

Supreme Lord 451

Chapter 451 Interrogation

Michael didn't really feel like the Berserkers Chieftain thought about what he was doing when he killed Elder Xerx. It would have been much better to interrogate the decaying old man until he died due to unbearable pain.

Not only would that have been a better punishment, but Michael was certain that Elder Xerx had more useful information to share than the prisoner, Mihal.

Unfortunately, he would never find out.

"Don't think too much about it. Berserkers are a very emotional race. Emotions control and strengthen them...or weaken them in certain situations. It is how it is," Kraft Viton tried to reassure Michael as they walked through a long hallway.

After the incident with Elder Xerx and more potential enemies, the emergency meeting had been postponed until Michael had collected more information. Michael found out about Elder Xerx's betrayal quickly enough to convince everyone present that he was capable of collecting all further information. Therefore, the prisoner was transported to a secret place that only the Berserker Chieftain, the War Priestess, and two more people got to know. Both of these people were human; Michael and Kraft Viton to be precise.

It was a secret prison located deep underground.

If not for the attack on Piloq and the unknown identities of the suicide squad's remaining members, neither Michael nor Kraft Viton would have been led to the underground prison. No human would have ever found out about it.

But since Kraft Viton had to keep using Psyche Obliteration on Mihal while Michael read the prisoner's mind, both received a glimpse into the secrets of the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs.

After using ten different elevators and walking through a myriad of various pathways, Michael and Kraft Viton reached the secret prison at last.

Its appearance created a stark contrast to the outside world. It was isolated and harbored a sense of loneliness. The prison's walls were constructed from cold, unyielding material that looked just like obsidian, giving it an oppressive and unwelcoming atmosphere. Harsh, artificial lighting cast long shadows, amplifying the feeling of despair all around – and within – the underground prison.

Narrow, dimly lit corridors wound through the underground labyrinth, creating an eerie path that was nearly too narrow for the Chieftain Berserker to pass through. Silver metal bars and heavy, pitch-black doors secured the prison cells – hundreds of them – with minimal furnishing. There was no mattress, or blanket, forcing the inmates to sleep on the cold and unforgiving ground.

As Michael and Kraft Viton entered the prison, heavy and musty air penetrated their nostrils. Echoes of distant footsteps and hushed conversations filled with a tinge of insanity and despair bounced off the obsidian walls, creating an unsettling feeling in Michael's heart.

The worst punishment for the prisoners in the underground prison was the utter state of solitude. They were cut off from the world above had no sense of time and were oftentimes forced to confront their own thoughts in the ever-lasting silence.

It was a place of punishment and isolation, a place that served as a constant and harsh reminder of the consequences that followed every action.

'I would rather die than end up in this shitty hole...' He thought as he made his way to the Berserker Chieftain and the War Priestess, who were already waiting for them to arrive.

Michael had to suppress a shudder due to the gloominess of the surroundings as he reached the Chieftain Berserker.

"We don't know how much time we are left with before the remaining members of the suicide squad jump into action. Figure out their numbers first and their names second. Once you get more information, inform us immediately. We need to clear this as quickly as possible!" Palika Mavenham announced.

Michael could only nod before he was forced to enter one of the underground cells where Mihal was already waiting for him, chained to a chair, gagged and his eyes blindfolded.

The appearance of the prisoner was miserable, but Michael didn't feel even an ounce of pity. The prisoner aided the attack on Piloq, which resulted in the death of hundreds of youthful prodigies, and more than 200,000 citizens. Why would Michael feel pity for someone like him?

"I will start now," Michael said after clearing his throat and stepping forward to use Mind Reader. His palm pressed firmly against the prisoner's forehead and the second mind reading session began.

Several hours passed in the blink of an eye before Michael stopped reading the man's thoughts. By now, he had forwarded various pieces of information about the Dark Heavens' plans, their secret spies and other tidbits.

However, what he found out just now was the most shocking.

"Dark Heavens sent out people to the Sacred Desert and the Barren Lands to destroy the Desert Mines, obliterate the Ten Ethereal Oases, and the farms all over the Barren Lands. Apparently, Dark Heavens obtained Seeds of Demonic Breed from the Hyumans. They seem to have created a trading hub in the Origin Expanse. The Seeds of Demonic breed drain the resources in the surroundings – including nutrition and origin energy – to create an Infernal Nest. The Seeds of Demonic Breed are only of a lower level but the Infernal Nests can give birth to Tier-3 Demons once they've collected enough energy."

"The Hyumans want to show our people that they're serious with their threats. The Seeds of Demonic Breed are their final warning and a message- Get rid of your allies and return to your roots, or we will consider you as enemies of the Supreme Human Alliance."

Michael forwarded the new information without looking at Kraft Viton, the Berserker Chieftain, or the War Priestess. His eyes were locked on Mihal, a weird feeling passing through his body. Something was off.

"I also know where the Tritaenus is located right now, and where they'll go next. But I am not sure how reliable the information is. Maybe the other members of the suicide squad told their superiors about the incident with Elder Xerx already? It could be a trap as well. They might have told the suicide squad that their mission is to kill as many enemies as possible via self-destruction, but the real task might be to reveal all those pieces of information..." He told the three powerhouses staring grimly at Mihal.

"Why do you think so? I don't doubt that the Supreme Human Alliance, or the higher ups of Dark Heavens, would kill their pawns for a multi-layered plan with several outcomes, but if you're just saying that this might be a trap because of your gut feeling you might as well not say it at all," The War Priestess remarked.

The remaining members of the suicide squad had been caught thanks to Michael's help. That improved his image significantly among the higher ups. However, that did not mean they would trust everything Michael said. It was good that he could give them a helping hand, but that didn't mean Michael turned into a master strategist with decades of experience in a matter of hours.

Michael understood their point of view, but he still had a nagging feeling that something was off. He just could not quite put a finger on it yet.

"You might consider it a gut feeling...but don't you think that it was way too easy for me to procure all those 'crucial' pieces of information? Why would a member of the suicide squad know this much? If it was Elder Xerx, I would consider that fine, but this guy doesn't strike me as an important and high-ranked member of Dark Heavens. His word choice and mental fortitude are not really great. He feels like an idiot with an exceptional Soultrait. A pawn rather than a leader."

Kraft Viton glanced at Michael and nodded in agreement. "We're dealing with humans here. They won't fight as straightforwardly as Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs. If anything, Dark Heavens would set up a multitude of traps to ensure that they can kill as many enemies as possible before it comes to a melee fight. That is also why they retreated after bombarding Piloq. They're probably waiting for our

response...and they know that we need the Tritaenus. If Dark Heavens came up with a multi-layered plan that means the information about the Seeds of Demonic Breed was supposed to reach us, either way. That also means they told the suicide squad about it to inform us indirectly, and that these bastards are already several steps ahead of us!"

Palika looked at Kraft Viton with sharp eyes. "So what do you want us to do? Sit back and let them leave with the Tritaenus and not retaliate against their sickening hidden attack? Do you think that the Old Ones of my kind will accept that? They will rip me apart alive, replace me and then it's over with the Tritan Alliance."

"Maybe that's exactly what Dark Heavens wants." Michael murmured to himself. Since most of his comments were ignored either way, Michael did not expect that the three powerhouses would listen to him now.

"What did you say?" Kraft Viton asked.

"I...I just said that they might have been expecting that very outcome. All they care about is 'bringing mankind back to their roots' or something along those lines. The biggest problem they have with us is the alliance between humans and other races – races they deem inferior. The Superior Human Alliance wants to get rid of all inferior races and rule across the universe...so wouldn't it be the most logical to sow the seeds of enmity in the Tritan Alliance and then 'reform' the human race to bring them back to the 'right' path?" Michael explained himself slowly as the cogs of his mind spun.

He had a lot more to say but he was certain that one of the three powerhouses would kick his ass if he dared to continue speaking like that.

Michael would have loved to rephrase his explanation to convey his message clearly, but it was not exactly easy to make sure that Palika and Silvana understood him properly. They shouldn't think that he was part of the Supreme Human Alliance, or that he agreed with their ideologies.

He was not like some idiotic Descendants.

Michael froze in his tracks thinking about some Descendants and how they reacted after the Colosseum had been attacked.

'It did not feel like they're members of Dark Heavens...but why does it feel like some families and their Descendants have a mindset that fits way accurately to that of the Supreme Human Alliance?'

Chapter 452 [Bonus] Extracting the Living I

Even if the Supreme Human Alliance had yet to reach mankind with their disturbing view of other races, Michael could imagine various Supreme Families, Great Clans, and High Nobles joining their mission. Maybe, they would do so secretly once Hyumans found a way to travel to the solar system, or the Lumina Stellar System, but their mindset would change quickly once they realized how wealthy Hyumans and the Supreme Human Alliance were.

Michael didn't hear a lot but reading Mihal's mind was enough to understand that the Supreme Human Alliance was currently solely dependent on their small amount of money to support Dark Heavens and other shady organizations. Yet, this pocket change was more than most Supreme Families and High Nobles earned in decades.

It was enough to sustain hundreds of Higher Lifeforms and to use them as sacrificial lambs whenever the need arose.

No matter how much Michael disliked the idea of forming an alliance with Hyumans, he could see the greed of humankind throw the Tritan Alliance aside in exchange for the Hyuman's financial support, their knowledge, and their strength.

It was the first time Michael heard of the race 'Hyumans', but that didn't mean they were weak. Countless races lived all over the vast expanse of the seemingly infinite universe. Of course, Michael didn't know all of them. Unfortunately, that meant he had no idea how old Hyumans were and how technologically advanced they were either.

'How long will it take them to reach the solar system? Will mankind split up and turn against each other once they arrive? No...that already happened. It's just that the scale is quite small for the time being.'

Michael told Palika, Silvana and Kraft Viton everything he'd gotten to know. From the location of Tritaenus to their next steps and movements, Michael didn't leave out anything. He repeated his worries again, but the War Priestess didn't seem to take him seriously. She was fueled with fury and hellbent to obliterate Dark Heavens. They dared to attack her people and kill the innocent. Therefore, Dark Heavens chose death as the only option according to her.

Michael pressed his lips together. He knew that he couldn't convince the War Priestess. Palika Mavenham was also beyond enraged and ready to kill the members of the suicide squad at once before proceeding to join hands with the War Priestess to skin every single member of the Dark Heavens alive. Fortunately, Michael could restrain the Berserker Chieftain.

"If you want me to continue to collect information and forward everything new I'll get to know, you should leave all of them alive. Break their bones and examine their brains for self-destruction mechanisms and we'll be fine. That way, I can collect more information while you guys move out, if you really need to rush it."

Michael didn't desire to be a Samaritan who spent his days doing something that didn't help him improve and grow stronger. However, spending the days with the traitorous pigs of mankind was something Michael was actually willing to do.

And that was not because he was happy to see them in pain – he was not a sadist, after all. Instead, Michael desired to be alone with the members of Dark Heavens' suicide squad to use Extraction on them. The first thing he wanted to do was extract Memory Orbs to validate some information. After that, Michael had a lot to experiment with. Michael wanted to see if he could procure both, a pile of SoulStar Fragments and Soultrait Symbols, from living Awakened. He desired to find out whether he could gain more by using Extraction on the living, or if it would be much harder and not as rewarding.

The desire to use Extraction in the underground prison of the Berserker race didn't come from nowhere. Michael found out that Mihal, the prisoner, possessed two Soultraits. One of the Soultraits was called Second Skin. It was a 4-Star Soultrait that allowed Mihal to transform into someone else and create a second identity. Even Higher Lifeforms would struggle to tell the doppelganger apart from the real person and Mihal once he used Second Identity. The only thing that could expose Mihal was the difference in their intrinsic personalities and body language. He would have to study his targets to impersonate them accurately.

But while Second Skin sounded like an interesting Soultrait, Michael was more interested in Mihal's second Soultrait. It was a 1-Star Soultrait called Insert. Michael was so interested in Insert because it was the exact opposite of Extraction – quite literally. Mihal could insert objects into others. Unfortunately, since Insert was only a 1-Star Soultrait, Mihal rarely used it. And if he used it, Insert was mostly applied to channel poison into his enemies' bloodstream through a simple touch. The effectiveness was negligible but Michael could see tremendous potential in Insert – especially when combined with Extraction.

Michael wanted this Soultrait. He needed it!

"You want me to keep them alive and leave you alone with them? Remember, no one else is allowed to enter this underground prison. You won't be allowed to leave on your own as well. Are you sure that you're willing to stay here alone? It's your decision because I would much rather crush some bastards of Dark Heavens than stay here to protect you!" Palika Mavenham uttered in a serious tone.

Kraft Viton was about to mention something when Michael nodded.

"In case anything goes wrong, I will kill the members of the suicide squad before they escape their confinement. I can protect myself quite well, don't worry. As long as you guys make sure that some droplets of Psyche Obliteration are inside them to break their mental defense, I shouldn't have an issue. Ensure that their limbs are broken and that the chains restrict them completely and I will procure all the information I can get out of them. Though I cannot promise you that I can hold back my emotions. It all depends on what I am going to find out... If they did something to children or tortured—..." Michael didn't have to speak any further. The three powerhouses understood what he was talking about.

"I am proud of you. You truly are a brave Warrior. Thaor and Lokai didn't lie when they praised you a lot. You are a good kid!" Palika Mavenham applauded him, only for the War Priestess to agree more or less willingly.

She had seen and heard enough about Michael to understand that he was a good kid. His heart was in the right place. Michael was genuinely hoping to strengthen his relationship with the Tritan Alliance. He wanted the Tritan Alliance to not just survive but thrive rather than collapse.

"I will allow you to stay here. If you're bored, use the prison's access to the library's network to read a bit. I'll allow you to read whatever you want. Consider it as a part of the reward for rescuing the Warlock Centaurs in the Colosseum and for offering your help to interrogate the traitors. You will be rewarded generously once we return. The pieces of information you provided were very helpful. Good job!" The War Priestess was not good at dishing out compliments. However, she knew that she had to say something good about Michael.

He deserved it.

Kraft Viton cleared his throat and pulled Michael next to him, "Of course, Michael will be rewarded generously by us as well. Not only did he procure so many useful pieces of information, but he also even provided us with the names of the spies in the Sacred Desert and the Barren Lands. His quick thinking

and the fact that he offered help despite knowing that everyone would frown upon him as a rather young Lord ensured that the main regions of mankind wouldn't face an economic disaster. The Bartholomew Corporation will definitely reward him for his selfless actions as well."

"Of course, our reward will be an addition to the reward the Tritan Alliance ought to give him if--.. No. Once we get back Tritaenus. I will make sure of that," Kraft Viton added proudly, staring at Michael with glimmering eyes.

Somehow, it felt like an old, faintly flickering flame deep inside Kraft Viton's heart had been fanned to burn brightly. From remnants of a tiny wisp, Kraft Viton's passion returned in the form of a blazing inferno.

'If you want to give me something...how about all the resources I need to build the Sacred Knight Temple, a bunch of Beast Ranches, a bunch of high-quality tools, and everything else I need to construct both a Teleportation Array and the Intermediate Summoning Gate?' Michael thought of a better reward for himself, but he didn't speak his mind aloud.

He needed too much, and he didn't want to come off as greedy in a situation like this. If anything, what Michael desired the most was to procure the bodies of all criminals in the underground prison. Unfortunately, that was something he could hardly ask for without looking like an idiot.

"If it's possible and the Tritaenus is not used as a trap, how about you try to kill as few enemies as possible? I should be able to procure a lot more information from higher-ranked authorities of Dark Heavens," Michael asked instead of demanding anything openly. But secretly he hoped that he could use Extraction on as many criminals as possible. After all, he had numerous things he wanted to know about Extraction, and experiments were the easiest way to find out new things.

"I am not sure if we can overwhelm their higher-ups and retrieve everything they stole without killing them. Not without sustaining heavy injuries at least. But I will try. I want to destroy Dark Heavens as much as you, so we should try our best to keep them alive and interrogate as many of them as possible if it means that we get a opportunity to find out more about Dark Heavens and the possible location of their headquarters," Palika opined, burning fury gleaming in his eyes.

The Berserker Chieftain was ready to obliterate Dark Heavens in one go.

Meanwhile, all Michael could think about was his experiments, and the fact that he could use Extraction to extract the SoulStar Fragments and Soultraits of a bunch of Higher Lifeforms.

'How hard can it be?'

Chapter 453 Extracting The Living II

It turned out that Extracting SoulStar Fragments from a living Awakened – a Higher Lifeform, at that – was far more difficult than Michael imagined.

After the Berserker Chieftain and the War Priestess granted him special permission to access the library network, they left for an emergency meeting. Kraft Viton joined the emergency meeting as well once he finished channeling several droplets of Psyche Obliteration into the war criminals of Dark Heavens.

He was worried that something might happen to Michael so he took extra precautions for the worst-case scenario. Afterward, Kraft Viton left Michael alone as well. He joined the emergency meeting to plan their next steps against Dark Heavens.

Left alone, Michael felt a little bit weird at first. He was in an underground prison with hundreds of criminals who were all extremely dangerous and Higher Lifeforms. None of them was below the Lowest-rank of the 4th Tier. Fortunately, Michael didn't have to worry about anything. Most criminals were confined, and their bodies were broken beyond repair. Even if they wanted to kill Michael, they wouldn't even be able to lift a spoon.

lightsNovel "I wish I could remove all of your Soultraits and SoulStar Fragments. With every single one of you here, I would definitely be able to upgrade Extraction to a 7-Star Soultrait!" Michael mumbled. Unfortunately, he didn't have access to the prison cells of the other criminals.

In the first place, it would be suspicious if he opened the cells of the other prisoners. A notification would appear in the log, which could be checked by the War Priestess and the Berserker Chieftain at any time. Therefore, all Michael could do was spend some quality time with the seven crippled suicide squad members.

Michael first thought that it would be a simple task to extract the SoulStar Fragments and Soultraits within them. It had never been difficult to extract them from the dead, after all. But it was the complete opposite in case of his latest targets, which made sense.

Upon starting to use Extraction on Mihal as his first target, Michael noticed that the essence of Mihal's entire being was trying to fight against Extraction. Despite his body being crippled beyond repair and his mental defenses getting crushed even before it could be rebuilt, Mihal's existence put up a fight against the invasion and power of Extraction.

Michael used several layers of Enhancement to strengthen Extraction as the tendrils of Extraction entered Mihal's body through his mouth, nose, and ears. Mihal began to writhe in pain immediately. He screamed aloud and began thrashing his body around. To his misfortune, Mihal was chained to a chair that had been reinforced and firmly attached to the ground. There was no way for Mihal to escape Michael's Extraction. All he could do was struggle and scream.

Meanwhile, the remaining six members of the suicide squad began to shiver. The crystal chains that restricted their movements and the circulation of their energy clinked loudly as the war criminal twitched uncontrollably. They had all been trained to endure suffering all their lives so they had been taught that physical pain was nothing but an illusion. But now, upon hearing their comrade's gut-wrenching cries, they couldn't fathom what kind of torture tactics Michael used to make Mihal scream that loudly.

The corner of Michael's lips curled upward when he saw the violently twitching war criminals seated around Mihal. Though he broke into a sweat while fighting against the remnants of Mihal's existence and was struggling against Extraction, he noticed that he was slowly gaining an advantage. Mihal's mind and body had already given up against the highly penetrative force of Michael's Extraction. Therefore, Michael could extract Mihal's lifeforce and the bits of energy that had accumulated within his body to further weaken him and put an end to his already insignificant and miserable struggle.

'How can he accumulate energy with those tempered crystal chains? Shouldn't they restrain his usage of energy, and deprive him entirely?' Michael wondered before unleashing more tendrils of energy to invade the remaining six war criminals.

They began to scream, writhe in pain, and fight desperately against the invading force. However, struggling was all they could do. Their minds were already weakened and they couldn't use the bits of energy inside them to fight against the invasion of Extraction either.

'They're all collecting energy traces. Did they learn a technique that allows their bodies to generate energy out of nowhere? If not for that, how else would they be able to collect energy while they're in a state like this? ... That means they could have accumulated enough energy to trigger their suicide mechanisms had I not observed the traces of energy within them... Good thing I have Extraction.'

Michael made sure to devour all of the energy traces within them. Afterward, he continued to drain their life force. He didn't kill them but he weakened them as much as possible to keep their future struggles at bay. Dealing with Mihal was already annoying enough. Michael didn't want to spend the next few days struggling to fight against the last remains of a Higher Lifeform's natural resistance. That was a hassle and way too arduous.

In the next few days, Michael didn't leave the underground prison chamber even once. He couldn't leave, either way. However, Michael didn't sleep, and he ate much less than usual. All he ingested was Energy Nourishing Pills to replenish his energy storage as often as possible.lightsnovel

Michael spent most of his time using the Power of Extraction on the War Criminals. They killed civilians, children at that, and didn't deserve nice treatment. If anything, they deserved the worst possible treatment. Their screams rang through Michael's ears but there was no remorse or pity in his eyes. His actions remained as merciless as before as well.

The prison chamber was void of furniture and there was no security camera inside the prison cell as well. Michael was left alone with the seven war criminals, who had grown much weaker over the course of the last few days. By now, even their Souls had grown much weaker. There was no natural resistance left.

The first thing Michael had tried was to extract SoulStar Fragments from the Awakened. Under normal circumstances, Michael would extract both SoulStar Fragments and Soultrait Symbols simultaneously. But since the Soultrait Symbols ended up being Starless or 1-Star, Michael felt like he could first extract the Soultrait's SoulStar Fragments before removing the Awakened's Soultraits.

It worked just like he wanted. The only downside was that it took way too long to extract SoulStar Fragments from a living target. Fortunately, that was something Michael could solve as his skill of handling living targets improved. The natural resistance of the targets decreased over time whereas Michael's proficiency and efficiency increased.

At the end of the first day, Michael ended up with a pile of 634 SoulStar Fragments. That was a lot less than he would obtain from killing a Higher Lifeform and extracting their Soultrait Symbol and SoulStar Fragments straight from the corpse, but there was also an advantage. Michael didn't wring out Mihal dry. It was just the beginning.

On the second day, Michael extracted 1859 SoulStar Fragments, and in the morning of the third day Mihal died as his Soultrait Symbols were ripped out of his Soul. Mihal had already been on the verge of death, and the backlash of losing his Soultraits in such a painful manner had been enough to kill the young man. Fortunately enough, Michael had been able to extract a total of 2734 SoulStar Fragments from Mihal before he extracted both Second Skin and Insert.

"2734 SoulStar Fragments and two Soultrait Symbols in roughly 50 hours. From a single Tier-4 Awakened... That's decent," Michael mumbled to himself in satisfaction. He realized that the drop rate of Soultrait Symbols was much higher when the Awakened was still alive. That was some crucial piece of information Michael could make use of in the near future.

However, for now he had to spend his time extracting more Soultrait Symbols and SoulStar Fragments from the remaining six war criminals. They were crippled and defenseless against the terrifying power of Michael's Extraction. However, even better was that Michael obtained the energy influx from killing Mihal. The energy influx of a Higher Lifeform swamped Michael. The energy ravaged his body and nearly caused his skin to burst. Therefore, Michael was forced to enter the Origin Expanse for a while to not suffer permanent damages to his body and War rune. He made use of the advantageous time dilation to assimilate bits of the energy influx to refine his body, mind, and War Rune.

Since his skill of practicing Sacred Rectification, Pandemonium's Requiem, and Caseurium Menta had increased over the past few weeks, Michael could properly handle the energy influx of a Tier-4 Awakened in two days. He digested it all and returned to the underground prison where he began to extract the SoulStar Fragments and the Soultrait Symbol of the next war criminal – another Lowest-rank Tier-4 Awakened.

This time, Michael spent only 24 hours extracting 2794 SoulStar Fragments and a Soultrait. He delivered the final blow by ripping the Awakened's Soultrait out of his Soul, once again providing himself with a tremendous energy influx.

Over the course of the next 10 days, Michael switched between extracting SoulStar Fragments and Soultrait Symbols and jumping into the Origin Expanse to spend most of his time refining his body, mind, and War Rune.

He advanced much faster than he could have ever hoped for and smiled foolishly when the last of the seven war criminals fell dead to the ground. It was a Lowest Tier-5 Lord, who'd been an Elder at the Silvermoon University. Michael didn't really care who or what he was. All he had to know was that the Elder was a traitor of the human race, and partially at fault for the death of hundreds of prodigies and millions of innocent citizens. That was enough to know that his death was justified and that there was no need for Michael to feel remorse.

If anything, Michael felt ecstatic. After all, he was able to procure seven massive energy influxes from six Tier-4 Awakened and a Tier-5 Lord just like that.

'This is already a decent prize for the help I provided. I'm a fucking Tycoon!'

Chapter 454 Risk And Reward

The impact of the last energy influx was the worst. Even though Michael used the energy influx of six Tier-4 Awakened to refine his body, mind and War Rune, the energy influx of a Tier-5 Lord was several times worse. It circulated through his entire body like molten lava and seemed to burn down everything in its path.

Michael screamed at the top of his lungs right before he disappeared inside the Origin Expanse. He forced his eyes shut to focus on his refinement techniques and use up as much energy as possible. He tried to refine his body, mind, and War Rune simultaneously so as to utilize the energy that wreaked havoc inside his body.

Several days passed before Michael opened his eyes once again. His entire body was drenched in sweat and he felt eerily weak. Yet, the power that surged through his body was amazing. It was exhilarating.

Instead of rushing to leave the Origin Expanse, Michael decided to eat something. He devoured more than a dozen jumbo-sized trays until he finally felt full. He then rubbed his stomach with a satisfying smile and collapsed on the bench.

When he woke up again, Michael found himself in his room. The tiredness that had accompanied him for the last two weeks was no more to harass him. Michael finally rested a bit. He talked a little bit with Tiara, and the Forest Elves about the territory development. Michael then checked the progress of the Sacred Knight Temple and a few other projects as well.

A few hours later, he returned back to the underground prison where a surprise was waiting for him.

The War Priestess, missing an arm, and the Berserker Chieftain, covered in various wounds that stemmed from explosions and razor-sharp blades, were back in the prison.

"Ohh...W-welcome back!" Michael greeted them, flashing a forced smile in the direction of the two powerhouses.

"You are still alive. That's good." Palika Mavenham said, patting Michael's back.

The force in Palika's pat was nearly enough to fling Michael across the room. Fortunately, his physique had improved quite a bit in the last few weeks so he could absorb the impact.

"The security system's sound detectors perceived your screams. The vital signal radar then showed us that you killed the traitorous Tier-5 Lord. I should have warned you about the energy influx. Good thing your limbs are still where they ought to be," The War Priestess explained, draining all the color from Michael's face.

lightsnovel 'I forgot about the vital signal radars! Fuck this shit... Were they able to sense the SoulStar Fragments and Soultrait Symbols as well?' Michael broke into a sweat at this thought. His breathing grew rougher and a lump formed in his throat. He was about to hyperventilate when he slapped his cheeks to force his body back under control.

'No. If they noticed something like that they wouldn't have asked about my well-being first. They would probably ask about the Soultrait Symbols and the SoulStar Fragments first...right?'

"H-how can I help you? Did you come just to look out for me? That's...nice..." Michael managed to say, wiping the sweat from his forehead.

"Actually, we just returned from Kirata. You were correct. It was a trap. Thankfully, we were prepared to jump straight into a trap. We created a strategy to counter most traps, and were able to overwhelm the bastards from Dark Heavens. We got the Tritaenus back and our people are currently checking the internal systems to check whether Dark Heavens' hackers were able to procure all or any information. They will also check for viruses and all the other stuff," Palika explained, not hiding that he had no idea about technology.

All the Berserker Chieftain cared about was combat, strength and the death of his enemies. Everything related to technology and modern science was not his forte, so he let others do what they were good at.

"You can read the report later. For now, we came to pick you up and check on you. The security system worried us a little bit because nobody would be stupid enough to kill a Tier-5 Lord while being a Tier-2 Awakened, but it's a good thing that you survived," The War Priestess pointed out.

Her gaze told Michael that she was mocking him. However, Michael could only sigh in relief – inwardly, of course. First of all, the War Priestess seemed to have accepted him. She didn't consider him as a stupid youngling, who trusted his gut feeling like a naive fool. The War Priestess might have lost an arm, but her expression didn't show any signs of worry or resentment. Michael didn't understand that quite well, but it was possible that the War Priestess was unburdened by the loss of her arm.

'They probably have the means to heal her. If Maria is willing to help out they can definitely regrow her arm. That should hardly be an issue.' Michael thought, happy that the security system didn't seem to have picked up on the Soultrait Symbols and the SoulStar Fragments.

He felt a little bit foolish for forgetting about the countless functions most modern security systems possessed, but it was a good thing that he Extracted the SoulStar Fragments and Soultraits of the war criminals.

He procured a total of 24,900 SoulStar Fragments and 8 Soultraits. Second Skin, Insert and a bunch of other rather useful Soultraits entered Michael's possession. The gains Michael made were exceptional, but there was still more. Other than the SoulStar Fragments, Soultrait Symbols, and energy influx, Michael also procured a large portion of the war criminal's goods, and several Memory Orbs.

Their War Rune's storage was emptied by Michael and the Memory Orbs were consumed at once. The dead couldn't speak, but their memories could.

After putting himself in a dangerous situation that could have exposed his secret, Michael obtained what he desired. It was definitely worth the risk. Of course, that didn't mean Michael didn't feel stressed out and under enormous pressure. His heart was palpitating, and he had a hard time talking to either of the races' leaders.

lightsnovel

"The Battle Exchange must have ended by now. What will happen now? We have only like...six or seven weeks left before we have to depart, right?" Michael asked, trying to change the topic.

"The Battle Exchange is over, yes. The participants of the Flag War have already been informed. You should also have a notification. In fact, you should have received multiple notifications by now. As for the rest, they'll leave Piloq in the next few days," Palika explained, looking back at Michael before he added, "But why did you kill that Tier-5 Lord? I mean, I understand why you did it, but I don't understand why you would put your life in danger like that. Don't you know that the energy influx of someone two Tiers higher than you is already dangerous? I didn't say anything because I was pretty sure that you would be fine killing the Lowest-ranked Tier-4 Awakened. But you went ahead and killed the Tier-5 Lord as well? You can consider yourself fortunate for being alive!"

It was interesting to know that many Awakened criminals were executed in the past. Since killing Awakened rewarded an energy influx to the executioner, various families began to search for high-ranked criminals to let their children kill them. The young Descendants were at a similar Tier and rank as Michael when they killed the Higher Lifeforms in the hopes of refining their War Rune rapidly. While that worked most of the time, it created two major problems.

The first problem was pretty simple. It was a fact that Awakened provided an energy influx upon getting killed. Various criminals were executed by young Descendants, but that was not all. Some big families were getting greedy. They wanted to grow faster than others and exceed them all. They wanted to become the sole and unrivaled rulers of mankind. Therefore, they began to hunt criminals to capture them for their children to kill.

Most families accepted this. They did the same in the beginning. However, they didn't kill innocent Awakened or smaller criminals. However, there was one family that began to frame powerful Awakened from unknown families. They captured and killed them for their energy influx. But that was not all. Smaller criminals who stole their party's goods were also captured by this family – and mercilessly killed by the younger generation. The family changed a lot, and they developed techniques to procure more energy influx from killing 'criminals'. Their hair turned crimson like the blood they shed when they killed the innocent and criminals alike.

Their family's name was added to history's books as the Crimson Hunters, the Arcania family.

The second problem was the danger of the highly potent energy influx a Higher Lifeform provided. The energy influx was on a completely different level from the energy influx of a Lesser Lifeform. Therefore many Descendants with weaker Soultraits suffered major backlashes from killing criminals, who were two Tiers above them in rank. Only the strongest Descendants with powerful Soultraits to strengthen their Soul, and a sturdy foundation encompassing both physical and mental fortitude could overcome and endure the energy influx provided by an Awakened two Tiers above their rank.

Michael met that requirement mostly because he was in possession of so many Soultraits. Even if his mind and body would crumble, his Soul provided enough protection to his existence to endure and use the energy influx of a Tier-4 Awakened. As for the Tier-5 Lord...Michael would rather be in unbearable pain and be considered an idiot for thinking that he could endure the energy influx of a Tier-5 Lord rather than keep his guinea pigs alive.

He had used the war criminals as guinea pigs for his experiments. He removed their Soultraits and extracted their SoulStar Fragments. Leaving them alive was not an option. Therefore, Michael chose to become the stupid fool, who overestimated his capabilities. That was much better than his secrets getting exposed.

Michael was still alive and he was almost done with the second refinement stage of Sacred Rectification. Caesurium Menta was also nearing the limit of the second stage. It was only a matter of time before he reached a bottleneck. By then, Michael would have to change his refinement technique to a better one or advance to the 3rd Tier to practice the 3rd stage of Caesurium Menta and Sacred Rectification.

"Well...how about I show you something? You might understand why I killed that old bastard on a whim," Michael responded to Palika. He retrieved a Memory Crystal and channeled some memories inside it.

The memories originated from the Memory Orb of the Tier-5 Lord he'd killed. Michael was disgusted just thinking about the memories, but he kept a straight face as he handed the Memory Crystal to Palika Mavenham.

The Berserker Chieftain's expression remained neutral for the first few seconds. However, upon reaching a certain point his expression turned sour. It worsened until his large hand twitched and his grip on the Orb tightened. Not even a second later, the memory crystal burst into thousands of pieces.

"This...Is that how humans can be? Not even the worst criminals of our kind would dare to do something so cruel and evil to children...and innocent women. How could someone let loose Goblins and Kobolds onto them....?"

Palika Mavenham had seen a lot. He had seen many bad people. However, most of the time the Chieftain could sense the bad within people. But that was not the case with the Elder. In fact, the Elder

of the Silvermoon University had a likable personality. Many liked him. Even Palika had had a favorable impression of him...until now.

"That is terrifying..." The War Priestess mumbled as she received a similar memory crystal from Michael.

"Yes, it is. He is one of the worst humans I've encountered until now...so I couldn't hold back...especially with his memory being imprinted in my mind...I hate it...I want to get rid of them all...but I needed that to collect information..." Michael swore under his breath, clenching his fists.

He really hated some of the memories that had been imprinted deep into his mental with exceptional clarity. It was horrifying to have someone else's memories in his mind, especially if those were foul. The only good thing was that Michael could organize his memories and thoughts. If not for being able to differentiate his memories from those of others, Michael would have crumbled by now. That was something he was certain of.

'But I need to know how disgusting mankind can be and how low they can stoop. I need to understand that not everyone is good. If I extract the memories again, I will lose every memory connected to the bad ones. The weapon mastery, their knowledge, and how disgusting they are. I...have to use their memories as a source of energy to grow stronger, and to remind myself about the dark side of mankind...'

"Their memories are inside you? That...must be your Soultrait's doing... I am sorry for you. That must be terrifying. I understand why you killed them," The War Priestess said, looking at Michael with a tinge of pity, and newly found respect.

Despite knowing how vile the war criminals had been, Michael spent the previous two weeks procuring as many useful pieces of information as possible. Silvana couldn't imagine how horrifying it must have been for Michael, and how much he had to endure. Yet, he worked so hard to help everyone. He deserved to be commended and respected.

"Don't worry about what others might say. I will make sure nobody can even harm a single hair of your hair for killing these bastards!"

Chapter 455 Sorry

Michael was fortunate that his worries didn't turn into reality. Solving the problems about the two powerhouses that tormented his mind had been rather easy.

He ended up worrying more about potential problems with the War Priestess and the Berserker Chieftain than necessary. Thankfully, they didn't find out about Extraction's existence. Therefore, there was no problem, in the first place. If anything, the two Leaders' opinion of Michael improved even further after they found out that Michael's Soultraits were capable of storing the memories of the war criminals in his mind.

According to their point of view, Michael had sacrificed a lot to procure crucial information. His sacrifice was far bigger than they'd anticipated.

Silvana and Palika felt bad for thinking that Michael didn't have anything to sacrifice. In their opinion, the youthful Lord lost nothing to procure the information they had required to find and retrieve the Tritaenus spaceship. But that was wrong. They had been wrong.

Watching Michael's expression change several times as the memories of the war criminals flashed through his eyes flooded the two older Awakened with guilt. Observing the anger in his eyes as he lived through the memories of those merciless and terrifying men was definitely not easy.

Silvana and Palika clearly recalled what had happened in the memories stored in the Memory Crystals, and they couldn't help but feel that Michael was worthy to be called a brave and tenacious Warrior. Michael was a brave soul, and he should be protected at all costs.

Not only did Michael protect their kind more than once, he was also one of the few who actively approached other Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs to establish connections. He protected others and offended his own people to make sure that the Warlock Centaurs and Berserkers were treated on equal terms. His determination to keep the Tritan Alliance intact and protect it was obvious. If not for his selfless offer to interrogate the war criminals – even if that meant that he had to imprint their memories in his mind – they would have never gotten back the Tritaenus, and their future plans would have been destroyed.

But that was not all. Michael was also powerful. Silvana and Palika couldn't even guess how many Soultraits Michael possessed at this point. He was like an onion with countless layers. He...was a treasure and a true prodigy.

Michael noticed the changes in both Palika Mavenham and Silvana Zentur's body language and way of interacting with him, and he was not sure if he deserved this kind of treatment. He wanted to help Alice and the others, but he also had selfish intentions when he offered to interrogate the war criminals.

Of course, Michael wasn't a fool to be upset about their preferential treatment. He didn't have the luxury to do so. The only luxury he had was to be in possession of a bunch of Tier-4 and Tier-5 Artifacts he'd extracted from the war criminals. Their quality was also pretty decent.

Selling the Artifact would provide enough funds to complete a few tasks on his to-do list. After adding the rewards he was about to obtain from his Battle Exchange ranking, and for offering his help, Michael hoped that he had enough funds to complete the Teleportation Array, start upgrading his Basic Summoning Gate to the Intermediate rank and maybe even continue with the Intermediate or Advanced level of the Sacred Knight Temple – once the Basic level had been constructed.

'But then again...better techniques might as well be better than some funds. Neither Sacred Rectification, nor Caesurium Menta, or Pandemonium's Requiem are top-tier techniques. They're not as potent and efficient as Inheritance techniques. As for combat techniques... I have too few of them...quite literally...'

Michael was deep in thought as he was led outside the underground prison. Silvana and Palika thought that he needed some time to fight with the demonic memories that had taken root in his mind. Therefore, they left him alone to clear his mind. Instead of bothering him right now, Palika forwarded a few files to keep him informed about the most recent changes about the Interdimensional Flag War and the happenings in Piloq. Silvana then shared a file about the battle with Dark Heavens.

Michael was led to a large room, or a ginormous bedroom to be precise, that had been emptied for him. In the center of the room hung a large chandelier. It shimmered brightly and attracted Michael's interest for a moment. His eyes moved to the king-sized bed and the dozens of cushions spread all over it. He then looked over to the huge wall of bookshelves on the other side. The bookshelves were filled with books, probably hundreds of them.

Their titles were quite interesting as well.

[Compendium of Mythical Creatures]

[Origin of the Expanse]

[The Will's Nature: The Foundation of Power]

[The Will's Nature II: Utilizing the Will]

[Achievement Stores and its Utilities]

...

Michael was curious about the previous owner of the room. Thus he asked the Berserker Chieftain.

Interestingly enough, the room had been Elder Xerx's residence before the...incidents...happened. Michael was given the room as a small gift of gratitude for the support he offered. He was given a few more pieces of information before the two Leaders left Michael alone – not without forgetting to profusely thank him once again.

By now it was obvious that the Leaders were going out of their way to ensure that he was taken care of. They were too forthcoming. It was uncomfortable at this point.

Once left alone, Michael began to skim through the messages and notifications on his crystal watch.

[Congratulations for successfully protecting your Flag War Token. As the 23rd Seed of the Duo Campaign, you can collect your resources from the Management Department *Now*. You may also select delivery to hire a courier to send over your reward package!]

[Dear Mr Fang. We would like to inform you that the Vice President of the Bartholomew Corporation provided a detailed report about your selfless actions for mankind's sake. The Seeds of Demonic Breed have been detected and removed thanks to your contribution. The Bartholomew Corporation wants to thank you for your extraordinary achievement. Your diamond-level discount will increase and your profit share of the Agriculture Project will increase to 21%. This is just a small gift of gratitude for saving the Barren Lands and the Agriculture Project from going extinct before it could flourish properly....]

The second message was quite long. It unlocked a bunch of functions he couldn't use before. But the most intriguing was a particular function that hadn't been available before.

[You may now use the Anonymous Trading and the Mysterious Auction. If you want to trade or auction rare materials through the Bartholomew Corporation you may go to any of our shops to do so. We ensure 100% anonymity and excellent customer service.]

Anonymous Trading sounded like a very useful function for Michael. He could use this function to trade his Mythic Scrolls with Ordinary Summoning Scrolls. Using the Anonymous Trading function, Michael wouldn't have to look for trading partners actively. He could use the Bartholomew Corporation to amass Ordinary Summoning Scrolls. lightsnovel

But since Michael didn't want to rely on the Bartholomew Corporation, he would trade with Alice and maybe talk to Lincoln, Zeke, and Kaleb as well. A few more connections might be suitable targets to trade his Mythic Scrolls, but Michael was not in a rush, not anymore.

[Frederik Kolbenheim(Barbaric Couple): Hello Michael... to be honest, I am not sure what I'm supposed to say right now. As you might know, I've never been in a situation like this. Jacqueline told me that she informed you about my...situation. It's a little bit embarrassing, to be honest. But...I think I should thank you for what you did. I don't think I deserve your help, but I'm relieved that I was unconscious and couldn't reject it. The healer is a little bitch who complains about everything, but she does her job well. Thanks to her – and your support – I will be able to heal again.]

[Frederik Kolbenheim(Barbaric Couple): Putting aside my thankfulness...I'm at a loss. My condition will improve enough to start training soon, but I won't be able to return to the Origin Expanse. The Arygats – that's the name of the enemies I faced-. they're monstrosities whose attacks inflicted curses and destroyed everything I owned. I was the last survivor of my people, and the Arygats' Lord knows where I opened my Runic Gate. He must have created a trap around my anchor to ensure that if I dare to return I won't be able to go anywhere. So...I don't know what to do. Jacqueline tells me to elope with her and run away, but...I can't do that. She loves her family too much, and I don't want to be the one to force her to make that difficult choice of who to abandon.]

[Frederik Kolbenheim(Barbaric Couple): Please ignore my rumbling. I have nobody to rant to, so...please just forget everything I've been messaging you. I...just feel helpless. I need strength but my father has been crippled and I am useless. I am a nobody, my Soultrait is not strong enough, and our Inheritance technique is of Inferior quality compared to other Inheritance techniques. How am I supposed to give Jacqueline what she deserves? How am I supposed to protect my father, and heal him? I need strength, but I cannot even use the Origin Expanse...]

Frederik had never been an obedient and calm child. He was known for his bad temper and ugly personality. But these messages...they were different. Michael was not sure what to say or to think.

He stared at his chat with Frederik and pressed his lips together before he typed something.

[Michael Fang: There is no need to thank me. Focus on your recovery first. That's the most important. You might feel like you owe me something, but I don't really think like that. I don't mind helping out a friend as long as I have the means to do so.]

Michael had more than enough to give Frederik a helping hand. Frederik Kolbenheim was about to lose everything. He shouldn't have to worry about his physique as well. He licked his lower lip, his fingers hovering over the holographic keyboard.

[Michael Fang: Would it be enough if you gained enough strength to oppress the potential marriage candidates the Elders have chosen for Jacqueline? Would that satisfy the Elders, or is there more you have to do? Like regaining your territory?]

He was not yet sure why he asked this question, but he sent the message after a while. There was a lot Michael had to reconsider, but he felt like he was doing the right thing by sending the message.

The chat with Frederik Kolbenheim closed and another chat opened. It was his chat with Alice Zenovia, and a bombardment of questions appeared on the holographic screen. Alice had been asking him where he was, how he was doing, and when he would come back. She mentioned the end of the Battle Exchange, the fight for Tritaenus, and the death of various powerhouses. Apparently, her friend had been injured quite severely as well. Fortunately, Maria Seraph chose to offer her help and tend to the wounds of the injured.

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): I really don't understand this little girl. Sometimes she avoids people by all means and runs away from healing the wounds of those who are on the brink of death, and other times she goes beyond her limit to tend to everyone. This time she even said that she would accumulate enough energy to heal the War Priestess' arm and tend to everyone else who's still injured by the time she returns. I really think that she has a few loose screws in her head.]

Michael raised an eyebrow while reading the second last message but the message that followed right after was even more ridiculous.

[Alice Zenovia(fierce beauty): Are you ghosting me now, or did Maria kidnap you and thrash your crystal watch? I swear, I will beat you during our next training session if I find out that you've been ignoring me!]

He let out a faint chuckle and shook his head in denial.

'This girl is getting more insane the more I get to know about her.' Then Michael typed a short message.

[Michael Fang: I was doing some tasks for the War Priestess and the Chieftain. Now I'm back. We can continue our Mythic Scroll trade if you're still interested. My subjects should have collected a few more by now. If you're interested you might be able to make a once-in-a-lifetime deal with me!"

Michae sighed deeply, feeling satisfied with himself. At last, he sent another small message to Alice.

[Michael Fang: I wouldn't ignore you. Don't worry.]

Chapter 456 Reward Package

Oddly enough Michael received a few messages from Jacqueline as well.

She told him that Frederik woke up a while ago and that he isolated himself from everyone else. The only person allowed to enter his room was the healer, who tended to his wounds. Jacqueline used her chat with Michael to complain about Frederik and reveal her insecurities about the future.

'How did I end up becoming their therapist? Don't they have other friends to talk to...? No, forget that. Of course, they don't have any friends...'

The Barbaric Couple was always together. Sometimes, Michael wondered if they were glued together. It was a miracle that they could survive apart from each other inside the Origin Expanse.

Staring at his chat with Jacqueline it was no wonder that Michael felt weird. He rarely had to console someone in such a situation. The Barbaric Couple was in trouble and they needed someone to talk to. Unfortunately, it was not like Michael was an expert in relationship advice or had much free time. Therefore, he figured that he could message them now that he had some time to spare.

After he read through Jacqueline's bombardment of text messages twice, Michael decided to reply to her with one long message. He explained to Jacqueline how Frederik must be feeling and what he was thinking in this situation. Michael made sure to tell Jacqueline that she should be patient and that she should only go to meet Frederik once he was in the right frame of mind. He also advised her to not be too forthcoming or act differently than usual. She should give him a helping hand when needed, but not go out of her way to do everything for Frederik. That would only result in a more uncomfortable situation. It wouldn't help Frederik adjust and accept his new life.

Michael took his time to reply to Jacqueline. He read through his own message thrice before sending the text. Afterward, he opened the file Silvana Zentur sent him. It was the report of the Tritan Alliance's counterattack.

Instead of skimming through the report, Michael read through it with great interest. The report was exhaustive and explained the fight against Dark Heavens in great detail.

"It was just like I suspected. A trap," Michael mumbled, "But to think that Dark Heavens would hide the Tritaenus in the planetary ring of Kirata to use the surrounding meteorites to bombard the Tritan Alliance's spaceships. That's pretty impressive. Too bad that Higher Lifeforms can survive in space for a while."

Dark Heavens' trap worked out decently. They used the meteorites in the planetary ring as weapons of mass destruction. The meteorites' trajectory was altered, and they were thrown toward the Tritan's spaceships that had just entered the planetary ring. Most meteorites were destroyed with the use of the Tritan spaceships' weapon system and some Soultraits, but other meteorites had been enhanced with the use of various Soultraits. They were resilient enough to endure a few attacks and smashed heavily into the smaller Tritan spaceships, destroying them in one go.

After the first two spaceships were destroyed, a human powerhouse used her Spatial-type Soultrait to teleport the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs inside Tritaenus. Given the way the report was written, Michael presumed that they sacrificed two spaceships intentionally to distract Dark Heavens. Thereafter the real attack began.

The Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs wreaked havoc inside Tritaenus, whereas the remaining powerhouses surrounded the Tritaenus spaceship to keep the Dark Heavens members, who wanted to flee, at bay. Dark Heavens had two Awakened with Spatial-type Soultraits, but they were low-ranked ones. The Tritan Alliance's anti-element devices that they'd installed after the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs invaded the Tritaenus were potent enough to restrain the use of those low-level spatial affinities. Thereafter one of the strongest powerhouses present released a seal that restricted the manifestation of Runic Gate in a radius of 10 kilometers. No one could escape their fate by fleeing into the Origin Expanse.

After reading through the first steps of the Tritan Alliance's plans which were explained in detail, Michael noticed that the climax of the battle was only skimmed through. All the report stated was the death of dozens of powerhouses, including humans, Berserkers, and Warlock Centaurs...and that they died in honor. The report continued to state that the Tritaenus had been retrieved and that dozens of powerhouses from Dark Heavens had been caught.

Every single one of the powerhouses caught was, at least, a Lowest-rank Tier-4 Awakened. However, most of them were even stronger.

Dark Heavens' Trap worked out to a certain extent as they destroyed two spaceships and killed close to 1000 Awakened with the potential to become a threat to Dark Heavens. However, Silvana's report stated that the honorable deaths of her comrades-in-arms allowed them to capture many enemies – something that could result in potential future gains.

As long as they could interrogate the enemies they'd captured, the Tritan Alliance could procure more knowledge about Hyumans, the Supreme Human Alliance, and the other human race of the alliance. It was highly likely that the interrogation would prove useful against other dark organizations as well.

'As long as they can find out Dark Heavens' future plans, the Tritan Alliance should be fine for a while,' Michael thought, right before his mind drifted away, 'Maybe...I can use Extraction on the Dark Heavens members this time as well. That would be pretty great!'

Each war criminal from Dark Heavens was a Higher Lifeform. Therefore, spending a few weeks with them would prove useful for Michael. He could extract the SoulStar Fragments within them, get hold of their Soultraits, and make use of their energy influx by killing them once he'd sucked them dry with Extraction.

By the time Michael was done reading through Silvana's report, he heard someone knocking at the door. Right after the sound of knocking reached his ear, a notification popped up on his crystal watch.

[Your reward package has arrived. Please verify your identity when you pick up the package!]

Michael got up from the bed and walked over to the door. A small drone hovered right in front of him. It scanned Michael from head to toe to verify his identity and dropped a leather bracelet with a small crystal embedded into it once the scan was completed.

The drone disappeared with a loud hum as Michael picked up the bracelet. The crystal was a dimensional shard, an ingredient that was often used to create storage devices. Its value was considered quite high because the storage devices created with dimensional shards didn't have to be bound to your War Rune to access them. lightsnovel

It was similar to Michael's spatial satchel, only much smaller.

The space within the spatial bracelet was not humongous, but it was large enough to fit piles of stones that looked like marble and shelves filled with vials that contained chestnut brown liquid.

The vials didn't look that pleasant to the eye, but Michael knew what they were. That was also why he was quite happy.

"Energy Stones and Apex Nutrition Serums? That sounds like a good reward, indeed," Michael mumbled as he recovered a small Energy Stone and one of the Apex Nutrition Serums.

The Apex Nutrition Serums were the most potent reagents that could be used by Lesser Lifeforms. Under normal circumstances, it was a waste for Tier-2 Awakened to use them since most Awakened couldn't absorb even half of the nutrition compressed into the small vial. They were simply too expensive to be wasted like that.

Thus, only young Descendants with their Inheritance technique would purchase those Apex Nutrition Serums at enormous prices. Their Inheritance techniques allowed them to digest most of the highly potent Apex Nutrition Serum to improve their mind, body, and soul.

Since almost all participants of the Flag War were either wunderkinds or adept at using Apex Nutrition Serums, one of the rewards ended up being shelves filled with Apex Nutrition Serums.

'There should be more than 200. Each of them is worth millions if I'm not mistaken. That's a few billion just for the Apex Nutrition Serums I've been given. My rank was quite high.... but how many Apex Nutrition Serums have been distributed to those at the top spots? How many did the Tritan Alliance distribute to everyone altogether? Their expenses must be in the trillions...maybe hundreds of trillions if we add the Energy Stones...'

Michael was having a hard time calculating the numbers in hundreds of trillions. Nobody would bother calculating such high figures. Why? Because one would easily lose count after reaching astronomical numbers. Instead of using dollars as a currency, most races used Energy Stones as the universal currency. The reason was pretty simple as well: Everyone needed Energy Stones.

Inferior Energy Stones were considered the most potent sources of clean power to absorb as a Lesser Lifeform. They were filled to the brim with energy and it was easy to consume the energy stored within. As long as your energy assimilation technique was potent and your mastery high enough, one could easily improve one's War Rune using Energy Stones.

Of course, they weren't cheap. Even the Inferior Energy Stones piled up in the storage bracelet were worth tens of millions – each of them.

"Filthy rich..." Michael mumbled, stopping for a moment before he added, "Or I'm just too poor."

"Well. Not anymore. It looks like I am about to start my grind soon."

He was quite excited. The thought of using trillions to improve his strength ached his stingy heart quite a bit, but Michael understood that it was necessary.

If the rewards distributed by the Tritan Alliance could help a few Descendants to attain enough strength to defeat some Tekur that would already be a successful investment. If it saved a bunch of Awakened from dying at the Tekur's hands that would be even better.

[Tritan Alliance(Official Account): Dear Michael Fang, we've been informed that your reward package has been delivered. We hope that you're satisfied with the rewards.

Unfortunately, we have to tell you that your remaining rewards will be given out later. The Officials are still trying to think of a proper reward for your extraordinary actions and contribution. We will inform you soon. Stay tuned!]

Michael raised an eyebrow while staring at the last message.

"Can't I just make a request? I have loads of things I need," Michael grumbled,

"Don't you dare to give me something shitty!"

Chapter 457 Variable

[Frederik Kolbenheim(Barbaric Couple): Well...I think with enough strength everything will be okay...I guess. I have no idea, Michael. I don't know anything. Maybe, I will never be able to return to the Origin Expanse...and maybe, the Elders of the Orlando family won't ever accept me if I were to ask Jacqueline to create a Link of Loyalty with me. In fact, that would aggravate them even more if I were to be daring enough to accept Jacqueline's help. The Elders would always think that I am beneath her and not worthy of her...not that I am worthy of her right now...]

"This guy is nuts. Consider yourself lucky, Frederik. The next time I'm near you while you act like this, I will drag you to Silverean's hellish training. I will make sure you cannot cry like a little child because you will be too tired, or unconscious after we're done!" Michael cursed Frederik quietly.

He wanted to distract Frederik, but that was hardly possible given the distance between them. Therefore, he had to listen to his self-loathing, and nonsense on repeat.

Michael thought a lot about Frederik and his situation. He had a few ways to help him but he hesitated. For now, Michael couldn't really do much to offer Frederik a helping hand. Frederik was quite far away...but if he traveled to Piloq, would that be worthwhile?

'I wanted to build my own army either way. But do I already want to invite humans? Am I willing to share my secrets with humans, or would that be too dangerous? If I invite Frederik to my territory and upgrade his Soultrait he would obtain a sudden increase in strength. But that would attract unwanted attention...'

Michael shook his head. He wanted to help Frederik, but he was not willing to take the risk just yet. It was not as if Michael needed any more attention. He had been under the spotlight for quite a while.

'Maybe after the Flag War is over, I can start searching for some targets.'

With that in mind, Michael decided to leave the room. He was about to meet up with Alice to talk about the Flag War and their future training program when he received a notification from the official account of the Tritan Alliance.

[Tritan Alliance(Official Account): Dear participants of the Interdimensional Flag War. After overcoming the recent events the officials decided to tweak the training program until the start of the Interdimensional Flag War. Lia, our AI, analyzed the combat prowess, personality, and compatibility of every participant to create Combat Teams with five to ten members each. The teams will meet up with their designated Instructor and work on their teamwork for the next six weeks. For further information don't hesitate to contact your designated Instructor.]

A file was attached to the notification. Michael opened the file to see which team he had been assigned to.

What he didn't expect was to find his name nowhere on the list.

"Did they forget me?" Michael murmured to himself as he entered Alice's office. He looked up and realized that Alice was not alone. Oliver Zeus was right next to her, his expression overflowing with seriousness.

"My timing seems a little bit off. Sorry for disturbing you two. I will wait outside," Michael said hurriedly, pedaling backward to leave the room.

However, Oliver pointed at Michael and gestured to him to stop.

"I understand that Killian has been appointed as a variable because of his Soultraits, and his nasty personality. But what is with this kid? How can he be given a spot as a variable? This kid is quite literally a Tier-2 Lord. How could you deem him fit to be a variable? Do you want to see him dead that much?" Oliver accused Alice, whose expression turned colder by the second.

Oliver noticed too late that he blurted the last sentence aloud, but he didn't take back what he said. Alice's decision didn't make sense, after all!

"What exactly does that mean? Is that why I can't find my name on the team list?" Michael asked upon realizing that Oliver and Alice were talking about the team list for the Flag War.

Alice averted her eyes from Oliver. She looked at Michael intently and explained the situation, "You are not in a team because I got you a spot as a variable. That means you can freely roam around the isolated dimension where the Flag War is held. Most variables are Peak Tier-3 Lords like Killian Zeus. His Soultrait is highly destructive, and his mastery of the Zeus family's Inheritance technique allows him to fight the Tekur head-on. He can help other teams when they're in danger or fight on his own against the Tekur."

Oliver then turned to Michael, "His Soultrait and personality make it quite difficult to team up with others. He is adamant about being the man in charge even though he fights at the frontlines. Killian cannot even see the entire battlefield, yet he wants to have the final say in everything rather than guide the supporters, who can oversee and control the battlefield much easier."

"But that's not the point. I understand that Killian Zeus and the others have been picked as variables but..." Oliver continued to look at Michael and sighed, "I really don't understand why you've been picked as a variable. I mean no harm, it's the opposite actually. I am worried that you will be in danger if you encounter some Tekur without a team. I saw your battles and know that you're strong, a treasure in the making even. But you don't have an Inheritance technique and your Tier is simply too low. I want to see you blossom to prove it to the High Society that someone without family backing can make it big. I would hate to see you die right now!"

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Michael was not too sure what to think of Oliver Zeus. The Zeus family sounded rather problematic given that they had Killian Zeus. The Zeus family was also the founding family of the Olympus. But then again, Oliver sounded sincere. It didn't look like Oliver had a specific reason why he hated that Michael had been picked as a variable.

"I just want you to use your communication crystals to team up with those who need your help. Of course, it would be best if you stay with some teams for a while, but I think you will do a better job running around without anyone holding you back," Alice merely said. She didn't shy away from Michael and stared straight into his eyes.

He trusted Alice, and he actually liked that she chose to reserve a spot as a variable for him. That was pretty neat.

'I can hunt the Tekur, extract them in secret, and help the others in that case.'

"Sounds good to me. But what kind of training do I have to undergo then? I can adapt pretty fast to other teams, but I am not sure if our teamwork will be great if I come to help other teams," Michael pointed out, "Do you want me to focus on growing stronger with the resources I've obtained, or is there some special training regime planned for variables?"

As his last words left his mouth, Michael noticed a faint change in Oliver's expression.

'So that's it?'

"The Tritan Alliance decided to give the variables a few additional resources. Everyone was allowed to recommend one Variable. I recommended you since I believe that Kaleb will do better in the team I created around him. Two officials had to approve my pick – which happened. Therefore, you are now officially the variable. You will be given additional resources soon. After that, we can talk about your training plan. I will give you a helping hand," Alice explained, the corners of her lips curling upward, "But I wonder how you convinced the War Priestess and the Chieftain to approve of you. They didn't hesitate to agree when I recommended you as a variable. Everyone was surprised because they didn't agree with any variable we picked before."

Alice watched Michael curiously. Oliver Zeus noticed that and frowned, but he didn't throw a tantrum – which Michael expected him to do. Instead, Oliver began to smile as he turned back to Michael.

"It is true that you will be given additional resources. However, the danger you will have to face in the isolated dimension is not to be taken lightly. You will have to grow stronger much faster, otherwise, you will die miserably."

"Either way, you did a good job collecting information. You deserve the additional resources whether you are a variable or not."

Micheal listened, but it had been quite obvious that his earlier assumption of Oliver had been wrong. He was not sincere, at all. Thus, he turned to Alice.

"I heard that more war criminals possess been caught. If you need any more help, I could spend a week or two to interrogate them. Killing them would provide an intense energy influx, so I wouldn't fall behind in training too much either way," He proposed his help once again.

"No!" Alice exclaimed near-instantaneously, taking the two men by surprise.

"You are not allowed to help any further! The Inspector has already returned from the Origin Expanse, and he will be in Piloq within a week or two. You will be busy training and as far from the war criminals as possible!"

Michael raised an eyebrow. He'd hardly ever seen Alice lose her cool composure.

"The War Priestess and the Chieftain told everyone to deny you if you ever proposed your aid to Interrogate some disgusting bastards. That's what they said," Oliver explained, "They told us concerning the downside of your interrogation Soultrait, about the fact that their memories are engraved onto your mind."

Michael nodded in understanding, but he frowned inwardly. This had been not going according to his plan.

'Well...that's a bummer...'

Chapter 458 Leviathan Diffusion

After Oliver Zeus finished talking to Alice Zenovia, he left her office. He felt like dragging Michael behind him but was also aware of the good rapport he had with Alice.

Oliver clicked his tongue just loud enough for Michael to hear before he closed the door behind him.

"Is he into you?" Michael asked suddenly.

"Hmm? You mean Oliver?" Alice responded with a slight surprise, "I don't think so. I never asked him though. We're better off as friends and colleagues, either way."

She looked into Michael's eyes and shrugged, "More important is that you're officially a Variable now. That means you will get a stash of resources that have been adjusted to the special training we've handpicked for you. The special training is customized and will help you to grow rapidly in the next few weeks."

Alice retrieved a tome from her War Rune. She threw it toward Michael and continued explaining, "Leviathan Diffusion is a technique that focuses on energy circulation and how to weave energy into your body and Artifacts to unleash their full potential. I am going to teach you an energy circulation

technique that will allow you to unravel the Origin energy's potential, and absorb more energy from the surroundings and Energy Stones."

"So you're hoping that I'll advance to Tier-3 in the next few weeks using Leviathan Diffusion and the massive number of Energy Stones I've been given?" Michael asked to see if he understood Alice properly.

"That would be the optimal result," Alice nodded, "But I think you won't advance to Tier-3 that easily. If I'm not wrong you need as much energy as Kaleb to refine your War Rune, maybe even more. That shouldn't make any sense because an Awakened with a 7-Star Soultrait requires nearly thrice the energy an Awakened with a 6-Star Soultrait requires. Either you have multiple 6-Star Soultraits, which I genuinely doubt, or you have Soultraits that require more energy to be refined. It could also be because you have so many Soultraits as there is a theory that possessing more Soultraits leads to an exponential growth in energy demand."

Alice simply shrugged but didn't try to probe Michael about the number of his Soultraits or their power. It was obvious that she was curious, but she knew better than to ask Michael. He wouldn't give her the answer she hoped for, and their relationship might turn awkward as a result.

"Okay, but the goal is to give me enough resources to refine my War Rune rapidly. The Apex Nutrition Serum is for my body and mind to be refined to perfection at the 2nd Stage, whereas the Energy Stones ought to be used for my body, and mind, but mostly my War Rune. I see," Michael murmured to himself, retrieving Leviathan Diffusion from Alice.

"Let me teach you the basics first. After that, you should spend most of your spare time in the Origin Expanse to make use of the time dilation. Other than joining some teams to spar with them every now and then, and asking me for pointers about Leviathan Diffusion and everything else that might be of interest, you should stay in the Origin Expanse!" Alice said in a tone that left no room for refusal.

"Yes, yes. I understand," Michael said nonchalantly, opening the tome to start reading, "Do you want the tome back, or is it mine now?"

Alice didn't think much about Michael's question since he didn't sound particularly interested in hearing the answer, but the opposite was actually the case. It was crucial to know whether he could use extraction on the tome to procure a Wisp of Knowledge from it, or if he had to study the energy circulation technique in the old-fashioned way.

"Keep it. We don't really need this technique anymore. It has been years since we used parts of Leviathan Diffusion to integrate it into our Inheritance Technique. The tome is of no value for us at this point," Alice answered, her words attracting his curiosity.

'A portion of Leviathan Diffusion has been used to improve their Inheritance Technique? Doesn't that mean the technique is a lot rarer than Caesurium Menta and the other techniques in my possession?'

Michael was starting to feel excited. He stepped closer to Alice and smiled brightly, "Let's get started. I can't wait to practice Leviathan Diffusion!"

Four hours of thorough teaching followed Michael's excited exclamation. He listened intently to Alice's guidance and tips until she thought that he should pick up his resource package as Variable and enter the Origin Expanse to experiment with Leviathan Diffusion.

lightsnovel Michael was more than fine with that. He rushed home while simultaneously sending the drone courier to his place with the variable resource package.

The package arrived at the perfect time. He arrived in front of his room as he saw the drone approach. Michael let the drone scan his body to identify him before dropping the resource package into his hands. Afterward, the drone disappeared, leaving Michael alone to enter the room.

A second spatial bracelet had been delivered to him, just like that.

Michael accessed the spatial bracelet, only to notice that it was filled with Inferior Energy Stones. There was nothing else.

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He tried to ignore the enormous wealth he'd been given today and focused on the task ahead. In the meantime, he completely forgot about his trade with Alice. Initially, he wanted to trade some Mythic Scrolls with her, but Leviathan Diffusion distracted him too much.

As of now, Michael wanted nothing more than to extract the Wisps of Knowledge from Leviathan Diffusion to improve his mastery and understanding of the technique as quickly as possible.

Michael entered the Origin Expanse and sat down on the floor inside his cozy room. He unleashed Extraction and enveloped the Leviathan Diffusion tome in a dazzling golden glow.

Six hours later, Michael's clothes were drenched in sweat. His breathing was ragged, and he felt like he was about to collapse on the ground.

It had been much harder to extract Leviathan Diffusion's Wisp of Knowledge. Still, he made it possible – after using the purified energy within two Energy Stones to keep his energy storage full.

The tendrils of Extraction made it easy to devour the purified energy within the Energy Stones. The energy entered his body near-instantaneously through the tendrils of Extraction where Michael could then use Pandemonium's Requiem to circulate the energy through his body wherever it was needed.

However, circulating Origin Energy through his body was not the forte of Pandemonium's Requiem. Absorbing energy was.

Michael could use Extraction to absorb energy from the surroundings and other objects. Therefore, Leviathan Diffusion was perfect. It was almost as if the technique had been created for him. Its' forte was energy circulation, not energy absorption, after all!

Michael consumed Leviathan Diffusion's Wisp of Knowledge right away without taking even a moment to rest. He was impatient and desired to start practicing the technique right away. Unfortunately, the flood of information was more intense than he anticipated. Michael's mind was flooded with information and knowledge imprinted straight into his brain.

He spent another six hours panting, his clothes drenched in sweat, and his entire head feeling like splattering into countless pieces. Fortunately, nothing like that happened.

Michael digested the Wisp of Knowledge within six hours before he fell asleep right after. He woke up the next morning with a wide variety of new knowledge in his head.

"Reaching profound mastery of Leviathan Diffusion in the next few weeks shouldn't be an issue. By then...I should be able to combine Extraction's power and Leviathan Diffusion well enough to improve my strength several times faster than before!"

Since he was eager to start, Michael didn't waste any more time. He retrieved a small stash of Energy Stones from one of the two spatial bracelets and released dozens of extraction tendrils. Each of the tendrils tapped into the purified energy stored within one Inferior Energy Stone. He devoured the energy within and transferred it straight inside his body.

From one moment to the next, Michael's body began overflowing with origin energy. He began to practice Leviathan Diffusion and circulated the origin energy through his body. Using Leviathan Diffusion to control tides of origin energy felt a little bit weird at first, but since Michael possessed the knowledge of the tome he knew that it was normal to feel like this. Therefore, he persisted knowing that the discomfort would disappear with time.

Controlling the tides of energy precisely, Michael led small streams to the pillar of light where the energy was absorbed and consumed. As the pillar of light was filled with energy his War Rune was being refined. Michael's War Rune worked tirelessly to refine as much energy as possible. But this time everything was much easier. Leviathan Diffusion controlled tides of energy that were split into countless small streams. The streams were weaved into the pillar of light in a natural setting where the War Rune had a much easier time digesting the energy to improve its refinement degree.

Michael was a little clumsy at first but given the knowledge he'd extracted earlier, he took note of his mistakes quickly. He noticed his flaws and mistakes and fixed them within minutes. By the time the first

batch of Inferior Energy Stones was consumed, Michael reached the basic mastery of Leviathan Diffusion.

Three days later Michael attained the Intermediate mastery, and one week later his mastery was already at the Advanced level.

Michael continued to focus on his War Rune's refinement degree until the end of the third week. He'd been tirelessly consuming Inferior Energy Stones to improve his War Rune and didn't leave the Origin Expanse even once. Michael had yet to start refining his mind, and body as he wanted to either way.

Nonetheless, he attained profound mastery of Leviathan Diffusion, creating the foundation to consume a tremendous amount of energy at once. That was perfect to not only improve his War Rune in the future but also to accelerate the energy circulation for his body refinement and mind refinement.

'I have only 5 weeks departed before the departure. Let's make use of that!'

Chapter 459 Power Up

Michael didn't leave the Origin Expanse even once in the five weeks that passed in Piloq. Only a few days were left before the Interdimensional Flag War started and they would have to depart soon to reach the dimensional portal, yet a bunch of Awakened were still inside the Origin Expanse – Michael included.

Ten weeks had passed in the Origin Expanse since Michael disappeared and Alice was getting worried. She didn't expect Michael to ignore her advice and stay in the Origin Expanse without asking her for any pointers. Did he think that he could reach a high mastery of Leviathan Diffusion just like that?

'What if something went wrong?' She wondered, a seed of worry taking root in her heart.

She poked at her dinner with a fork, having lost her appetite suddenly and ignored the people around her.

"Michael returned!" Kaleb exclaimed all of a sudden. He jumped up from his chair, his eyes trained on the holographic screen in front of him.

"He is back? Is he fine? Why did he not return earlier?" Alice bombarded her little brother with questions, but all she received was a scowl.

"How...am I supposed to know all that? All he messaged was that he's back..." Kaleb frowned at his sister, who pressed her lips together and sat back on the chair.

'As long as he's fine.'

"I will meet up with Michael. See you later," Kaleb said right before disappearing, leaving Alice alone.

Meanwhile, Michael was lying in his king-sized bed, calmly reading through the new notifications he'd received over the last few weeks.

Many things happened in the last few weeks. The Basic Sacred Knight Temple had been completed – a little bit later than expected due to certain complications – and the first batch of Blessed Squires was promoted to Holy Knights. A total of 10 Blessed Squires were promoted to Holy Knights, while two Starless Summons received enlightenment after training tirelessly in the Basic Sacred Knight Temple for several days. They were promoted straightaway to 2-Star Holy Knights without the need to become Blessed Squires first.

That was very intriguing as the news motivated hundreds of Starless Summons to train with the Immortal Knight in the Sacred Knight Temple. The small army of Blessed Squires expanded as well. By now Michael had 550 Blessed Squires and 12 Holy Knights under his command, and their numbers would increase even faster in the future. Once the Immortal Knight adapted to his newly acquired powers, and the Starless Summons were more comfortable with the Sacred Knight Temple, Michael would have a surplus of Blessed Squires and Holy Knights.

That was great, thought it posed one big disadvantage. More than half of Michael's army consisted of Blessed Squires and Holy Knights, resulting in a lack of versatility. Only having Blessed Squires and Holy Knights in his army was certainly not the best. Holy Knights were trained in different Swordstyles and Spearmanship, and they could move nimbly through the surroundings while wearing hardened leather armor sets, but they had various disadvantages.

Holy Knights weren't Archers, Healers, or Mages. They were not Assassins either. Even though the Holy Knights could use their Holy Power to create an aura that blocked pain and healed wounds to a certain degree, there were several limitations.

Fortunately, the Summoning Gate provided an influx of 11 Summons every single day. Since two and a half months passed in the Origin Expanse, Michael summoned 770 daily summons with the lowest ranked being 1-Star Farmers, and the highest ranked being two 2-Star Elemental Mages.

Michael couldn't grumble about the development of his territory either. His subjects went out to hunt every single day and they brought back a wide variety of monster corpses. They were dissected near-perfectly with Michael's Extraction and their loot was collected. Instead of using the Summoning Scrolls and Summoning Scroll Fragments immediately, the young Lord opted to store them for the time being. He hoped to procure another Legendary Scroll soon.

The Elemental Empress' cave slowly transformed into a proper home for Elementals. She created close to a hundred Lesser Elemental Cores and was about to create her first Noble Elemental in Michael's territory. That attracted Michael's interest. Unfortunately, he had no time to spend several weeks watching Zeroa creating Elemental Cores.

lightsnovel Michael did not have that much time to spend with anyone since the vast majority of his days were dedicated to refining his body, mind, and War Rune. That was a little bit sad for Michael and his subjects, but the results were amazing. Sacred Rectification and Caesurium Menta reached perfection in the 2nd Stage. He even reached the Enlightened mastery of Leviathan Diffusion, leaving only perfect mastery to topple it.

In merely two and a half months, Michael achieved something others could only dream about achieving within a few years. That was how valuable the knowledge and understanding Michael obtained from the Wisp of Knowledge truly was. His energy circulation speed was on an entirely different level than before and Michael could now naturally infuse energy into his movements. This further increased his strength, nimbleness, and reaction speed.lightsnovel

The energy circulation speed and energy weaving expertise would certainly help him a lot in the future.

However, the most intriguing aspect was that Michael's War Rune reached the Late rank. In fact, his War Rune was about to reach the Peak of the 2nd Tier. He was really close to reaching peak refinement, but there was only one downside. He had used up all of his resources ...resources worth close to 10 trillion dollars.

Michael didn't really like thinking about the fortune he'd burned through within two and a half months because the energy consumption was way too shocking, but he had to acknowledge that refining his mind, body, and especially War Rune would consume a lot more resources in the future.

It was possible to rely on the surrounding energy, energy shares, and energy influx to increase his strength slowly, but if he wanted to grow stronger rapidly, Energy Stones, Nutrition Serums, and a wide variety of other highly valuable resources would be the only feasible way – other than massacring hundreds of thousands of enemies in the Origin Expanse.

"I should be fine for the Flag War. Killing a bunch of them should reward me with some merits. It should be possible to convert them into funds, or resources. Ah...I still have the Mythic Scrolls as well... And the Tier-4 and Tier-5 Artifacts of those war criminals..." Michael mumbled to himself.

He got up from the bed and sent a message to Kraft Viton and Alice Zenovia without a second thought. Over the last few weeks, Michael had to pay attention to the complaints of his people way too often. They were displeased by the favoritism he displayed for the military section and a few even told him that he shouldn't neglect them for too long.

It was good to hear his people complain because that meant they weren't afraid of being reprimanded by him. They didn't fear approaching him directly. Instead, they thought of him as a sensible enough person who would listen to their requests and demands. Michael was not certain if he was walking down the perfect path to manage and lead his territory, but he was quite satisfied with how things were going right now.

Listening to his subjects' nagging motivated Michael to get moving. It was odd.

[Michael Fang: Hello Kraft Viton. First of all, I want to thank you for increasing my share of the Agriculture Project's profits. I observed a large transaction on my Bartholomew Account. It made me very happy. I'm glad that the Agriculture Project is prospering. With that in mind, I procured a handful of Agriculture-type Blueprints(several thousand) to hand over to you. Other than that, there also are a bunch of expensive Artifacts I want to sell to the Bartholomew Corporation. I hope we can meet up before the departure to the dimensional portal because I have a huge list of items and materials I need for my territory. If possible, I would appreciate to send the materials and items to the Origin Expanse before I have to enter the dimensional portal. Otherwise, I will get beheaded by my own people for not keeping my promise.]

Michael joked a little bit at the end of the message he sent Kraft Viton. However, there was also a trace of truth in his comment. He needed the materials and items soon, otherwise, his people would start rebelling, calling him a liar. It wouldn't end with his head rolling over the ground, but Michael didn't want to lose his subjects' trust.

Hoping things wouldn't turn that bad, he opened Alice's chat to send her a message.

[Michael Fang: Hello Alice. Nice meeting you again. To give you a little report, I reached the bottleneck of my body and mind refinement techniques. I've also advanced to the Later rank of the 2nd Tier. I'm very close to the Peak though. Unfortunately, I used up all of the resources before I could reach the Peak. I will probably advance to the Peak rank in the dimensional portal. But that's fine as well.

- Either way, I want to trade a bunch of Mythic Scrolls with you before I have to depart to the dimensional portal. If that's possible, and you're still engrossed in the Mythic Scrolls, that is.]

Michael didn't waste any time talking about his progress in detail. He shared enough information with Alice and Kraft Viton to inform them about the most important things and keep them updated.

Thereafter, Michael came back to the Origin Expanse to empty the warehouses where all unused monster parts and the blueprint duplicates were stored. He returned and met up with Kaleb.

"How about you tell me about the happenings of the last few weeks while we walk around for errands?" Michael asked, causing Kaleb to frown a little. Then he recalled how hard he worked in the last few weeks and nodded his head.

"Hmm, okay. It's about time that I rest a little bit. Some gossiping won't hurt," Kaleb chuckled,

"But let me warn you. A lot happened in the last few weeks. Loads of interesting things!"

Chapter 460 Errand Boys

Michael quickly found out that it was a good idea to allow Kaleb to accompany him on his short journey through Piloq.

Kaleb told him a lot about the happenings of the last few weeks.

"Did you know that Frederik messaged me only because you weren't available? This little jerk picked me as a substitute to cry his heart out," Kaleb complained, though he smiled, "At least, Frederik is finally back on his feet. He recuperated well and the healer left. Jacqueline still has a hard time getting close to Frederik, but that is mostly because Frederik is trying to get back to his peak state. I am not sure what he is going to do going forward, but he hasn't given up on himself just yet. Maybe the thought of getting stronger for his beloved – his father and Jacqueline – pushes him to keep moving. Maybe that little jerk is not as bad or hopeless as I first thought."

Michael observed Kaleb as he talked freely about Frederik. There was no need for Kaleb to act overly polite or force himself to behave like a noble in front of Michael. He could be himself.

"His temper is a bit problematic, but Frederik is a good guy. Jacqueline as well. Maybe, if I lecture them a little bit more, both can turn into decent human beings," Michael said half-jokingly.

"True that. But that might not even be necessary if they can overcome this ordeal. IF they overcome it that is. My sister said that it won't be easy. The Elders of the Orlando family garnered more influence across their extended relatives and family tree and they're pressuring Karek and Jacqueline to terminate

the engagement with Frederik. Sis is not sure how much time they received until it escalates," Kaleb sighed deeply.

The politics, scheming, and two-faced behavior of most nobles were truly the worst. As long as you were valuable you would be used as a chess piece. Either you would be married to some other family to strengthen your relationship and increase your influence, or you would be married to someone with a similar Soultrait – or a Soultrait that could strengthen your Soultrait. If the latter was the case, the engagement would proceed quickly after the age of 20 and you would be told to procreate and give birth to heirs as quickly as possible. After evolving to Higher Lifeforms at the 4th Tier, procreating was a lot more difficult and time-consuming, after all.

It was truly troublesome.

"Putting aside Frederik's troubles, what else happened over the last few weeks? The Investigator must have arrived to interrogate the war criminals. Did he find out something useful, or were the Dark Heavens' members not as well informed as we were hoping for?" Michael asked, recalling the grand opportunity he had lost because he told the War Priestess and the Chieftain about the memories of the war criminals – and that the memories were imprinted on his mind. He still regretted having shared that. Unfortunately, he couldn't take his words back anymore.

"Oh, that? The Investigator arrived a week after you departed. He spent ten days investigating the Dark Heavens members and came back with good and bad news. The Investigator retrieved various information about incidents of the past. According to his investigation, more than 200 incidents where Awakened either went missing or were found dead can be led back to Dark Heavens. That included the incident revolving around the death of Zeke's sister. Zeke and Quinn are going crazy right now. They want to eliminate Dark Heavens, but neither of them is strong enough – and nobody knows where the headquarters is located either. That being said, two potential locations of their branches have been retrieved. Unfortunately, the Investigator cannot be certain whether it is a trap or not. He is suspicious about how easily he retrieved those pieces of information from the Dark Heavens members. Usually, it would be much harder."

"A trap...in a trap? So not only hijacking Tritaenus was a trap, but maybe also easily letting them assume that they captured these Dark Heavens members was a devious trick? Is it really feasible for Dark Heavens to sacrifice so many high-ranked members?" Michael asked.

"Sis thinks that there were no high-ranked Dark Heavens Members involved in these incidents. The highest ranked members were probably the members of the suicide squad you've interrogated," Kaleb explained, which resulted in Michael slowing down in his steps.

"Higher Lifeforms are ordinary members? That seems extravagant...and dangerous," Michael mumbled as they reached Kraft Viton's room.

Kaleb didn't know where they'd been heading, but upon seeing Mr. Viton open the door, his countenance changed quickly. His eyes widened and he paid the old legend his respect.

Both Kraft Viton and Michael stared at Kaleb with a subtle smile.

"I didn't expect you to bring your friend," Kraft Viton pointed out.

"Is that a problem? I didn't really think much about it but the Bartholomew Corporation might be bothered if our partnership is exposed." Michael replied. He merely wanted to talk to Kaleb to be able to speak with someone about the events of the last few weeks and didn't think much about the trades he was going to make while doing so.

"If you trust him it's fine. You are getting exposed as our partner. The Bartholomew Corporation is not shy of revealing our partners – as long as they're willing to step out into the open, of course," Kraft Viton added, giving him a meaningful expression.

Michael looked at Kaleb and shrugged, "It's fine. Kaleb probably knows already."

"Knows what?" Kaleb asked.

"That I am a small partner of the Bartholomew Corporation's Agriculture Project," Michael answered lightly, only for Kraft Viton to intervene.

"A small partner doesn't own a 21% share of the Agriculture Project's profit."

"You are a partner of the Bartholomew Corporation? Was I asleep when you told me that...or am I missing something?" Kaleb asked, stupefied.

'Alice didn't tell him? I expected her to tell Kaleb everything. That's...a lot better than I expected.'

"Yeah, either way..." Michael turned to Kraft Viton and retrieved all the blueprints and Artifacts he'd collected and Extracted over the last few weeks. The piles of blueprints filled the room entirely, departing little space for the three Awakened to stand comfortably.

Kraft Viton released his energy with a wave of his arms and collected everything in one go. Michael then held out a spatial bracelet.

"Monster parts of roughly 10,000 Tier-1 and 1,500 Tier-2 Monsters are stored inside, and...here is the list of items I need to calm down my lovely subjects," Michael said lightly. Now it was him who grinned with a smug expression on his face as he retrieved a small book filled with several pages of materials and goods he needed.

"You can deduct as much as you need from my bank account. I don't really understand how much I have, either way."

"In the worst case, I'll deduct some from your future profits. After helping us find out about the Seed of Demonic Breed, the head of the Bartholomew Corporation decided to give you some more leeway than others, either way. Of course, only in the legal range. We won't break the laws for you," Kraft Viton remarked, causing Michael to smile.

"I would never request you to break the laws for me."

While Michael and Kraft Viton discussed their future deals and the value of certain goods Michael had requested, Kaleb's eyes flicked from the old man to Michael. They never stopped jumping from one of them to the next, but his expression worsened the more he heard.

'Is Michael really only a few months older? How can he deal so easily with Kraft Viton, and how did he become a small – no, a major – partner of a large-scale project such as the Agriculture Project? Wasn't that a Tier-5 Artifact earlier as well? Thousands of Blueprints...all of them looking rare and valuable... and hundreds of Artifacts. Who the hell are you, Michael? Are you really the same youth from the Golden Sun Province?'

No matter how Kaleb looked at it, it was obvious that Michael had grown a lot. From dealing with the Barbaric Couple and participating in the Saphirelake Military Academy's exam to dealing with High Nobles, Supreme Families, and finally helping old powerhouses in Interrogating members of dark organizations and becoming a major partner of a large-scale project that could topple the power balance in the Origin Expanse, and the financial situation for the entirety of mankind.

On the other hand Kaleb did...what exactly? He manifested a powerful Soultrait and summoned a Mythical Creature as his first Summons. He expanded his territory and focused on becoming stronger. But...all of that was only possible because of his family's support. Without the Zenovia family's support, Kaleb wouldn't have been able to achieve half of everything he did. His territory wouldn't have expanded nearly as much, and without the Inheritance Technique, special tutelage revolving around Frozen Nova, and resources such as Apex Nutrition Serums and Inferior Energy Stones, Kaleb would be...a nobody.

Kaleb was happy for Michael. Michael had worked harder than everyone else. He deserved to grow rapidly and become well-known all over the human race's territory. But that didn't mean Kaleb could accept that Michael surpassed him in every possible aspect. He was glad that Michael was great, yet he didn't want to see himself becoming left behind so easily.

It felt like Michael didn't even consider him a rival...as if he was in a one-sided rivalry with Michael. Michael treated him nicely. He was the best friend Kaleb could have wished for.

But that was not enough.

'I need to get stronger.' Kaleb realized once again.

'I need to use the Flag War to bridge the huge gap between us...otherwise...'