon Armor Set.

A second layer of protection covered his entire body a moment later. Just as the protection enchantments were fully unleashed and covered him, several icicles and fireballs impacted hard. The fireballs exploded, destroying the protection layer, while the icicles dug into his armor.

They missed his vitals because he was being tossed and turned due to the tidal wave that kept pushing him away.

After the impact, Michael manifested Seron Voulge again. He pierced the blade deep into the ground and got up while fighting against the impact of the wave. Keeping his Soultraits activated was an ordeal but it helped him overcome James' combination of attacks.

Michael felt his feet brush the slight elevation of the combat ring's border and knew that he had almost lost the fight by stepping out of the combat ring.

A few strands of his hair that had regrown during the last weeks were wet, just like the rest of his body, but he felt extremely hot and energetic at this moment.

A feeling of immense greed, and desire swept through his body.

He was excited to continue the fight.

He didn't want to lose either.

Michael used Lesser Enhancement on his entire body, further enhancing his physical strength and senses. He then pulled Seron Voulge out of the ground while watching James momentarily.

'He never attacked. He is not even trying to.'

Michael burst forward and inched closer to James, who was breathing heavily as he conjured more icicles and fireballs. Droplets of blood trickled down his nose but he didn't seem to notice that.

His brown eyes gleamed brightly as he continued to attack Michael with fireballs and icicles. Michael cut through two fireballs while twisting his body uncomfortably to evade the remaining fireballs. At the same time, his sharp reflexes allowed him to block most icicles. The rest impacted his shoulder, or arm where they barely caused a little discomfort.

Michael's combat prowess wasn't restricted. His eyes were wide open, taking in every single movement and action of his opponent as he continued to lessen the distance.

Then, just as Michael was about to reach his opponent, James roared out loudly. The golden headband shone brightly and a tremendous amount of energy streams shot out from the headband straight toward Michael. More blood poured out of James' nose, and his eyes began to bleed as well, but he continued to fight as if he was totally fine.

He was about to smash his hands on the ground and manifest a second water pillar when he saw something from the corner of his eyes. Seron Voulge whizzed through the air with a terrifyingly high velocity.

Michael threw the voulge in the air with all his might.

He forced James to dive to the side, otherwise, he would have been impaled. Even then, James couldn't evade the lengthy blade of the voulge. It cut into his side as he dived to the left.

The cut was not deep but the injury worsened when James jumped up from the ground. He manifested more icicles and fireballs in his hands and searched for Michael, who had already arrived in front of him.

Michael threw a straight punch at James' face, which James could barely perceive. His sight grew hazy from all the blood trickling down his eyes. He released the icicles and fireballs simultaneously, hoping that they would hit Michael.

However, Michael ducked, and moved to the side with nimble steps all while releasing three jabs in quick succession.

"I'm faster," Michael thought, but then he realized, "No, he is just too slow. He cannot move properly with the headband!"

At last, Michael realized why James' movements were sluggish and slow all this while. The golden headband must be several times heavier than James, restricting his movements drastically. Simultaneously, James couldn't generate energy out of nowhere. His Stamina suffered tremendously, providing the last pieces of information Michael required to conclude his analysis.

'Heavy weight but can generate origin energy in exchange for draining the body of its nutrition and power. That's the power of the golden headband!' He shouted in his mind before delivering a heavy blow to James' solar plexus.

James didn't want to give in to Michael, and make use of his higher degree of refinement, but his breath was taken by Michael's last attack.

His sight turned black for a moment and he fell to the ground. The golden headband dispersed, and James began to cough up blood.

Yet, instead of stopping in his tracks, Michael moved his upper body to generate more momentum for the next impact. His right fist was about to smash down on James' head when the referee signaled the end of the battle.

"Victory, Michael Fang!"

Chapter 182 High Nobles' Power

Michael looked in the direction where Seron Voulge landed, but he didn't walk over to pick it up.

Instead, his attention flicked back to James.

"You did a good job, take this," Michael offered a healing potion, which he retrieved from his War Rune's storage space.

He took off the lid and was about to help James drink the content when Jarg and Janus rushed into the combat ring. They were faster than the medics and arrived next to James.

"Get away with this trash!" Jarg bellowed, slapping Michael's hand away. The potion fell to the ground and shattered.

Michael raised an eyebrow but he only shrugged before he retorted, "Sorry for being poor."

Jarg ignored Michael's remark and fed his brother a potion with red viscous content that sparkled golden.

James drank the content greedily and breathed in relief when the warm liquid entered his body.

He opened his eyes and looked over at Michael apologetically.

"Sorry for Jarg's attitude. He is very protective of us," James said weakly, but Michael gave him an understanding look.

"It's fine. My brother would probably be worse."

Michael didn't think too much about Jarg's words and actions. It was a fact that his potion was not of high quality. Nonetheless, he hoped that he would have to fight against Jarg next time. Michael's hands were itching to beat some sense into Jarg's head.

James was disappointed that he lost, but he did not fret a lot about it. It was not the first time he lost, though this time hurt more than usual as this was his first fight in the Academy. The medics healed James' physical wounds quickly, and they all left the combat ring.

"You should see us fight with our combined power as triplets. Though all you'll be able to see is the dust we leave behind!" James announced.

Michael responded with a serious nod. He could imagine the triplets were strong when they combined their power.

"By the way, you're not too bad, Michael," Lincoln said when everyone returned to them. "Of course, you're still far from actually being strong!"

Michael frowned lightly, but he didn't say anything. He looked at Lincoln, whose gaze flicked to Zeke. Zeke saw the expression on Lincoln's face and his breath escaped in a drawn-out sigh.

"Your eyes are okayish," He said quietly before turning his head away.

'What strange people. That's interesting,' Michael mused to himself while observing the triplets and the two descendants of High Nobles.

Lincoln and Zeke's opinions of Michael changed a little after the fight. They were more amiable than before. The two could tell that Michael was nice and kind, but that he was not afraid of fiercely smashing his friends – or the people he wanted to befriend.

Competition and friendship were two different things. Being friendly in battle would only cause trouble, possibly even lead to death. That was not good, for sure.

Furthermore, acting friendly with your opponent was disrespectful.

Nobody would feel great fighting against someone who was clearly holding back in an attempt to injure you as little as possible.

"Lincoln Piedra versus Anastasia Lilia. Please come to combat ring six!" A referee shouted loudly before a second announcement followed a few seconds later.

"Zeke Lavia versus Frederik Kolbenheim. Please come to combat ring four!"

Following the announcement, Lincoln and Zeke entered the combat rings where their opponents were already waiting for them. Anastasia Lilia was the female student, who could control blood with her Soultrait. She had defeated the student with the Dragonoid transformation Soultrait easily.

Anastasia was also the student whom both Lincoln and Zeke could defeat with one strike – according to their words.

"Just watch and observe," Lincoln had said just before he entered the combat ring.

Michael was curious and executed Eagle Eyes before he added Lesser Enhancement to increase the strength of his eyes further. He didn't want to miss a single detail in Lincoln's fight against Anastasia.

The referee signaled the start of the battle a second later. Anastasia backed off while retrieving the ominous black dagger and a few black vials from her War Rune's storage space. She reached the border of the combat ring where she cut her arms to initiate her transformation.

However, it was at this moment that she realized that something was wrong.

The gravitational force around her seemed to increase drastically. Inertia seemed to double in intensity, forcefully slowing her movements.

At this moment, Anastasia knew that she had to hasten up, otherwise, she would be defeated before she could even finish her transformation. But it was already too late. A stone fist, the size of Lincoln's body, had condensed in front of him. Lincoln pressed his flat hand lightly against the stone fist, releasing the projectile with terrifying velocity.

The stone fist crossed a distance of 30 meters in the blink of an eye. Anastasia instinctively responded by conjuring several huge blood spears. She terminated her transformation and used the black blood within the vials to create reinforced blood spears. Using her high mental power, she willed the blood spears to rotate around their own axis rapidly before they were fired to collide with the stone fist.

Anastasia was certain that the stone fist wouldn't be strong enough to maintain its shape against the terrific impact of ten rotating blood spears. It ought to fall apart and crumble to pieces.

Unfortunately, she watched in shock as her attack failed miserably. The stone fist's velocity wasn't slowed at all. The stone fist smashed the blood spears into smithereens instead. I think you should take a look at

Anastasia's eyes further widened in horror, and a short scream escaped her lips before the stone fist smacked her hard.

The next moment, Anastasia's bloodied body transformed into a deformed cannonball that was flung several meters through the air. Throughout most parts of the arena, the cracking sound of bones

resounded. The audience's attention instinctively moved to Anastasia, whose deformed body slammed onto the hard floor and was now writhing on the ground outside the combat ring.

"Victory, Lincoln Piedra!"

The medics rushed over to tend to Anastasia's wounds. Meanwhile, the audience watched in stunned silence. Most students had been wondering how intense the fight between Lincoln Piedra and Anastasia Lilia would be, only to end up being utterly dumbfounded at the one-sided beating.

"One strike...just like he said," Michael mumbled to himself.

He didn't miss a single detail while watching Lincoln's fight, yet Michael couldn't understand everything. Lincoln's Soultrait was obviously related to the earth, but Michael couldn't tell the true extent of his Soultrait's power.

'Condensing projectiles out of stone, and being able to increase inertia in a small area. He didn't even enter close combat, and I'm not sure if I can beat that...' Michael concluded, feeling both excited and dumbfounded.

Michael wanted to talk to Lincoln and ask a few questions, but he recalled that Frederik had been called up to fight against Zeke. Frederik was only a Low Tier-1 Lord with a 3-Star Soultrait, but his control of the Soultrait was precise. Michael was sure that Frederik would give his all, and that he would be able to last longer against Zeke.

However, when his attention moved to the combat ring where Frederik and Zeke ought to fight, Michael could only see Frederik staring ahead with an empty gaze. Frederik didn't move an inch and was frozen like a statue while Zeke strode closer to Frederik calmly.

Zeke pressed his sword's cold blade against Frederik's neck before looking at the referee.

"Do I have to cut his throat, or will you announce the winner?" Zeke asked coldly, causing a bead of sweat to trickle down the referee's temple.

"Victory to Zeke Lavita!" The referee announced quickly, ending the battle.

Zeke retrieved his sword, and Frederik began to move again.

The life in his eyes returned, and he began to move wildly, manifesting tens of wind blades simultaneously.

"The battle ended with your loss. Please stop utilizing your Soultrait," The referee ordered quietly to which Frederick only threw him a puzzled look.

The referee understood that Frederik didn't realize what had happened, but that was only obvious. Once caught by Zeke's Soultrait, it was hard to escape. Escaping Zeke's Soultrait while being of a lower Tier made it even more difficult.

"What the hell are you talking about? We were in an epic battle just now?!" Frederik snapped at the referee, who could only shake his head in disappointment.

"I'm just saying this to make things easier for you. Touch your neck," The referee said, trying to ease the situation a little.

Frederik did as told while continuing to glare at the referee. Only then did he realize that his neck stung when his flat hand rubbed across it. He looked at his hand and saw blood – his blood.

"What the..." Frederik mumbled to himself. He looked down at his body and noticed that he had only one wound on his neck while the rest of him was perfectly unscathed.

"How can that be? I was clearly cut all over my body just a moment ago...We were having an epic battle...but how..." He asked himself while his voice grew quieter by the second.

His head whipped in Zeke's direction to demand answers. However, Zeke Lavita had already left the combat ring.

"Just come out, honey. You...lost..." Jacqueline Orlando said as quietly as possible – in hopes that only Frederik could hear her.

She had witnessed the battle from start to end and could clearly tell that Frederik had been caught in some trance or illusion. Frederik had been deceived the moment the battle started, and he had yet to realize it.

Frederik glared at Jacqueline. He grit his teeth and stormed out of the combat ring. However, instead of rushing toward Jacqueline, he followed behind Zeke.

"Oi, descendant of the Lavita! What the hell did you do to me?" Frederik bellowed as he walked toward the group of six people.

Lincoln frowned when he saw Frederik pursuing them, and he was just about to react when he saw that Michael walked past him.

Michael's eyes gleamed brightly one moment when he looked at Zeke, who had returned to their small group, and it turned sharp as his attention moved over to Frederik.

Frederik didn't even notice that Michael was standing with them. However, his body shook when he heard a familiar voice thundering in his ears.

"Frederik, shut your mouth and get your act together!" Michael hissed.

He grasped Frederik by the collar and pulled him closer to himself. Michael – his eyes still enhanced by Eagle Eyes and Lesser Enhancement – stared deep into Frederik's azure eyes. Taken by surprise, Frederik could barely react.

"Michael? What are you..." He could only say before Michael's head butted down on Frederik's.

A loud thwack resounded in the vicinity, and the triplets and Lincoln were startled by the sudden turn of events. Even Zeke couldn't help but look at Michael in surprise.

Little did they know that even Michael was slightly astonished about his response to Frederik's stupid behavior.

Chapter 183 Private Life

'Why did I do that just now?' He asked himself while looking down at Frederik, who was holding his head and howling in pain.

"No fighting outside the combat ring!" One of the referees blared loudly. He stared daggers at Michael, who returned an innocent expression.

"I'm just teaching my friend. Mind you—..." Michael started to explain but he noticed that he'd gotten too heated. He stopped mid-sentence and apologized to the referee,

"I'm sorry. I just wanted to ensure that nothing bad would happen. Brawls between friends are rough sometimes."

The referee lifted an eyebrow at his response. He looked at Frederik, who had visibly calmed down, and nodded his head.

"Next time, both of you will receive your first warning. Three warnings, and you'll be disqualified from the Real Combat assessment!"

"Yes, Sir. Thanks for your generosity!" Michael responded while pulling Frederik up.

His friend nearly collapsed on the ground when they headbutted, but Michael's grasp around Frederik's collar was iron-tight. He only let go of him when he saw that Frederik could stand on his own feet.

"What are you doing here?" Frederik asked after he got back to his senses.

He noticed that his rambling had attracted too much attention and that Michael prevented the worst. Without Michael, Frederik wouldn't have stopped until Lincoln, or Zeke would have responded to his nonsense – and they wouldn't have been as nice as Michael.

"I was talking to them about your little spar. I observed your fight and saw that Zeke took advantage of your distraction," Michael said calmly. His expression eased upon seeing that Frederik had calmed down visibly.

"He won the moment the battle started. You guys never fought, in the first place," Michael added before explaining that Frederik had never moved from the spot and that his gaze had been empty all along.

"You guys know each other?" Lincoln asked, visibly displeased at the sight of Frederik.

Michael could only smile bitterly seeing this.

"We're both from Elyra and we fought quite often," He revealed honestly before he added, "He is just bad at losing fights. His parents spoiled him a little bit too much."

Frederik's lips parted and his brows furrowed, clearly indicating that he wanted to say something. However, he quickly shut his mouth when he saw Michael glaring at him.

The white golden hue around his eerily dark eyes turned his glare even more terrifying than it ought to be.

Frederik pressed his lips together and stayed put.

At that moment, Jacqueline came rushing over.

"She is also a troublemaker. They're known as the Barbaric Couple because of their foul attitude," Michael added mercilessly.

Jacqueline felt like she had been targeted unjustly, but seeing her fiancé's pitiful appearance, she didn't say anything. Instead, she embraced Frederik and spoke to him with genuine care.

"So...you're their nanny, who's trying to beat sense into them?" James asked half-jokingly, while Janus added, "Or are they your punching bags?"

Janus giggled and James joined his brother. On the other hand, Jarg's eyes were fixated on Michael.

"Punching bags? If you think about it like this, we were each other's punching bag on our way to Kelta. That includes Kaleb as well," Michael said nonchalantly.

He felt that the tension in the surroundings eased up visibly. Lincoln, who had been ready to beat the shit out of Frederik, regained a neutral stance toward Frederik, while Zeke began to frown hearing what Michael said just now.

"You're talking about Kaleb Zenovia, aren't you?" Zeke asked, recalling the exchange between Kaleb and Michael.

"Yep, exactly that one," Michael affirmed, "Fortunately, he is not an Awakened yet. I can still beat him up thanks to that."

Michael pinched the bridge of his nose and added, "But this kid is way too talented. Sometimes, I'm jealous of the tutelage he received in his past."

He felt that he was being too honest with the people around him just now, but he couldn't help it. Michael was forced to give his utmost to enter a prestigious Elite High School where he was taught some important lessons about the Origin Expanse, and his classmates had nothing better to do than to pick on him – just because he had no great background.

"But then again, I learned a lot working my way through bullies, and idiots. And I got to meet the fierce be—... Professor Zenovia, so I guess it's perfectly fine," Michael mumbled, mostly to himself.

He was not sure why he had suddenly opened up about his life, but it didn't feel too bad. Until now, Michael's only person to talk to about personal life had been his brother. However, he hadn't been able to reach his brother for quite a while. Talking to Frederik and Jacqueline about his personal matters never sounded like a good idea. His opinion of them had improved a little. They were not as tyrannical as before – even if they still had many flaws to improve.

Frederik looked at Michael with the same astonished expression as the others, "I didn't know that."

Frederik wasn't referring to the bullies and idiots Michael mentioned, but that he had met Professor Zenovia before already.

"Is that why you called her Alice before? Are you close to her?" Zeke asked, his curiosity piqued. I think you should take a look at

Lincoln was also interested in the discussion. He didn't expect an inconspicuous character like Michael to turn out to be much better connected than some minor nobles.

Being friends with the children of the Kolbenheim and Orlando families wasn't that exceptional. It was still an achievement, but it paled in comparison to being befriended by the Frozen Duchess, Alice Zenovia.

Being allowed to refer to anyone just by his or her first name publicly might not seem like a great deal to others, but they were talking about the prodigy of the Zenovia family right there!

"How did you get to know the Zenovia family?" Lincoln asked at last.

The tension between Frederik and the others was forgotten, and all interest moved to Michael, and his past.

He didn't seem like an influential guy, but his demeanor alongwith his revelation attracted their curiosity. It was weird.

Michael just shrugged their astonishment off, "Well...it's hard to explain. I don't know what's on her mind either. My War Rune wasn't even manifested during the final exams when she told me to join the Saphirelake Military Academy."

At this point, it was Jarg, who began to frown deeply,

"Wait, your War Rune manifested barely two months ago?

James was also surprised, "You're telling me that you refined your physique to that degree in two months...all while studying two Soultraits to the extreme? Your Soultraits weren't even disturbed when the tidal wave and fireballs impacted upon you. Are you just making fun of us, right now?"

Michael was thoroughly grilled by the group for the next ten minutes. Frederik forgot about his loss against Zeke for the time being, and the other group chose to ignore Frederik's childish prideful attitude from before.

They were more interested in Michael's connection to the Zenovia family, and how he was able to become that strong in just two months. After all, contrary to most other students of the Saphirelake Military Academy, Michael's family was not influential.

He hadn't heard anything from his parents for nearly a year, and it was only thanks to Danny that he entered the Origin Expanse for the first time with a weapon bound to his War Rune.

Tigerfang made his life a lot easier in the Untamed Jungle, and it was the greatest benefit he could have obtained from having Danny as his dear brother.

After talking about Michael's life a little bit more in detail, the others were impressed. Lincoln and Zeke were confident that they could achieve the same as Michael under the same circumstances, but their upbringing was different. They had been taught a lot more than most ordinary people could ever find out about the Origin Expanse and the extraterrestrial.

That was also why they could tell that Michael was an interesting person, especially after they saw him fight two more times.

Michael talked openly, he smiled a lot, and he didn't seem to feel offended when others asked him questions that were very personal. Others would consider these questions rude, but Michael answered everything as long as he was comfortable.

He rarely had the chance to talk about himself because nobody had ever been interested in his life except his brother. Thus, he didn't feel odd at the thought of exposing bits of his personal life. On the contrary, he was happy to see that other people were interested in him and his life. It was a welcome change that made him feel much closer to the people around him.

Michael merely avoided talking about his two hidden Soultraits Extraction and Spirit Whip, but that was rather simple because nobody asked, 'Do you have any more hidden Soultraits?' That would have been weird.

However, while he was extremely happy and smiling the entire time he talked to the people he began to consider his friends in his heart, his demeanor changed the moment he entered the combat ring.

His eyes turned sharp, and his expression was overflowing with seriousness when his third battle began.

He didn't show mercy fighting against his third opponent and overwhelmed him within the first five minutes of the battle. Michael slowly pushed his opponent into a corner before he finished him off. More than ten energy arrows jutted out of the vitals of his opponent, who hadn't been given a single opportunity to initiate a counterattack.

Michael's third opponent was weaker than James, but his fourth opponent was a little bit more cumbersome to tackle.

Nonetheless, Michael's merciless tactics worked once again.

He fought the student with the Dragonoid transformation Soultraits in his fourth match. The student had recovered physically, but his mentality had been crushed by Anastasia before.

Michael took advantage of the trauma the student had sustained from his battle against Anastasia. He didn't give the student enough time to finish his transformation and attacked immediately.

His War Rune was at a lower stage of the refinement degree, but his will and mentality were as sturdy as iron. He released several arrows the moment the battle started, forcing his opponent to terminate his transformation.

Afterward, Michael inched closer while continuously releasing more arrows. The arrows were precisely aimed and released with enough force to put the student in a predicament. The student was able to block some attacks and initiate another attempt to transform.

However, Michael was close enough to switch to the voulge before bursting forth to enter close combat.

Using both Lesser Enhancement and Eagle Eyes to the extreme, Michael was at an advantage against the mentally broken student, who couldn't even unleash the full power of his Soultrait. He could barely manifest his dragon wings when Seron Voulge pierced them.

At this point, the battle turned upside down. The pain of bursting apart shot up in the student's head the moment Michael pierced his wings. The student began to scream at the top of his lungs and he collapsed a few seconds later.

"Oh damn. This guy really needs some counseling!"

Chapter 184 Fighting A High Noble

He had yet to lose a battle, but it was evident that the fifth fight would become increasingly more difficult.

At last. Michael's fifth fight began, and it changed everything.

He was called into the combat ring alongside Lincoln Piedra. The young descendant of the Piedra household turned out to be his next opponent.

'He is already at Tier-2, can manipulate gravity to a certain extent, turn his skin into hard stone, and manifest a stone fist to use as a cannonball-like projectile.' Michael ticked off Lincoln's abilities.

After watching multiple battles of Lincoln, Michael gathered all those pieces of information. He wasn't certain that this was the full extent of Lincoln's power, but he presumed that Lincoln had a few more tricks up his sleeve.

"Let's give our best!" Lincoln said cheerfully but without a tad of worry in his heart. He didn't even manifest a single Artifact.

Giving his best- That was exactly what Michael was ready to do.

Michael manifested the Onyx Dragon Armor Set and the Siltang Bow. He channeled origin energy through his entire body, while also preparing himself for the start of the battle and to use his Soultraits instantaneously.

The moment the battle started with the signal of the referee Michael used Lesser Enhancement several times. First, he strengthened each of his Artifacts one after another. Afterward, he strengthened his eyes alongside the Eagle Eyes Soultrait. Michael then exerted Eagle Eyes.

Michael's strength increased drastically, but even more so his sense of sight, and perception. He could immediately perceive the changes in Lincoln's stance.

Lincoln squatted down while creating a huge human-sized stone fist in front of him. The manifestation was not instantaneous, but Michael couldn't react immediately because the inertia around him doubled.

The Siltang Bow and the Onyx Dragon Armor Set weren't affected by the increased gravitational force, only Michael. That was slightly surprising.

'It affects only me? That's better than expected.' Michael thought as he began to move.

Being faced with double the inertia on Kelta was cumbersome, but Michael's physique was refined to a high degree, and his physical strength received high enhancements from his Artifacts. That way, he could still move through increased inertia – even if it was a little bit annoying.

His eyes narrowed and the muscles in his legs cramped a little as the stone fist had been fully manifested. Michael's eyes glowed brightly and he burst to the right side suddenly.

A quarter of a second after Michael burst to the right side, the stone fist shot toward Michael like a cannonball. It was terrifyingly fast and would have smashed him into smithereens if he hadn't jumped aside. Michael had seen what the stone fist could do, and he really didn't want to experience the pain of having his body deformed.

Michael didn't do any somersaults or big moves. He moved just enough to evade the stone fist by a hair's breadth to save time and energy to initiate a counterattack. The highest-level energy arrow had condensed on the Siltang Bow's string, which Michael pulled back as the stone fist brushed past him.

A strong gust blasted on his face, forcing Michael to adjust the Siltang Bow's angle by a notch. Afterward, he released the first arrow.

Several energy arrows followed in quick succession. The arrows weren't as powerful as the stone fist, but they were strong enough to pierce the skin of Tier-2 Monsters with weaker defense after Lesser Enhancement had been used on both Siltang Bow and the energy arrows.

However, Lincoln didn't even move an inch. The corners of his lip tilted up, and his skin turned gray. Lincoln turned his skin into stone, repelling the arrows easily.

The arrows weren't even strong enough to scratch Lincoln's stone skin!

'Is that for real?!' Michael cursed in his heart. He grits his teeth and retrieved the Siltang Bow. Seron Voulge appeared in his hands, and he pushed forward.

'What is the downside of his Soultrait? What is its limit? How can I counter him?!?' Michael asked numerous questions in his mind, but he couldn't answer a single one with confidence.

Approaching Lincoln seemed like a dangerous move as well. However, it was better than staying back and hitting him with arrows that didn't even scratch Lincoln's skin. The stone fist was the most dangerous, and it seemed like a feasible plan to shorten the distance to Lincoln to ensure that Lincoln didn't have enough time to manifest one of those huge cannonball-like stone fist projectiles again.

'If I pressure him, Lincoln won't be able to use his Soultrait precisely,' Michael mused to himself. A 6-Star Soultrait may be extremely powerful, but it was just as difficult to control precisely. I think you should take a look at

If Lincoln's Soultrait was even a little bit like Frederik's Soultrait, it would require full focus to be maintained. That meant disturbing his Soultrait control was the way to defeat him. It was the only option Michael could chase in the pursuit of victory.

Michael's plans changed from attacking Lincoln to an attempt to restrict Lincoln's Soultrait usage. That was difficult, but it was worth a try.

Lincoln manifested a smaller stone fist when he saw that Michael burst forth to enter close combat. He released the stone fist, which Michael evaded with a nimble move to the side.

Michael saw the attack early enough due to his enhanced eyesight and great perception. He determined the trajectory of the stone fist projectile, and the exact moment Lincoln would release the stone fist.

His prediction was close to perfection as Michael moved to the side the moment the stone fist propelled forward.

A trace of surprise entered Lincoln's eyes. His stance changed ever so slightly, but that was already enough to affect the inertia weighing down on Michael.

He immediately noticed that inertia had decreased to 1.5x the earlier amount. This gave Michael the opportunity to accelerate.

He twisted his body in front of Lincoln and moved Seron Voulge around, knowing that the lengthy blade wouldn't be enough to pierce through Lincoln's stone skin, not yet at least.

Instead of using the blade, Michael chose to exhibit the power of Seron Voulge's pole. The pole smashed hard against Lincoln's neck.

Lincoln didn't move an inch, at first. However, when he noticed how heavy the impact was, his expression changed.

It seemed that he had grossly underestimated the force Michael could unleash with his Soultraits. In the first place, Michael's Soultraits were a great combo.

Michael responded even before Lincoln counterattacked. He retrieved Seron Voulge in his War Rune and kicked his feet off the ground to retreat.

'A dent in his neck? That's better than nothing, I guess!' Michael thought.

Yet, just as he was about to put some distance from Lincoln, the young descendant of the Piedra household made his move.

Michael smashed against a wall that had appeared behind him all of a sudden. He had been looking at Lincoln, who lunged forward and didn't even realize what appeared behind him.

That was a grave mistake.

Lincoln's arm shot toward Michael's neck as he struggled for a second to straighten his back. Michael wanted to evade the attack by all means, but he was much slower.

Michael's only advantage was that he could perceive and react to the attack much earlier than others.

Michael ducked down and shot to the side.

He saw Lincoln from the corner of his eye as he moved and was certain that he had successfully evaded Lincoln's attack.

However, the next moment proved him wrong.

Michael's momentum was disrupted as he was pulled back with great force.

The next moment an ominous sound reached Michael's ears.

It was the sound of Cracking bones and his own scream of agony.

Chapter 185 Broken

Michael's arm snapped like a twig.

Lincoln didn't even consider increasing the force in his iron-tight grasp slowly to let Michael catch his breath. No, he increased the strength in his hand as much as he could – instantaneously.

White hot pain reached his brain, overwhelming his senses. His mind became chaotic, and Michael found himself back on the battlefield in the Origin Expanse. His mind switched to battle mode as it perceived that a life-and-death battle broke out.

He responded instinctively after that moment. His eyes turned sharper and the golden glow in his eyes intensified. Michael exerted Lesser Enhancement on Spirit Whip while manifesting one in front of him.

Instead of losing control of his Soultraits due to distraction, Michael's battle mode was initiated. He perceived his battle with Lincoln as a situation where his life was on the line. This allowed him to enter a state of full concentration.

A Spirit Whip strengthened through Lesser Enhancement condensed above Lincoln. It lashed out at Lincoln, taking the young Piedra by surprise.

Despite his strong willpower and higher Tier, Lincoln failed to guard his mind at this moment. He was fully exposed to the power of the Spirit Whip and lost the ability to maintain his Soultrait. But that was not all. His tight grasp around Michael's broken arm loosened significantly.

Michael reacted at once. He used every bit of strength in his left arm to shoot forward. Michael's flat hand whizzed through the air like a projectile that impacted hard on Lincoln's elbow. Lincoln's right arm trembled and the young Piedra's expression winced in pain.

And, before Lincoln could react, Michael had already initiated his next attack. His leg shot high in the air. His right leg crashed down on Lincoln's neck – exactly where Seron Voulge's pole had impacted before.

As Lincoln was not able to use his Soultrait at this moment, the inertia weighing down on Michael had returned to the usual. Simultaneously, his stone skin was replaced by human skin, decreasing Lincoln's protection drastically.

Lincoln reacted instinctively when Michael's high kick crashed down. He raised his left arm and let go of Michael's arm in his right hand. While his left arm was supposed to block the high kick, Lincoln's left arm lunged forward.

Lincoln grasped Michael's right leg the moment the high kick impacted his left arm.

"It's over!" Lincoln shouted, but it was just a moment later that another enhanced Spirit Whip lashed at him, not once, but twice in succession.

Lincoln roared loudly as he was just about to utilize his Soultrait once again. Michael's timing had been perfect, forcing Lincoln not only to terminate using his Soultrait once again but to let go of his leg as well.

Michael backed off a meter after he regained freedom. Seron Voulge manifested in his left arm, but this time he was going to use the weapon's sharp blade.

'I found his weakness!' Michael roared in his mind, feeling the adrenaline kick in.

It was extremely difficult for Lincoln to continue using his Soultrait while guarding his mind against mental attacks and ensuring that he wouldn't be impaled by Seron Voulge.

'Keep distracting him!' Michael told himself repetitively.

Three simple words turned into his mantra. He repeated them over and over to prevent his mind from going crazy due to the pain shooting up his nerves from the arm that was hanging limply from his shoulder.

Seron Voulge propelled forward. Michael aimed straight at Lincoln's head, but Lincoln blocked the attack. The back of his hand turned into hard stone despite Michael continuously using Spirit Whip to lash at the young Piedra.

'His mind is too strong. A full restriction of his Soultrait is not possible...' Michael realized at last.

Lincoln could still use his Soultrait to do simple things while Michael targeted his mind with Spirit Whip. That was not what Michael had hoped for, but it was much better than facing attacks from all sides. I think you should take a look at

It was already enough to fight against a Tier-2 Lord whose skin was hard enough to make it increasingly difficult to scratch him, forget about inflicting lethal wounds!

Michael's energy consumption increased with every passing second. Using Lesser Enhancement on his Artifacts and his eyes the whole time was already tiring, but that did not stop Michael from using Eagle Eyes to the full extent while also maintaining the Spirit Whip above Lincoln to lash out at him whenever the opportunity arose.

Michael's proficiency and control of his Soultraits were exceptional, and they weren't too hard to control either since he focused on training his Soultrait mastery. Despite that, he was rapidly approaching a situation where both his mind and energy would soon be wrung dry with nothing left.

But Michael couldn't do anything about that. His opponent was too powerful to risk decreasing the usage of his three Soultraits. He could barely keep up with Lincoln by using three Soultraits to the extreme!

He had been torn between showing Spirit Whip and not using it, but he didn't want to lose either. He wanted to give his best to say that he had given the fight his all. Michael didn't want to regret it later.

Michael grit his teeth, not even realizing that blood was pouring down his nose.

The muscles in his body creaked loudly and his stance changed. His rhythm changed as well and he lashed out with Spirit Whip before using the voulge's pole to smash against Lincoln's hands, pushing them away.

In the next instance, Michael inched closer. Lincoln's hands were only centimeters away but he spun Seron Voulge smoothly before thrusting forward with every ounce of strength within him. The blade's tip pierced Lincoln's abdomen before it slowed down at once.

It felt like Michael pierced through hard stone as he slowly dug into Lincoln's body.

The tip of the blade wasn't even a centimeter inside Lincoln when Michael noticed that something was off.

Lincoln's skin turned into stone, and the young Piedra's body seemed to expand. His eyes turned yellow, and their shape began to change. Simultaneously, Seron Voulge began to creak. It showed signs of breaking apart.

Startled, Michael retrieved the voulge, only to end up facing a tremendous amount of pressure weighing down on him. That meant Lincoln's gravity manipulation had returned. Michael tried to cancel it by whipping Lincoln with his Spirit Whip, but it felt like the mental attack caused the opposite effect.

Inertia increased more than twice the norm. It kept increasing, and weighing down on Michael until he couldn't stand anymore. His body slumped to the ground with a thud. Small spider web-like cracks formed on the ground around Michael.

Lincoln took a step toward Michael. His movements were slow, and his body was growing increasingly heavy, causing the entire combat ring to tremble.

The young Piedra picked up Michael from the ground before he put some strength into his grasp due to which Michael's left arm broke instantly. It was almost as if Michael's arms were made of crackers. There was little to no resistance.

Michael roared out in pain. He manifested a second enhanced Spirit Whip, leading to the bleeding of his nose to intensify. Michael even began to bleed out of his eyes, but he couldn't pay any attention to this.

It was now or never!

Two enhanced Spirit Whips lashed out at Lincoln's mind repeatedly. Lincoln uttered a gut-wrenching sound before he threw Michael to the other side of the battle ring.

Michael crashed hard on the ground. His mind and origin energy were drained at last. He couldn't move his arms anymore either.

Yet, Michael didn't remain lying on the ground. He groaned in pain while standing up, shaking in pain and exhaustion.

'I don't want to lose.'

Chapter 186 Foolish

Lincoln roared loudly while Michael got up from the ground.

Lincoln had yet to sustain a serious injury, but something about him seemed to have changed.

Michael recalled having heard Zeke shouting loudly, something about "Stop, Lincoln!", but he wasn't too sure about that.

Right now, Michael's mind was in a mess. His mental power and origin energy had been drained to the last drop, and he could barely stand on his feet.

On the other hand, Lincoln's body kept expanding. He was already four meters tall and looked like a tiny Stone Giant. Inertia weighing down on Michael kept increasing as well, trying to force him down on his knees.

However, Michael didn't want to give up. He couldn't give up after coming so far.

Fighting a Tier-2 Lord, who had a 6-Star Soultrait, might be a level above Michael's current prowess. Nonetheless, he wanted to show everyone that he wasn't to be taken lightly. He wanted to win and would continue to strive toward his goal, no matter who his opponent was!

A huge earthen wall shot out of the ground a few meters on Michael's left and right sides. Michael's body tensed upon noticing an upcoming attack. But he didn't expect two humongous stone fists to manifest out of thin air.

Lincoln didn't require several seconds to manifest a stone fist like before. No, he could immediately condense two eight-meter-tall stone fists. The stone fists shot toward Michael as Lincoln issued another roar. The roar reverberated through Michael's ears, dulling the sound of his own raging heartbeat. No other sound reached him after that.

His mind was on the verge of blanking out as he prepared to use his entire strength to jump high up in the air. After all, the sky was the only direction he could go. Yet, even before he jumped, a huge stone foot smashed down, taking away Michael's last path of escape.

Michael narrowed his eyes, and he felt as if he heard Zeke's voice once again.

"Lincoln!!!"

Just as the stone fists and the foot were about to crash down on Michael, time slowed down. Various thoughts flashed through Michael's mind. He was trying to find a way out of his predicament, but he quickly noticed that it was not possible.

There was no way out of this situation. He was not strong enough to crush the attacks, forget about blocking them with his body. Michael couldn't even evade them.

Maybe it was possible with a Soultrait such as Jeffrey's short-distance teleportation. However, Michael wasn't in possession of such a Soultrait. He had Lesser Enhancement, Eagle Eyes, and Spirit Whip at his disposal, but not enough energy to use them.

Michael could try to use Extraction on the stone wall to extract the entire wall or all components that ensured the wall's stability. However, Michael didn't have enough time to use Extraction for a long period nor was he in possession of the necessary energy to use Extraction.

Just as Michael realized that there was no way out for him, a loud snap rang through the surroundings. The referee chose to intervene, crushing Lincoln's attack with a snap of his fingers. The stone fists crumbled, and the stone fist turned into countless tiny particles.

Then the referee appeared in front of Michael. He landed lightly on the ground and looked at Michael, whose heart was beating wildly.

'Did he just crush the attack as if it was nothing worth mentioning?' Michael looked up at him in disbelief.

The referee, a young-looking man with short silver hair, looked at Michael.

"Are you okay, kiddo?" He asked aloud on a whim.

The referee merely wanted to check if Michael's spirit had been crushed after losing miserably against Lincoln Piedra. But what the referee didn't expect to see was Michael's eyes that burned fiercely as he looked straight into the referee's eyes. Even in a helpless situation, Michael's fighting spirit never crumbled. He was a warrior through and through.

"I couldn't feel better!" Michael answered in a dry tone.

His eyes moved to Lincoln, whose Soultrait had been forcefully suppressed by the referee. Lincoln's eyes shot wide open, and he looked down at his body, which slowly returned to normal. Then he looked at Michael, who smiled lightly.

"What the hell was that mental attack?!" Lincoln asked, still unable to control the mess of emotions within him.

Michael shrugged at Lincoln's question, which hurt much more than he expected.

The adrenaline that helped him suppress the pain had dispersed, leaving nothing but the pain in Michael's heart.

However, the pain was not worth focusing on. Medics were already rushing over to tend to his wounds.

The only thing of importance in Michael's mind was that he had lost.

Michael gave his all to win, but he couldn't. He didn't have a chance at all.

Not even exposing Spirit Whip changed the course of the battle. It enraged Lincoln and forced him to move, but that was it. I think you should take a look at

Others might say that it was only obvious that he had lost. He fought a descendant of a High Noble, someone who was a few months older, had awakened a 6-Star Soultrait, and possessed custom techniques related to his Soultrait, which he had been practicing for several months even before Michael had entered the Origin Expanse, but none of that mattered.

It didn't even matter that Lincoln had a family, who was willing to invest greatly into their descendants. It was not important.

At the end, the only thing that mattered was that Michael lost the fight.

He wasn't even interested in the prideful part of coming out victorious.

Of course, it felt great to win. It boosted his ego and gave him a satisfactory feeling. Nonetheless, the loss made him realize something far more important; That he would have lost and died if the battle had been against an enemy in the Origin Expanse.

He knew that he had to improve a lot, but he didn't expect to be that helpless against the descendants of a High Noble.

At this moment, Michael realized one thing for sure; his combat prowess was insignificant.

It may be enough to fight Tier-2 Monsters to a certain extent, but that was already it. In the future, his individual combat prowess wouldn't be high enough to fight Monsters of a higher Tier either. Once he attempted to fight Tier-4 Monsters, Michael would be crushed. Existences that advanced to the 4th Tier were on a whole different level as beings at Tier-3. They were higher lifeforms that broke through the first barrier.

At his current level, Michael would never be able to rival the descendants of High Nobles, Great Clans, and Supreme Families.

He wouldn't even have a chance against the prodigies of other races.

Secretly, Michael knew that Kaleb Zenovia was highly likely to leave him behind as well. After today's battle, Michael realized the true power of high-ranked Soultraits, and the difference the techniques that had been prepared by the ancestors of the Piedra family made.

Most of the influential families with a foothold in the Origin Expanse had such techniques.

Kaleb had yet to awaken his War Rune, but he was already strong enough to rival the strength of an Awakened Tier-0 Lord. He wouldn't have an issue defeating someone like Niklas Liekhoven.

Michael didn't even want to imagine how fast Kaleb's strength would increase after he became an Awakened. Using his ancestor's heritage and techniques, Kaleb was bound to reach Michael's level in the blink of an eye.

Even Frederik Kolbenheim and Jacqueline would soon become much stronger.

Frederik told him before that his Soultrait might only be 3-Star, but that his ancestors spent more than a century to find a way to amplify wind elemental affinities using a Hybrid technique that refined both the Mind and the Body in a complex way. It was a Hybrid Refining technique with which Frederik wanted to defeat Michael once he completed the first stage.

At this moment, Michael felt like a fool. It was like the world crashed down on him.

He had lectured Frederik to never feel arrogant and not to take others lightly, but that was exactly what he had done.

He totally overestimated his own combat prowess and lost miserably as a result.

'Why did I ever consider it important to keep Spirit Whip a secret? Why should I hold back? Can I even afford to hold back, in the first place?'

Michael felt like he was a big joke.

'How am I going to become strong if I'm holding back while fighting people, who're far stronger, in the first place?'

After his battle against Lincoln Piedra, Michael realized some of his stupid mistakes. He began to understand that he should never hold back and that he had to give his all to become stronger, otherwise, his peers and everyone else would become much stronger while he would stay back and miserably watch the gap between them widen.

So far, he merely fought fellow humans in the Academy. However, what would happen once war broke out in the extraterrestrial? What if his territory was under attack, and he was too weak to protect his subordinates and territory because he didn't give his best all this while? Would holding back help him become stronger? No, it would just hold him back from attaining the best results and more resources!

Oddly enough, this realization caused Michael to smile foolishly.

Going all out against stronger opponents was an intense feeling. It was exciting and somewhat addictive.

Michael didn't want to care about hiding his secrets anymore. He wanted to improve his strength and become powerful enough to fight on even grounds against someone like Lincoln.

Of course, fighting against someone like Lincoln on even grounds was only the beginning.

Nonetheless, it was a goal worth fighting for.

Chapter 187 MINE!!!

The sound of continuous tapping on a hard surface resounded through a large hall where close to a hundred men and women ranging from their 20s to their 100s were seated around a large table.

Dozens of holographic screens were projected above the table, attracting the interest of the men and women seated around.

'Did I see correctly?'

A perfectly normal thought popped into Alice Zenovia's mind after she watched the battle between Lincoln Piedra and Michael Fang.

Her fingernails drummed against the table's surface rhythmically until she decided to open the starnet messenger. She opened the chat with Michael and typed a short message.

[Alice Zenovia: Are you a Triple Awakened?]

Her eyes remained glued on the chat for a few minutes until she realized that Michael wouldn't answer her anytime soon.

Alice leaned back in her seat and clicked her tongue as she was deep in thought. Some of the people seated near Alice looked at her pointedly for a moment, causing Alice to straighten her back once again.

Even if she was from the Zenovia family, there were enough people of higher status present right now. Offending them was one of the last things on her mind.

During events like the Real Combat assessment, the Instructors, Professors, and other staff responsible for education in combat would meet up, analyze their students' combat prowess, and determine what most students lacked. It was important to know what the masses lacked to fix their bad habits and give everyone a chance to improve.

They watched the recordings of certain fights – which the supercomputer deemed exceptional using specific parameters.

"I think we should pay more attention to Silva Ori. He deserves a few bonus points for defeating an opponent, who was at a higher stage, and in possession of an advantageous Soultrait. His usage of the Quarz Oath Saber technique was pretty good," One of the Professors said aloud.

He waved his hand, expanding the screen on which the fight of a young silver-haired man wielding a white sword was being displayed.

"His comprehension of the sword is pretty good," An old man seated at the large table murmured to himself, "If he continues to fight well, using the heart of the sword to improve his technique's proficiency, I might take him in as a personal student. It should be worth a try."

Some of the Professors and Instructors looked at the old man with slight surprise.

Everyone present had the authority to give certain students bonus points, and Sapphire points if they fought greatly against certain opponents. They could also pick a few students and focus teaching on them privately – if the students had compatible Soultraits, fighting styles, and suitable personalities.

However, it was not often that the teaching staff picked students to teach privately. It cost a tremendous amount of time, and effort to teach students individually, and it could cause conflicts between certain families with frail egos.

"By the way, what's with the student you recommended, Professor Zenovia?" The young Professor next to Alice Zenovia asked.

It was Oliver Zeus, who had been with Alice in Elyra.

Alice heard what Oliver said, but she could only sigh and take another glance at the chat on starnet messenger.

"I'm not sure..."

"Not sure? Hearing something like that from you...feels weird," Ophelia Blaze joined the conversation by pushing Oliver's head to the side.

Oliver Zeus was seated between Ophelia and Alice. Ophelia hated that, but she could make use of the opportunity to torture the idiot of the Zeus family a little bit more. That was more than enough to make up for the seating arrangements.

Alice could only give Ophelia a shrug. She also knew that her behavior was not normal. However, Michael's fight confused her.

It didn't make any sense, no matter how hard she thought about it.

'Was that why the Karmatic Compass broke before it came to a conclusion?' She mused in her mind when her gaze fell on a holographic screen not too far from her.

It displayed Michael's fight against Lincoln Piedra. The supercomputer awarded the fight with two stars, indicating that it had noticed something odd about the fight.

One of the older folks present at the table noticed the familiar appearance of the Piedra household's descendants and expanded the holographic screen to have a better view.

A few more instructors and professors noticed the video after it had been expanded. They created a copy and opened the video in front of them on their screens to watch it without having to move from their seats.

"Lincoln Piedra, the descendant of the Piedra household. I didn't know that he also came to our academy. The next Battle Exchange will be very interesting with him present!" An Instructor mumbled loud enough for many to hear.

They agreed with a subtle smile on their faces. It was only obvious that Lincoln would become a very valuable asset to the Saphirelake Military Academy, whether it was for their image, or the Battle Exchange in half a year. I think you should take a look at

Lincoln was already a Tier-2 Lord, and he was in possession of a 6-Star Soultrait. As long as he was nourished patiently, he would grow strong enough to affect the result of the next Battle Exchange.

More professors opened a holographic screen to inspect Lincoln's battle. They watched it with great interest, only to notice that something changed in the midst of the battle.

"Did he lose control of his Soultrait? Wait. What is his opponent doing?! This kid is suicidal..." One of them blurted out, while another one added as he saw the fierce glint in Michael's eyes after the referee intervened, "His fighting spirit is not bad. Look at his eyes!"

"This student is just a Tier-1 Lord but he managed to keep up against Lincoln pretty long. That's not too bad. Wait...isn't he using 3 Soultraits at once?" An old woman asked in doubt after she rewatched the battle.

She noticed that Lincoln's opponent used two Soultraits right off the bat and chose to open the files that had been documented about Michael Fang. Only two Soultraits had been mentioned in the records.

However, the moment Lincoln broke his opponent's arm, something changed. Lincoln couldn't keep his Soultrait materialized, and his opponent began bleeding from his nose.

"Three Soultraits? I thought he was using the enchantments of his Artifacts...but Tier-1 Artifacts shouldn't be strong enough to forcefully terminate the usage of Lincoln's 6-Star Soultraits...that's right! Is that kid really in possession of three Soultraits? What a lucky bastard!" Oliver Zeus grumbled while shoving Ophelia back into her seat.

Ophelia grumbled something incomprehensible about wanting to sit closer to Alice, but she stopped herself from fighting Oliver for his seat.

Meanwhile, Alice wasn't even paying attention to Oliver, or Ophelia.

"His third Soultrait should be a 3-Star Soultrait that affects the mind if it can disturb Lincoln to such an extent. That's pretty good! But...if he is using three Soultraits simultaneously, shouldn't he be one of the special students? I have never seen this kid..." One of the younger Instructors said while sensing that a golden opportunity unraveled in front of him.

"Michael Fang..." The old woman mumbled before she shook her head, "That doesn't ring a bell. I've never heard of this kid before."

"If nobody has ever heard of him, he must be from an ordinary background," The young Instructor said with a tinge of excitement before adding, "I'll take him then. His fighting spirit is calling to me!"

"Delvis, your Soultrait is not suitable. You don't understand the struggle of possessing multiple low-level Soultraits. It's much better for someone like me to teach him," One of the female instructors suddenly added.

She was in possession of two low-level Soultraits, which she could use to fight against opponents who had much stronger Soultraits. Her combo attacks were feared by many, even the prodigies of influential families. It was justifiable for her to teach someone like Michael.

Michael's combat prowess didn't stand out too much compared to other freshmen, but he had three combat related Soultraits, and his fighting spirit was not to be underestimated as well. As long as he was taught properly, he would turn into a frightening opponent!

This was also something Alice understood after watching Michael's battle against Lincoln. However, she couldn't feel happy right now. Alice felt frustrated, realizing that Michael had never exposed his full potential to her. And now, she pondered whether she had done enough to lure him, or if he required more bait to trust her wholeheartedly.

She was just about to release her anger when the sound of a notification dragged her out of her thoughts. The sound rang in her ears, causing her body to respond subconsciously.

[Michael Fang: Maybe I have three Soultriats, maybe I don't. Are you asking this as a Professor of the Sapphirelake Military Academy, or as Alice Zenovia?]

Alice didn't even realize it at first, but the corners of her lip curled upward. Michael's cheekiness was something she couldn't get tired of.

He was different from the dogs, wagging their tails in front of her, praising her day in and day out for being a prodigy.

"You cannot get him," Alice mumbled, barely loud enough for those with a strong hearing sense to hear.

Oliver Zeus, Ophelia Blaze, and the others turned to her at once upon hearing her.

"Of course, we can compete to determine who'll be the best to teach him, but don-..." The female Instructor said before looking over to Alice, whose eyes were as cold as a glacier.

"He is mine!" Alice retorted sharply.

Hmmm?

What was she talking about?

Alice noticed something and cleared her throat.

"I recommended him, so I'm using my right of priority," She said, before slowly but fiercely adding, "He. Is. Mine!!"

Alice's eyes brimmed with confidence and the desire to beat up everyone who was daring enough to take away what belonged to her.

Chapter 188 First Request

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): I asked as Alice Zenovia]

[Michael: In that case...Yes, I have more than two Soultraits!]

After he used Spirit Whip against Lincoln, he figured that everyone could find out about his third Soultrait by rewatching his match with Lincoln a few times. It was highly likely that everyone would figure out his secret about Spirit Whip sooner or later.

But so be it. It happened, and Michael didn't regret fighting Lincoln with everything he got.

He lost fair and square while giving his all. That's all that counted.

Furthermore, some people awakened three Soultraits. It was extremely rare, but it had happened in the past.

'I cannot afford to play around anymore. Don't be stupid and get your act together!' Michael shouted at himself inwardly.

Nobody would pay attention to him while he was this weak. Even if someone paid attention to him, what would he become? A bully's target? That was definitely not what he wanted to happen. He would never allow anyone to bully him again! That time was over!

Michael didn't speak about his third Soultrait directly, but Lincoln and Zeke figured that Michael had been hiding a trump card. They were astonished, but not as much as Frederik who was shocked to the core. He stared blankly at Michael for half an hour before he stormed off.

He couldn't believe that his rival had been hiding something as important as a third Soultrait all this while.

They had been sparring for so long, yet Michael never used Spirit Whip against him. What did that mean? Did Michael not think of him as a rival on equal standing? Was Michael trying to make fun of him and consider him a rookie?

You cannot even defeat me when I'm just using two Soultraits. How are you supposed to deal with me when I start using my mental attacks as well? Will you even be able to materialize wind blades before I beat you into a pulp?

Various scenarios flashed through Frederik's mind – one worse than the other in which Michael mocked him. He grit his teeth and left the arena, stomping his feet angrily. Frederik needed some time for himself.

Breathing heavily, he reached his room where he blanked out, asking himself what the hell he was supposed to do.

'Is he hiding more? What if he has a fourth Soultrait? What if he never went all out against me? Even if I complete the first stage of the Wind Sage's Sacred Body refinement technique...will I be able to beat him? He is just an ordinary peasant without any backing, yet he can retaliate against one of the High Nobles' descendants in a fight...I was just standing there blankly...'

Frederik slumped onto the edge of the bed in his room. The creaking bed muffled the heavy sigh that escaped his lips. He almost yanked his hair, feeling like his purpose in life was slowly losing its meaning.

'So what if I'm the only heir of the Kolbenheim family? I'm totally useless. I cannot even defeat Michael. I'm not even strong enough to clash with the descendants of the High Nobles. What am I even good for?'

'All this training...more than a decade of constant training, studying, stress and constant nurturing...a vast fortune invested by my family...just to create a loser...' Frederik cursed himself in his mind, punching the bed harshly.

He grit his teeth until his jaw hurt and clenched his fists until his fingernails dug deep into the soft flesh of his palms.

"This cannot go on like this," Frederik blurted out after a long time of silence passed.

He opened the starnet messenger on his crystal watch and took a deep breath.

"He said I shouldn't message him...but if it's about this, he wouldn't mind, right?" Frederik asked himself while nibbling at his lower lip.

"Whatever. What's the worst that could happen?" He asked before typing the first message to his father after he, and his future father-in-law sent him and Jacqueline to the aptitude assessment and the Sapphirelake Military Academy as a punishment.

Meanwhile, Jacqueline was searching for Frederik. She didn't know what was going on in his mind lately, and that worried her more than anything else.

'Who cares whether we're not as strong as these prodigies? It doesn't matter as long as we have each other. You idiot! Don't be that prideful, and come back to me!!!' She screamed in her heart, while her eyes got teary.

Jacqueline couldn't hold back from sobbing quietly on the way to his room. Why was it important to be stronger than everyone else? Couldn't Frederik be happy with just her by his side?

For the first time in her life – and the 16 years she and Frederik had known each other – Jacqueline felt the distance between herself and Frederik grow. She was also surprised to find out that Michael had grown strong enough to fight and defeat both of them simultaneously, but she overcame the shock quickly.

Unfortunately, Frederik was not the same. His confidence had been crushed just like his pride.

It was all Michael's fault. Ever since he had appeared in their lives, Michael caused nothing but havoc.

"I won't allow you to take Frederik away from me!" She screamed as she ran through the hallway, "Just wait for me to beat you up. Nobody takes my Frederik from me....NOBODY!!!"

Jacqueline opened starnet messenger on her crystal watch as well. She first wrote a message to Frederik, telling him that she would take care of everything before she opened another chat with her father.

"If you don't help me, you're dead to me dad!" She cursed loudly, while furiously typing a message. I think you should take a look at

Just as the Barbaric Couple went through their first crisis, Igor Kolbenheim and Karek Orlando were having dinner together. They met up occasionally to talk about their territories, how to develop them, and what to focus on next. Their businesses inside and outside the Origin Expanse were tightly intertwined, forcing the two to work together by all means.

Igor and Karek clinked their glasses and savored the refreshing taste of their cool beer. They enjoyed the well-cooked dishes and their company, completely oblivious to what their kids were going through.

However, their moments of silence and peace didn't last long.

The sound of multiple notifications rang through the room simultaneously, which caused the two men to lower their forks. They opened the holographic screen on their crystal watches and stared at the messages that had popped up in front of them.

[Son: I know that I'm not supposed to message you for a while, but this cannot go on. I know it's too early, but I need the upgraded version of Wind Sage's Sacred Body Refinement technique. I started the Basic Mind Refinement practice, but it's not enough. It's not fast enough. I need to get stronger. I need the Soul Strengthening part as well...Dad... please!!!]

Igor Kolbenheim stared blankly at the message in front of him. A few more messages from Frederik made it seem as if he was on the verge of breaking down. It was the complete opposite of Frederik's usual behavior. It was worlds apart.

'Is the Saphirelake Military Academy that terrifying? I heard from a few High Nobles who had sent their children to the Military Academy earlier...but to think that he broke that quickly! I thought they just arrived in Kelta yesterday,' Igor thought, lowering the holographic screen in front of him to see his friend and watch his expression distort slowly.

[My Little Princess: Dad, send me the newest version of our family's Inheritance technique! I don't care if the Hybrid form is not ready for use. I don't care if the 'synergy' between mind, body, and soul has yet to be improved. I need it. NOW! If I don't beat up someone soon, he'll take Frederik from me!!!!]

[My Little Princess: I swear, if you don't send me the technique, I'll cut ties with you. DADDD message me back ASAP!!!!!!]

[My Little Princess: DAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAADDDDDDDD!!!!]

Karek Orlando's face paled all of a sudden. His face was wiped off of all its previous joy and a heavy sigh escaped his lips.

'What...is going on here?

The middle-aged men looked at each other, their expressions speaking volumes.

"You too?"

"Yours sent a message as well?" Karek Orlando asked with a trace of hope in his voice.

Frederik was usually not as ill-tempered as Jacqueline, but he could be just as demanding as his spoiled little princess. That was what Karek hoped for.

Unfortunately, Karek's hope was crushed when Igor showed Karek the message Frederik sent to him.

"I see...your son asked for the upgraded Hybrid Form..." Karek mumbled absentmindedly.

The joy he felt from finally being able to spend some time off work disappeared. A sour feeling replaced his happiness in an instant.

Igor noticed that something was wrong, and he saw the last message Jacqueline sent to her father.

"It's fine. Your daughter is hard to crush. Look at it positively," Igor said, trying to console his best friend, "Our children are finally ready to face reality. If they stay motivated and keep striving for strength we won't have to worry about the future. Isn't that a good thing?"

"Hmm...is that so? Well...my daughter threatened to cut ties with me...so...I guess I will send her the technique..." Karek responded half-heartedly.

Igor had never seen Karek so miserable. However, looking at the messages Jacqueline sent her father, Igor could fully understand how Karek must feel.

'Good thing Frederik is a lovely son,' Igor thought before he squinted his eyes at the realization, 'Scratch the lovely. He is a spoiled brat, who finally faced a wall he cannot climb on his own.'

Even though he felt a little bit sorry for Karek, it was a first for both Frederik and Jacqueline to make a request like this. Usually, they took everything they'd been given, but that was already it. They used the resources at their disposal, but they wouldn't ask for more. Normally, they were content with what they'd been given.

But that was not enough anymore. Something had changed, and Igor felt a little excited at that.

His son made his first request, and he even said 'please'. Both were a first, and it happened much sooner than both Igor and Karek had estimated and hoped for.

"Good thing that we focused our research on the Soul Strengthening part of the techniques. Let's send them over and wait patiently," Igor said before he patted his friend's back.

"Maybe the Sapphirelake Military Academy will improve Jacqueline's attitude as well. We can only hope for the best!"

If the Military Academy was not enough to change Jacqueline, there would still be Michael.

Michael could beat some sense into the pampered little princess, and he was more than willing to do so!

Chapter 189 Individual Teaching I

Michael was bombarded with countless questions from Lincoln, the Barscht triplets, and Zeke, but he didn't pay much attention to those questions.

He didn't want to go into detail, and the others couldn't force him to reveal more information about his Soultraits either. It was generally known that everyone was allowed to keep secrets about their Soultraits.

That was also the reason Michael wouldn't be questioned about why he hid Spirit Whip during the aptitude assessment. Some may wonder why he did that, but it was his choice to do so.

Nonetheless, Spirit Whip had been exposed, and it wasn't impossible for everyone to collect information about his three Soultraits. In this era of technology and starnet, nothing remained hidden once exposed. Everything would be documented somewhere.

It was a pity that he lost one of his trump cards, but he had been ready to expose Spirit Whip from the beginning of the Realm Combat assessment, so it was fine.

'Let's just create a few more trump cards for later use,' Michael thought with a shrug, 'Of course, without holding back.'

Extraction was not a combat oriented Soultrait, either way. Not using it publicly outside the Origin Expanse was to ensure that information about it wouldn't be documented in starnet.

After losing miserably against Lincoln, Michael had many things to think about. He wanted to become stronger and gain more experience fighting opponents with exceptional inheritance techniques, and powerful Soultraits.

Unfortunately, he wasn't given too much time to think about ways to turn Lincoln and Zeke into his sparring partners. He received a few notifications on his crystal watch, just like everyone else.

[To the freshmen – Select your timetable until the end of the Real Combat assessment to ensure a smooth transfer to the beginning of the first semester.]

[The courses at the Saphirelake Military Academy are all optional, and there are no mandatory classes. Please choose your courses wisely. Courses are added and rotated regularly. You can register at any time as long as enough spots are left. Please keep in mind that some courses will require a fee using Saphire Points/special requirements to be met and that the Instructors and Professors won't start teaching you from scratch if you join late.

Remark: If you fail to meet the minimum requirements set by the instructors, you will be punished and marked. Should you be marked three times in one semester, or five times over the course of three years, you will be expelled and sent home (we won't reimburse the ticket price for the flight back home) Good luck]

[Course Selection Catalog.

—Mainstream courses— Intermediate Combat Practice, Unique Racial Abilities, Race Analysis, Mankind and the Extraterrestrial, Basic War Tactics, Magic Warfare....

—Secondary courses— Basic Terraforming, Advanced Topography, Native Territories, Origin Economic, Business Education, Mechanics, Space Exploration,...

—Special Courses— Limit Breaker, Ancient Ruins, Old Languages, Danger Sense, Memory Lane, Psychology, Basic Concoction, Enchantments and how to use them properly, Spacecraft Driving Course, Engineering, Giga Mechanics...]

As he browsed through the catalog, Michael realized that there were far more interesting courses than he had initially expected. He thought that he would be interested in a handful of them, but he was proven wrong immediately.

Just looking at the Special Courses was enough to pick more than five courses that he would love to attend.

'I shouldn't pick too many at once. If I spend too much time studying, I'll neglect the Origin Expanse and my foundation, and I'll slow down,' Michael thought dejectedly.

He had yet to finish the second stage of the Berserker Physique, improve his War Rune, and comprehend the neutral energy absorption technique, Pandemonium's Requiem. His combat prowess had yet to improve as well. Michael wasn't even in possession of a powerful combat technique since he ignored the wicked Spear Arts, which he had obtained through Fenrir's Memory Orb.

"I already finished creating my schedule. Isn't that what everyone did?" Jarg asked, a little annoyed at the notifications that kept popping up.

"Weren't the courses kept secret from the public?" Michael asked no one in particular. However, he quickly realized that the two High Nobles and the triplets turned over to him.

"I also finished mine," Lincoln added conversationally.

...

"Keeping something a secret from the public seems like a big joke in a place where everyone has connections," Michael grumbled quietly as he continued to look through the Course Selection Catalog.

He noticed that a few courses were already grayed out, meaning that there were no more spots left in these courses.

Michael's initial excitement dipped a little seeing that some of the courses he was interested in couldn't be picked anymore. Unfortunately, there was nothing he could do about that. Thus, he started picking other courses.

"Did you hear that Professor Zenovia is also the freshmen's representative, Zeke? Why wasn't that mentioned in the notifications?" Janus asked Zeke, before also looking at Lincoln in curiosity, "Did you know about that as well?"

"Well...isn't it obvious? Kaleb will join the freshmen once his War Rune manifests. I don't think it's surprising that Professor Zenovia wants to keep a watch on him, or is it?" Lincoln responded with a shrug.

He didn't see a deeper meaning behind Alice Zenovia's actions. She was known for being an overprotective sister, who would do everything for her little brother. Becoming representative of the freshmen in the Sapphirelake Military Academy for Kaleb didn't seem far-fetched.

'Alice is our representative?' Michael thought just as he received another notification on his crystal watch.

It was a message from Alice itself.

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): I recommend you to pick only 3-4 courses to ensure that your schedule is free for the special course [Individual Teaching]. Add it three times a week, two hours each. It doesn't matter where you add it.]

'Is she angry at me?' Michael couldn't help but think after seeing her message.

Her message sounded different than usual – dry and to the point. However, that was not the only part that confused him.

'Individual Teaching? Who wants to teach me? Alice?'

Michael's heart leaped in excitement at the thought of receiving individual teaching from Alice. She was a Tier-5 powerhouse and had a 6-Star Soultrait. Receiving her tutelage meant that he could spar with a real powerhouse three times a week. He wouldn't even have to force Lincoln and Zeke to spar with him. That was great.

Yet, at the same time, Michael's expression was distorted a little. Why would Alice be willing to teach him individually?

Confused, Michael chose to pick an unusual way to confirm his suspicion about Alice at last. Rather than engaging in a conversation with her to figure out her intentions, Michael chose to turn into Super Detective Fang – for once, at least.

He closed his chat with Alice and opened Kaleb Zenovia's chat on starnet messenger.

[Michael Fang: Hey Kaleb, I didn't even know that your sister is the representative of the freshmen. Will that affect you?] I think you should take a look at

Instead of asking his doubts straightforwardly, Michael started off with light chatting.

[Kaleb Zenovia: I saw you earlier.]

[Kaleb Zenovia: I don't know if it will affect me, but Alice wanted me to stay by her side, so she had to take on more responsibilities. Otherwise, I wouldn't have been allowed to come to the Sapphirelake Military Academy without a War Rune, and without taking any tests. But that's not all, you know.]

'Since when is he willing to write such long-ass messages? Is he bored?' Michael wondered when he saw the second message Kaleb had sent.

Usually, his messages were extremely short and to the point, which was also why Michael hadn't expected much. But his third message was even longer, and it revealed information Michael wasn't supposed to know – probably.

[Keep this a secret, but my sister uses the reason mentioned above as a disguise. She wanted to become representative of the freshmen to get closer to the Tritan Alliance. Our parents want to expand our business, which is why they want to request the Berserker and Warlock Centaurs to become exclusive business partners of our family. Unfortunately, that's not easy because our family has to gain their respect first. She wants to attain that by turning this year's freshmen – and me – into her KPI. She wants us to overpower the youngest generation of the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs at the next Battle Exchange!]

Michael read the message thoroughly and could only smile wryly.

'He turned into a gossip. He trusts me way too much...'

He was not too sure how to feel about the immense trust he received from Kaleb. But he knew that he was slowly getting closer to unveiling Alice's true intentions.

[Michael Fang: But how is that related to me?]

Now that Kaleb laid out the basic foundation of their conversation, Michael could change the topic rather easily.

[Kaleb Zenovia: Related to you? It shouldn't be.]

[Michael Fang: Is that so?]

Michael raised an eyebrow at Kaleb's response, but he didn't let it bother him. Instead, he changed his approach again, asking Kaleb a few different questions until he finally confessed.

[Kaleb Zenovia: To be honest, I thought Alice wanted to use you as a plaything when I got to know that you guys know each other. If not that, I thought she wanted you to join her squadron to use you as a meat shield later during the Battle Exchange – to test the waters for everyone else.

You seemed like an easy target – being talented but without anyone backing you.]

Michael nearly burst into laughter reading the message. The youngest member of the Zenovia family was really not good at keeping his mouth shut.

Kaleb didn't seem to have been taught when to stay silent, and when to speak.

But it was quite funny, which was also the only reason why Michael didn't feel insulted. Kaleb was simply giving him insider information and he could not be mad about it.

[Kaleb Zenovia: But these days things have changed. I think she likes you being around me. Maybe she thinks that you're a good influence on me. Dunno]

Michael had sensed it before as well that Kaleb was much easier to talk to these days and would often attempt to strike up a conversation with him.

Rather than showing his silent and arrogant attitude, Kaleb seemed more level-headed and capable of quietly analyzing the situation in front of him before acting. Their chat showed that Kaleb's messages were written without much thought, but his actions and the way he analyzed the situation were different – thoughtful and analytical.

Michael didn't expect Kaleb to acknowledge that he was changing slowly, either. He might not be willing to say it openly, but his behavior and attitude were quite different from the young man who had challenged him at the buffet. Interestingly, Kaleb was fully aware of that.

'Kaleb also figured that Alice wanted to use me,' Michael thought before he shrugged, 'Well...it's not like that is something extremely hard to comprehend.'

Even though Michael was still not completely certain about Alice's reasoning, he doubted that she wanted to use him for Kaleb's sake. Furthermore, he was slowly collecting information that allowed him to comprehend the big picture.

Kaleb's information had been extremely helpful. Michael continued to chat with Kaleb, but that wasn't all he did.

He opened a second holographic screen where he opened his chat with Alice.

Instead of continuing to beat around the bush, he chose to be straightforward with Alice.

[Michael Fang: Why did you offer me Individual Teaching? Do you want to use me for the Battle Exchange? Or do you want me to join your squadron in the future? What did you plan to do once you gained my trust? I really don't understand what you're thinking.]

His message was impolite considering that Alice was the representative of the freshmen, and a Professor, while Michael was merely an ordinary student, but he didn't really care about that right now.

He was too curious and wanted answers.

Now!

Alice was still seated in the large room with the other Instructors, Professors and some of the older folks of mankind when she received Michael's message.

The corner of her lip curled upward upon reading it.

"Being polite doesn't really suit you," She mumbled, "This is much better than those bootlickers."

Then she began to type a long message.

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): The message will be a little bit longer, so don't complain later.]

Michael subconsciously nodded his head when he saw the message. He waited patiently, glad that he would finally receive the answer he'd been waiting for.

Ten minutes later, the message he'd been waiting for arrived. However, it was much longer than he expected.

'What is wrong with this amount of details?!?'

Chapter 190 Individual Teaching II

The message covered the entire holographic screen and held an enormous amount of information.

Alice must have been using her speed as a Tier-5 powerhouse for ten minutes straight to write an essay with several thousand words. It was pretty insane.

Nonetheless, Michael was glad. The long message made him feel like Alice didn't want to hide her reasoning from him, so he began to read quietly.

Half an hour later, his understanding of Alice's actions had improved considerably. Combining the information written in Alice's long message with the secrets Kaleb exposed earlier, Michael could finally see the big picture.

"To think that the government will give Professors more funds if they find unpolished diamonds among ordinary people. It makes sense... but why does it leave a bitter aftertaste?" Michael mumbled quietly.

One of the reasons Alice picked him was her KPI. The better he performed in the Saphirelake Military Academy the higher the funds Alice could receive. She recommended him to the Saphirelake Military Academy, so he was her golden goose.

Apparently, Alice watched his final exam when she was supposed to be watching Kaleb's ex fiancé's final exam the first time she came to his school in Elyra. He attracted her attention even though he was still unawakened at that time. Alice used a consumable Artifact called, Karmatic Compass, to make sure that her intuition was right.

Michael didn't know what the Karmatic Compass was, but he didn't ask either because he was too distracted with Kaleb's canceled engagement. Their terminated engagement was a good thing since Jasmine had never been a good person. Michael was glad that Kaleb escaped this red flag.

Alice also revealed that he had exceeded her expectations by advancing to Tier-1 this quickly, and his great archery skill during the archery competition at the afterparty of the graduation ceremony was phenomenal.

She also thanked him for staying by Kaleb's side. Kaleb's attitude improved by leaps and bounds ever since he became friends with Michael. He stopped nagging whenever Alice wanted to teach him. On the contrary, Kaleb began to show his desire to train harder than before. At that point, Alice repeated herself quite often, saying that Michael motivated Kaleb to work harder and that she was thankful for him being there.

Then, she began to explain her reasoning as to why she wanted to teach him individually.

She was grateful for his help to Kaleb where she failed miserably and felt that Michael was the perfect support for her little brother because he was not too formal and that Lords with three Soultraits were

rare to find – especially talented Lords without any noteworthy connections. Not teaching him individually meant that she neglected her duty after recommending him to the military academy.

By the time Michael finished reading the huge essay, he was a little overwhelmed. It took him quite a while to organize his thoughts. Yet even after he was done organizing, Michael didn't want to stop confronting Alice. In the first place, her explanation made him have even more questions.

Michael felt that Alice wouldn't always be willing to message him openly about her actions like she did today. He had to seize the chance while he still could.

Alice told him about her parents' mission to create a squadron, but she left out the information Kaleb had told him. She told him a lot, possibly everything that mattered, but Michael was getting greedy. He wanted to know 100% of the truth, not only 99%!

[Michael Fang: Basically, the Zenovia family wants you to build a squadron under your name and prepare them to enter the Battle Exchange. Your parents planned to use you as the head of a 'squadron', and Kaleb as the Leader in the Battle Exchange – once he awakens. That way, your family earns the honor and respect of the Berserker race, and the Warlock Centaur race. By then, you can start building connections to start trading goods inside the Origin Expanse and outside.]

Michael knew that Kaleb had asked him to keep his mouth shut, but he typed everything in a hurry and hit the enter button. Too late did he realize that he had pushed Kaleb into the blazing fire.

For a while, Michael felt apologetic. Fortunately, Alice didn't seem to care too much. Her response arrived a few minutes later.

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): Did Kaleb tell you about our parents' plan? Well, it doesn't matter. Yes, you're right. We hope to further strengthen the Tritan Alliance and make sure that the Zenovias will be one of the alliance's pillars. Trading is just the start. After all, war is awaiting us in the extraterrestrial.]

Michael had heard about the war from various Lord forums and his brother. However, he didn't know any details.

He was curious about the extraterrestrial war, but he didn't ask more about it. That was something he could do later.

Instead, he focused on Individual Teaching and his chat with Alice Zenovia.

[Michael Fang: Is it possible to reject your Individual Teaching, if I don't want it?]

Michael was interested in Alice's teaching. In fact, he desired her tutelage simply because she was the strongest person he had gotten to know until now. He knew that he could learn a lot from her.

But there was one important point he had to make sure of; whether or not he could really trust her in the long run.

Most people were unwilling to show their real faces in front of others. At the end of the day, their true self surfaced only when they couldn't get from you what they wanted. This might be sad, but it was the bitter truth that many had to learn the hard way.

Thus, Michael chose to give Alice a little push to see how she would react.

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): ...You can... do that...]

Alice clearly hesitated in replying. However, that was only obvious. She hadn't expected him to ask such a question, in the first place.

Alice Zenovia was a Tier-5 powerhouse, and a descendant of a Supreme Family. She was – quite literally – one of the best connections Michael could get at this point. Not many would dare to offend Michael as long as the opposite party knew that Alice was his teacher. Furthermore, Michael would get to learn things most ordinary people and people on par with Minor Nobles wouldn't learn their whole life!

"Why would he even think about rejecting my tutelage? Is my personality that rotten to ignore the connections and resources I can give him?" Alice cursed loudly, attracting the attention of the people around her. I think you should take a look at

"Is he drunk or what?" She blurted out, not bothered about the attention her words attracted.

[As long as I'm not restricted, it should be quite useful to have the Frozen Duchess as my personal teacher, so I should agree, I guess.] Michael typed before halting in his tracks for a moment. He didn't immediately send the message but wondered how Alice would respond.

A moment later, Michael shuddered. It was fine to tease Alice a little bit, but he shouldn't go too far. He had to pay attention to certain boundaries.

Michael knew that getting taught by Alice would help him a lot. However, he felt weird talking formally to her. He liked talking to her like he did with Danny. Thus, turning into her disciple would take away the opportunity to talk informally to her. In fact, calling her Professor Alice was already quite annoying.

It irked him a lot.

Instead of pressing send, Michael deleted his message.

He asked something else instead of immediately agreeing to become her student.

[Michael Fang: Do I have to call you Professor Zenovia?]

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): What kind of question is that? Do whatever you want.]

Michael's eyes lit up, and a sly smile blossomed on his face as he typed the next message.

[Michael Fang: Alright then. Thanks for teaching me, fierce beauty Alice!]

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): ...]

Michael could tell that Alice regretted having given him permission to be informal with her, but he could have some fun.

Being serious all day drained him too much. It felt great to act a little childish every now and then.

'If you hate my behavior, don't give me permission to do whatever I want!' Michael lectured Alice in his mind.

pandasnovel.com Finally, he knew why Alice decided to recommend him to the Sapphirelake Military Academy, and why she acted like this. It was her curiosity that led her to use the consumable Artifact, which increased her trust in him, and his rapid growth – and encounter with Kaleb – that lead to the turn of events.

Whether all of this was some grand scheming of fate, or merely multiple coincidences didn't matter. Michael was quite happy, and relieved. He had expected her true intentions to be much worse.

Thus, now that he was not worried about her hidden intentions, Michael's interest in her teaching began to surface in his mind. Her individual teaching wouldn't consume too much of his time either.

Individual teaching was certain to provide exceptional benefits. It was a golden opportunity for Michael, and for Alice as well.

As long as she taught him properly, her chances to complete the mission she'd been given by her family would be much higher. In turn, Kaleb and Michael could use each other as grindstones.

The way Alice looked at the relationship between Kaleb and Michael, she was certain that the two could become rivals as well as friends. Their rivalry would fuel their friendship and competition simultaneously. That way both would grow stronger much faster than they would without each other's company.

Alice never had a rival like this, but she could tell that her growth would have been even faster with a rival as prodigious as she was.

Michael might be lacking a lot compared to Kaleb, but he had the advantage of time. Kaleb would turn 18 in two months. Until then, Michael had to grow much stronger. That way, Kaleb would have a harder time catching up.

Once he caught up, Michael would feel a sense of inferiority. Michael would work even harder, and his hidden potential would slowly be unraveled.

By then, the two would be great friends and even greater rivals.

That was the plan forming in Alice's mind, and she loved it much more than she wanted to acknowledge.

'Maybe, I'm getting too invested in this?' She thought just to shrug it off.

'Well....whatever. Who cares?'