

## Supreme Lord 341

### Chapter 341 Surprise

After the Battle Exchange started, Alice Zenovia and the other Professors of the Saphirelake Military Academy had a hard time befriending the higher-ups of the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs. The cultural differences were a lot larger than they had anticipated, and the Dean of the Octagon Council didn't really help Alice and the other Professors either.

On the contrary, the Dean and the representatives of the Big Five Universities and the Great Three Academies were trying their utmost to hold back the representatives of the Saphirelake Military Academy. They wanted to keep their benefits to themselves and continue to develop their relationship with the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs. Thus, the Saphirelake Military Academy was a thorn in their eyes. The Military Academy was clearly trying to squeeze and push its way through before throwing everyone aside.

It was only obvious that the heads of the Great Three and the Big Five didn't look happy with this.

Therefore, Alice Zenovia, Oliver Zeus, and Ophelia Blaze had a hard time getting close to the Berserker Chieftain, and the War Priestess. They were always surrounded by the Dean of the Octagon Council and the other representatives. It was truly a nuisance.

Fortunately, the events on the second day of the Battle Exchange created a great opportunity for Alice, Oliver, and Ophelia to move near the heads of the Berserker race and the Warlock race. As the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs grew more aggressive in the battles against human Awakened, some representatives of the Big Five Universities made some unpleasant comments.

The comments earned them a deadly glare from the Chieftain and the War Priestess. Afterward, they began to ignore the representatives. Taking advantage of that, Alice pushed past them.

"Looks like we finally gained some recognition," Alice said just loud enough for a few people around her to hear.

The Chieftain was one of the people who heard her. They had been observing the Duo discipline's battles from the VIP section where nobody could bother them – or that was how it was supposed to be. Unfortunately, most representatives of the human race didn't know when to keep their mouths shut. They couldn't enjoy the welcoming sight of a fierce battle when it unraveled in front of them.

However, the frosty female human, who appeared next to him didn't say much – and the few words she said weren't unpleasant to her. Her words showed that she understood the reason the Berserkers were fighting more aggressively all of a sudden. That was more than the Chieftain expected after hearing the comments of the other human representatives.

"Allies are supposed to show their true selves in battle. How else are they supposed to get to know each other?" The Chieftain asked while turning his head back to the center of the Underground Colosseum.

Alice nodded her head in response. Seeing that the Chieftain had given her some attention, Alice figured that it was not time to strike. Her family had researched the Berserker race and Warlock Centaurs for months. Their extensive network system had been used to collect countless reports about their allies, and Alice studied every single report.

She spent several months preparing for this day, and she wouldn't let it slip past her fingers.

Other representatives would have been angry at the little attention they received, but Alice knew that the Battle Exchange was an important event for the Berserkers and the Warlock Centaurs. The war-loving races competed with the human Awakened with all their might to determine who would be the leading force in the Interdimensional Flag War. Everyone wanted to be the leading force, but that was not possible.

To fight the Tekur race head-on, they were in need of a united team, trust, and explosive power. Having a single entity leading the rest would make things much easier than a loose group of a thousand Awakened thrown into the Lesser Dimension Gate – especially with the Tekur race being their common enemy. Fighting alone against the Tekur race was similar to committing suicide. That was something the Chieftain and the War Priestess had realized after they were nearly annihilated in a single attack from a Tekur powerhouse.

Without the help of the human Lord, they would have died, and the portal connecting the Tritan Alliance and the Tekur race wouldn't have been altered, preventing powerhouses from slipping through.

Alice used every piece of information that had been stored in her mind to her advantage. Since her earlier words had been enough to garner the Chieftain's interest, Alice continued to drop a few sentences here and there. She didn't speak a lot, but every sentence she said clearly pointed out that she had extensive knowledge about the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs.

Others tried to copy her tactic, but they failed after a few minutes. They approached the Chieftain without patience or preparation, resulting in angry outbursts and frustration.

The Chieftain continued to ignore them. He merely answered some of Alice's questions once he realized that Alice had done her homework and took her time to find out more about their allies, the way they thought, and why they acted the way they did. Other representatives might have done some research, but it was beneath them to actively spend weeks, if not months, of their valuable time as powerful Lords and higher authorities of the human race to learn more about their allies. They didn't think it was necessary to learn everything since they could do so in the future.

Palika Mavenham, the Chieftain, didn't like this sentiment. He would rather be in possession of too much information than lacking important pieces of information.

But that was also why he regretted his lack of interest in a particular individual after their first encounter. As the Berserker's Chieftain, he had been too busy in the last few weeks. He had been unable to research a certain individual of the human race's youngest generation.

Thinking about the young man with eyes that were as dark as the night, and short black hair, Palika Mavenham looked across the spectator area. He had yet to see the young human, whom he had encountered in the Library and in the Ulran Arena.

The clock struck midnight and Duo discipline ended after dozens of fierce battles. Many Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs were excited because they finally found some worthy allies to fight against with their full power. Unfortunately, it would take a few more minutes before the teams for the Team discipline would enter the combat rings.

After his gaze moved past the spectator area, the Chieftain observed the representatives of their allies. He looked at the emblems and medals that were fastened to the representatives' clothes, indicating the place they represented. However, a particular emblem attracted his interest. The emblem was a small sapphire-colored lake drawn in front of a humongous tower. I think you should take a look at

It was the emblem of the Saphirelake Military Academy attached to the collar of the young woman standing next to him – the same emblem that had been attached to the black-haired youth's clothes.

A tinge of interest flickered in the Chieftain's eyes when he realized that the woman and the young man were from the same place.

However, before he could ask something, the exclamation of the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs in the arena attracted his attention.

The first teams of the Team Combat discipline had entered the arena.

"Oh? That is...unexpected," Oliver Zeus exclaimed next to Alice all of a sudden.

Alice had noticed the curious glance from the Chieftain earlier, and she wanted to say something, but both Oliver and Ophelia distracted her.

"Why didn't you tell us that your little brother has applied for the Team discipline with Berserkers and a Warlock Centaur? Didn't you say that your brother is leaning toward being anti-social? Teaming up with strangers doesn't really seem anti-social to me..." Ophelia Blaze complained to Alice.

Alice's head flicked to the combat rings, and her ice-cold expression crumbled for the first time in a while.

'What is Kaleb doing there?' She nearly blurted aloud.

Since they arrived in Piloq, Alice had been too busy to take care of her brother. But that was fine with Kaleb as he didn't like being treated like a little child. He hated that Alice pampered him, which was also why she had to promise her little brother not to bother him after arriving in Piloq.

But that was even more reason for Alice to end up confused. She knew Kaleb better than anyone else. Kaleb was not as hard to approach as Alice, but he didn't bother getting close to other people. It was hard to become his friend and to stay friends with him for a long period.

Yet, Alice's little brother ended up being the only team consisting of the three races of the Tritan Alliance. How was that possible?

"There he is."

Alice heard the Chieftain's voice to her right and turned around. She was still shocked, but Alice would never forget the mission the Zenovia house had given her.

Her gaze followed the direction the Chieftain looked at, only to end up staring at Kaleb and his team again.

"Huh?" She blurted out, the confusion in her voice apparent.

"I wasn't eavesdropping, but your colleague was rather loud," The Chieftain said all of a sudden, "The blue-haired youth is your brother, and not Michael, right?"

It took Alice a moment to register that the Chieftain was speaking to her. Afterward, a few more seconds of doubt passed until some words slipped through her lips.

"Kaleb is my brother, yes...but how do you know Michael?"

The Chieftain glanced at Alice from the corner of his eyes, and his lip curled upward ever so slightly.

"I had two encounters with this kid before, one more surprising than the other," Palika acknowledged before he added, "...let's hope that the third encounter is even more surprising."

Chapter 342 Teamwork

At first, Alice could only see her brother amid the group of Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs. She was so stunned after seeing Kaleb in the group of the two Berserkers and the Warlock Centaur that she missed Michael Fang chatting with the Berserkers.

Michael looked rather calm and inconspicuous in the group. It was almost like Michael was an extra character, who didn't receive much attention from the people around him because of the way he acted and his weak presence.

Alice had known that Michael could control his presence to a certain degree, but she realized only now that Michael's Ring Artifact helped him naturally suppress his presence. But then again, Michael didn't stand out too much even among other humans. He was handsome, for sure, but being handsome and beautiful was rather ordinary among the descendants of powerful families and households.

The impurities within the bodies of Awakened were expelled whenever their War Rune advanced to the next Tier. At the same time, the genetics of powerful families was known to be top notch. Thus, Michael ended up looking inconspicuous with his short black hair, dark eyes and ordinary clothes compared to the others whose hair and eye color was much brighter, pulling everyone's attention away from Michael. To boot they wore expensive clothes that had been woven out of the silky threads of an Imperial Spider and other unique ingredients.

Nonetheless, everything seemed to make sense now that Alice discovered Michael in Kaleb's team. In fact, Alice was certain that Michael had pulled her brother in the group of the two Berserkers and the Warlock Centaur.

Alice's eyes shone brightly when she saw the team around Michael, and she didn't even notice that the corner of her lips curled upward.

Alice was not sure what it was exactly, but something about him made it easy to get along with. Michael never did anything special to please anyone. On the contrary, he was quite feisty when he disliked something. Michael was straightforward and wouldn't allow anyone to take advantage of him, or his friends. But most importantly, Michael was genuine. He meant what he said, and one could trust that he would do whatever he promised. Michael was not the scheming type of person, who befriended others because of selfish interests.

If he wanted to benefit from you, he would say that. That was what Alice believed firmly after knowing Michael for more than half a year.

But despite being blunt and straightforward, Michael had an easy time getting along with many people. That was something Alice could hardly understand. Even the young descendants who thought too highly of themselves were drawn to him. The Barbaric Couple was the prime example.

The Barbaric Couple were truly problematic. If Alice had been responsible for the admission of new students in the Saphirelake Military Academy, she would have rejected Frederik Kolbenheim and Jacqueline Orlando without a second thought. She wanted to train powerful Lords, not pamper unreasonably violent students, who didn't know that their only advantage was their families' wealth.

But Michael tamed the Barbaric Couple. They weren't the only ones either. Lincoln, Zeke and Kaleb were also quite hard to approach. They had few friends, yet Michael befriended them rather quickly.

And now Michael got close to some Berserkers, a Warlock Centaurs, and he even attracted the interest of the Berserker's Chieftain? How was that even possible?

It was the first time that the Berserker's Chieftain showed genuine interest in a human participant of the Battle Exchange.

This was a great opportunity; something Alice desperately needed.

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All while Alice was trying to grasp the opportunity that appeared in front of her, Michael and his team had been called into combat ring number two.

Their first fight was about to start.

A group of five humans entered the combat ring after them. They were all smiles as they looked at the mixed group they were about to face first.

"I don't know who is dumber here. The two idiots who ended up teaming up with the brutes, or the brutes for teaming up with the two idiots," One of them said loud enough for everyone in the combat ring to hear.

Michael just chuckled when he heard the young man's comment. He didn't expect many prodigies participating in the Battle Exchange to be proficient at spouting nonsense. They should pursue a career in bullshitting and name calling rather than being a Lord in the Origin Expanse.

"Just beat the shit out of him once the fight starts. The two taller men are probably their tanks. You guys can focus on them first. We'll adjust our strategy once we have more information. Though, I doubt that it will be necessary to use some special tactic against them," Michael told his team.

Lokai was already a little angry at their opponents, but that was fine. In fact, it was advantageous since it meant that Lokai would go all out the moment the battle started. That was what Michael was hoping for.

Once everyone was ready, the referee lifted one of his four hands high in the air. I think you should take a look at

"Begin!" He shouted, starting the battle immediately.

Mekhaz summoned his Living Armor instantaneously. His hooves kicked the ground with great force, propelling him forward. Summoning his Spear Artifact, Mekhaz was ready to clash with his opponent.

Lokai and Thaor weren't far behind Mekhaz. Only centimeters separated them from taking the lead.

Thaor's body was steaming. He had unleashed his Red Giant Soultrait without hesitation. His size increased in response and his muscles bulged, inflating several times as the Crimson Aura of his Unique Constitution merged with his body.

Lokai, on the other hand, had used her Burning Fury on herself and everyone else in her team. It enhanced their Agility, Strength and Perception considerably, further boosting the speed of the two Berserkers and the Warlock Centaur who charged at the five human opponents.

The human team stared at the humongous opponents that charged at them. They swallowed their saliva as the intimidating force inched closer with every fraction of a second that passed. Even though most Awakened in the human team were Tier-3 Lords, they were baffled at the sight unfolding in front of them. However, the situation grew even worse.

The temperature in the combat ring dropped rapidly, and moving through the combat ring grew increasingly more difficult. It was almost like their feet were glued to the ground. The team of humans required a few seconds before they realized that their feet were not glued to the ground but that a thick layer of ice had suddenly shot up, freezing their feet to the ground. The layers of ice slowed down their movements at first, only to fully lock their feet in place, restraining their movements.

Even if the Awakened wanted to avoid the charging Berserkers and the Warlock Centaur, they couldn't move. They didn't have enough time to destroy the ice engulfing their feet and evade the incoming attack right after. Thus, they could only try to block the attack.

But that was easier said than done.

One of the burly guys at the front roared out loudly. A humongous shield manifested from altered origin energy manifested in front of him. The shield was black in color and it released an ominous feeling that reverberated through the combat ring. Interestingly enough, the movement path of Lokai, Thaor, and Mekhaz changed suddenly. They began to move toward the burly man – his black shield to be precise.

'A Soultrait that taunts enemies? Looks like this guy is a born tank.'

Michael smiled lightly when he saw what the burly man did. Unfortunately, the team of humans focused mostly on the Berserkers and the Warlock Centaur, considering them as the stronger opponents. They barely took note of Kaleb, who continued to release his Frozen Nova, expanding the ice that engulfed their feet and calves by now.

As for Michael, they didn't even know he existed. They only realized that something was wrong when a flash passed by. The burly man groaned in pain as something heavy smashed upon his mind, and he lost control of his Soultrait. The black shield dispersed, returning the Berserkers and Warlock Centaur's control to attack their designated targets. Meanwhile, Michael appeared in the back rows of their opponents. Six Qi Swords shot forward, and his Wyverntooth Spear thrust out, nearly piercing deep into the nearest enemy.

If not for the referee releasing a trace of energy to block Michael's attack, he would have pierced his opponent's neck. Meanwhile, the Qi Swords would have done the same, if not for the interference of the referee.

Michael might not possess the strongest presence or the strongest attack power in this team, but he was nimble and had great control of his Soultraits. His Spirit Whip destroyed the burly man's focus, allowing the others to finish their attacks, while his weak presence allowed him to move past the frontlines taking the remaining opponents by surprise.

But even then, Michael knew that his interference hadn't been necessary. Kaleb's Frozen Nova combined with the brute force of the two Berserkers and the Warlock Centaur would have been more than enough to defeat the human team.

That was not only because Kaleb's Frozen Nova was powerful, but also because Lokai's Burning Fury further enhanced Kaleb's power.

If their enemies couldn't move, how were they supposed to block the charge of three heavyweights that charged at them like humongous enraged bulls?

It didn't take long before Lokai hurled the other tall human through the combat ring. The human crashed hard on the ground outside the ring, while the burly man ended up facing the charge of both Thaor and Mekhaz.

Lokai saw the referee interfering, ensuring that the burly man wouldn't end up as a sack of crushed bones and meat.

She scoffed and shook her head, ignoring the silence that engulfed the arena as she blurted out,

"Well...that was rather boring, wasn't it?"

Chapter 343 Control

"I hope our next opponents are stronger. There was nobody for me to fight with my full strength. I even had to share my target with Mekhaz. How disgraceful!" Thaor thundered, kicking the ground.

The frozen surface of the combat ring cracked and burst apart as the force of the kick rippled through it. In the next moment, Kaleb used Frozen Nova to destroy the ice spread throughout the combat ring. He freed their opponents' legs and turned over to Michael.

"Looks like everyone is a little bit confused," He said, lightly pointing toward the spectator area. Kaleb was the first to notice the silence that shrouded the Underground Colosseum as their battle ended.

Their team fight didn't even take more than ten seconds before it was already over. Even the representatives of the Tritan Alliance were a little surprised. After all, every single participant was a future powerhouse. All youths participating in the Battle Exchange were prodigies. Defeating them shouldn't be that easy.

Michael had to acknowledge that their victory looked quite easy and simple, but that was actually not the case.

There were multiple factors one had to take into consideration, including the fact that Michael's team went all out the moment the battle started while the other team used a completely different tactic to start the fight. The other team wanted to spread out and get some feelers to test their opponents' strength. Because of that, they didn't unleash their Soultraits immediately with the intention to surprise their opponents once they found out more about them, specifically their weak points.

Keeping your Soultraits hidden while testing your opponents was a common tactic. It allowed Awakened to take advantage of their knowledge to surprise their enemies, under normal circumstances.

However, their tactic failed miserably as the two Berserkers and the Warlock Centaur used their full power to charge ahead. They unleashed their Soultrait without any hesitation and charged ahead with terrific speed.

Combining the sudden charge with Kaleb's Frozen Nova and slowing down their opponents' movements before freezing them to the ground created enough mental pressure to force them into action.

But that was not enough. Just as the first human Awakened used his Soultrait to counter the Berserkers and Warlock Centaur's charge, a mental attack struck him heavily, nearly knocking him out.

Everyone focused on the three huge enemies charging toward them, only to miss the smaller human who shot alongside the edge of the combat ring to stay out of his opponents' line of sight. Michael appeared at the backlines where he pinned down the other Awakened, who were too stunned to use their Soultraits in time.

In fact, they had been able to trigger their Soultraits already, but the terrifying pressure released by the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs restricted them to a certain degree. It was almost as if the Berserkers and Warlock Centaur's entire being was in fury.

The group of humans considered the team discipline of the Battle Exchange as a friendly spar, not as a life-and-death battle. Thus, they weren't mentally prepared to face the Burning Fury of the Berserkers and Warlock Centaur.

That was also why Lokai thought of the entire battle as rather boring, and disappointing. There was no climax. It started...then it ended, just like that.

Of course, the events of the battle looked different from outside. It looked like the team consisting of humans was sluggish and that they weren't professional. Meanwhile, Michael's team was the exact opposite. Their teamwork was not too bad. There were some points that required improvements, but there weren't any glaring mishaps.

The way they played out their tactics by utilizing everyone's strengths was a pleasant surprise. It was a great demonstration to show what future battles against the Tekur race could look like.

Michael and the others left the combat ring after the fight ended. They practiced their energy absorption technique to replenish the energy they'd used up in the battle and discussed the earlier fight while resting up until their team was called up for the next battle.

After their first fight, Michael and his group gained more attention. That was what Michael had expected, but it didn't really change anything. They would continue to give their best until they would encounter an opponent who was too strong to deal with.

Michael saw a few teams full of Peak Tier-3 Lords. He had seen some of their earlier battles during the Solo and Duo disciplines, and knew that their Soultraits and Artifacts were both powerful and extremely valuable.

Despite being powerful enough to fight opponents at the 3rd Tier, Michael, Kaleb, and Thaor were only at the 2nd Tier. If they encountered someone at the 3rd Tier who could also fight people above their rank, Michael and the others would have issues dealing with them. That might be obvious, but it was also no reason to be intimidated. Michael's team would continue to give their utmost, either way.

Their second battle was against six Berserkers. They didn't say anything but the smug smiles on their faces, and the sheen of excitement in their eyes was enough to determine that they would go all out the moment their battle started.

Thaor knew the six Berserkers quite well. I think you should take a look at

"None of them has a Support-type Soultrait. The huge Berserker on the left has a Soultrait called Herculean Strength. It's a passive Soultrait that is always active. It drains his Stamina faster but enhances his physical strength to a monstrous level. The one next to him has a Soultrait called Titan Arm. He can expand his right arm to inflict devastating damage," Thaor explained loud enough to be heard by their opponents.

The Berserker team stared at Thaor in anger, but they didn't say anything as he continued to reveal their Soultraits to his team, "The one in the middle has a Soultrait called Double Impact. He can only use it on his feet, but that is more than enough since he trained in martial arts that focuses on kicks. Upon using Double Impact, the first impact of his kick will be doubled, and a shockwave – a mix of energy and force– will be sent through the enemy. I can tell from experience that it's quite painful to be hit by that. Other than that, there is a young Berserker with a Silver Aura that amplifies the destructive power of his attacks, and the one on the right has a Soultrait called Sword of Doom. it's sharp and can cut through most stuff rather easily, so...don't get cut in half."

Thaor had a lot more to say about the Berserkers' Soultraits, but the fight was just about to start. Thus after listening to him intently, they went into position, summoned their Artifacts and waited for the referee's signal.

The signal that started the battle rang out mere moments later alongside the referee's shout.

"Begin!"

Just like before, Lokai used the full power of Burning Fury to enhance the Agility, Strength and Perception of the entire team. The presence they exuded after Burning Fury was applied to each of them was intense and ominous. However, it didn't affect the five Berserkers, who kicked the ground to charge forward without any hesitation.

They unleashed their Soultrait and burst forth. Meanwhile, Lokai, Thaor, and Mekhaz did the same. With their Soultraits fully unleashed, they charged ahead as well. Meanwhile, Kaleb unleashed Frozen Nova once again.

However, this time, Kaleb's tactic changed a little. He manifested his Staff, an inheritance he had obtained from his sister a few weeks ago – a Legendary Tier-2 Artifact. The Staff had three purposes. First, it decreased the energy consumption of Ice-type Soultrait. Second, it increased the control of Ice-type Soultraits. Last but not least, the Ice Staff reinforced the sturdiness of Ice manifested with an Ice-type Soultrait.

Unleashing the power of the Legendary Ice Staff alongside the effect his Inheritance Technique had on Frozen Nova, Kaleb's 7-Star Soultrait grew even stronger.

A simple wave with the Legendary Ice Staff was enough to manifest two large glaciers in front of the Berserker with the Titan Arm Soultrait, and the Berserker with the Sword of Doom. The Berserkers charged into the glaciers at full speed. The glaciers trembled along with the combat ring as the heavy Berserkers crashed into it, but it didn't break. The glacier remained standing, blocking the advance of the two Berserkers.

Meanwhile, the remaining three Berserkers collided with Lokai, Thaor, and Mekhaz. Mekhaz collided with the Silver Aura Berserker, Thaor faced the Herculean Strength Berserker, while Lokai ended up clashing with the Double Impact Berserker.

However, Kaleb was not done supporting his team. He waved the Legendary Ice Staff through the air once again, releasing large ice walls in between the five Berserkers and the Warlock Centaurs less than a second before their weapons would have clashed.

Thaor, Lokai, and Mekhaz were prepared for this. They knew that Kaleb would erupt several ice walls to block their sight – and the sight of their enemies – mere moments before they would collide. Fully aware of the abrupt appearance of the ice walls, the three changed their trajectory all of a sudden. Lokai charged at the Silver Aura Berserker from the side while Mekhaz's target changed to the Double Impact Berserker.

Meanwhile, Thaor moved to the left side of the ice wall to attack the Berserker with Herculean Strength. But he was not alone. While Thaor appeared on the left side of the ice wall, Michael emerged on the right side, his body shrouded with six enhanced Qi Swords and dozens of Glacicles.

The Silver Aura Berserker and the Double Impact Berserker smashed into the ice wall without hesitation. They believed that their enemy was waiting behind the wall and smashed the ice wall with brute force. The two Berserkers didn't expect to face a different opponent all of a sudden, let alone that their previous target would charge from the side.

They were also taken by surprise as the fragments of the ice shards shot toward their heads instead of falling to the ground.

Kaleb was breathing heavily after using Frozen Nova with such great precision several times in succession. His Soultrait was more of a large-scale power that erupted with tremendous force rather than a Soultrait that required great precision to do minor things such as controlling ice shards. Yet, to use everything on the battlefield, Kaleb had to adjust himself, and the Power he possessed.

That was extremely difficult, but both the Legendary Ice Staff and the results of his daily practice with the Zenovia family's Inheritance technique allowed him to achieve this feat. His mind was screaming at him to stop tormenting himself and to use Frozen Nova the way it was supposed to be used. But Kaleb didn't listen to the voice in his mind.

Instead, he smiled vibrantly as he watched Michael's tactic unfold right in front of him just like it was supposed to be.

'I'm in control of everything!'

## Chapter 344 Support

By combining the changes caused by the Inheritance technique with the exceptional power of the Legendary Ice Staff, Frozen Nova was too strong to be blocked easily. Even Thaor's body and Mekhaz's Living Armor couldn't block Kaleb's attacks easily. After Lokai's Burning Fury was applied it became even more difficult to block the Frozen Nova.

Despite the great attack power of the Frozen Nova, Michael felt like Kaleb wasn't using his Soultrait's full potential which he told his friend straightforwardly. The attack power of Frozen Nova may be great, but was that really all? Was a 7-Star Soultrait not capable of more than that?

Due to the versatility of Michael's Soultraits, he learned to use them in various ways, sometimes even in ways they weren't supposed to be used. Reinforced Sword Qi, for example, ought to be used to reinforce a Sword. However, Michael was not good with Swords. His weapon was the spear, which was mostly due to the memories and experiences that had been engraved onto his mind after he absorbed the Memory Orb of Cleave Fenrir.

Michael was wasting an effective Soultrait by not using its full potential. He applied Reinforced Sword Qi in a unique way that disrupts the enemy's rhythm. If Michael were to switch to a Sword and apply Reinforced Sword Qi in the way it was intended to be used, in addition to the unique way he used it currently, he would be able to use much more of the Reinforced Sword Qi's potential.

Thus, Michael wanted Kaleb to experiment a little bit more rather than using Frozen Nova the way everyone told him to use his Soultrait.

A long discussion between Michael and Kaleb resulted in an attempt to use Frozen Nova to control the battlefield with great precision.

And that was exactly what Kaleb did right now. He restrained the movements of the Titan Arm Berserker and Sword of Doom Berserker while also aiding the others.

He erupted ice walls according to their plan and transformed the shattered ice walls into deadly projectiles as the Double Impact Berserker and the Silver Aura Berserker destroyed them.

The ice shards shot toward the two Berserkers right after they lost great momentum from crashing into the ice walls. Lokai and Mekhaz didn't hesitate either. They shot toward their new targets from the side and began assaulting the Berserkers. Mekhaz twisted his wrist while thrusting his spear forward. Meanwhile, Lokai's mace shot to the side, pulling back to create enough momentum to finish off the Silver Aura Berserker at once.

After losing momentum, the two Berserkers were faced with attacks from two sides. The ice shards burst forth with great velocity, aimed at their heads – their eyes to be precise.

The Berserkers didn't feel tremendous power oozing from the ice shards. They thought about leaving their eyes open for a moment to keep focusing on their opponents' movements. However, compared to the rest of the body, their eyes were sensitive and not very well protected, just like everyone's eyeballs. Losing their eyesight – even if it was just momentarily – was not something they could afford. But blocking the ice shards was also not feasible. Why? Because Mekhaz and Lokai's attacks were about to impact as well!

The Berserkers reconsidered moving back, but they felt some resistance around their legs the very moment the thought of retreating surfaced in their minds. They didn't even have to look down to know that their legs had been covered in ice. Their movements were restrained, and they had already lost momentum earlier. The two Berserkers could only unleash their Soultraits and Artifact, close their eyes to protect them from the impacting ice shards, and raise their weapons to block Mekhaz's spear thrust, and Lokai's heavy strike.

Even though their opponents were physically stronger on average, and two Berserkers were Champions – signifying their exceptional combat prowess –, Thaor, Mekhaz and Lokai couldn't be underestimated either. In the first place, they were stronger than their opponents in a one-versus-one fight. Adding Lokai's Burning Fury, and Kaleb's exceptional crowd control all over the battlefield gave them even more advantage.

And then there was Michael, who had decided to aid the others in their battle rather than entering a battle head-on by himself. He appeared on the left side of the Herculean Strength Berserkers, but released enhanced Qi Swords and Glacicles in all directions.

The enhanced Qi Swords and Glacicles hit the joints of their enemies precisely, taking the Silver Aura Berserker and the Double Impact Berserker by surprise. Their eyes were still closed, Kaleb's ice shards had just impacted in their faces, and they had just blocked Mekhaz and Lokai's attacks, only to be taken by surprise by projectiles from the opposite direction.

Michael's enhanced Qi Swords cut deep into the wrists of the two Berserkers' weapon arm. Taken by surprise, they could barely hold onto their weapon all while Lokai and Mekhaz retracted their weapons to initiate a second attack. Their movements were smooth, rapid and with extraordinary force.

Michael glanced in their direction for a mere moment, but that was enough to determine that Lokai and Mekhaz would defeat their opponents in the next few seconds. Thus, he decided to focus elsewhere.

The thunderous noises of Thaor clashing with the Herculean Strength Berserker attracted Michael's attention. He turned around, his Eagle Eyes allowing him to assess the situation at once.

Thaor and the Herculean Strength Berserker moved rapidly, their fists colliding over and over again. Both Berserkers moved with a blinding speed, not allowing the other party to gain an advantage. Thaor shot to the side, punching out with his black knuckles glowing gloomily, only for the Berserker with Herculean Strength to counter the attack with a feisty punch.

The Herculean Strength Berserker wielded a unique set of gloves. A tremendous amount of energy was channeled into them, releasing bits of energy shockwaves with every attack. It was a weakened version of the Double Impact Berserker's Soultrait, creating a second impact with an energy shockwave. But Thaor didn't even react to the shockwaves. It was almost as if he didn't feel them. I think you should take a look at

Steam rose from his skin as the fusion between his Crimson Aura and the Red Giant Soultrait were fully unleashed, granting him tremendous power and a great advantage in terms of natural regeneration. Thaor healed rapidly, much faster than the Herculean Strength Berserker could inflict damage.

Michael moved forward while observing the battle between the two Berserkers. Berserkers didn't like it when others interfered in their battle, however, Michael couldn't care less about that right now. They were in a team battle, and it was only obvious that he would help his teammates. In the Flag War, no member of the Tekur race would care about the Berserker race's desire to fight individually. They would either get steamrolled or overwhelmed at once.

A team battle was supposed to be fought as a cohesive force, and that was something most Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs had yet to accept.

Fortunately, Michael's team was the first team to showcase the great synergy between humans' Soultraits and unique powers, and the physical superiority of the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs.

Michael conjured a six-layer enhanced three-fold intertwined Spirit Whip as he charged at the Berserker with Herculean Strength from his blind spot. He waited until the Berserkers' fists were about to collide once again before lashing out with the six-layer three-fold Spirit Whip.

The moment his Spirit Whip struck, the Berserker with Herculean Strength groaned out loudly. The white of his eyes became clearly visible as he stumbled and his energy circulation failed miserably. His punch missed Thaor's fist by a hair's breadth, creating a great opportunity for Thaor. Thaor didn't like that Michael helped him out against his opponent, but he was also fully aware of the given situation.

Michael had already made it clear that they were a team and that they were supposed to fight together even before they applied for the Team discipline. If they wanted to fight alone, they shouldn't have accepted Michael's invitation. Instead, they should have fought in the Solo discipline and lost miserably against the Peak Tier-3 powerhouses who were several years older than them.

Thaor couldn't suppress a grunt when he noticed that Michael had intervened in his fight, but he didn't say anything else. He also exploited the opportunity created by Michael.

The corner of Michael's lip tilted upward in response as he followed behind the Berserker with Herculean Strength who smashed onto the ground. Six Qi Swords and the blade of the Wyverntooth Spear pressed against the Berserker's neck not even a second after the Berserker had been punched in the face.

"Dead," Michael uttered quietly, yet just loud enough for everyone in the combat ring to hear.

"Dead here as well! He was dead before you guys killed yours! I just forgot to say it!!" Lokai shouted, using raw power to smash her fist down onto the unconscious body of the Silver Aura Berserker lying beneath her.

"Here as well," Mekhaz announced, his spear pressed against the chest of the Double Impact Berserker.

That left only the Titan Arm Berserker and the Sword of Doom Berserker, who had used their brute force and Soultraits to smash their way through the glaciers that had imprisoned them.

After they'd charged into the glaciers, Kaleb had used Frozen Nova to seal the gap behind them, imprisoning the two Berserkers as long as possible.

He was dead-tired and drained of energy by now, but Kaleb's performance and display of power all over the battlefield had been exceptional. He was clearly the most important member of the team at this point, allowing the others to unleash their full power while restraining their opponents' movements severely.

But now that three out of five Berserkers had been defeated, Kaleb was tired. In the Origin Expanse he had yet to fight an enemy at the 3rd Tier. Yet, while being teamed up with Michael, Kaleb was forced to fight a multitude of Tier-3 monsters with his full strength.

It was a new experience, but it was definitely not something he hated.

On the contrary, it filled his heart with excitement.

#### Chapter 345 Reason

Even though Kaleb had run out of power, Michael and the rest were more than enough to deal with the remaining two opponents.

Thaor charged toward the Berserker with the Titan Arm Soultrait, while Lokai and Mekhaz focused on the Berserker wielding a humongous black sword.

Mekhaz focused on countering the humongous Sword of Doom by altering its trajectory with great precision. Since he had fought the Berserker with the Sword of Doom Soultrait a few times before, he knew how the Berserker would move and how powerful the Sword of Doom was. It could cut through most metal armors, which included Mekhaz's Living Armor. Mekhaz didn't dare to get hit by the Sword of Doom, but that was even more reason for him to act carefully and forcefully divert the Sword's trajectory with his spear.

Meanwhile, Lokai focused on inflicting damage to the Berserker. But she was not alone. Michael appeared next to Lokai with dozens of Glacicles and six Qi Swords revolving around his body. The freezing mist of the Glacicles was even stronger than usual thanks to the decrease in temperature Kaleb's attacks caused. The entire combat ring was freezing cold, enhancing the Glacicle's power and freezing effect.

Combined with enhanced Qi Swords, Michael could inflict several deep cuts all over the Berserker's body while also aiming the Glacicles to pierce into the freshly inflicted wound to freeze the Berserker's flesh. As a result, the Berserker groaned in pain, but he couldn't move away. Lokai was to his right side, throwing her mace around like a mad woman, while Mekhaz blocked his Sword of Doom no matter how he moved.

Michael conjured more Glacicles and Qi Swords. He also shot forward with the intent to inflict some damage with the Wyverntooth Spear. But that was not even necessary. After the second batch of Glacicles and Qi Swords hit the Berserker, Lokai and Mekhaz had overwhelmed him. The referee lifted one of his hands, announcing the Berserker as dead. In the next instance, Michael, Lokai and Mekhaz charged toward the Berserker with the Titan Arm Soultrait.

Thaor was fighting him with all his might, but his opponent retaliated with great fervor. None of them was strong enough to overwhelm the other party, resulting in a stalemate until Michael and the rest arrived.

A few seconds after everyone arrived, the Titan Arm Berserker lost.

"Victory goes to the team Best Mix. Congratulations for advancing to the next round!" The referee announced after a few seconds.

He stared at Michael and the others with newfound interest. None of the members of Michael's team had been defeated, while every single one of the Berserker team had been eliminated more or less easily.

Most Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs knew how strong their brethren were. They fought each other at least once a week. Everyone knew that Thaor, Lokai and Mekhaz were roughly as strong as the Berserker with Herculean Strength, and the Berserker with Double Impact. Yet, the two Berserkers and the Warlock Centaur overwhelmed their opponents in today's battle. In fact, Mekhaz and Lokai were feeling so pumped that they could continue to fight a few more battles before they would tire out.

Thaor was a little tired but his stamina replenished rapidly just like his origin energy. A little bit of rest and he would be overflowing with energy once again. Only Kaleb was completely drained. However, solving that was not a mission impossible either.

The referee regained his composure and glanced over to the VIP section where the Chieftain and War Priestess were located. It was then that understanding dawned upon him.

'I finally understand what he meant. I get it.' He thought, recalling something the Chieftain said a long time ago.

Berserkers were innately against using greater numbers to defeat their opponents. The Chieftain always lamented his past self because he thought that it would reward him with more honor and glory if he fought against his enemies in a one versus one battle. It was even better if their enemies had a numerical advantage because every Berserker and Warlock Centaur was told that winning a war against the odds would reward most glory and achievements.

In the minds of the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs strength was all that mattered, not numbers, or petty tricks. They would rather restrain themselves to fight fair and square than taking advantage of others – even if the other party was their nemesis. The two war-loving races were certain that they could gain more honor and glory for their people that way.

They were certain that more achievements waited for them in the Origin Expanse if they followed that mindset until death. But was that really the case? That question was something the Chieftain had asked in the past.

Why would they fight 'fair and square' against the Tekur, who were endangering their livelihood by infiltrating the Lumina Stellar System? If they couldn't force the Tekru into retreat, the Lumina Stellar System would get conquered by the Tekur race, and the Warlock Centaurs would be annihilated as an aftereffect.

Was it really a good idea to fight fair and square for the sake of honor if their races faced potential extinction? In the first place, was it really unfair to combine their forces and overwhelm their enemies with numbers, or trickery? Was it honorless to make use of their numerical advantage, or to exploit their knowledge of their territory to surprise attack their enemies with their tremendous physical strength?

Wasn't it more humiliating and honorless to intentionally restrain their strength to fight fair and square and somehow be responsible for their race's annihilation? Wouldn't it be far more respectful and honorable to use their full power and everything at their disposal to fight their enemies, no matter how weak or strong they were? Using their full power against everyone and saving their home was an act of respect.

That was something the Chieftain always thought, but the traditional values that had been engraved deep into the heart and soul of the old Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs would lead to the never-ending inner conflict. The Chieftain might be the strongest Berserker, and the leader of the Berserker race, but that didn't mean he possessed all the power. Even as the Chieftain of the whole race, he had to respect and honor their age old traditions, values and ethics. Disregarding their teachings was equivalent to disrespecting them, and everything they stood for.

Thus, the Chieftain had been forced to find a way to communicate and spread his inner thoughts subtly to everyone...and he decided to use the Battle Exchange to achieve that.

The Battle Exchange was mainly created to work against the Tekur race and combine the forces of the three races within the Tritan Alliance to pick the strongest prodigies and nurture them before the Flag War started. However, it was also a way to get to know the traditional values of other races, to learn that the world was not only black and white and that many questions had more than one answer.

Therefore, the Chieftain was satisfied when he saw that a mixed group emerged in the Team discipline. It was the first time that the Berserkers accepted humans in their team, and vice versa. Usually, they would have issues with each other, and there wouldn't be an ounce of teamwork between the humans and Berserkers. The combat style differences were simply too huge, just like the traditional values of an individual race that applied to a battle.

But the mixed team in front of them had found a way to make it work.

It was obvious that Thaor, Lokai, and Mekhaz weren't too pleased that Michael and Kaleb supported them throughout the battle against their opponents, but they also respected their power and insightful comments. Spending a week with Michael, and a few days with Kaleb was enough to tell what was on their mind during a battle.

Michael defeated both Thaor and Lokai because they underestimated him at first. Michael made clear that this kind of action was disrespectful, and that it was not something an honorable Warrior should do. Honorable Warriors were supposed to unleash their full strength against their opponents. The only exceptions were training lessons and other unique circumstances. Other than that, fighting with full power was a necessity to show respect to your enemy.

And what could be better to show how much they respected their opponents than combining their powers to unleash even more power?

Michael used this type of – more or less – fucked up logic to convince Thaor, Lokai, and Mekhaz to use their full power and combine it with the aid given by Kaleb and him to overpower their enemies. It worked out somewhat fine, but there were still a few major points Michael wanted to improve.

Fortunately, they had more than enough time to improve further.

That was also what the Chieftain was hoping for. He continued to watch the mixed team, hoping that they would improve further and that the victories of the mixed team would attract more attention – possibly even curiosity.

Meanwhile, Alice didn't know what to think anymore. She was baffled at Kaleb's display of power, and that was not because his strength had increased by leaps and bounds. That was not the case. Her surprise was because Kaleb's fighting style was completely different than what he had been taught.

Alice taught Kaleb meticulously to ensure that his means of attack and defense would be as advanced as possible. Kaleb's mastery of Frozen Nova was still rather low because the Soultrait was layered like an onion, and way too powerful to be fully controlled by a Tier-2 Lord, but his offensive techniques and defensive measures were quite good already.

But in today's battle Kaleb revealed himself as the core component of the team by taking charge of the battlefield, controlling everything precisely. For a moment, Alice saw glimpses of herself in Kaleb, his style reminding her of the time when she was younger and using Frozen Kingdom. Her Soultrait had a large area of effect, something that could be well utilized to control the battlefield. However, Alice never expected that Kaleb would use his Soultrait the same way she usually used Frozen Kingdom.

Their Soultraits were of a different type. So why would he change his way of fighting all of a sudden?

That was already enough to baffle her. But there was something she couldn't understand at all.

"Michael...has an Ice Soultrait?"

Chapter 346 Unfortunate Set-Up

After their second battle, Michael's team had a little longer break before they would have to enter the combat ring once again. The schedule gave them just enough time to rest a little and replenish their origin energy just before the 3rd fight started.

They won the third battle by applying the same tactic as before and advanced to the next stage. The 4th and 5th battle ended with the victory of the Best Mix team, however, it was progressively harder to win against their opponents. But that was only obvious. The combat prowess of their enemies increased alongside their Tier.

The fifth battle was against a team of humans with two Late Tier-3 Lords as members. Each of the two Tier-3 Lords would have been strong enough to exterminate the Best Mix team if they had been in possession of offensive Soultraits. Even without offensive Soultraits, the two Tier-3 Lords were stronger, faster, and more perceptive than everyone else on the battlefield. Not even Thaor and Lokai were strong enough to compare with the tremendous power the War Rune provided upon getting refined to a high degree.

Most Awakened said that the natural power scale didn't apply to true powerhouses and extraordinary prodigies. They were certain that those with powerful Inheritance techniques, exceptional Soultraits, and individual teaching from the old and well-seasoned war veterans allowed the younger generations to break the natural power scale.

While that might be true to a certain extent, there were numerous factors that had to be taken into consideration. The higher the refinement degree of the War Rune the deeper the pool of power that could be accessed. Even if someone wasn't in possession of a powerful Inheritance technique, an exceptional Soultrait, or profound teaching from old monsters of society, they could be stronger than those who received all of this.

If a Tier-2 descendant who had high mastery in his Inheritance technique, was in possession of an exceptional Soultrait and had also been taught and trained for more than a decade could tap into a pool of power and extract the equivalent of a droplet of water, that droplet of power would undoubtedly be of high quality, pure and incomprehensibly strong. Furthermore, it would be increasingly difficult for a descendant armed with this single droplet of power against someone at the Peak of Tier-3 with a pool of power equivalent to the size of a sea.

Even a normal Awakened at the 3rd Tier would be strong enough to defeat a descendant at Tier-2. That was the natural order of the War Rune's power scale that couldn't be ignored even if one wanted to.

Fortunately, the Best Mix team had Lokai with Burning Fury in their team. Facing two Late Tier-3 Lords with great power resulted in a drastic increase in Burning Fury's enhancement. This allowed the two Tier-3 Awakened in the Best Mix team to stall the Late Tier-3 humans all while Thaor faced the three remaining human opponents by himself.

Michael and Kaleb continued to use their powers to aid the two Berserkers and the Warlock Centaur in battle. They made sure that the Late Tier-3 human Lords couldn't move away from Lokai and Mekhaz while using various means to slow down the three other human Lords.

Michael and Kaleb slowed their enemies before narrowing their paths of escape, creating better opportunities for Thaor to make full use of his size, physical strength, and powers.

The fifth battle was extremely difficult to win, but the effect of Burning Fury allowed their team to narrow the gap in strength just enough to defeat the five humans.

After the fifth fight everyone was exhausted, but the huge round of applause they received from the spectators allowed them to forget about all the pain and suffering.

The first and second fight hadn't been accompanied by cheers. Everyone had been a little bit stupefied seeing humans, Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs fight together. It was hard for the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs to accept that the humans in the Best Mix team interfered in Lokai, Mekhaz, and Thaor's fights, destroying the natural balance the war-loving races honored usually.

But after watching the third and fourth battle of the Best Mix team, their opinions changed slowly. The Best Mix team was set up against opponents stronger than them. All Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs knew how strong Lokai, Thaor, and Mekhaz were. Yet, despite knowing their powers better than anyone, the teams of Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs fighting them in the third and fourth round ended up losing – even though they had always been stronger than the two Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs.

The fourth and fifth battle against Mid and Late Tier-3 opponents sealed the deal. Everyone began to understand slowly that Kaleb and Michael's subtle intervention in their allies' fights allowed them to

take out their opponents one after another. Kaleb and Michael allowed Lokai, Thaor, and Mekhaz to make full use of their strengths while also balancing out their weaknesses.

It was an exceptional sight and a miraculous feat that was hard to ignore.

The Chieftain was pleasantly surprised with the Best Mix team's results. They entered the top 100 even though their strength should have barely been enough to enter the top 200. Unfortunately, their opponent in the sixth round was on a completely different level than their enemies before.

"Why...do we have to fight them? That doesn't make any sense. Isn't the result of the fight obvious?!" Kaleb complained to the others.

Michael could only respond with a wry smile. He felt that they were quite unlucky to be put up against the Blazing Sun team. The Blazing Sun team had four members at the Peak of the 3rd Tier, and one member at the Peak of the 2nd Tier.

The student, Ludwig Pearl – Lord at the Peak of the 2nd Tier – was someone Michael was somewhat familiar with. He was the student with the War Flag Soultrait, a Soultrait that enhanced the morale, energy circulation and Soultrait Power of all allies in range. Unfortunately, the worst was that the War Flag Soultrait could be overclocked with the use of more energy. Its range of effect decreased the higher the War Flag was overclocked, but it could increase the Power of all allies' Soultraits in its range by roughly 50%.

This Support-type Soultrait was of exceptional value, especially for the four Peak Tier-3 Students, who had 5-Star and 6-Star Soultraits.

Their leader was a woman called Maria Wang. She had a 6-Star fire elemental Soultrait. Her right hand was also a woman, Sera Kani, with a 5-Star Wind attribute Soultrait, and her left hand was a young man, Ashryn Hard, with a 6-Star Soultrait that was similar to Liopham's Rage of the Primal. The only difference was that his Soultrait enhanced his means of defense alongside taunting his enemies.

Last but not least the Blazing Sun team's fourth Peak Tier-3 member is called Zelda Norman. She had a Soultrait that manifested an ominous dome all over the combat ring. The dome weakened the Soultraits of the designated targets. The higher the difference in stars the stronger the weakening effect, resulting in a drop of more than 50% for 3-Star Soultraits.

Combining the effect of all of those Soultraits precisely granted them a great advantage, alongside the fact that the entire Blazing Sun team was several years older than the Best Mix team. They had several years of time to grow stronger, enhance their War Rune's refinement degree, and reach a higher stage of their individual Inheritance techniques. I think you should take a look at

"So what? We will definitely not give up, if that's what you're thinking about, Kaleb!" Thaor declared, his voice fiercer than usual.

At this point, Thaor had fully acknowledged Kaleb. He even began to call him by name rather than saying "you", or "hey".

"That's obvious...but I still want to complain, okay?!" Kaleb cursed quietly to himself.

"We will win!" Lokai growled, causing Michael to smile wryly.

"That's the spirit."

Lokai was a slow thinker and rather dense, but she had a strong battle spirit and would never give up. Her combat prowess and battle instincts made up for what she lacked.

Michael was deep in thought after he recollected the information he had about their next opponents. Fighting against a team of Peak Tier-3 Lords who had powerful Soultraits and a great team set-up was rather annoying.

But it was also exciting.

A tinge of excitement spread throughout Michael's entire being as the cogs in his mind rattled tirelessly. A few ideas formed in his mind, but he couldn't refine any of the ideas because the referee called them onto the combat ring.

Michael bit his lower lip while staring at the Blazing Sun team as they entered the arena before he pulled Kaleb next to Lokai.

"I think we can try something," Michael mumbled, revealing one of the ideas that formed in his mind.

Kaleb began to frown deeply as Michael finished laying out his plan.

"But I am not a Supporter. I am a brave Warrior!" Lokai declared with a tinge of anger in her voice. She stared down at Michael and took a step closer to him, making use of her size to tower above the young human.

However, Michael didn't back off. He sighed deeply and lifted his hand.

"You can fight the moment we finish my plan," Michael responded, not budging at all as Lokai took another stride closer to him.

"I like his plan," Mekhaz said, having listened to Michael's idea, "It's just like he said. Join the fight once you guys are done. We might have a chance to win if it works out."

Thaor agreed as well. He nodded while a glint of excitement spread through his eyes.

Lokai cursed aloud but she ended up nodding her head.

Michael and Kaleb looked at each other, unable to control their facial expressions. Vibrant smiles formed on their faces.

"Let's kill them all!" Kaleb announced, only for a chuckle to escape his lips.

Michael patted Kaleb's shoulder, also chuckling lightly.

"Killing might be a bit too much. Let's just freeze them alive!"

Chapter 347 Might Of The Frozen Nova

"Who the hell put Best Mix in the same combat ring as the Blazing Sun team? Aren't there more than enough other teams?!" Alice asked, not quite understanding how the schedule could be that messed up.

The Battle Exchange focused on putting Awakened with similar power levels against each other until there were no more enemies at the same power level to fight with. That way, the strongest Awakened across the different power levels would fight each other in the last few rounds of the respective disciplines.

The Best Mix team's determined average power level was Late Tier-2. That was one of the lowest power levels left in the top 100 of the Team discipline. On the contrary, the Blazing Sun Team's power level was between Late, and the Peak of the 3rd Tier. There was no way that the Blazing Sun team would be put in the same combat ring as Michael and the others, not yet at least.

"Looks like they attracted too much attention. The Saints must have interfered," The War Priestess remarked as she appeared next to the Berserker Chieftain.

Until now, the War Priestess didn't say anything. However, her attention was pulled to the Best Mix team. She only noticed that she responded to Alice's complaint when it was already too late.

"The old ones... Well, that was expected. They don't like the attention this mixed team receives," The Berserker Chieftain said, the corner of his lips uplifting as he added, "But it's already too late."

The Chieftain looked across the spectator area with a satisfied smile as he saw dozens of Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs pointing at the Best Mix team. They gossiped about the Team discipline and the tremendous power Thaor, Lokai, and Mekhaz could unleash with the two humans by their side.

"The Saints...you mean the old Warlocks, who've long since retired, right?" Alice asked the Berserker Chieftain.

She knew the answer to her question already, but by making it sound like she was interested Alice got the Berserker Chieftain to talk more to her.

"We call the retired Warlocks Saints, yes. They value our traditions more than their lives because they braved death to protect them during the last thousand years. That makes it harder to create new traditions, or alter old-fashioned traditions," He revealed, which got the War Priestess to add, "But it looks like this group ignited a spark within my people. Some will view humans in a new light after the Team discipline."

The Chieftain agreed with a nod.

"That would be great. Maybe we can help each other..." Alice was just about to use the opportunity that appeared in front of her when she sensed something.

She suddenly felt goosebumps spring up all over her body, and her eyes widened in bewilderment. Alice's head flicked to the combat ring where the fight between the Best Mix team and the Blazing Sun team had just begun, her entire focus on Kaleb, and both Michael and Lokai who stood beside him.

Kaleb grasped the Legendary Ice Staff tightly with both hands alongside Michael, whose eyes were shut closed. Meanwhile, Lokai pressed her flat hand against Kaleb's broad back, using more than three-quarters of her energy to overclock Burning Fury as she used it on Kaleb – and no one else.

Burning Fury jumped into effect, enhancing Kaleb's strength, agility, and most importantly, his perception. The Soultrait's mutation was also fully unleashed. Burning Fury determined the four Peak Tier-3 Lords as enemies immediately, further enhancing Kaleb's strength, agility and perception.

Following the enhancement he had received, Kaleb could perceive everything in his surroundings down to the finest detail. He could easily perceive the changes that occurred within his enemies as a humongous War Flag manifested on the other side of the combat ring. The War Flag hovered high in the air, enhancing the power of the designated targets.

Simultaneously, Kaleb could easily determine the changes in his surroundings as a dark, semi-translucent dome expanded all over the combat ring, with Zelda Norman in the center of the dome.

Kaleb perceived the changes in space as Ashryn Hard unleashed his Soultrait, but he didn't pay any attention to them. He watched Thaor and Mekhaz charge at Ashryn all while a terrific power was unleashed to his left.

Michael tapped into the Power of Enhancement that he had stored in his Legendary Ring Artifact. He grasped the Legendary Ice Staff even tighter than before and used the stored Power of Enhancement at once, enhancing Kaleb's Legendary Ice Staff with eight layers of Enhancement.

Enhancement's effect was a lot weaker if applied to objects unrelated to Michael. Its energy consumption was much higher as well. However, Michael didn't pay any attention to the weakened effect nor the tremendous energy consumption as the eight layers of Enhancement shrouded the Legendary Ice Staff with a dense white hue.

From one moment to the next, the Legendary Ice Staff's effects grew exponentially. Kaleb realized this at once as he tapped into the Power of Frozen Nova through the Legendary Ice Staff.

His energy consumption upon using Frozen Nova dropped drastically. Frozen Nova was much easier to use and control all of a sudden, and Frozen Nova's creations grew even sturdier than before.

One moment the battle started, and in the next moment, Kaleb used the entire energy stored inside his body to unleash Frozen Nova.

Time slowed down, the temperature in the entire Underground Colosseum dropped below zero at once, and the ominous black dome of Zelda Norman began to crack, long white gashes of ice spreading across the dome like cobwebs.

The combat ring froze and cracked open as humongous pillars of ice shot out of the ground. The pillars of ice split up the combat ring, separating Maria Wang and Sera Kani from the rest of her team.

Ashryn Hard, Zelda Norman, and Ludwig Pearl were separated from each other as well as several thick ice walls burst out of the ground.

Last but not least, Ludwig's War Flag was pierced as dozens of human-sized ice shards shot across the combat ring, tearing huge holes into the War Flag before it began to freeze and crumble. I think you should take a look at

The battle had just begun but the combat ring looked completely different than before. Kaleb split up the Blazing Sun team, and he even destroyed both Zelda's gloomy dome and Ludwig's War Flag.

After Kaleb had unleashed his full power, he collapsed to the ground. Meanwhile, Lokai took a step to the side, put her hands together, and bent her knees. She looked at Michael, who charged toward her.

He lightly jumped upon her flat palms just to use his entire strength with the second jump as he propelled himself high into the air by kicking his feet from her hands. Simultaneously, Lokai straightened her legs as Michael jumped the second time. Her hands moved upward alongside Michael's kick, providing Michael with even more momentum.

Michael flew across the combat ring, avoiding the ice pillars and ice walls beneath him. The moment Lokai threw Michael, she used her remaining energy to pass along an overclocked version of Burning Fury to everyone else. Though much weaker than the earlier version she had given to Kaleb, Burning Fury was stronger in its usual form.

Afterward, Lokai charged toward Zelda Norman, who was trying to erect a new gloomy dome.

Burning Fury's mutation effect came to full display as Lokai faced Zelda Norman. The same could be seen as Thaor and Mekhaz charged toward Ashryn, unleashing the tremendous power that surged through them.

Michael was no different. He used the chilling air around him to manifest more than a hundred Glacicles as the gravitational force pulled him back to the ground. Michael crashed hard onto the ground right after the Glacicles poured down on Ludwig Pearl. Using Enhancement on his body as he landed, Michael remained unscathed as he smashed onto the brittle frozen ground. He looked up and turned into a white flash as he dashed ahead.

The Wyvertooth Spear manifested in his hands while the Spirit Armor Set covered his entire body, further enhancing his strength. Threads of Extraction's power shrouded Wyverntooth's blade alongside Enhancement's white hue and Reinforced Sword Qi's silver energy.

Bursting with strength, Michael faced Ludwig head-on. He made use of his Soultraits and means to artificially increase his strength to move rapidly, inflicting several injuries all over Ludwig's body, thus allowing the threads of extraction to break past his enemy's defenses, infiltrating him.

Michael slowly drained Ludwig's origin energy, which he then used to slowly accelerate the energy drain. Simultaneously, Michael made use of Glacicles, Qi Swords, Spirit Whip, and the Wyverntooth Spear to wear down Ludwig and inflict more injuries, slowly but steadily defeating him.

Unsure how much time Michael had, he decided to accelerate his pace and defeat Ludwig quickly. Since Ludwig was focused on supporting others, his combat prowess was not as exceptional as most descendants of powerful families. Nonetheless, he was at the Peak of the 2nd Tier, and a descendant of a powerful family. He couldn't be underestimated. Fortunately, Michael could still make use of Burning Fury's effect to defeat Ludwig at last.

However, once he turned around, the scene shocked him greatly. He felt searing heat burning down his back even before he had turned around but had not expected to be face to face with a humongous inferno that ravaged throughout the combat ring. The combat ring burst apart due to the sudden increase in temperature that followed the rapid decrease in temperature.

Michael's eyes narrowed as his Eagle Eyes found the Peak Tier-3 Lords Maria Wang and Sera Kani combining their Soultraits' powers to create the humongous inferno. They could control the inferno precisely, melting down the ice pillars and ice walls rather quickly. But despite the marvelous display of great power, it took the inferno several seconds to break down the ice walls and pillars. However, that was something Michael had been hoping for when he came up with his plan.

The ice walls and ice pillars were the results of the combined effort of two Legendary Artifacts, a 7-Star Soultrait, and two overclocked Soultraits.

Michael's eyes moved quickly across the battlefield. He saw that Ashryn had been defeated by Mekhaz and Thaor, but also noticed that the Berserker and Warlock Centaur had been greatly weakened. Due to their sorry state, the blazing inferno was all it took before the referee had to interfere. Knowing that he dragged Mekhaz and Thaor out of the combat ring, just like he had done with Kaleb as the young Zenovia had collapsed on the ground.

Lokai ended up dragging Zelda Norman out of the arena. The Berserker didn't want to lose, but she realized too late that Zelda Norman was too strong to defeat after she had used her entire energy to overclock Burning Fury several times. A Peak Tier-3 Lord was not easy to defeat, yet Lokai used her weight and strength to her advantage to sacrifice herself by grasping Zelda and throwing her and herself out of the combat ring, disqualifying both of them.

Zelda had been fighting against Lokai's grasp, but the Berserker overcame and endured the heavy injuries she sustained to drag Zelda out of the arena.

Meanwhile, Kaleb was in an even worse state than anyone else. He was bleeding from his eyes, ears and nose. Only the white of his eyes was visible as well. Alice had already appeared next to Kaleb outside the combat ring to tend to his condition alongside the healers.

That left only Michael, Maria Wang and Sera Kani in the combat ring. Unfortunately, the effect of Burning Fury wore off.

Then the inferno hit Michael, burning him...and his hair.

Chapter 348 Baldie

"Did I faint?" Michael murmured as his heavy eyelids opened slowly.

He looked up at the ceiling of the Underground Colosseum and forced a wry smile on his face. The last thing he remembered was his attempt to unleash Extraction to extract the oxygen in his surroundings to extinguish the Blazing Inferno. Unfortunately, he had grossly underestimated the power of the two Peak Tier-3 Lords and ended up draining his energy storage near-instantaneously before the searing hot flames of the inferno reached him.

He collapsed right after.

'It doesn't look like much time has passed. Did I black out for a few seconds?' Michael wondered as he got up from the ground.

Alice was still tending to Kaleb, but she glanced over at him every few seconds. A sigh of relief escaped her lips when she saw Michael getting up from the ground, and she returned her full focus to her little brother.

"Please don't strain yourself too much. I will take care of your wounds in no time!" A young woman in her mid-20s appeared next to Michael, releasing a strong healing current that washed over his whole body.

Michael looked down at his body for the first time, only to see that most of his clothes had burned along with his skin. However, the most disgusting was that the skin beneath his Spirit Armor Set was now glued to it. Michael tried to loosen the Spirit Armor Set but he quickly noticed that he had to rip out his skin to remove the Spirit Armor Set.

Michael considered doing that, but he changed his opinion when he sensed that his energy storage was replenished enough to extract the Spirit Armor Set. He pressed his flat hand against the chestplate of his Spirit Armor Set and exerted Extraction. A thin golden membrane shrouded the Spirit Armor Case before it disappeared inside the War Rune's storage space.

The young healer was a little bit surprised seeing how easily Michael detached the armor set from his molten skin, but she sighed in relief seeing that he didn't rip the Spirit Armor Set out of his body like a brute. That made her job much easier.

Michael ignored the pain spreading throughout his body as he moved. He put on a new set of loose pants and a comfortable shirt all while his gaze moved through the Underground Colosseum.

It shouldn't have been a full minute since their fight ended considering that the fights in the other combat rings were not over yet, but something seemed to have changed. The dynamic in the other combat rings had been disrupted, and nobody seemed to be paying attention to their own fights. Their full attention was lingering on the Best Mix Team and the Blazing Sun team.

Michael and his team might have lost, but none of the gazes thrown in his direction were filled with ridicule or boredom. On the contrary, the gazes that fell onto him were full of excitement, curiosity, and seriousness. It looked like everyone wanted to fight the Best Mix team even though they'd just lost.

The Underground Colosseum was deadily silent. Only occasional comments of the attending healer resounded in the Colosseum. However, even those didn't instigate others to start talking again.

"It looks like we underestimated your team. To think that a team with three Awakened at the 2nd Tier was strong enough to defeat three members of our team. You guys did a really good job countering our tactic," A young woman with blazing red hair said, breaking the silence as she approached Michael and Kaleb.

The woman was Maria Wang, the leader of the Blazing Sun team, and the heir of the Wang Family. She manifested the 6-Star Soultrait Blazing Sun, a Soultrait that was said to be able to create a flame as hot as the Sun. Michael was not too sure about that, but he clearly recalled the blazing flames burning him alive rapidly. It had been more than just a little bit hot.

"The two of you did a great job...or should I say that your combination of Soultraits and Artifacts did a great job?" Sera Kani remarked as she appeared to Maria's right side.

Both Maria and Sera were the only members of the Blazing Sun team, who didn't sustain any injuries. However, they were the most prideful, and it wounded their pride to win against the Best Mix team by a small margin. They ought to be dominating the Best Mix team rather than struggling the entire match to win. Something had gone terribly wrong, and it looked like they were searching for excuses right after the battle.

"Artifacts and Soultraits are part of our power if that's what you're trying to get at. But you're correct. We did great at combining our powers," Kaleb said, holding his head as he got up from the ground.

He regained his senses when Maria Wang approached them. It didn't require much intelligence to see and hear that Sera Kani was displeased about the result of the battle. But Kaleb could understand them. The power he unleashed thanks to Lokai's overclocked Burning Fury, and Michael's weird power that strengthened his Legendary Ice Staff by more than 150% was terrifying. Kaleb had never felt that much power before. It was terrifying and exciting at the same time.

"You can store the Power of Soultraits in your ring, right?" Maria Wang asked Michael, pointing at the crimson ring with the Red Dragon emblem. Michael didn't answer immediately, which Sera Kani used as an opportunity to add, "It's a Legendary-rank Artifact, ain't it?"

Once again, Michael didn't comment. However, both Maria and Sera regarded his silence as an affirmation.

"A Legendary Ring Artifact that stores the Power of Soultraits...That's quite rare," Alice mumbled to herself, eavesdropping on the conversation between the youngsters as she continued to tend to her brother.

"My family wasn't able to procure a good Tier-3 Artifact yet. But I took a liking to your Legendary Ring Artifact. How about selling it to me?" Sera Kani asked, her hand already reaching out for Dragon Might.

Michael pulled his hand back and furrowed his brows and she would have seen it... if his eyebrows hadn't burned alongside his hair.

It was only at this moment when Kaleb realized that Michael's hair was no more. He burst into laughter while pointing at his friend's head.

"You are allowed to grow hair, you know? Michael, you should really avoid flames for the next few months, otherwise, your hair might never grow back. But now that I think about it...maybe being bald is your fate!"

Kaleb's comment alongside his loud laughing was loud enough to resound throughout the whole Underground Colosseum. In response, Michael subconsciously touched his bald head, a heavy sigh escaping his lips when he realized that he was actually bald again.

'I just grew back some hair...is that a bad joke, or something?'

Michael began to curse in his mind, ignoring Sera Kani, who was still trying to reach out for his hand.

"Oii. I asked you something. Don't ignore me, baldhead!" Sera shouted in frustration when she was unable to catch his hand.

Michael froze in his tracks the moment 'baldhead' resounded in the combat ring, and he turned back to the young woman.

"Hold your damn horses right there," Michael growled, numerous curses flashing through his mind, "First of all, why would I sell my Legendary Ring Artifact to anyone when I need it myself? Second, and most importantly, everyone even remotely responsible for my loss of hair would get nothing except a beating."

Michael didn't care whether Sera Kani or Maria Wang belonged to a big noble house, or some other influential household as his words tumbled out of his mouth. He was slowly getting angry at losing his hair whenever it was about to regrow. Michael couldn't even remember if it was the third or fourth time he ended up as a baldie. He didn't even look that great without hair. It was frustrating and saddening.

"Beating me? You could barely defeat some of our members only because of Kaleb and his 7-Star Soultrait. Don't overestimate yourself, baldhead!" Sena Kari shouted, completely forgetting about the Legendary Ring Artifact. Her cheeks were red and she continued to point at Michael and stare at his smooth, round head.

"Just try and fight me. I will beat you up at any time!" She chided, only to squeal aloud as Maria Wang pulled her back.

"Either way. You guys did a great job. I didn't expect your Frozen Nova to be that powerful. It looks like your strength will skyrocket once you advance to Tier-3. I will probably have evolved to a Higher Lifeform by then, but you can try and fight me. I want to see if my Burning Sun can burn through your Frozen Nova!" Maria Wang praised Kaleb before she turned around, ignoring Michael after he said that he wouldn't sell the Legendary Ring Artifact to them.

"I will definitely beat you!" Kaleb promised, just to glance at Michael before he added, "We will beat you two together!"

Sera Kani stopped in her tracks and turned her head to Kaleb, but she couldn't utter a single word as Maria pulled her along, dragging her away from the combat rings.

Left alone, Michael sighed deeply. He looked at the Legendary Ring Artifact and smiled lightly. He knew that Accessory Artifacts were rather rare, especially Accessory Artifacts with unique abilities such as Dragon Might. It could unleash a dragon's might to a certain extent, and store the Power of Soultraits for later use. The storage capacity was extremely high thanks to the ring being a Legendary Artifact, which further increased its value.

It was likely to be of equal value as Kaleb's Legendary Ice Staff. Maybe, it was worth even more.

Michael and Kaleb joked a little bit with each other now that they found a good target to provoke – Sera Kani. Meanwhile, Alice stared at Michael for quite a while.

It took her a few seconds but when Michael glanced over to her, Alice spoke out what had been lingering on her mind since the start of the Best Mix team's first battle.

"So...you have an Ice Soultrait?"

Chapter 349 Talk

"So...you have an Ice Soultrait?"

Alice's words rang through Michael's ears, and he broke into a cold sweat almost immediately.

He knew very well that it was getting more difficult to hide his Soultraits from the people around him. It was already quite weird for him to possess five Soultraits, but everyone knew that he had been inside a Lord Rift. Thus, he could have procured a Soultrait Symbol from there. If his contribution was extremely high Michael could have procured two Soultrait Symbols from the Lord Rift.

However, Michael knew as well as anyone else that the probability was extremely low. He didn't really want to lie to Alice Zenovia, but he didn't feel at ease revealing Extraction to her.

It was not that he didn't trust Alice, or Kaleb, but it was a fact that they were members of the Zenovia household, a Superior family that controlled their lives. From the day Alice and Kaleb were born they'd been raised as future powerhouses of the Zenovia family. They were conditioned to act in the Zenovia family's favor, train every single day and do everything necessary to expand and grow their family's business and influence – whether that was through marriage or other means.

Michael was not yet certain how much control the older generation held over Alice and Kaleb. However, he could tell that Kaleb had been suppressed before they met each other. Kaleb had already been engaged even before he Awakened. While his engagement might have been terminated it was a fact that Kaleb's family had already found him a fiancée long before he was legally considered an adult.

Michael didn't know what would happen once he told them about Extraction's power. He might gain many benefits, such as Alice and Kaleb's full support in terms of influence, wealth and knowledge, but it might also backfire. The older generation such as the patriarch might kidnap and imprison him to ensure

that nobody else would find out about Michael's power. It was obvious that nobody would want to share a power like Michael's and keep it for themselves. All families would want to have monopoly over his power. Thus, the families would give their utmost to tie him to themselves – or to ensure that nobody could get him.

None of those options sounded nice. Thus, Michael only told the Forest Elves about his powers so far. The Forest Elven Tribe was nowhere close to their Stellar System. The tribe's Awakened were also nowhere close to the human territories in the Origin Expanse. There was close to no chance for them to take advantage of Michael after he revealed his power. That was ensured through the Links of Loyalty he created with the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team and the fact that he was the Lord of thousands of Forest Elves by now.

One wrong move from the Forest Elven Tribe, and he could kill the Forest Elven Adventurers and Summons – which would be the worst that could happen to the Forest Elven Tribe since they valued their ancestors more than most races.

It was not that Michael trusted the Forest Elves more than Alice and Kaleb, but the circumstances around the Forest Elves were more in Michael's favor. In the worst case, Michael could kill the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team to cut all ties with the Forest Elven Tribe. But the same couldn't be said about the Zenovia family.

"I got it in the Lord Rift," Michael revealed truthfully while leaving out the most important pieces of information.

"Is that so? You don't look like you're lying, but that's not all..." Alice mumbled, almost as if she could read his mind. She smiled lightly at Michael and nodded her head in understanding, "Don't worry, you don't have to tell me everything. Just be careful, because many have started to observe you. I hope you can come to talk to me about your situation, and problems before you get into trouble. I want to help you, after all."

Alice's voice was not as cold as usual. On the contrary, her voice was filled with warmth and kindness. It was rare for Alice to reveal this side of herself, so rare that Kaleb ended up staring blankly at his sister.

"You have many secrets, and you have no idea if you can reveal some of them, or if it will endanger you and the people around you. If your secrets ever grow too much to keep, talk to someone you can trust. After all, some secrets grow heavier the longer you keep them to yourself. But don't worry too much," Alice added, somewhat repeating herself.

Michael nodded his head, his head hanging lower. He rubbed the back of his head for a few seconds before he looked Alice straight in the face.

"You know about my brother, right?" Michael asked even though he knew the answer.

The Zenovia siblings nodded their heads simultaneously.

"Yes, I know. I was informed about his...demise...just before you entered the Lord Rift."

"I know about it as well."

Michael forced a smile on his lips. He didn't want to talk about his Soultrait right now. However, something told him that he would feel better if he talked a little bit about his brother. It had been a while since he thought about his brother intensely, and something deep within told him that he was a bad brother for rarely talking about Danny.

"Well, our parents abandoned us after Hesta disappeared. Oh. Hesta is our elder sister. She was the pride of our parents. After Hesta disappeared our parents abandoned us. We were still quite young and we had to look after ourselves..." Michael said as a matter of fact.

He continued to reveal more about his past, and how he and his brother grew up.

"...Then I summoned a 4-Star Summon called Masked Saber. We established a Link of Loyalty the moment I summoned him. He could control silver energy that looks like Sword Qi. I trained with him for several months.... We fought together...and we entered the Lord Rift together....Targeted by the Red Dragon, he sacrificed himself... and it was only after his mask shattered that I realized that Masked Saber, the 4-Star Summon, was actually my brother...who was resurrected right after dying in the Sacred Desert...."I think you should take a look at

Michael was not sure why, but he didn't cry anymore. His voice cracked after talking too long about his brother, and sadness overwhelmed him, but no tear escaped his eyes. He summoned the Reinforced Sword Qi in the form of a highly detailed Qi Sword and smiled sadly at it.

"And this 5-Star Soultrait, Reinforced Sword Qi, actually belonged to my brother. I received it for my contribution in the Lord Rift..."

Michael didn't look at Alice or Kaleb anymore. He was also not sure where they were at this moment. At some point, Alice and Kaleb had pulled him away from the center of the Underground Colosseum. He also subtly recalled that Thaor, Mekhaz, and Lokai had been talking to him, but the memories dispersed the moment he recalled them.

All that had been flashing through his mind was the need to talk about Danny. It was weird, creepingly weird...but it didn't feel too bad to talk about Danny with someone other than Tiara. On the contrary, it was oddly liberating.

"The Will rewarded you with your brother's Soultrait...that has to be a cruel joke..." Kaleb mumbled after he stared blankly at Michael for more than half a minute.

Michael almost never talked about himself, and he finally understood why. Kaleb always envied ordinary families for their lives because they didn't have to carry heavy responsibilities from the moment they were born. However, Kaleb didn't envy Michael's life. He felt bad for envying Michael in the past, instead. Kaleb felt like the worst human being for being jealous of Michael when he didn't know anything about his friend's past.

Digesting Michael's story took a while. It was a sad story, filled with a lot of drama. Yet, Kaleb couldn't help but feel like a jerk for secretly feeling happy that Michael was willing to share his burden with them.

He noticed that Michael avoided talking about the Soultraits he manifested in the Origin Expanse, but he told them a lot about himself, his relationship with his brother, and how close they'd been.

"It must have been hard on you. Thanks for telling us about your past," Kaleb said, glancing over to Alice, who hadn't said anything yet.

'What's wrong with her?' Kaleb wondered when he saw Alice staring at Michael with a blank look on her face.

"Hesta...Hesta Fang...Wait. You're Hesta's brother?! The War Empress Hesta Fang??" Alice asked at last, her voice much louder than usual.

In fact, Kaleb couldn't remember having heard Alice speak that loud, let alone that she would stare at someone looking utterly baffled. That was definitely not normal, and out of her usual character.

"War Empress? I don't know anything about that. She must have been in her early 20s when she disappeared. I doubt that anyone called her a War Empress then," Michael said, not sure if he and Alice were talking about the same person, "But it's not like I care...not anymore."

Alice regained her senses after her outburst. She noticed that she had hit one of Michael's sore spots and pressed her lips together. She wanted to ask more about Hesta Fang, but it was also quite obvious that Michael didn't know more.

But now everything made a lot more sense. If Hesta Fang and Michael were siblings everything would make sense.

Hesta Fang disappeared ten years ago. She had been an Awakened for less than five years, yet her combat prowess was among the most terrifying in all of mankind's youngest generation. Hesta might not have been one of the fastest Awakened to reach the Peak of Tier-3, but she was as fast as the descendants even though she never had anyone backing her with resources and techniques. However, that turned her into an even more terrifying opponent than anyone else.

She didn't have anyone backing her with resources, yet Hesta Fang was strong enough to defeat a group of Awakened from the Tekur race by herself.

And that was not all.

While Hesta Fang was still a Lesser Lifeform, she could handle a group of dozen descendants, who had already evolved by becoming Higher Lifeforms at the 4th Tier.

Words would fall short to explain her combat prowess. She was inhumanly powerful, earning her the title of a War Empress as a gift for her premature promotion to a Higher Lifeform.

However, on the day she advanced to the 4th Tier – evolving her lifeforce to the next level –, Hesta Fang disappeared.

And now Hesta Fang's younger brother who was just as inhumanly powerful as his sister had been rumored to be was standing in front of her.

Chapter 350 Secret Files

Various thoughts flashed through Michael's mind when he realized that Alice knew his sister. He had been convinced that he didn't care about his family anymore. Only his brother had been of importance to Michael. Despite that, something in the back of his mind kept nagging at him, telling him to research more about his sister, and find out more information about her.

Doubts popped up in his mind, and he began to wonder what must have happened for Hesta, the 'War Empress', to disappear the day she advanced to the 4th Tier. While his mind went down the rabbit hole, Michael didn't even realize when he opened his parents' chat.

He listened to the messages they'd sent, only to end up frowning deeply. The audio files they sent through starnet messenger were deleted shortly after Michael listened to it, but Michael didn't pay much attention to that. He could only frown, staring blankly at the now-empty chat between him and his parents.

"I really hate you," Michael cursed quietly.

His parents barely mentioned Danny before switching their focus to talk about him, Hesta, and how their lives have been in the last few years.

Michael figured that his parents wouldn't be useful, but he was once again disappointed about how little they seemed to care about him and his brother. Danny died, yet they didn't even sound sad in the audio files. Michael even thought that he heard a trace of curiosity and excitement in his father's voice, but he genuinely hoped that he was mistaken.

'Why am I even disappointed in them? Does that mean I still have expectations? Am I hoping that they will return, bring Danny back from the dead, and that we can become a happy family once again? That's nonsense...'

Michael hated himself for the thoughts flashing through his mind. He subconsciously knew that he wanted everything to return back to normal, and that he would forgive his parents for abandoning them if they could bring Danny back from the dead. However, that was just wishful thinking. His brother was no more, and his parents wouldn't return. Even if they would come back, they wouldn't be able to bring Danny back.

Michael didn't even realize that he was still in Alice's office with the Zenovia siblings. They silently kept observing the constant changes in his expression, and could even listen to his parents' audio files since Michael didn't bother to use headphones to listen to the audio files alone.

Alice and Kaleb looked at each other for a while, complicated expressions plastered all over their faces. Then their attention moved back to Michael, who opened the crystal watch's research engine to look up information about his sister.

"War Empress Hesta...no information?" He mumbled, pressing his lips together in annoyance.

Why was everything about his family so difficult? He couldn't find a single piece of information about his sister even though Alice said that she was a prodigy amid prodigies.

Michael glanced at Alice, who wanted to say something. But before she could say something, Michael had already opened the Bartholomew Network. His Diamond Membership access granted him permission to research information that was restricted to even Tier-4 Awakened. His hands moved smoothly across the holographic keyboard's surface, looking up his sister's name.

"Oh? There are three files," Michael blurted out, not expecting to find anything. He tapped on the first file, only to be rejected. A red notification popped up on the holographic screen.

[Access denied. Higher authority required!]

Michael frowned and looked over to Alice, who had shut her mouth after seeing him continue to research.

"Did the government delete her information, or was that the work of the High Nobles, the Superior Families and the Great Clans? Or is there another reason because it makes no sense that I cannot find any information about my sister if she was as powerful as you mentioned," Michael pointed out, not sure whether he was angry, frustrated, or just helpless.

He didn't even know why he was researching his sister after having repressed thoughts about his sister and parents for so long. Would it change anything if he found out who Hesta was? So what if she was powerful and special?

"Actually it's none of that. News about your sister has always been suppressed. Many families were curious about her and started collecting information, but they found almost nothing. Only private channels and information agencies were able to find and collect information about her. Even then some information got lost. It was always presumed that Hesta was related to a world-class hacker who was capable of bypassing the most secure security system to delete all information about her. But that was never confirmed," Alice revealed, making him feel mildly annoyed.

"After she defeated the group of Tekur, and a bunch of descendants at the 4th Tier, people got more interested in her. However, they quickly lost interest after the War Empress disappeared. Some descendants in their 20s and 30s might still know about her because some of them encountered her in the past, but most families must have forgotten about her. After all, she never resurfaced after disappearing nearly a decade ago."

Michael nodded his head slowly, trying to digest the information.

'Deleting information. Isn't that just like the chats with my parents? Everything is deleted shortly after the audio files have been deciphered and listened to.'

Michael's gaze returned to the three files stored in the Bartholomew Network. He knew that he wouldn't be able to feel at ease without finding out more. Michael hated his own curiosity right now more than ever.

"Do you know where the old man is?" Michael asked Alice.

"Old man?"

"Kraft Viton. Do you know where he is?"

"Oh...there were some problems with an important client of the Bartholomew Corporation. Something happened with the Kolr–Kolbenschein family's territory or something like that," Alice answered, clearly not really interested in the Bartholomew Corporation's business.

However, Michael felt that something was odd. Even Kaleb frowned when he heard the family name.

"Do you mean the Kolbenheim family?" Kaleb asked, and Alice nodded.

"I think that was it. But I'm not too sure. I was focused on the Berserker Chieftain when Kraft told me that he would be busy for a while," She said, causing both Michael and Kaleb to look at each other with widened eyes. I think you should take a look at

"You mean something happened to Frederik's family?" Michael asked, while opening his chat with Frederik Kolbenheim to write a message.

[Michael Fang: Hey, I heard that something happened. Are you and your family fine?]

He sent a message to Frederik before switching to Jacqueline, hoping that he would receive a reply as soon as possible.

[Michael Fang: What happened to Frederik's family?]

Michael forgot about the files related to his sister and frowned deeply staring at the chat in front of him. Frederik might not be his best friend, but Michael took a liking to his tenacity with time. The Barbaric Couple's personality improved a lot during the last few months as well. Frederik and Jacqueline were more likable now, especially since both were trying their utmost to grow stronger.

They realized that the world didn't revolve around them and that everyone worked hard to become stronger. Thus, they did the same, spending day and night to improve their strength, deepen their knowledge, and expand their territory to grow even more powerful.

'I hope it's nothing too bad,' Michael thought when he received a message from Jacqueline.

[Jacqueline Orlando(Annoying Girl): Igor Kolbenheim's territory was attacked last week. He suffered major losses, but he is not severely injured and his territory won't fall. However...now Frederik's territory is under attack....He...has been in the Origin Expanse for the past three days, and there are no signs of him...I can't do anything to help him...I am so useless...I hope he is fine. He has to be. I will kill him if something happens to him!!!]

"Huh," Michael and Kaleb blurted out simultaneously. They looked at each other's crystal watch, only to see that they'd received the same reply.

Jacqueline must have copy pasted her message.

"A territory attack. It's not like that's something abnormal," Alice said with a shrug after she read the message from Kaleb's starnet messenger.

Alice was not worried about Frederik. That was a little reassuring, even though it was quite obvious that the Frozen Duchess couldn't care less about Frederik Kolbenheim. All Alice cared about was her family, her territory, and results. At least, that was the public consensus. She was cold and heartless to everyone but her family.

"His family is rather small but they're filthy rich. Their connections might not be comparable to the Zenovia family, but they have enough money to invest as much – if not more – into their offspring as High Nobles and Supreme Families invest in their descendants. Igor should have invested a great fortune in Frederik's territory and growth. Don't worry too much," Alice said somewhat coldly as her eyes moved between Kaleb and Michael.

Her voice might be cold but her words were reassuring. Michael and Kaleb looked at each other and smiled lightly.

"I would rather fight myself," Michael said, which was approved by Kaleb.

"Same here."

Neither Michael nor Kaleb had been too worried about Frederik because they knew that their friend had been working hard to grow stronger recently. Overcoming this ordeal would allow him to grow even stronger than before. A territory attack was a great opportunity even though it could also devolve into a disaster. Nonetheless, it required Alice's intervention to reassure them that everything would be fine.

The tiny traces of worry and doubt dispersed as Alice cleared her throat.

"Either way. Let's get back to business," Alice said, changing the topic while intensely staring at the two youths.

"Business?"

"Yes, business," Alice said, smiling lightly at the two youths, "Precisely, your business as students is to give me - your teacher - a report about your battles, tactics, and future plans for the Battle Exchange."

Alice smiled at Kaleb and Michael, but the two young men could swear to have never seen a more devilish smile. It wasn't Alice's ordinary cold and nearly expressionless smile. No. It was something far more terrifying.

"Are you serious, sis?" Kaleb blurted aloud, only to groan in pain as Alice's hand smacked flat on his head.

Tears welled in Kaleb's eyes. That was how hard Alice hit him.

"I am your teacher right now, and I'm disappointed as your teacher!"

"Disappointed? But we almost defeated Maria Wang and her team! That's amazing, don't you think?" Kaleb said stubbornly, only to receive another loud smack on the head.

"If winning against them involves sacrificing yourselves, I don't even want to imagine how you and Michael will end up fighting in a life-and-death battle when your territory is under attack," Alice thundered, "Will you rely on others to protect you after you collapse onto the ground mere two seconds into the battle? In that case, you might as well rush into the enemy's camp and present them your head on a silver plate!"

As Alice said the last few words her head flicked to Michael. She stared at him coldly, causing Michael to press his lips together, knowing damn well that her last sentence was directed at him.

"If you guys fight like that against the Tekur, you might as well go home. That way you will live at least."