

Supreme Lord 461

Chapter 461 Aethyr

Michael finished his trade with Kraft Viton, while Kaleb was deep in thought.

"You will get everything before the departure to the dimension portal," Kraft Viton said before sending the two youths away.

Michael and Kaleb left the office and made their way back to Alice.

"Did something else happen while I was away, or was that everything important you told me?" Michael asked Kaleb.

"Something else? Well. If you didn't know that yet, the Sacred Desert is in danger."

"In danger?" Michael inquired.

"Apparently, many Lords encountered Undead forces in the Sacred Desert. The Undead appeared out of nowhere in astronomical numbers, and have already exterminated several human territories. Other than human territories, the Undead must have obliterated dozens of enemy territories as well. Their strength and numbers increase as the plague of Undead continues to spread. It's...kinda difficult to tell what is going to happen now," Kaleb explained to his friend.

'Undead?' Michael frowned deeply, a seed of uncertainty blossoming in his heart. 'Are the Undead related to Danny's death? Is that possible?'

Michael was not really sure, but the Undead of the Sacred Desert made him feel things. Something was definitely wrong with them.

Unfortunately, there was nothing Michael could do about the Undead of the Sacred Desert.

The only thing he could do was to focus on the Interdimensional Flag War. There was not much of a choice in that regard since he had to stay alive a little longer to find out more about the Sacred Desert,

Danny's death and the role some higher ups of High Society played – and maybe how the Undead were involved in his death.

Strength was what Michael needed the most to achieve each of these points. Therefore, he had to utilize the Flag War!

The youths talked a lot about the Sacred Desert and its issues until they reached Alice's office. Alice was already waiting for them, but she was surprised to see Kaleb accompanying Michael.

"Hey Alice. I hope you're going to give me a nice deal!" Michael greeted her lightly, "The Mythic Scrolls are already waiting for you."

"Before we begin discussing our little trade, I'm curious about something," Alice said.

"Did you really use up all the resources that were given to you? How did you do that? Leviathan Diffusion is rather new so your mastery shouldn't be too high yet. Its absorption rate of purified energy is not that high either. Did you mix two techniques to increase the absorption rate of another technique with Leviathan Diffusion's energy circulation?"

"I am just a Glutton. There is no need to think too much about it. I got the knack of Leviathan Diffusion quite fast as well."

"But that was enough to bring..." Alice glanced over to Kaleb and shook her head, "Forget it."

"So you are about to reach the Peak of Tier-2. That should be fine with your combat prowess and the Aethyr Artifact."

"Aethyr Artifact?" Michael inquired but Alice just smiled.

"Let's finish the trade first. How many Original Scrolls do you want in exchange for one Mythic Scroll? You know that you can ask for specific Scrolls as well. Given the rarity of Mythic Scrolls, you can get your hands on Named Summoning Scrolls quite easily as well," Alice explained, providing Michael a chance to pick Named Summoning Scrolls other than Ordinary Summoning Scrolls.

Michael had already thought about that. However, he initially thought to wait a little longer before switching from trading Mythic Scrolls for Ordinary Scrolls to demanding Named Scrolls.

"I know that the Zenovia family has several Adventurer teams hunting for them. You have great hunting grounds that reward a high number of Ordinary Scrolls. That's why the inflated price due to the limited purchase ability of Ordinary Scrolls doesn't really apply to the members of the Zenovia family," Michael said, clearing his throat to give his idea a second thought before he added, "I hope you can give me 20,000 Ordinary Scrolls and 100 Named Scrolls of my choice in exchange for a Mythic Scroll."

Alice raised an eyebrow, "15,000 Ordinary Summoning Scrolls and 50 Named Scrolls at most!"

Michael smiled in response and raised his hand to shake Alice's. "That's perfect! You obtained a deal right there."

Instead of trying to play around with Alice by negotiating, Michael accepted the trade right away. His offer had been a little high with the Named Scrolls in addition, but he obtained exactly what he wanted – if not more – through Alice's counteroffer.

"15,000 Ordinary Scrolls and 50 Named Scrolls of my choice for every Mythic Scroll I'm giving you or a member of the Zenovia family. Is that fine? If it is, let's proceed to prepare a proper formal contract, please," Michael uttered with a smile on his lips.

Alice expected some more resistance from Michael. She didn't think that he would accept her counteroffer just like that.

Named Scrolls were quite hard to procure but Ordinary Scrolls were basically procured for free for the Zenovia family.

'Is it because he inquired for specific Named Scrolls? Since he can decide what 1-Star Summon he wants, he can develop his territory with more precision. For someone who lacks funds, it might actually be better to trade his Mythic Scrolls or Named Scrolls of his choice.' Alice thought, preparing the contract right away.

She quickly signed the contract once she was done drafting and setting it up. Alice handed Michael the contract with a flick of her wrist. He read through it and was satisfied with the clauses. There was nothing that could be used against him. The contract was very simple and transparent. Michael signed it without hesitation.

Once both parties signed the contract, Alice put the Zenovia family's seal on it before making a copy with a magical device. She handed the copy to Michael while keeping the original.

"Do you want to move to the next subject right away? How about I introduce you to the Aethyr Artifa—" Alice stopped her sentence mid-way as she watched Michael gather 10 Mythic Scrolls in one go.

"Before that, I would love to finish my business with the Mythic Scrolls first. That's 150,000 Ordinary Scrolls, and 500 Named Scrolls. I need 200 Archers, 50 Instructors for Archery and Spearmanship. Assassination, Scouting, and Riding. If you have any Instructors for Blacksmithing, Alchemy, and Enchanting I'm all in. The remaining Named Scrolls should be focused on Agriculture. A batch of 10 Lesser Tamers would be great as well."

Michael smiled at Alice, his expression nonchalant as he shared an exhaustive list of what he wanted with Alice. He thought about retrieving 52 Mythic Scrolls in one go, but he figured that he wouldn't procure enough Fragments to create a Legendary Scroll. Thus, it was not worth retrieving all Mythic Scrolls since it would attract too much attention. Michael didn't need 2500 Named Scrolls right now either way, let alone 780,000 Ordinary Scrolls.

It was better to wait until after the Flag War to trade the Mythic Scrolls when he was in need of more specific Named Scrolls since he could choose whatever Named Summoning Scroll he desired.

"That...Well, alright." Alice said, staring at the Mythic Scrolls for a moment.

"I will get your Summoning Scrolls later," She added, "Are you ready for your gift at last?"

"Gift?" Michael was not sure why he would be given a gift.

"To be more accurate, it's the reward you were supposed to get a while ago. The reward for helping interrogate the war criminals and revealing their tactics. Without your help many more would have died. Maybe, we would have lost the Tritaenus and the secret information stored in its network forever.

"You might not realize how valuable your help was. That was also why it was much harder to find an appropriate reward for you!"

Alice twirled the paperweight on her desk with her hand as she continued, "Of course, there were some higher-ups who were not really in favor of giving you something valuable. They'd been hoping to secure the Aethyr Artifact for their families. Fortunately, the War Priestess and the Chieftain were adamant of not letting that happen. It is only thanks to them that you can receive 'this'!"

As her last words reached Michael, Alice retrieved something from her War Rune.

It was... a mass of silver liquid...

"That...thing is the Aethyr Artifact?" Kaleb inquired instead of Michael.

He was not sure whether his sister was joking, or not, but given Alice's usual demeanor and her overly serious expression the silver mass must be something good...probably?

"We didn't want to give you some sort of martial arts technique since you wouldn't be able to reach a high enough mastery until the start of the Interdimensional Flag War. That is where the Aethyr Artifact comes into play. It's an alloy created from a trace of Aether. The Aether content is about 0.001% within the alloy, but it has high compatibility with the other materials used to create the alloy," Alice explained.

"You can use it just like Aether even though it is countless times weaker than pure Aether. Nonetheless, it is extraordinary. Aethyr is a Unique Artifact that can be upgraded up to Tier-3. In fact, most Descendants would still use it even after becoming a Higher Lifeform since the Aethyr Artifact can change into 28 different types of weapons."

Alice noticed that Michael stared at the silver mass intensely. She thought that he must be wondering what Aether was.

"I guess you don't know what Aether is since it's rare to find and retrieve. Only a few humans were ever able to gather a few grams of Aether. So Aether is—"

"I know what Aether is," Michael intervened. "It's amazing! I didn't even know that you could create an alloy with bits of Aether to substitute the required volume to form Armaments with other raw materials. Even though Aether's power and wide variety of uses were downgraded a lot, I love it!"

The Aethyr Artifact was ideal for Michael. Only pure Aether would be better. After all, Michael was somewhat adept with all weapons thanks to the Memory Orbs of more than 100 Awakened he'd digested.

He loved it!

Chapter 462 Insert

The silver mass wiggled as Michael touched it. A white tendril emerged from his War Rune. It shot straight into the wiggling silver mass, coiled around it and encased it into a cocoon.

Michael's eyes narrowed because he had never ordered the War Rune to do this, but he didn't use his will to stop the tendrils. Instead, he watched in rapt attention as the tendril as it pulled the cocoon inside the War Rune.

His War Rune began to shimmer brightly and before Michael knew a silver droplet coalesced in the bottom of his War Rune.

"Great. Another change in my War Rune," Michael murmured quietly. He eyed the Mark of Fate for a second before he turned his attention away.

"The Aethyr Artifact doesn't enhance me externally. It doesn't feel like an Artifact either."

Instead of calling it an Artifact, Michael decided to refer to it as just that; Aethyr. He sensed a faint connection to Aethyr. It was stronger than the link he had to the Soultrait Shard of Maria's Archangel's Grace.

Michael tried using Archangel's Grace once but it didn't work. According to Kaleb, that was because he had to be near Maria so that her presence could charge the Soultrait Shard that had invaded his War Rune. She could also charge it actively, but Michael couldn't bother asking Maria at this point. They hadn't met since the incident and Michael was not about to rush to her to ask her to fuel the Soultrait Shard before disappearing once again.

"It's not a natural Artifact so it won't enhance you externally," Alice explained, "Either way. There are a few things you have to understand. First, you have to strengthen your link with the Aethyr Artifact to use all of its forms. You can order the Aethyr Artifact to change its shape on command. The stronger your connection to the Aethyr Artifact the faster you can change forms and summon it in your hand. To adjust the shape of the 28 weapons you can form with it, you need a high understanding of those weapons. That means you will either have to learn to wield all the weapons until you reach the Intermediate mastery, or you have to focus on a few forms. From what I can tell, you should be able to use the Bow, Longsword, and Spear forms quite easily. I will teach you in the next few days and continue to do so until the Interdimensional Flag War starts so that you can use the Aethyr Artifact well enough in fights. Don't worry, I'm good with many weapons!"

Michael had already closed his eyes while listening to Alice. He sensed the silver mass inside his War Rune. It was attached to the pillar of light, yet it was somewhat distant. It revolved around the Sphere of Light, but was far enough to avoid affecting the Sphere.

There was something odd about the Aethyr Artifact. It was not compressed into its mass. Instead, silvery tentacles tried to spread out to the pillar of light, the Sphere of Light, and...SoulStar Fragments.

None of the silver tentacles could reach either because they were repelled, but Michael's curiosity was piqued.

'I understand the pillar of light. Aether is sentient according to the Immortal Knight. Therefore it wants to grow stronger at all times to strengthen its forms and attain more intelligence. Increasing its Tier by devouring origin energy makes that happen. But...why is Aethyr drawn to the Sphere of Light and the SoulStar Fragments? Or is the trace of Aether within Aethyr drawn to both?'

Michael wished to do a few experiments with Aethyr because it felt like his SoulStar Fragments and the existence of the Sphere of Light could change something about Aethyr – maybe even enhance it somehow.

That would be amazing.

Unfortunately, Alice wouldn't allow him to leave just like that.

He kept his eyes closed and concentrated on the silver mass. Once his mind was fully focused on the silver mass, he manifested the Aethyr in his right hand.

"Sword." Michael mumbled, and the silver mass morphed into the shape of a silver longsword – precisely a replica of Tigerfang.

"Spear."

The longsword changed to a spear that looked just like Wyverntooth.

"Bow."

Now the spear changed to Zark's replica.

"It's using my memories and imagination to change its form," Michael theorized.

"War Axe," He murmured and Aethyr shaped itself into a large two-headed axe – one of the weapons Immortal Knight wished him to test out.

"Mace."

"Saber."

"Dagger."

"Whip."

"Scythe."

Michael experimented with Aethyr a little bit. He first changed its form using verbal commands. The verbal commands triggered Michael's memories to create an image of the weapon he wished Aethyr to change to.

Aethyr changed between the forms rather quickly. He didn't even give it exact commands to do so. A simple word to provok his memories and imagination was more than enough. Once Michael imagined a new form for Aethyr to assume it would change. The switch in forms was much faster than replacing the Wyverntooth Spear with Zark mid-battle manually– and it could go even faster than that once his connection with Aethyr improved. Michael was certain to take his enemies by surprise with Aethyr. It was a great weapon that ought to give him an edge in battle as long as he could wield it with high proficiency.

'Mental commands should also work.' He thought right before starting to change Aethyr's form with mental commands.

The response rate was a little bit slower but Michael was certain that this would improve as he got more accustomed to the act.

"Are you proficient with that many weapons? I didn't expect that," Alice revealed honestly.

"I got a good Summon, who's teaching me how to fight without Soultraits. He told me to practice with a wide variety of weapons to find out what's the best for me. That didn't work too well since most weapons are quite suitable as far as I can tell," Michael said, swinging the scythe around his body.

He rotated it smoothly and changed Aethyr's form into a dagger right before hitting Kaleb. Aethyr then turned into a longsword that nearly pricked Kaleb.

"Don't play around when someone else is around. Especially if that someone is me!" Kaleb protested.

"Well, you guys can persist to play. I will get Michael's Summoning Scrolls," Alice uttered all of a sudden, "She then turned to Michael and disclosed a frosty expression, "After that you will have some fun training with me until you break down!"

"...Yay..." Michael mumbled, summoning the Runic Gate before he informed, "I will be in the Origin Expanse for an hour or so. There is something I have to do before someone beats me up with lots of love. What a wonderful way to spend the days left before the Interdimensional Flag War. Beaten until I'm unrecognizable..."

Michael disappeared inside the Runic Gate before Alice, or Kaleb could say something. The siblings looked at each other, and Kaleb couldn't contain himself anymore.

"You know. Sometimes, I feel like Michael is doing much better than me. You look somewhat human with Michael around."

"Somewhat?" Alice raised an eyebrow, only to see Kaleb nod.

"Yup."

"Cheeky brat."

Alice ruffled her brother's hair and manifested her Runic Gate as well. She left to collect Michael's Summoning Scrolls, leaving Kaleb alone for the next hour.

There was one particular thing Michael had wished to do before the Interdimensional Flag War started. He wanted to fuse Insert with his War Rune.

Michael felt that Insert was a powerful Soultrait with extremely high compatibility with Extraction. The future potential of Insert was nothing to scoff at. At least, that was what Michael sensed.

Combining Insert with Extraction should allow him to insert tendrils of Extraction inside other beings without the need to injure them. That should help him drain their life force and origin energy from within without them realizing what was going on at first. Simultaneously, Michael felt like experimenting with Insert and Extraction might help him quite a lot. He had always been curious about Unique Racial abilities and Innate abilities. If he could extract them, shouldn't it be possible to Insert them into others?

Would Inserting Unique Racial Abilities change their DNA, would their DNA collapse, or would the Unique Racial Abilities be repelled? Was it possible to insert Unique Racial Abilities into others, in the first place? Michael had no idea, but he could find out.

In one way or another, Insert and Extraction were a great combination. Furthermore, thinking about the wide variety of Insert's uses, Michael felt that it should be possible to use Insert to insert the Power of Enhancement onto others. It may only be temporary but it was definitely worth fusing with Insert.

With that in mind, Michael retrieved the emerald box. He opened it and removed the Soultrait Symbol of Insert. Then he created the 10th socket in the Sphere of Light using 3,000 SoulStar Fragments before allowing the white tendrils of his War Rune to devour Insert.

The Symbol of Insert appeared in the Sphere of Light where it linked to the 10th socket.

Michael expected it to stay in the outer ring of the Sphere of Light, but Insert's position changed almost instantaneously. The socket was dragged through the Sphere of Light until it began to revolve around Extraction. A faint link was created between the Symbol of Extraction and Insert thereafter.

It was very very faint, but Michael could tell that it was the beginning of something big. He then spent 3,000 SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Insert from 1-Star to 5-Star right away.

The link between Extraction and Insert grew stronger as Insert's star rating increased.

Michael licked his dry lips and a bright smile blossomed on his face as the stream of information flooded his mind.

'That...is very interesting!'

Chapter 463 Beaten

In a small, cobbled arena with dim lighting, Michael faced Alice head-on. Alice wore a set of simple combat clothing. It was dark and highlighted her shape and curves perfectly. However, Michael had no time to stare at her mesmerizing figure. He was too concerned about the deadly weapon that rested in her hands. It was Alice's Wintertusk Saber, a Tier-5 Artifact – a thin saber – embedded with a sapphire gemstone in the handle.

The sapphire gemstone decreased the consumption of ice elemental spells and increased the coherence of ice spells cast on the Wintertusk Saber.

Michael, on the other hand, wore the Spirit Armor Set, and the Legendary Ring Artifact while wielding Aethyr. He stepped through the arena trying to locate a flaw in Alice's regular stance. However, there was none. It was almost like Alice was ready to face her enemies at all times.

Two days passed since Michael procured Aethyr and many things changed. First of all, Michael experimented a little bit with Insert, and he learned how to use the Soultrait with his other Soultraits. Thereafter, Michael used some SoulStar Fragments to see how it would affect Aethyr. The result was surprisingly good.

His connection to Aethyr stabilized and it grew firmer. At the same time, Aethyr seemed to grow more powerful. The silver droplet on Michael's War Rune expanded a tad and faint lines formed around it, creating various symbols of tools and weapons. Michael learned instinctively that he could transform Aethyr into more than 28 weapon forms.

He kicked the ground to dash in Alice's direction. Aethyr changed into a pole and swung against her head. Alice inched closer and blocked the attack to her head by lifting Wintertusk Saber. The tip of her saber was just about to block Michael's attack when the quarterstaff morphed into a dagger. Michael didn't lose any momentum as the dagger whizzed past Alice's saber. He transformed the dagger into a spear and thrust forward, using the opening his feint created.

Alice lowered her body, and one of her legs lunged out to pull Michael's feet away, while her saber flashed through the air. The saber's pommel collided with the flat side of Aethyr Spear and pushed it aside. Meanwhile, her left foot reached Michael's right foot and hooked it to drag him down. But right before Alice was about to do so, Michael moved closer to Alice. The spear in Michael's hands turned back into a dagger. Entering close combat against Alice may not be the best idea due to her extremely high martial skills, but she couldn't use the length of the Wintertusk Saber to her advantage if her opponent was too close.

Wanting to utilize that to his advantage, Michael pushed forward as fast as he could without the use of his Soultraits. He weaved origin energy into every movement and sped up just enough to arrive in front of Alice. The dagger in his hands lunged out, ready to draw blood. Unfortunately, Alice wasn't a fan of injuries. She didn't even think of giving her students a sense of fulfillment. On the contrary, Alice desired to observe Michael's expressions up close as he realized in desperation that he had no chance to reach her.

Alice had already pulled her left leg back when Michael pushed forward. Her left leg lifted, and she kicked out with great force. But instead of hitting Michael's side as she intended to, Alice noticed with slight surprise that Michael had already reacted to her attack. He forcefully terminated his attack to transform Aethyr Dagger into a small shield right before Alice's kick impacted.

Her attack crashed heavily into the Aethyr Shield. The attack was strong enough to push Michael back and make him feel like he lost his right arm. His right arm was numb and he doubted that this sensation would go away quickly. To his misfortune, Alice didn't seem hurt. If anything she was surprised – a tiny little bit.

She expected Michael to respond a little slower, but that was a good thing. Alice trained Michael to strengthen his martial skills and unravel the hidden potential of his body. She hoped that he would grow much stronger, faster, and more responsive to her attacks in the next few days. That way, she could be certain that Michael would survive the Interdimensional Flag War.

Michael was not sure why she worried so much about him, and why she didn't focus on training Kaleb right now. In his opinion, Kaleb was in far more danger – except for the fact that Kaleb was in a team of ten Lords, and Michael was given a spot as a variable. Maybe, Alice held Kaleb in higher regard because she knew that he could survive or escape if the fight ended in a certain loss. Meanwhile, Michael wouldn't...or so Alice must be thinking.

At least, that was what Michael guessed.

After training with Alice for a while now, Michael learned that Alice's experience and martial skills were exceptional. Not that he did not know it before but fighting her head-on made him realize just why she was looked up to by many. Even by restraining her strength to the Peak of the 2nd Tier, Alice could easily deal with Michael. Of course, Alice's refined body, and heightened senses couldn't be restrained and dulled that easily, but the biggest reason for her superior combat prowess was her exceptional reaction speed and the way she fought instinctively. It felt like centuries of combat experience had been engraved into Alice.

As for her combat techniques, they were exceptional as well. She could weave origin energy perfectly into her body to unleash her hidden potential and overwhelm Michael.

Meanwhile, Michael struggled to use his creativity against Alice. The passive empowerment Michael received from some of his Soultraits was exceptional, especially his eyesight, but it felt like his body was always a quarter of a second too late. His mind could barely come up with a way to counter Alice's bombardment of attacks when Alice initiated a new attack. His eyes saw everything early enough but both his mind and body were still a tad too slow to react in time. And that was the case even though he'd reached the perfect state for the second stage of his body refinement technique and mind refinement technique.

Alice's saber sliced through the air with great velocity. Michael could barely jump back to protect his neck. He changed Aethyr's form into a pole once again and smashed it against Alice's leg, which was about to kick against the side of his head.

Aethyr changed into a longsword right before Alice's kick impacted. Michael grasped Aethyr's handle with two hands, but the force of Alice's attack was too strong. His hands went numb and Aethyr fell out of his hands. A good thing with Aethyr was that he could recall it at all times. Therefore, Aethyr returned back to his War Rune on command, giving Michael the means to summon it again.

Michael looked at Alice just to see that her combat suit had been scratched. The longsword formed by Aethyr was razor sharp. It could easily cut through Tier-2 and even Tier-3 monsters. However, Michael hadn't used the longsword to attack. Instead, he'd been hoping to cut Alice by utilizing her momentum and the force she'd applied to the kick.

That didn't work as well as intended.

Alice's clothes had been cut, but her leg was unscathed. There was not even a scratch. No mark at all.

'Did I grow too confident after I killed that Tier-5 war criminal? Why did I even think that I could pierce through her defenses?' Michael wondered, laughing at himself in his mind.

Killing the war criminals had hardly been difficult for Michael. If anything, the members of Dark Heavens had been served to him on a silver tray. They were no challenge at all. But Alice was on a different level altogether.

She was a Tier-5 powerhouse with extraordinarily high mastery of her Inheritance Technique. Michael didn't know much about the Zenovia family's Inheritance Technique but given that Leviathan Diffusion

was only a small snippet of its true potential, Michael figured that the Inheritance Technique was exceptional.

He was a little bit jealous but also intrigued. When was he going to create his own Inheritance technique?

Unfortunately, Michael didn't really have the time to create a customized Inheritance Technique. He was getting beaten up way too much to even think about analyzing Alice's martial arts. How could he spare time bothering about Inheritance Techniques?

His spar with Alice ended after half an hour. The only injuries sustained on Alice's side were a small tear in the fabric of her clothes...just once. Meanwhile, Michael's face was wounded black and blue. The other wounds were hidden underneath his Spirit Armor Set and his clothes.

"That's domestic violence...abuse..." Michael complained silently.

"Do you want to continue? I doubt you need a break if you can still spout nonsense," Alice joked lightly, wiping a single droplet of sweat from her forehead. Her head flicked to Kaleb, "How about you join us for a spar?"

"I'm fine, sis. I rather watch Michael getting beaten up than being the one who's beaten into a pulp," Kaleb rejected Alice's 'offer' before adding, "I already trained with my team in the last ten hours. We're slowly getting somewhere. The team composition is pretty good. Our only problem is that everyone wants to be the team leader. It doesn't make sense for some of them to be adamant about becoming the team leader but they desire the fame and honor that comes with it. Some nonsense like that."

Kaleb shrugged as if it didn't concern him, but Michael noticed that his friend wanted to become the team leader as well. It would be highly beneficial if Kaleb became the team leader of a team that killed a dozen or more Tekur. That way, the Zenovia family's honor could be upheld and possibly increased, and it was also possible that their connections to the Tritan Alliance could be strengthened.

Kaleb wanted to help his family extend their connections and procure more wealth. He wanted to give them back what he received with interest...and without the need to marry someone he didn't love.

But that was difficult.

Chapter 464 Departure

The day of departure arrived at last.

Michael never thought that he would be this happy when Alice told him that it was time to leave Piloq. But he couldn't be more wrong. It felt great to leave since that meant he could escape Alice's beating. One or two spars with Alice a day would have been great, but it was definitely not great to spar with her tens of times close to 16 hours a day— if one could call the beating he received a spar, in the first place.

"There is no need for you to be so happy. I will continue to train you until the day the Interdimensional Flag War starts. That's five more days to train you!" Alice said, the faint smile on her lips speaking volumes. She enjoyed herself. Good for her. Bad for Michael.

"Ah...Great..." Michael cursed in his heart, trying to force a happy expression on his face.

Alice understood why Michael was unhappy. He was known for using his Soultraits to overpower his enemies. Unfortunately, that wouldn't work whenever he encountered strong opponents. One fluke and he might lose his life. Alice wanted to prevent flukes by training Michael relentlessly until he could learn to evade her attacks instinctively without having to use his Soultraits.

Once he reached that level, Michael could easily evade attacks with his Soultraits utilized right before unleashing a barrage of attacks to counter and kill his enemies. Immortal Knight thought like Alice. That didn't make things easier, but it showed Michael that their approaches were indeed important. They cared about him and hoped that their merciless lessons would help him survive in the Origin Expanse and outside.

Michael thought a lot about the Origin Expanse. Unfortunately, he didn't have too much time to spend in his territory. All Michael could do was hand Opars his Legendary Ring Artifact to fill it with the Power of Energy Imprint until the Interdimensional Flag War started. Other than that, Michael received the requested materials and items from Kraft Viton a day ago. Kraft Viton brought everything and told him that he was not in debt. Just a little bit...of course...

The profits of the Agriculture Project should negate his debts soon enough. There was no need to worry.

Alice procured Michael's Summoning Scrolls even before their training session began. Michael used the Named Scrolls immediately whereas the Ordinary Scrolls were stored in the warehouse. He thought about extracting them immediately, but there was something he wanted to test out first.

Given the resources Michael had stocked in his territory, he didn't have too much to do in the Origin Expanse. He could train, refine his War Rune, and spend time with his subjects to train, hunt, or get closer to them, but his presence was not required for the next few weeks. That was good. After all, nobody had a clue how long the Flag War would last. The dimensional portal would open just once in a year for three to ten days. The exact duration was uncertain. All the Tritan Alliance knew was that some Flag Wars lasted only a few days while others lasted ten days. The participants that survived the flag war would be expelled from the dimension and brought back to the place they entered once the active duration of the portal ended.

"Don't worry. You will be at your peak when the Flag War starts," Alice said reassuringly before turning a bit more serious, "I know that you understand why I'm doing this. I hope that you can kill one Tekur to satisfy the High Nobles. Because the Zan family is still bothering some of the families and clans affiliated with them. The only reason why nobody took any severe actions against you is because you didn't kill the Zan Twins and also because of the video the Barbaric Couple shared online.

"It would disgrace the Zan's affiliates to hunt you down for what the Zan Twins did. Other than that, it is pretty good that you are Maria's Primal Amplifier. The Zan family will probably shut their mouths soon enough. That means you only have to kill one Tekur to complete your 'punishment', and everything will be back to normal...somehow..."

Alice didn't sound pleased talking about Maria, but Michael shrugged that off. He was pretty sure that the Zenovia family and Seraph family were not on good terms. Even if they were, it was not as if their relationship mattered to him.

"I will be fine, don't worry. The Zan family should wait patiently until I come to interrogate them. They understand something about my brother's death, so they should wait for me. I will come to them on my own sooner or later," Michael responded, his eyes turning ice cold. Thinking about his brother and what the Zan Twins said when they provoked him openly, Michael felt like crushing the Zan family in their entirety.

However, Michael also comprehended that the Zan clan were merely the pawns of some organization or High Nobles. They heed the commands of someone stronger than them. That someone probably had some connection to Danny's death or was aware of more information. Michael had to investigate further soon enough.

"You can think about that once you're strong enough. For now, your mission is to survive and avoid attracting too much attention from the High Society. It's not like you've already attracted more than enough unwanted attention at this point," Alice scolded him. She shook her head and gestured to him to get moving.

The day of departure had reached and they had to get inside the spaceship. The next few days would be spent in a small, but cozy spaceship. As for their destination, it was a small planet – the native planet of the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs – where the dimensional portal had manifested.

They had to return to the ginormous hill surrounding Piloq to get to the spaceship. It was a massive, sleek, and incredibly advanced vessel that appeared to be a mix between a spaceship made by humans and an ancient, intricate relic of old times. The spaceship had a circular gate-like structure at its core with shimmering, glowing symbols.

The spaceship could travel through vast distances with incredible velocity. Once the symbols etched all over the vessel were activated, it emanated an otherworldly hum, and the ring-like gate at its center would come to life, releasing a mesmerizing whirlwind of energy.

Michael had never seen a spaceship like this. He read a lot about mankind's space exploration technology due to his vast interest in space, but he had yet to find time to study everything in-depth. His lack of knowledge about spaceships manufactured by other races irked him a little bit seeing the oddly shaped spaceship, but that only fueled his motivation to research more once he had the time and focus to spend his little time on things other than the Origin Expanse, training, training, or training.

Michael and Alice were among the first to enter the spaceship. They didn't have to wait for anyone else. Instead, they used the time to start sparring. Their spars didn't even stop as more participants and powerhouses entered the spaceship. Alice ignored their existence entirely whereas Michael had to learn to endure their glares and the hushed discussions about him.

Ever since the attack on Piloq, Michael was not just another 'nobody' as before. Now he was a well-known nobody whom everyone researched to find out what made him so special. The answers they received were all the same; there was not much about Michael to find online.

His parents abandoned him after his sister disappeared. The brother was dead, and all properties of the Fang Family could be counted on one hand – one finger to be precise. It was a small apartment, nothing special.

The only special thing about Michael's Family was the fact that the name of his sister couldn't be found out. It was almost like his sister never existed. Only by digging deeper was it possible to find out that a sister existed – but her name was still unknown.

Most were not interested enough in Michael's clan to put more effort into researching his sister as well. Instead, they studied his combat prowess – something that turned out to be much harder than initially expected.

Michael ignored the people around him and the only reason their spars ended for a few minutes was to sit down when the antique spaceship was about to take off. While sitting down, Michael didn't even realize that Maria Seraph had appeared next to him. She seemed just as surprised to see Michael and looked at him with wide-open eyes.

Michael and Maria hadn't seen each other since the bombardment of Piloq. Michael had no idea what Maria had been doing, but he did not really care that much either. All he cared about was that the Mark of Fate didn't restrict him in any way. That was a pleasant surprise since it meant that Maria and the Seraph family were the only ones with issues, for now.

Maria's lips parted and she desired to say something, but no words came out of her mouth. She was not certain how to behave around Michael because she dragged him into a big mess. However, Michael didn't seem to hate her. It didn't look like he did. Seeing Michael grin at her calmed her considerably. Thus, she decided to strike up a light conversation.

"Hey, Michael. It has been a while," She greeted him and attempted to add a little tease, "Looks like your hair grew back since we met last time. You look much better now!"

It was true.

Michael was not bald anymore!!

Chapter 465 Portal

As the spaceship traversed the Lumina Stellar System, it moved gracefully, almost as if it was gliding through space. The entire vessel was imbued with a sense of mystery and wonder – something Michael wanted to study and explore. He wished to dismantle the spaceship, inspect every single piece, and put it back together. Then he would do it all over again until he got answers to all of his questions.

But there was something that obstructed him. Not only was it the fact that they were in space and would all die if he started dismantling the spaceship, or the fact that Alice distracted him by beating his ass regularly. It was more the fact that the antique spaceship seemed to harness the power of the universe itself to move through space. It was almost like the spaceship could connect distant points in space and create anchors to push itself forward in a magical and highly technological way.

It almost felt like the spaceship warped through space.

At last, the antique spaceship landed.

"So...what are you doing now? You are not really planning to run through the realm all alone, are you?" Maria asked as she removed the multitude of seatbelts around her. She glanced at Michael, waiting to hear his answer.

"I've been training alone to focus on my individual combat prowess. That's also the only reason why I'm about to reach the Peak of Tier-2. If not for that I would probably end up a nameless corpse on the battlefield before others realize that I'm missing," Michael joked lightly.

Michael spent some time talking to Maria in the antique spaceship – not that he had much free time, in the first place. However, it was quite pleasant. Maria didn't seem arrogant like other prodigious Descendants, and she was quite smart. Michael never found himself in awkward silence around Maria, which was a little odd because there were so many things they wanted to talk about...just to not talk about them.

Maria never mentioned the Mark of Fate or the fact that Michael became her Primal Amplifier. Both noticed that Maria's Soultrait Shard inside Michael was slowly getting charged and that the connection was growing stronger.

Michael tried using Archangel's Grace once and he noticed that he could heal himself rather quickly. The interesting thing was that his natural regeneration accelerated his stamina and energy recovery as well.

Even if Michael didn't want to think about his connection with Maria Seraph, he felt that the Soultrait Shard within him could be of great use.

As long as he was around Maria, the Shard would be fueled and empowered. Its effect would be stronger when he was closer to Maria, but the fuel could also be churned to use Archangel's Grace despite being far away from her – in a weakened state. Maria, on the other hand, could use her Soultrait without any restraints. If anything, the power of her Soultrait increased as her distance to Michael decreased. She didn't even have to use Heaven's Descent to amplify her Soultrait's power given that Michael was close to her.

That was exceptional. It was too good to be true. And it was the reason why Maria didn't dare to speak to Michael about the future. All she thought about when she used Heaven's Descent was to help the injured around her. Maria never expected Michael to be compatible with her Soultrait. It didn't even make sense...yet it somehow happened.

Fate brought them together.

It was bittersweet...and it would create problems in the future, mostly for Michael. That bothered Maria the most. She was the reason why Michael would be forced into the treacherous games and political alliances of High Society. It was not what Maria wanted to happen to Michael...to anyone for that matter...

Alice didn't join Michael and Maria during their breaks. She was busy dealing with the other higher-ups who'd fly to the capital of the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs where they would wait for their students to return from the Flag War. They would focus on establishing trading routes and socializing while their lovely students would fight for their survival.

This year's mission was pretty simple; destroy one Dimensional Pillar in the Flag War and strengthen the relations with the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs.

Alice was certain that she could do the latter rather easily now that she could use her relationship with Michael to her advantage. Palika Mavenham and Silvana Zentur held Michael in high regard. Since she was his teacher, their respect and attitude toward her improved significantly. The other human Awakened didn't like that, but Alice was more than pleased. She was overjoyed.

Once the participants of the Flag War got out of the antique spaceship, the scene around them surprised them quite a bit. Even the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs were left stunned. They didn't expect to see a humongous purple Runic Gate the height of a skyscraper near the antique capital.

Michael's eyes were drawn to the antique capital for a while. It was an impressive sight to behold. There weren't many skyscrapers or structures made with the help of highly advanced technology. Instead, it was a city from ancient times that hadn't been forgotten by history. It was bustling with life. The buildings were made of wood and stone.

They stood proudly in the radiance of the sun and the architectural marvel surrounding him left him speechless. The facades were weathered by time, and flowery vines had claimed ownership of some of those moss-draped structures. But that just added to the rustic appeal of the place.

Just looking at the old buildings made Michael feel many things.

"Beautiful..." Michael mumbled, taking Maria by surprise. She'd been watching the dimensional portal and its eerie resemblance to a Runic Gate.

"W-what do you mean?" She asked, fumbling around only to see that Michael was not even looking at her. He didn't even notice her standing next to him.

All Michael saw were the narrow, winding cobblestone streets that created a network through the entire city. People were going about their lives, and he observed them in fascination, their attire and how idyllic everything in the ancient capital seemed to be.

"You don't have to ignore me, you know?" Maria grumbled, glaring at Michael who finally turned back to her.

"What did you say?" He asked, his eyes gleaming with joy.

'Is he not nervous, at all? Where is this confidence coming from? Or is he just an idiot? Maybe an overconfident idiot?'

Maria studied Michael for a few seconds but it was not long before people began to gather around her. She had some alone time in the antique spaceship because everyone was assigned specific seats. Unfortunately, there was no alone time outside the spaceship. It was not that she could flee into the Origin Expanse either. Suppressing a sigh, Maria turned to her team.

Instead of consisting of only 10 members, Maria's team had a total of 25 members. Her Soultrait was powerful enough to tend to the wounds of many Awakened simultaneously. But that was not the whole reason.

Most members of Maria's loyal fan club wanted to be part of her team. They would want to enter the isolated dimension with her, either way. Therefore, the higher-ups of the Tritan Alliance made the least problematic decision; they allowed everyone who wanted to join Maria's team.

Adding the Support Soultraits of two Descendants, Maria could easily heal everyone while paying attention to their surroundings.

She had been jointly with the people around her for a long time – much longer than she wished. Maria even trained with some of them from a young age. Their families must have been hoping that training together would increase their compatibility for one of them to become Maria's Primal Amplifier once she manifested her Soultrait. Once one of the Descendants would have become her Primal Amplifier, their engagement would have been announced and they would marry the moment both turned 20 years old.

Fortunately, Maria manifested a 7-Star Soultrait, giving her some leeway. She didn't have to utilize her Inheritance Technique because her family was searching for a perfect candidate to become her Primal Amplifier. It would be best if her Primal Amplifier was the second child of a Supreme Family or a High Noble with great influence. Their families could expand their influence and power whereas their children could become the strongest couple of the century to further increase their popularity.

Little did anyone expect that Maria would use her Inheritance Technique in Piloq with a 'nobody' and in an extreme twist of fate, this said 'nobody' would turn out to be extremely compatible with Maria and Archangel's Grace.

Maria didn't want to implicate Michael for now. She researched enough about him to understand that he was already busy enough. It would be troublesome to tell Michael about certain...issues. Therefore, Maria decided to bid Michael farewell and to meet up with him once everything was over. Maybe the Interdimensional Flag War could solve some of their problems. Hopefully.

Her eyes flicked to Killian, who glared at Michael with uncontrollable fury in his eyes and she had to clench her hands into fists and summon her entire focus and control not to do anything stupid.

'Don't do anything stupid...please...'

Michael spotted that Maria left, but he didn't mind. The hateful stare locked on him disappeared the moment Maria stepped aside. Only a few pairs of eyes remained locked on him. It was a good thing that Michael didn't care about them – especially not the daggers shooting out of Killian's eyes.

It didn't take long before the purple portal began to hum loudly. Energy burst forth from the dimensional portal and it opened by manifesting a swirl of energy within the replica of the Runic Gate. The swirl expanded and turned into a purple mass that resembled the blue liquid inside Summoning Gates.

Michael was intrigued and he stepped closer to the portal.

"You seem to be in a hurry," A voice next to Michael called out.

Marie Wang and Sera Kani from the Blazing Sun team approached him.

"Did your girlfriend leave you behind?" Marie Wang asked, gently pushing a strand of crimson hair out of her face.

"She is not—"

"Not your girlfriend? Even better. Enter the dimension gate with us."?Sera Kani offered hurriedly.

Michael beheld Ludwig Pearl with the Flag War Soultrait standing next to the two young women. There were also Zelda Norman and Ashryn Hard in that group. It was the same old Blazing Sun Team Michael fought jointly with Kaleb earlier.

"Why?" He couldn't help but ask.

"Why? That's simple. Because you are strong!"

Michael raised an eyebrow. Faced with four Peak Tier-3 Lords and another Tier-3 Awakened, he didn't think he gazed too strong – at least in his head.

In reality, Michael didn't possess much less energy than the Peak Tier-3 Lords. Refining his War Rune while being in possession of 10 Soultraits was certainly not great, but one of the advantages it generated was a larger energy storage. That was definitely a big advantage - especially for someone like Michael.

He could only smile at that thought. If he had been the same as a few weeks ago, Michael would have felt like the Blazing Sun team was joking. But he was not the same as a few weeks ago. Many things happened in the last few weeks and Michael was certain that he'd grown stronger.

The energy that coursed through his body didn't feel any weaker or lesser than the energy that resided in the body of Peak Tier-3 Lords.

He was...strong. A lot stronger than ever.

"We beheld you spar with Alice. Even without your Soultraits, you've got some decent moves. How about this? Enter the dimension with us and fight with us against the Tekur once. After we beat the shit out of some Tekur, we can see where we'll go." Marie Wang offered again, lifting her hand to shake Michael's.

Michael grasped her hand and returned a smile.

"It's worth a try. I always desired to see the true power of the Wang Family's Blazing Sun!"

Chapter 466 Tekur

Michael didn't expect Marie Wang and the others to approach him. Their team worked together since the start of the Battle Exchange, spending a total of three months on improving their teamwork and tactics.

Since four out of five members of the Blazing Sun team were already at the Peak of the 3rd Tier they could only focus on fortifying their body and mind refinement as well as training together. Asking Michael to join them all of a sudden didn't really make sense.

Nonetheless, Michael was curious to know how much the Blazing Sun team had improved. He wanted to see them fight.

Since the dimensional portal was now active, several teams rushed to it. Michael saw Kaleb and his team near the entrance of the dimensional portal, as well as Lincoln and Zeke, who had teamed up with Quinn.

'Zeke's Illusions should be quite useful against the Tekur. They have another Supporter in their team with an boost Soultrait. Hmm...They want to focus on enhancing their individual combat prowess as much as possible before combining the crowd control Soultrait of their 5th member with Zeke's Illusions. That could work very well.'

Michael analyzed the people around him. He'd researched every participant of the Flag War. Therefore, he could tell who everyone was according to their appearance. Even if Michael didn't really focus on their names or background, he could tell what type of Soultrait they possessed and how strong they were. That was all that mattered right now.

"Did you know that you're very popular among the Descendants these days?" Sera Kani asked, her eyes darting toward Michael.

She grinned at him, causing goosebumps to spread all over his body. That was how creepy her stare was when she looked at him.

"Popular? If you mean to tell me that I'm the most hated among the Descendants I'd like to inform you that you suck at your choice of words," He responded without really paying attention to Sera.

"Most hated? I'm not so sure about that. Sera probably meant to say that many talk about you these days," Marie Wang joined the conversation as they approached the dimensional portal.

"Talk about me?"

"Yeah. They talk about you and it's actually not about the fact that you've become Maria's Primal Amplifier. Some talk about that but most Descendants don't dare to say anything wrong. After all, they don't want to get on Maria's wrong side. They have better things to do than offending the Seraph family, especially since every family will sooner or later need the Seraph family's help to heal one of their own."

"What are they talking about then?"

"It is actually pretty simple. They talk about your relationship with the Zenovia family. Everyone knows, by now, that you possess multiple Soultraits. Nobody really knows how many you have since you never announced it openly. However, it is well known that you have a Soultrait related to Ice. That is why some Descendants wonder whether you are an illegitimate child of the Zenovia family – precisely an experiment of the Zenovia family to grow a supernatural warrior with a handful of Soultraits."

Michael raised an eyebrow and scoffed.

"I am not related to them though. I procured the Ice Soultrait within a Lord Rift," Michael revealed.

Sera Kani appeared next to him. Her shoulder bumped into his side and her eyes glimmered with curiosity and the spirit of gossip as she asked, "In that case...why are Kaleb and Alice so nice to you? You were even able to get close to Lincoln and Zeke. The Piedra and Lavita Heirs are quite...difficult to approach."

"I don't know," Michael shrugged and pointed at the dimensional portal, "But what I know is that we should stop gossiping."

It was time to step into the dimensional gate.

Once they stepped through the whirlwind of energy the space around them twisted. Sera Kani had many questions to ask but Michael had already disappeared.

The Blazing Sun team was right behind Michael, hoping to end up near him. After all, the dimensional portal teleported everyone to various locations all over the isolated realm if they didn't enter the portal simultaneously.

At least, that was how it usually worked.

Michael was already accustomed to space twisting around him. It was a little bit more intense than the Runic Gate's teleportation, but it was similar to Zeroa's portals. Therefore, Michael could focus on his environment the moment he appeared inside the isolated dimension.

The first thing Michael noticed was that he was not alone. The Blazing Sun Team appeared near him, but there was more. There were at least 20 teams of the Tritan Alliance that had been teleported to the same location.

Michael saw Kaleb, Lincoln, and Zeke, who looked just as surprised at the other teams as him. It was not normal for so many teams to end up in the same location right from the start.

However, even more startling was the surrounding environment. They had emerged in a large plain with little to no trees and bushes to find cover. The soil was blueish-gray and dark-blue grass was the only natural flora Michael could find for as far as his eyes could see. There were no monsters either.

The only object that provided some cover from potential attackers was a humongous black pillar. The pillar was black like charcoal. It had a rough surface and was several hundred meters tall. The black pillar was thick and was as wide as the Colosseum.

'The Dimensional Pillar!' Michael realized, his heart skipping a beat.

Until now no team had ever emerged near a Dimensional Pillar during the Flag Wars. It was the first time for something like that to happen – with close to 200 members of the Tritan Alliance at that.

Many Awakened figured that the Dimensional Pillar stood in front of them, and they began to strike it. Despite being humongous and extremely thick, the Dimensional Pillar was not indestructible. It was resilient but attacks with the destructive power of a Tier-3 Awakened were enough to hurt it. It was just that destroying a Dimensional Pillar would take a while.

Even if hundreds of Awakened attacked the Dimensional Pillar simultaneously, they would have to spend a few hours until it would collapse. That was more than enough time for the Tekur to reach them and attack. The Tekur would gather around the Dimensional Pillars to protect them, after all.

"If we spawned so close to the Dimensional Pillar...who says that the same—..." Michael trailed off as he watched the other Awakened rush at the Dimensional Pillar to destroy it as soon as possible.

Suddenly a rock the size of a house manifested in the air. At first, everyone thought that the rock belonged to their allies. Therefore, nobody stopped in their tracks. Only a small group of selective individuals realized that something was wrong. Nobody possessed a Soultrait that could manifest a dark rock that radiated immense heat.

No warning was given as the dark rock smashed down in front of the Dimensional Pillar. It burst into countless pieces that propelled into all directions with tremendous force. An explosion resounded through the vicinity. Screams and shouts rang out only to be silenced by a second explosion that reverberated through the frontlines.

Two large craters emerged in the ground beneath the feet of a Warlock Centaur who had been charging at the Dimensional Pillar just a moment ago.

Not even the remains of the Warlock Centaur were left behind as the craters swallowed him whole.

While only one Warlock Centaur died, many sustained injuries. The meteorite that burst into countless shards upon impacting, inflicted wounds on every single being on the frontlines. For a moment the healers of the teams were stupefied. Fortunately, their instincts kicked in quickly. Hearing the muffled screams of the injured, the healers began to move to heal their comrades.

Michael glanced at the injured only for a moment before his eyes traveled to a small group of beings that appeared from behind the Dimensional Pillar.

The beings were somewhat humanoid. At least, they walked on two legs and possessed two arms. Silver carapaces covered their bodies and wings sprouted out of the backs of some of them. Their heads looked like a cross between a honey bee and an ant, with long silvery mandibles growing out of their cheeks.

The beings had lanky legs and looked skinny at first glance, but Michael didn't make the mistake of underestimating their physical combat prowess.

He knew what those beings were.

The Tekur race had arrived.

There were only a dozen Tekur, which a group of 200 members of the Tritan Alliance could deal with, but the initial strike of the Tekur was already enough to tell that they were not to be taken lightly.

The power of the meteorite had been enough to kill a Tier-3 Warlock Centaur and injure more than 20 Awakened – prodigies of the Tritan Alliance.

"Are they usually that strong, or is that just one of them?" Michael heard someone ask. It was a Descendant, whose entire body was trembling in fear at the sight of the two-meter-tall Tekur.

Michael had no answer and the same seemed to apply to the other people around them.

"If you don't dare to strike first, we will," A loud voice with a heavy accent rang through the surroundings. The clattering of the speaking Tekur's mandibles caused shivers to run down the spines of many humans.

One moment the dozen Tekur were together and in the next moment four Tekur disappeared. The remaining eight Tekur released their energy with a burst and used their Soultraits to get started. Meanwhile, the four Tekur who'd disappeared a moment ago appeared on the front lines.

Their lanky arms lifted high into the air as they appeared next to the healers.

"Try not to die too quickly. We want to enjoy this a little bit!"

Chapter 467 On the move

Chaos ensued the moment the Tekur made their move.

Four Tekur appeared next to the healers who had been tending to the wounded. With their claw-like hands raised high into the air, they were ready to strike at once and remove the most annoying members of their enemies in one go. As long as the healers were taken care of, the Tekur would have much fewer issues killing the remaining enemies.

But before the Tekur could behead the healers something happened. Quinn Karta used his Soultrait to jump through space. He appeared next to one of the Tekur, his entire body covered in radiant marks. His strength increased significantly, and he received an additional boost as his team members amplified his combat prowess using his Soultrait. Thereafter, Zeke used Eye of Illusion to create an illusion to distract the Tekur, granting Quinn just enough time to push the healer aside. The Tekur's claw cleaved down and narrowly missed the healer.

The next moment vines shot out of the ground. The fifth member of Quinn's team used his crowd control Soultrait, Vine Domain, to shoot vines out of the ground. He intended to pin the Tekur to the ground to ensure that Quinn Karta could kill the Tekur swiftly.

Meanwhile, Lincoln used Stone Giant's lesser earth affinity to shift the earth all over the battlefield. He moved the healers and injured people away from the frontlines, while Quinn, Zeke, and the two other members of their team faced one of the Tekur.

The Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs made their move as well. Lokai and Thaor appeared next to another Tekur.. The Awakened with Support Soultraits used them to empower their allies before hastily giving out orders to reorganize their groups. Everything was a mess, but they couldn't run away to escape the Tekur before reorganizing and attacking again.

The speed of the four Tekur who decided to jump into the crowd of enemies was too high. Their combat prowess was not to be underestimated either. The Tekur facing Quinn was affected by Zeke's Eye of Illusion and the vines coiling around him, yet he could easily evade Quinn's attack. No matter where Quinn tried to attack the slightly restricted Tekur, his attacks were blocked.

The Tekur loudly snapped his mandibles at some point. Thereafter the remaining eight Tekur made their move as well. Their Soultraits had already been unleashed and they were only waiting for permission to join the battle as well.

The moment the sound of clattering mandibles rang out from the side of the Dimensional Pillar, the situation turned even worse. The combat prowess of the melee-fighting Tekur improved drastically, and the minor scratches that covered their carapaces commenced to heal as well.

There was at least one Tekur with a Healing Soultrait and another one with a Soultrait that strengthened the Tekur physically. Both were strong Soultraits. However, nobody could tell for sure how strong they were exactly because the Tekur race was known for focusing on reinforcing the power of their Soultraits to the peak. Each of them ought to have a technique that was customized to fit their Soultrait perfectly, yet Michael couldn't tell if they were already using these custom techniques, or if they were simply playing with their opponents.

Another meteorite appeared in the sky high above the battlefield. However, this time nobody believed that it was an allies' creation. Marie Wang utilized her Blazing Sun, amplified by the War Flag Soultrait of her comrades. A highly compressed fireball manifested atop Marie Wang's staff. A rich and vibrant azure-blue flame erupted and shot toward the Meteorite that shattered as it collided with the azure-blue fireball.

As the meteorite shattered, a mysterious force shrouded the thousands of pieces of the meteorite. The shards stopped moving mid-air and pointed downward.

One of the Tekur was controlling the shards with his Soultrait and was just about to shower the Tritan Alliance members in a downpour of meteorite shards when Sera Kani created her move. She combined her Soultrait with the power of other Descendants and unleashed a typhoon out of nowhere.

The typhoon was about to destabilize the meteorite shards when something silvery passed through it. The energy used to maintain and control the typhoon was corrupted. Sera lost control of it – and of the meteorite shards alongside.

But that was fine. Zelda Norman reached the group of 8 Tekur with a group of close to 50 allies. He unleashed his 6-Star Soultrait, Dome of Weakness, and targeted the eight Tekur simultaneously. An ominous dome covered Zelda and the eight Tekur alongside her allies. The dome weakened the Soultraits of the designated targets, therefore lowering the effectiveness of the Support, and Healing Soultraits that gave the melee Tekur an upper hand over Quinn and others.

Even the Telepathy Soultrait that was supposed to control the meteorite shards was weakened considerably.

The biggest downside of the Dome of Weakness was that it lost potency the stronger the target's Soultrait. A 3-Star Soultrait's power would be weakened by 50%, but a 5-Star Soultrait would barely sustain a drop of power equal to 10%.

Interestingly enough, the Tekurs' Soultraits were all weakened considerably. By at least 10%, whereas the telepathy Soultrait's power dropped by close to 50%.

That meant the Tekur's Soultraits were not as high-ranked as suspected in various detailed reports. It...also meant that the tremendous power of their Soultraits either stemmed from the Tekur race's Unique Racial abilities, their extremely high mastery of their Soultraits, or their techniques.

Or...the number of their subjects with a firm Link of Loyalty was tens of times higher than the Links of Loyalty most Humans, Berserkers, and Warlock Centaurs possessed.

Michael frowned deeply as he analyzed the battle all around him. Everyone tried to join the battle in some way, but it was way too chaotic. The 200 members of the Tritan Alliance hadn't been taught to fight together like this. They were trained to fight in their own small team. Fighting one member of the Tekur race with five to ten members was the most efficient way to deal with the Tekur.

However, the Tekur didn't fight alone. They'd teamed up as well, which was obvious. Not every single Tekur had a powerful combat-affine Soultrait. Some were Healers and Supporters just like it was the case with the others.

Michael grabbed a deep breath and activated Eagle Eyes and Spirit Gaze. He summoned Aethyr in its spearform and coated the blade with a layer of Sword Qi. Michael user Insert to insert a trace of Extraction into Reinforced Sword Qi, resulting in a subtle change within the Sword Qi. Veins, golden in color, spread through the silver Sword Qi that shrouded Aethyr Spear's blade.

Origin energy coursed through Michael's body. He weaved the energy into his movements and applied several layers of Enhancement onto his body. Once ready, Michael licked his lip, lowered his body and kicked the ground with great force.

His physical strength at the Peak of the 2nd Tier came to full display. Utilizing Leviathan Diffusion at full power and with Enhancement added to the play, Michael's physical strength easily surpassed an

ordinary Tier-3 Awakened. He was not an ordinary Awakened to begin with. Michael was a Lord- A lord with combat prowess exceeding the norms of a Mythical Existence!

He flashed through the battlefield and passed by Lokai and Thaor, who'd been fully focused on the battle ahead.

"Give me Burning Fury," Michael ordered Lokai right before jumping into the air. He utilized Thaor as a launchpad to propel himself higher into the air. As he kicked Thaor, Michael used Insert on the Berserker, granting him two layers of Enhancement. The effect would wear off in five to ten minutes but that was more than enough time for Thaor, Lokai, and Michael to deal with a Tekur or two.

Aethyr transformed into a bow mid-air. He manifested a Glacicle Arrow inserted with a trace of Extraction, pulled the bowstring back, and shot at once. The Tekur noticed the Glacicle arrow but he quickly dismissed it as the power behind the Glacicle arrow was not that great.

He rather focused on the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs around it.

Michael didn't use his entire strength when he attacked with the Aethyr Bow. Instead, he utilized his understanding of Glacicle to his advantage.

The Glacicle arrow burst apart even before it collided with the ground or the Tekur. The compressed freezing mist within was unleashed at once. It spread around and engulfed the Tekur and the two Warlock Centaurs he had been facing.

Michael ignored the Warlock Centaurs and how they might be affected by the freezing mist. He willed the freezing mist and transformed it into a hundred tiny icicles. Their pointed ends were directed at the Tekur and they shot toward him. Their impact didn't cause any serious harm to the Tekur, but it distracted the Tekur from his signature move – utilizing the trace of Extraction.

The trace of Extraction didn't disperse as the Glacicle arrow turned into freezing mist. It hung into the air and was shrouded as the freezing mist turned into icicles. The icicles were too weak to burst through the Tekur's carapace but the Power of Insert was still effective five seconds after Michael utilized it.

The ice needle didn't even have to break through the Tekur's defense for the trace of Extraction to invade his body. All that was needed for the trace of Extraction to invade the Tekur's body was to get close enough while the Power of Insert was still active.

And that was exactly what happened.

The ice needles were repelled, their freezing effect barely affecting the Tekur.

But that was not important.

All that mattered was that Extraction grabbed root in the Tekur's body. It was only a matter of time before the Tekur would die.

Realizing that, a sly grin appeared on Michael's lips.

'How nice it is to have such a great skill set.'

Chapter 468 Insert Extraction

Even though the trace of Extraction invaded the Tekur's body without any difficulties, it was not that easy to kill them. Michael was forced to nourish the trace of Extraction slowly, ensuring that the Tekur wouldn't realize anything until it was too late.

Therefore, Michael willed the trace of Extraction to devour minuscule portions of the Tekur's lifeforce and origin energy. Even if the Tekur felt something, since he was not injured in any way, he was likely to presume that one of his 200 enemies possessed a Soultrait with the power to drain lifeforce and energy of designated targets. He hadn't been injured nor did he sense that anything entered his body. Therefore, the option that something foreign took root inside his body didn't even cross the Tekur's mind.

Michael released a few more Glacicle arrows to distract the Tekur while Thaor, Lokai and a few more Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs entered close combat. The Berserkers understood that it was not feasible for tens of them to face a Tekur simultaneously. They created a tactic to fight the Tekur with a rotation system. The Berserkers would face the Tekur, three at a time, to inflict some damage and then rotate smoothly. A new batch of Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs would face the Tekur with a different combat style and varying approaches to attack and kill the Tekur, wearing him down.

The Tekur, who'd been daring enough to enter close combat knew what they were doing. They altered the trajectory of the Berserkers' attacks with fluid motions and counterattacked rapidly. Their means of defense were exceptional, and even if they failed to evade or block the enemies' attacks, their carapace would save them.

Despite having a great numerical advantage on their side, the Alliance members weren't able to overpower the Tekur easily. If anything, it looked like the dozen Tekur could easily fight with the 200 Descendants for a while. The only ways the Alliance could hold their fort against the Tekur was the Alliance's training and the fact that their Soultraits ended up being much more useful than expected.

Adding the Alliance's teamwork – which was much better than ever – some of the Tekur were pushed back. Thaor managed to crack the carapace of the Tekur he fought, whereas Quinn Karta's daggers pierced into the thighs of another Tekur.

Meanwhile, the Dome of Weakness decreased the support the Tekur in the back could provide to their comrades near the frontlines.

Michael moved through the battlefield as quickly as he could. He inserted a few layers of Enhancement onto the Awakened who seemed to have the biggest advantage against the Tekur to further increase the slight upper hand his people had gained in the fight. Simultaneously, he continued to release Glacicle arrows inserted with traces of Extraction.

Michael managed to insert more of Extraction's power inside the group of Tekur. A total of eight Tekur were infected by Extraction before Michael decided to will the traces of Extraction to devour the insides of his enemies. He focused on their lifeforce and origin energy to weaken them, but Michael didn't hesitate to break through their mental defenses and devour their blood and flesh as well – at least, he was trying to.

The Tekur's mental defense was much stronger than anything he'd ever seen before. It was already a wonder that the traces of Extraction managed to devour bits of origin energy and lifeforce inside them. Fortunately, the traces of Extraction took root in the Tekur before they spread out. Ordinary mental defenses, no matter how sturdy, couldn't block the traces of Extraction. If the Tekur desired to remove the traces of Extraction, they would have to use their energy to isolate the power of Extraction and expel it. That required time and full concentration. Right now, the Tekur had neither to spare.

One of the Tekur possessed a Soultrait that blocked the trace of Extraction subconsciously. It couldn't find a place to take root inside his body and was naturally expelled. Therefore, Michael didn't even try to infect the remaining Tekur. Instead, he focused on weakening the eight infected Tekur to kill them. Applying some layers of Enhancement on Extraction was enough to reinforce the extraction efficiency.

Michael's vigor was overflowing, and his energy storage never dried out. He created a compressed Glacicle Sword, coated it in a layer of Reinforced Sword Qi, and added several layers of Enhancement on top. The Glacicle Sword glimmered above Michael as he lifted his hand. His hand cut down in a straight line and the Glacicle Sword burst forth.

["Throw yourself to the ground if you like your head!"] Michael shouted at Thaor and Lokair with Whispering Energy.

A quarter of a second later, the two Berserkers reacted. They stopped focusing on the Tekur in front of them and dived to the ground. The Tekur's attack missed the Berserkers by a hair's breadth. He didn't expect the Berserkers to jump to the ground just like that. But their sudden change in tactic made sense as a glacier-blue glittering sword whizzed past the Berserkers, impaling the Tekur.

The Glacicle Sword pierced the damaged area of the carapace and pierced through the Tekur in one go. The Tekur's eyes widened, and his mandibles snapped viciously. Energy burst forth from the Tekur, whose size expanded. His silver carapace darkened and the presence around the Tekur intensified. Michael ignored the Tekur's presence as much as possible. He released the Reinforced Sword Qi shrouding the Glacicle Sword explosively into the Tekur. The Tekur's insides were shredded, his intestines damaged, and some internal organs obliterated in one go.

It was only after the Reinforced Sword Qi was unleashed that the Glacicle Sword's freezing took effect. The area around the sword wound froze and the strong freezing effect expanded. The Tekur crushed the Glacicle Sword with his tremendous physical strength – or tried to. The moment Michael noticed what the Tekur was trying to do, he willed the Glacicle Sword to burst into freezing mist that would block the Tekur's vision and invade the insides of the Tekur.

The Tekur screamed aloud, his mandibles clattering uncontrollably. This was a sign for the other Tekur to pay more attention to the wounded Tekur, who couldn't even continue screaming as several blades pierced into him from all sides. That was not even all. A heavy mace smashed down on the Tekur's head. Not once. Not twice, and not thrice either. Three Berserkers at the Peak of the 3rd Tier took turns smashing a heavy, several hundred kilograms, mace to crush the Tekur's head and kill the monstrosity.

But the Tekur twitched and continued releasing a burst of energy. He continued to move and managed to injure one of the attackers severely before his legs were pinned to the ground. The assault continued until the energy influx of the Tekur reached one of them. The Tekur stopped moving after his head was mashed entirely.

Everyone but Michael turned away from the dead Tekur. They had to help the others fight the remaining 11 Tekur. Michael waved his hand to retrieve the trace of Extraction and the freezing mist. Simultaneously, he stored the corpse of the dead Tekur in his storage. Some Awakened observed that but they were too busy supporting their comrades to ask Michael what he was doing or why. That was something they could do later as well.

Once the corpse was stored in his storage, Michael made his move. He enhanced his body again and manifested a dozen Glacicle Swords around his body. Michael weaved energy into his body to enhance his strength and perception before inserting traces of Extraction into each of the Glacicle Swords. The Glacicle Swords shot in all directions, one to each enemy.

The Glacicle Swords were under his precise control. He shattered them right before they impacted and willed the freezing mist that burst forth from the Glacicle Swords to shroud the Tekurs' heads. The freezing mist then transformed into hundreds of Glacicle needles that tried to pierce through the Tekur's carapace. However, the only thing that could harm the Tekur was the trace of Extraction that managed to invade the Tekur – every single one of them.

Michael didn't even consider slowly devouring the energy and lifeforce of the Tekur at this point. He used the vast majority of his energy to increase the power of Extraction, which was how Michael succeeded to weaken the remaining Tekur enough to create opportunities for his comrades.

Zeke continued to use Eye of Illusion to cast a life-like illusion onto three Tekur, whereas the Awakened with Vine Domain focused on restraining the Tekur. The other Alliance members, on the other hand, were either focused on weakening the Tekur, strengthening their allies, or inducing small injuries.

Some of the Alliance members gained confidence watching one Tekur die after another. They were infused with the much-needed confidence to deliver the final blow against one of the Tekur. Unfortunately, their confidence resulted in an aggressive fighting style. Since they wanted to deal the final blow, the Awakened didn't withdraw when the Tekur changed their targets. They were assaulted and ripped into shreds. In addition to that, several tiny meteorites formed in the air. Some concentrated on destroying them, but there were some Awakened whose entire focus was fixated on the Tekur. They were hit by the tiny meteorites and suffered heavy injuries, resulting in deaths for some of them.

Nonetheless, the Tritan Alliance gained a major advantage. The Tekur were slowly overwhelmed by the number of enemies and Soultraits they had to face simultaneously. All they could do was attempt to run away to reorganize and lead more Tekur toward the Tritan Alliance or die while taking as many enemies as possible with them.

Confident in their superior combat prowess, the Tekur continued to fight. Despite the numerous disadvantages they faced, the Tekur were extremely sturdy and didn't die that easily.

The dozen Tekur died at the end of the battle, but they succeeded to kill a total of 15 Alliance Members while facing close to 200 of the Tritan Alliance's stronger prodigies.

They were still at an advantage...and there were still hundreds of Tekur waiting to fight them.

Chapter 469 Gains

"Where is Michael Fang?" A young Descendant asked.

He was worn out, but a tinge of anger mirrored on his face.

"Why are you looking for Michael?" Kaleb frowned.

"He stored one of the Tekur's bodies in his storage space." The Descendant answered.

"He collected one here too!" Another Descendant said, only for a Warlock Centaur to note.

"I think he collected most of the bodies. I see only two corpses."

"Did he run away? That bastard stole our merit points!!" The young Descendant roared angrily once again, not hesitating to accuse Michael.

"I did not run away, brickhead."

Michael's voice resounded from behind the Dimensional Pillar. He walked around the pillar with a mocking smile on his face. "I stored the corpses to make sure that nobody will obliterate the corpses by accident, and to ensure that nobody else could take them while we were busy fighting."

Michael retrieved a total of 10 Tekur from his storage space and snapped at the man who'd accused him just now, "How about you think before you accuse someone? That might help you stay alive a little longer. Maybe, you can get a girlfriend if you keep your foul mouth closed."

He turned to the remaining Alliance members and pointed at the corpses, "Let's make sure that everyone receives a contribution for killing the dozen Tekur. After all, everyone participated in the battle so it's only fair that everyone should receive merit points."

Michael did not really care about glory, or honor. The merit points he could procure were not that important either. The sole reason Michael took the corpses mid-battle was to disappear near the end of the battle to extract the SoulStar Fragments, Soultrait Symbols and Memory Orbs from the dead Tekur. He contributed to their death. Therefore, he could easily loot the Tekur.

To make sure that nobody would notice anything, Michael extracted only the rewards nobody else could procure. Memory Orbs, Soultrait Symbols and SoulStar Fragments were not something others could procure. Only Michael's Extraction was capable of that.

Unfortunately, he had to be extremely fast. Almost the entire energy he extracted from the Tekur was used up to further amplify the Extraction used on the Tekur. He didn't even have a minute to extract as much as possible and had to collect everything in a rush before returning from behind the Dimensional Pillar.

The bodies of the Tekur were now spread out in front of Michael but he was unable to use Extraction on them. He didn't plan to expose Extraction in front of the Alliance after all.

"You want to make sure that you'll get your contribution in the battle to complete your punishment sentence and be done with it, don't you? That's smart!" Kaleb blurted out, his voice loud enough to reach everyone around them.

Most Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs didn't know about Michael's punishment, but the human Descendants had heard something about it. The man who had accused Michael stared daggers at him, but Michael didn't really pay much attention to it.

He secretly thanked Kaleb for saving him from coming up with an excuse, but he didn't answer Kaleb. The thought of punishment had not even crossed his mind. It was not that important at this point.

The Dimensional Pillar was of greater importance. It would take the Alliance members a few hours to destroy the pillar, but it was certainly worth it. They would get closer to their final goal: to close the Isolated realm and seal the dimensional portal for good.

"We can talk about everyone's contribution later. For now, we have to recuperate and destroy the Dimensional Pillar," A four-meter-tall Berserker said, his voice thundering through the surroundings, "But one thing is for sure. This kiddo deserves the contribution he needs, whatever his punishment may be. He was running around to help everyone on the battlefield and his attacks weakened the Tekur over time. If not for him we would have lost more brave warriors!"

Michael didn't like that the Berserker pushed him into the limelight. He felt that the Berserker thought of him too highly after what happened in Piloq. It was not as if his influence in the battle had been much higher than Kaleb, Lincoln, and the rest. Everybody gave their utmost to kill the Tekur, but all Michael could do about it was nod and hope to stay out of the Alliance member's radar.

Almost everyone noticed Michael at some point in the battle. They realized that Michael had been everywhere on the battlefield to use his Soultrait once or twice before disappearing once again. Once he disappeared the Tekur's power output and resilience seemed to weaken over time. As the battle progressed the Tekur's resistance decreased even further.

The most perceptive Alliance members observed that Michael did something to weaken the enemies over time. They were not sure whether it was poison or the freezing of his Soultrait. But one thing was easy to tell; Michael's attack pattern had been similar from start to end.

He utilized his Ice Soultrait which was shrouded in a whitish-silver aura intertwined with golden vein-like threads to distract and inflict damage over a long range. His body was covered in a white hue, which amplified Michael's strength and speed, allowing him to cross the limits of his Tier.

"Okay okay. Fuck this shit." The man, who'd accused Michael said, the anger in his tone apparent.

"I will rest a little bit then. I wasn't wounded but I need to recuperate my energy before I can be of any help," Michael said, not even minding the Descendant. He shifted near the teams of Kaleb and Lincoln to stay close enough to them if anything was to happen. Simultaneously, he disappeared behind the crowd to make sure nobody could bother him with more questions.

He then closed his eyes and focused on the goods he'd extracted from the Tekur.

'Ten Tier-3 Tekur provided 4100 SoulStar Fragments...and that was in a rush. But I didn't get a single Soultrait Symbol. That's a shame...'

Michael was quite surprised about the massive amount of SoulStar Fragments. If he was given enough time to use Extraction on the Tekur he would have procured 30% to 50% more SoulStar Fragments and at least three Soultrait Symbols. Even though it was a bit unfortunate that he didn't obtain everything, Michael was satisfied with his gains. His life was never in danger, yet he procured enough SoulStar Fragments to upgrade a Soultrait to 5-Star.

The only issue Michael had to solve now was to figure out what he should do with the SoulStar Fragments he'd accumulated.

A total of 50,000 SoulStar Fragments were eager to be utilized to upgrade some Soultraits. Unfortunately, it was not enough to upgrade Extraction. As for Insert, it was already quite powerful as a 5-Star Soultrait. It wouldn't increase his combat prowess drastically.

'If I accumulate 100,000 SoulStar Fragments it will still not be enough to upgrade Extraction to 7-Star. The gap between a 6-Star Soultrait and a 7-Star Soultrait is even wider than that between 5-Star and 6-Star. The price to upgrade Extraction to 6-Star was more than 20,000 SoulStar Fragments. That means...I'll need 200,000 SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Extraction to 7-Star, at the bare minimum.'

Michael was actually not in a hurry to upgrade Extraction. The amount of energy he required was already high enough to bother him. Nonetheless, the easiest way to increase his strength was to upgrade his Soultraits. It was the fastest and most potent way to acquire power. Furthermore, the more energy his War Rune required to be refined, the more tempered his origin energy would be.

Upgrading his Soultraits was like playing with a fiercely burning flame. As long as he could control the flame it was fun to play around. But once he lost control, the flame would burn him down mercilessly.

'The Tekur are even stronger than I'd anticipated. Their teamwork is a little bit sluggish, but that was probably because they underestimated us. They didn't expect our Soultraits to be that effective against them.' Michael thought, retrieving one of the Memory Orbs he'd removed from one of the Tekur.

He extracted a total of three Memory Orbs and decided to consume them one after another. Maybe the Tekur's memories could give him more insight into their power system, their weak points, and their plan for the Interdimensional Flag War.

Michael consumed the first Memory Orb and closed his eyes. He distributed origin energy through his entire body to stir the surrounding energy and absorb it while also watching the memories of the first Tekur.

Ten minutes passed in the blink of an eye, yet Michael was not done digesting the memories of the first Tekur. An hour elapsed before Michael opened his eyes. Michael tilted his head, pressed his lips together, and scowled lightly. He was not exactly sure what he'd observed just now.

He consumed the second Memory Orb and closed his eyes once again. Half an hour later his eyes shot open again, the frown on his face even deeper. The last Memory Orb disappeared in his mouth and his frown disappeared as the third flood of memories attained his mind.

The third Memory Orb was fully digested within half an hour. Michael licked his lips, a bead of sweat trickling down his temple.

"That is...fucked up..." He mumbled to himself.

He found out why the Tekur were a superior race and how their Soultraits ended up so powerful even though they were not of a high rank. It was pretty simple.

First of all, the Tekur were much older than the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs. Michael could not be certain about this but he was pretty sure that the Tekur were even older than the Forest Elven tribe... and that explained quite a lot of things.

Due to their age, the Tekur were able to procure lots of knowledge. But that was not because their intelligence was superior to others. They didn't research much. If anything, the vast majority of their knowledge comes from conquering other races.

And that was how the mess all began.

Chapter 470 Elite

The moment the Tekur acquired the knowledge to maximize the profits of Soul Power, learn how to create portals to random habitable locations all over the universe, and create customized techniques that suited their Soultraits best, the Tekur race's power and desire to expand would increase exponentially.

Michael procured various memories from the Tekur's Memory Orb, and he got to know that the Tekur had hundreds of dimensional portals like the portal in the ancient capital of the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs. They led to various stellar systems which they wanted to conquer and colonize to spread their humongous population throughout the entire universe.

The Tekur's population has grown too big too fast. They're like Goblins – their population rapidly expands and their individuals are hard to kill once they reach a certain threshold. Goblins typically evolve into Goblin Warriors, Goblin Champions, or even higher forms of life. Meanwhile, the Tekur grew into terrific lifeforms as their territory expanded. Their Tier increased and the power of their Soultraits seemed to evolve. But that was not exactly it.

The Tekur didn't care about the life and death of their Soldiers. If anything, it would be a good thing if the Soldiers died because it gave the rest of the Tekur race a little bit more space to live.

One of the reasons why the Tekur were so powerful was the number of their Links of Loyalty. Almost all Tekur manifested War Runes from a young age, but most of them died at a young age. They were not even teenagers when the War Rune manifested and were pushed into the Origin Expanse where they had to fight fully grown monsters and Lords with years of experience.

Those who died miserably turned into Starless Summons within the Origin Expanse. They turned into the subjects of those Tekur, who'd survived a little longer than the rest, allowing the strong to grow even stronger while the weak became their Lord's slaves.

Millions of subjects from the Tekur race resided in the territory of each Tier-3 Lord, granting them an enormous amount of Soul Power. The Soul Power could be amassed and utilized in the customized techniques the Tekur Lords executed to fight against their enemies, resulting in the misunderstanding that the Tekur race had tremendously powerful Soultraits.

'The Tekur participating in the Interdimensional Flag War are only...Soldiers... They survived longer than most members of the ordinary folk, who decided to grab the opportunity to enter the Origin Expanse after their War Rune manifested. Their desire to procure strength and be more than slaves tempered them, allowing them to become powerhouses in the eyes of other races...yet they're only ordinary Soldiers...'

The Tekur race pursued a simple caste system. Since every Tekur manifested a War Rune they were considered the norm; citizens. However, it was also possible to reject the gift of the Origin Expanse. If the Tekur who'd manifested a War Rune didn't enter the Origin Expanse within the first 24 hours after their War Rune appeared, it would disperse. The War Rune was unstable at first and one had to enter the Origin Expanse since the War Rune required ambient origin energy from the Origin Expanse to stabilize.

Therefore, the Tekur who'd been unwilling to join the Origin Expanse were considered trash: The Cowards.

Tekur who survived for 2-3 years in the Origin Expanse were considered Elite citizens, whereas soldiers were those who've been trained using a simple customized technique. The most important aspect of being a Lord was that they were still in control of their territory. They were still Lords!

Customized techniques required a specific amount of Soul Power. Even a simple customized technique required far more than most Awakened of the Tritan Alliance could acquire as Lesser Lifeforms. The Soul Power would empower the customized techniques and allow the user to overclock their Soultrait's power to defeat opponents with stronger Soultraits easily.

That was also how a dozen Tekur – mere soldiers – were able to fight off and hold back 200 Alliance members simultaneously. They couldn't kill all and died at the end of the day but their strength allowed them to dampen their enemies' spirits and deliver the alliance a harsh blow.

"Not only Soldiers are participating in this year's Flag War...there are also three Elite Soldiers with multiple simple methods and an Elite Class Technique," Michael mumbled once he was done digesting and organizing all memories.

He learned a lot, including that the Tekur were much younger than Michael expected. The Soldiers were merely 11 years old, whereas the Elite Soldiers might only be 14 or 15 years old...at most...

That felt wrong, but it gave Michael more insight into the tactic used by the Tekur – precisely, the lack of tactics. It confused him at first, but the Tekur roamed through the isolated realm together, yet their combat style was not really adjusted to suit one another. They didn't fight as a team even though they fought together.

They were just too young to have been taught everything. Their desire to defeat the enemies in front of them made them lose all rationality.

'That is good. As long as I can make use of their childish tendencies, I might be able to survive until the end of the—...' Michael was deep in thought when his body froze all of a sudden as he opened his eyes.

He observed the Alliance members work together to take down the Dimensional Pillar. However, there was something he saw that bothered him. He saw the countdown displayed on the Dimensional Pillar – the countdown that revealed how long the dimension would be active and when they would be thrown out once again.

"14 days?! The Flag War has never been that long. 10 days was the highest two years ago!" Michael cried out in a voice loud enough for one of Kaleb's comrades to notice. He smiled lightly at Michael.

"You just noticed? I hoped that the dimension would close after three days now that we're about to destroy a Dimensional Pillar so soon after everything just started. Unfortunately...it looks like we will have to deal with a few more groups of Tekur until the dimension throws us out," Kaleb's team member said.

Michael was not willing to chit-chat with the Descendant. But he didn't want to be rude either. He talked to Joseph, Kaleb's team member, for a few minutes before excusing himself. Michael had to continue replenishing his energy. Well. That was not true, but there was something else he had to do.

'In 14 days I will definitely encounter a bunch of Tekur. Maybe even the Elite Tekur if I'm unlucky. That means I need more power to deal with some of them on my own.' Michael thought, slightly worried

about the possibility of encountering an Elite Soldier who'd used Elite Class methods to obliterate him and his friends.

Elite Class methods required five times more Soul Power than simple customized techniques. That meant the Elite Soldiers had several times more Soul Power than the ordinary Soldiers – meaning his Soultrait was either extremely powerful from the get-go, or he had tens of millions of subjects.

The latter was a possibility, but it was more likely that the Elite Soldiers had decent Soultraits. After all, Soultraits with high star ratings had an easier time accumulating Soul Power. Michael knew that best as someone who'd used various Soultraits at different stages. Upgrading his Soultraits not only increase their power and potency but also the amount of Soul Power residing within them – thereby increasing their efficiency drastically.

Michael was already on the verge of advancing to the Peak of Tier-2. One of the two energy influxes from killing the Tekur would be enough to break the barrier and reach the Peak of the 2nd Tier. That was fine and actually not too difficult to achieve. In the worst case, Michael could also ask Kaleb for a handful of Energy Stones and stay near the Dimensional Pillar for the next few hours to break through.

But advancing to the Peak of the 2nd Tier was not enough to deal with multiple Tekur and their Elite. That meant he had to strengthen his Soultraits.

Why?

Using Extraction on the Tekur meant that he could procure a portion of their wealth and treasures stored inside their War Runes' spatial storages – that included the possibility of extracting their customized methods as well as their mind, body and special techniques. Michael could research and alter them and possibly make use of them at last.

Then he could extract their Artifacts, and most importantly both their Soultrait Symbols and SoulStar Fragments. The latter was the most important because Michael never gained as many SoulStar Fragments from an Awakened at Tier-3 as each Tekur had dropped. It was highly likely that each Tekur would reward Michael with more than 500 SoulStar Fragments, probably more. If he could extract them while they were still alive it would be even more than that.

So what was the best way to hunt down the Tekur and make the biggest gains? A total of 1000 Tekur entered the dimension, at least 12 were already dead, and there were a total of 3 Elite Soldiers. The rest were roughly as strong as the ordinary Soldiers Michael and the rest had faced.

HOW could Michael make as much use of the SoulStar Fragments in his possession to gain as much profit as possible?

The Interdimensional Flag War was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for someone like Michael, and he had to grab it.

'It would be best to upgrade Extraction...but that will cost way too much. I don't have enough SoulStar Fragments. It's not enough to complete one-fourth of the 7th Star...So what else can I do?'