

Supreme Lord 531

Chapter 531 Meal

'What the hell just happened?' Michael asked himself, still confused about the sudden proposal.

He was fortunate that Giuliana Seraph received a call before she could put more pressure on Michael, but that didn't change the fact that the matriarch of the Seraph family was hoping to engage Maria with him.

"Finally she left," Alice cursed quietly under her breath as the matriarch of the Seraph family left in a hurry.

Alice didn't look that well after listening to Giuliana Seraph's sudden proposal. She glanced in Michael's direction but was at a loss of words for a while.

"Will you consider marrying Maria? Her family is one of the wealthiest families and they're connected to almost all members of High Society," She asked Michael.

Michael was still quite shocked, but he shook his head, "I'm currently too busy to even think about committing to a relationship."

"At least, that's what I want to say. The bitter truth, however, is that even if I find someone I like romantically...it will be a mess," He mumbled. "The moment I commit to a relationship, the person I love would be frowned upon. Everyone would think she's an opportunist, or that she's a vixen for making me fall in love with her after my power's were exposed. One way or another, some households of High Society might attempt to approach my lover and manipulate her into becoming their tool to approach or harm me."

"I don't want to put anyone in danger, and even if the other party doesn't care about that...how can I be certain that they didn't approach me with an ulterior move?" Michael asked, sighing deeply.

He knew that he could use Mind Reader to read the mind of his lover whenever he wanted, but if he started doubting his lover...how was he supposed to create a firm bond of trust and dependence with someone?

Alice understood what Michael meant, but her heart ached to see Michael like that. Until a year ago, Michael had been an ordinary person. He wasn't part of High Society and nobody really cared about him. In fact, he was treated like a pushover by some children of small, and mid-sized families.

One year was all it took to change Michael's life drastically. He evolved into a bigshot who was strong enough to deal with Descendants several years older than him, and he attracted the attention of the High Society, in its entirety. Even the Tritan Alliance was interested in him and his power.

"Are you fine?" Michael asked Alice. She had been staring at him for quite a while, her expression filled with sadness. Her anger and confusion about Giuliana's proposal to Michael were washed away, sadness replacing her hate and helplessness.

She hated being part of the High Society since the family heads and elders could decide their future. They could order them to marry some other Descendant merely for the sake of strengthening the families' bonds. Alice was only fortunate that their families didn't find her a suitable groom yet. That was also why she was desperate to grow stronger. She had a 6-Star Soultrait and was already a Tier-5 Lord. Her parents wouldn't want her to marry someone weaker, someone with less potential. Her father wanted to create the strongest generation of the Zenovia family using her and strengthen their bloodline.

Thus, her father was in search of a bigshot with exceptional talent to marry her to. On the contrary, Alice was trying to advance to Tier-6 and grow beyond the control and dominance he exerted on the entire family. Now that she thought about it, Michael was much unluckier. He had no family to protect him. He was alone, yet, everyone wanted to make use of him.

"I'm...fine..." Alice responded to Michael after a while.

Michael observed her and felt a pang of guilt.

"I'm sorry."

"Huh? What? Why?" Alice was pulled out of her train of thought and stared at Michael.

"Well, you were injured because of me. And..." Michael started to explain, only for Alice to raise her hand, "What nonsense are you talking about? Sustaining injuries is normal. It's not the first time that I was injured, and it won't be the last time either. Why would you be sorry about that?"

She cleared her throat and some color returned to her face as she added, "If you're sorry, treat me to a meal, or something like that!"

Michael's stomach growled at that moment. It looked like his stomach agreed.

"Let's get something to eat then. I'm starving."

Alice and Michael went to a nearby restaurant and ordered a mountain of dishes. They heard some gossip about the recent events, including rumors about Michael's power, his relationship with other Descendants, and the attack of the four Lords. Apparently, Beast, Veronica, and the other Lord had been imprisoned, and their War Runes had been crushed into thousands of pieces to make an example.

"You're quite popular, aren't you?" Alice teased Michael, who could only shrug.

"Did they really break their War Rune?" Michael asked instead.

"I'm not too sure, but I don't think so. Punishing Lords of esteemed families usually takes a while. All I know is that I won't receive any punishment for killing James Walton and that the others have been put into jail, their energy veins severed. If they want to demonstrate what happens to anyone who tries to kidnap you, they'll break their War Runes publicly. If they want to divert everyone's attention from the kidnapping effort they will think of something else to do so," Alice responded.

"Maybe, I should message Kraft Viton and tell him to change the date of the Soultrait auction. Pulling everyone's attention to the Soultrait auction should do the trick."

"You decided to partner with the Bartholomew Corporation?" Alice inquired while playing with her fork, seemingly uninterested in the dishes.

Michael continued to devour the dishes around him like the Glutton he was.

"I did. They're not affiliated with anyone, so I'll have an easier time."

"How many Soultraits are you going to sell to the Bartholomew Corporation? Are you considering selling Soultraits privately as well?" Alice inquired all of a sudden.

"I gave Kraft Viton six Soultraits, two for each race. It's just an appetizer though. All Soultraits in my possession are 1-Star. Whoever manages to buy the Soultraits will have to come to me and ask for my help to upgrade them. As for private sales, I'm not sure. I was planning to use some Soultraits to get hold of some Adventurers. I should be able to lure a few dozen Adventurers into my group. All I'm missing are loyal and hard-working Adventurers and a bunch of Teleportation Tokens."

"So it's like that. That means you'll probably accept Zeron Polik and everyone else who wants to join your territory, right?" Alice asked.

"I like Zeron Polik, so...yeah, why not? Everyone will have to sign a Soul Pact and undergo a long interrogation under the scrutiny of Mind Reader, but that shouldn't be much of an issue."

"Can I buy a Soultrait as well? Not as part of the Zenovia family, but as Alice, a perfectly ordinary Awakened..."

'Hmm?' Michael peeked at Alice. He had a hard time keeping his mouth shut and not blurting out the thoughts that flashed through his mind.

Was she planning to slowly detach herself from the Zenovia family? Michael had no idea.

"Eh...sure. I owe you a lot. It's only fair for me to repay you. What Soultrait are you looking for?"

Alice smiled at Michael and rocked her head.

"Not now. I just wanted to ask if I'm allowed to buy a Soultrait from you."

That was weird, but Michael merely shrugged and switched his attention to the food in front of him.

They continued to enjoy their meal – at least, Michael did. He completed more than 15 plates overflowing with savory dishes in the next 20 minutes, yet his stomach was still empty. His body was in dire need of more nutrition and energy, therefore, he placed a few more orders. He only ordered an additional 30 plates stuffed with delicious food or so. It was not that much.

Alice eyed Michael as he evolved into the incarnation of Glutton with a smile. Sometimes she couldn't believe that Michael had become a bigshot. However, the hushed murmurs reaching her ears through all corners of the restaurant clarified that Michael's existence was much more impactful than most people wanted to acknowledge.

"Did you hear that the Park and Walton family made an official statement? They apologized publicly about the actions of their members, and hope that Michael Fang can forgive them for not raising their future generation Lords properly." One of the voices said.

"I heard something similar. James Walton, Veronica Park, and the two other Lords went out of control. Their families abandoned them, saying that they have nothing to do with Michael's kidnapping." A second voice revealed.

"Apparently, all four families have issues with their territories in the Origin Expanse and the businesses outside the Origin Expanse are slowing down as well. It looks like these poor Lords tried to alter their family's fate by kidnapping Michael. Unfortunately, it made everything worse. Poor idiots."

Michael raised his head from the plate in front of him and looked at Alice. She'd heard the three Berserkers' gossip as well.

"That's nonsense. Don't listen to them. Nobody can tell me that the Elders and Patriarchs didn't know anything about the kidnapping attempt," Alice grumbled, "The Investigator will find out the truth soon enough."

Michael didn't respond to anything. He returned to his meal and completed the last batch of dishes in the next 20 minutes. Once he was done eating, Michael paid for the meal and they departed the restaurant.

Only a few hours later the result of the Investigator's investigation was revealed. The three Lords couldn't remember anything. Their memories of the last 48 hours had been wiped out.

Weird.

Chapter 532 Meeting I

The Saphirelake Military Academy announced new changes for the start of the second semester. For one, the Saphirelake Military Academy would change into a place that accepted prodigies of the entire Tritan Alliance. This was a means to strengthen the Tritan Alliance's internal bonds encompassing various races and grow stronger as one entity.

At least, that was what the official thread claimed. However, the truth was that the Saphirelake Military Academy turned into the playground of the Tritan Alliance because of Michael. It felt weird to think like that but it was true. The people, races and organizations around Michael changed gradually, slowly adapting to him.

There were various other changes Michael caused by stating that he would stay in the Saphirelake Military Academy until he graduated. Tens of thousands of transfer applications reached the management department of the Saphirelake Military Academy, followed by heavy donations and various unique offers that the Saphirelake Military Academy's administration couldn't reject.

Even young core disciples of the Great Clans and highly talented rookies of the strongest Guilds decided to apply to the Saphirelake Military Academy.

At first glance, it seemed like everyone wanted to transfer to the Saphirelake Military Academy because of Michael, but that was not the sole reason. Since the Descendants and Heirs of the biggest households and organizations suddenly wanted to get admitted there, everyone else followed suit.

Why? Wasn't the reason obvious?

Everyone desired to socialize and establish a clique, or group, to trade the goods they procured in the Origin Expanse. Establishing a large group with hundreds of Descendants was everyone's goal, allowing the Descendants and Heirs to procure the ingredients and materials they required rapidly. No matter how rare certain materials and ingredients would be, having a group of hundreds of powerhouses to trade with would solve the material scarcity in the blink of an eye.

Michael understood that he could save lots of trouble by pursuing the same. He could create a group with Lincoln, Zeke, Kaleb, Frederik, Jacqueline, Maria, and maybe even Alice, to trade goods on a daily basis. However, Michael had a much better trump card up his sleeve; The Bartholomew Corporation.

He considered creating his own organization where he would sell Neutral Soul Techniques, the Soul Energy Fusion technique, Soultraits, and a wide variety of other goods that could only be procured in the Untamed Jungle, but he quickly realized that establishing a trading firm required too much time, effort, and experience. Michael was inexperienced and he couldn't spare time, and effort in administrative tasks either. Therefore, he decided to turn the Bartholomew Corporation into his playground, to a certain degree, at least.

'I will use my unique products to elevate the Bartholomew Corporation to new heights and the Bartholomew Corporation will help me obtain whatever I need. Win-win.'

That was Michael's plan, and it seemed to work decently fine. The Bartholomew Corporation wished to leave no stone unturned to reveal and advertise the Soultrait Symbol Auction all over the Tritan Alliance. Simultaneously, Kraft Viton had initiated the establishment of the Soul Technique Department, a facility that was fully focused on mass-producing the Soul Energy Fusion, and Neutral Soul Techniques. Kraft Viton was still searching for trusted workers with suitable Soultraits and techniques to mass-produce the Soul Energy Fusion techniques flawlessly, but it was only a matter of time before the mass production would start. By the time the products rolled out in the shops all over the Tritan Alliance's lands, Michael should have finished creating several Neutral Common Soul Techniques.

For now, Michael had to deal with other things. Kraft Viton was good enough at his job to leave him be. On the contrary, Michael had yet to start one of the most important tasks as a Lord. He was about to accept the first Humans, Berserkers, and Warlock Centaurs into his territory.

Obviously, Michael wouldn't allow some random strangers to barge into his territory. Hence, he held a meeting for all Awakened who desired to join his territory as his subordinates.

The meeting was held in one of the large ancient halls in the center of the ancient city. Michael received permission to use the hall for the meeting as it played a vital role in the future of Michael's territory, and the relationship between Humans, Berserkers, and Warlock Centaurs. The only condition Michael had to fulfill in exchange for the permission to use one of the ancient halls was...to allow a representative of each race to attend it.

Michael was against this, at first, but later could see where the War Priestess and the Chieftain were coming from. None of the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs who openly revealed their willingness to join Michael's territory had been subordinates to another Lord before. Forget becoming the subordinate of a human Lord, they hadn't even considered obeying the commands of other young Berserkers and Warlock Centaur in their lives. Hence, becoming a human's subordinate was an alien concept for the young Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs. Only tomes about the ancient history of the Berserkers revealed snippets of something similar happening in the distant past.

At the end of the day, Michael agreed that it was better to give a representative of each Race the chance to convey possible issues. It might cause some scuffles but the long-term results would be far better. With that in mind, the meeting was held the next day.

"First of all, I want to greet everyone to the meeting. As you all might know, this little meeting is being held to determine whether you guys are suitable to become my subordinates, and if I meet your expectations as your potential Lord," Michael started the meeting with a rather simple introduction, "Let me present myself once again. I'm Michael Fang, I will turn 19 years old in a few weeks, and I'm a Tier-3 Lord at the Lowest rank."

Michael's vibrant golden eyes traveled through the large ancient hall once he finished his introduction. He observed the reaction of the Adventurers around him and raised an eyebrow.

More than a hundred Adventurers were present, most of them being Warlock Centaurs and Berserkers. This was not unexpected for Michael since they were currently in the ancient capital of the Warlock Centaurs and Berserkers. The humans that managed to reach the ancient capital were all participants of the Flag War, and most probably either Descendants or prodigies who'd been picked up and trained by other households.

"Dimitriv Ruchco, Lamia Lumia, Yves Welt..." Michael listed out a total of 31 Awakened, the vast majority being human Descendants, before his gaze stopped on Kaleb Zenovia, "...and Kaleb Zenovia. Everyone I called out just now...leave before I add you to my blacklist!"

A commotion rang through the ancient hall. Even the War Priestess raised her eyebrow. Four of the names Michael had just mentioned were Warlock Centaurs.

A young Descendant, probably around Michael's age, leaped up and pointed at Michael.

"Why the hell should we leave? We cleared our schedule to attend in this idiotic meeting. I showed you more than enough respect. How about you learn from me, and everyone else, instead of acting like an all-mighty little child?!"

Following the example of their short-tempered friend, a bunch of Descendants leaped up and complained as well. However, that was all they did.

'Barking dogs don't bite. What an apt saying!' Michael thought, observing the barking Descendants. They pointed fingers at him and raised their voices, but the words escaping their lips were nothing but hot air.

Michael shook his head, a light chuckle escaping his lips. As he observed the Awakened participating in the meeting, he noticed something that made him call out a bunch of them. First of all, the majority of the names he'd called out were disinterested. They were clearly not interested in becoming Michael's subordinates. There was no reason for them to be at this meeting if they didn't even want to listen to his words.

Meanwhile, other participants were Lords. Lords couldn't become the subordinates of other Lords. Their powers as Lords would clash, slowly destroying each other, or consuming the weaker Lord. That meant these participants were not here to become his subordinates either. On the other hand, there were also Heirs and a bunch of highly talented Descendants, the most talented children of their families. Obviously, their families wouldn't want them to become Michael's subordinates either.

A single glance was all Michael needed to pinpoint those who were unwilling to become his subordinates from the vast crowd in the jam-packed hall. Most of them were humans, and their intention to attend in the conference was quite obvious. They were trying to get closer to him in the private setting of the meeting.

"If I blacklist you and your families, neither of you will be able to purchase Soultraits, or Soul Techniques. I mean...if you don't care about getting blacklisted feel free to stay. I won't take responsibility for your families' reactions though. That's your headache, not mine." Michael scoffed. He cursed silently in his

heart. Why the hell were they even here if they were not interested in becoming his subordinates? Was he an entertainment program or what?

Some Descendants cursed, whereas others frowned. Nonetheless, they got up from their chairs and headed to the door to depart. No matter how confident they were in their family's influence, they couldn't afford to get blacklisted from purchasing Soul Techniques and Soultraits. Their families would execute them publicly to pacify Michael and revoke their names from the blacklist.

The thought alone was enough to make them shudder. They hurriedly left the ancient hall without a backward glance.

This included a few Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs who weren't actually interested in becoming Michael's subordinates. All they desired was the power Michael could grant them through customized Soul Techniques and Soultraits.

As the number of Awakened in the room decreased, Michael diverted his concentrate to Kaleb, who didn't move an inch.

"Me too?" Kaleb asked, staring at Michael with puppy eyes, his lips turning downward.

"Isn't that obvious!" Michael asked, pointing to the door. "Go!"

Chapter 533 Meeting II

The meeting started for good and it didn't take long before more Awakened left the meeting hall. Even some of those who Michael didn't notice earlier, decided to leave. They realized that Michael was not a suitable Lord for them. They wanted to become Michael's subordinate to procure Soultraits and Soul Techniques from him, to grow stronger by utilizing Michael's influence.

There was nothing wrong with that approach. It was the way of a mercenary- To work and fight in exchange for wealth, connections and influence. It was a temporary aspect, not permanent. However, that was not what Michael wanted. Michael wanted subordinates who stayed with him until death separated them.

Michael made it clear that if he started to invest his Soultraits and SoulStar Fragments into his subordinates, they would have to stay with him permanently. That was one of the conditions he wouldn't change no matter what happened.

If they desired to leave after he granted them several Soultraits, Soul Techniques, and whatnot, they would have to pay the price. Michael was not a charity.

Michael realized that the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs respected him, but it was also quite evident that they didn't like the prospect of being tied to him permanently. At least, they wanted options to choose from.

"How about you tell us more about your territory and the current situation in and around your territory?" The Chieftain asked, trying to steer the meeting in the right direction. "Revealing more information about your territory would help everyone assess the situation and danger of becoming your subordinates. The details will also affect the clauses in the final contract."

Initially, Michael intended to hold the meeting to investigate the applicants. He totally forgot that both parties would place their demands and conditions. The Awakened who would accept his proposal wouldn't work for him for free. That was only obvious. They wouldn't want to endanger their lives without getting paid. The Awakened were not a charity either, after all!

"That seems only fair. I don't want to be accused later, either way," Michael responded lightly.

He didn't see a reason to lie about his territory. Michael didn't have to hide much, other than the fact that he owned an extremely old ancient ruin. Michael was unwilling to reveal the existence of the Temple of the Forgotten in the Underground Forging Hall. Outsiders didn't have to know about the Temple of the Forgotten. The same applied to the being that resided underneath his territory. Michael didn't even know what kind of being resided beneath the home of the Elementals.

"My territory is located in a humongous region called, Untamed Jungle. I've been living in the outskirts of the Untamed Jungle near a Native Empire called Zentika Empire, and a large Savannah Region. The growth of flora and fauna in the Untamed Jungle is extremely fast, resulting in periodical cullings to maintain the monster population. The vast majority of Monsters are at the Peak of Tier-1, and Tier-2. However, the strength of monsters increases as we venture deeper into the Untamed Jungle..."

At some point, Michael began to talk more in detail about his enemies. He revealed his conflict with the Zentika Empire and the fact that they were at war with another Lord on the opposite side of the Zentika Empire. Michael talked about the regional warfare in the Savannah region as well. There was no need to hide that he was in contact with the Trilance and that he considered helping them out at a later point in time.

Michael didn't shy away from talking about the Mythic Serpent and other necessary information either. He felt that it was only fair to share a considerable amount of information with candidates, who might become his subordinates in the near future. Michael talked about the Forest Elves as well and the fact that he has already given them Soultraits. He even revealed that most of the land in the Untamed Jungle was now home to monsters after he eliminated the Kitsun Lord.

Once Michael finished speaking about the Elemental Empress and her setting up her own society in his territory, everyone stared at Michael with a mix of confusion, excitement, and disbelief.

Even the War Priestess and Chieftain had gotten interested in Michael's story-telling at some point and everybody maintained a pin-drop silence. The only noise in the silent hall was that of Michael. The Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs, who had considered leaving the meeting, stayed behind and listened intently until Michael was done.

From Michael's explanations, it was obvious that his territory was overflowing with fierce battles and deadly wars. It was no wonder he advanced to Tier-3 less than one year after manifesting his War Rune. His territory was a treasure trove of resources, energy, and battles. It was...great!

Wars and deadly battles were exactly what the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs wanted. Nonetheless, they required more information to ensure that they wouldn't fight battles they were certain to lose. Nobody wanted to die a useless death.

The Warlock Centaurs and Berserkers began to gossip among each other. Even the Chieftain and War Priestess joined their conversation now and then. Michael didn't say anything and let them murmur all they wanted. He listened and came up with a few ideas and ways to alter the contracts he had in mind. The contracts ought to create a win-win situation. That way his subordinates would be satisfied and happier, resulting in a stronger Link of Loyalty and better camaraderie among his combatants.

It took a while before the gossip ceased. Michael used the opportunity to reveal information about the trial he came up with, or multiple trials to be precise.

"First of all, I desire to make sure that everyone present understands that it will be necessary to endorse a Soul Pact if you're going to become my subordinates. A Link of Loyalty is not enough for me. The reasons should be obvious enough," Michael announced and everyone else nodded. Some asked about the conditions and clauses of the Soul Pact to which Michael responded by manifesting a holographic screen with the details of the Soul Pact he had in mind.

Some clauses could be altered but others mentioned a few points that Michael didn't want to alter no matter what happened.

"Other than that, I'll interrogate everyone present one by one. I forwarded a file with a few dozen questions to each of you. Answer all questions honestly before you send the files back to me. The questions are pretty simple but don't even think about lying to me. If you don't want to reveal something, leave the answer empty instead of spouting nonsense."

Michael mentioned the interrogation but he didn't reveal what exactly he was going to do. But it was quite simple, and easy to tell. Michael would use the file of questions and answers to question the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs.

He would use Mind Reader which he would further reinforce with several layers of Enhancement to interrogate them and find out whether their answers were nothing but the truth, or if they tried lying to him. The power of Enhanced Mind Reader was potent enough to control the thoughts of the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs.

Peak Tier-3 Awakened might be capable of resisting his control to a certain extent, but if they were unwilling to undergo the interrogation, Michael would reject their application at once. He couldn't trust someone with his life if they were unwilling to let him read their minds.

Some might consider that a little bit over the top and an invasion of their privacy, but Michael had a bad feeling about accepting people into his territory without a full-blown interrogation. He had heard too many rumors and news about the betrayal of Adventurers to take this lightheartedly.

With that in mind, Michael spent the next four hours discussing the Soul Pact's clauses, conditions, and demands with his potential soon-to-be subordinates before they underwent the interrogation. After almost eight hours, the meeting was about to end. Everyone was tired of talking about the Soul Pact and

the interrogation. It was far additional taxing on the mind than training the body or fighting powerful enemies over a few hours.

Most Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs would much rather fight some powerhouses instead of wasting their time talking about contracts and undergoing interrogation. Nonetheless, Michael and the Leaders of the Tritan Alliance deemed all of it necessary. It was necessary to talk about the contracts and investigate future subordinates to ensure their loyalty. There was nothing wrong with that.

At the finish of the day, there were only around 30 applicants left. However, that was a lot additional than Michael expected from the first batch of applications. He was certain that he would be departed with less than five Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs by now. Interestingly enough, more Awakened went through the entire tiresome interrogation than he could have hoped for.

However, one thing was certain- Everyone hoped that Michael could help them gain honor for their races and families. They sincerely hoped that Michael could help them grow stronger whether it was by participating in large-scale wars in the Untamed Jungle, or by supplying them with Soul Techniques and Soultraits.

They desired to obtain honor and glory...and to be useful for their people.

Michael was glad to have met the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs. He remembered Danny's wise words that he'd told him in the past- We might feel closer to other races than humans at some point in time. That didn't seem too far-fetched in Michael's opinion.

He didn't hate mankind, but he took a liking to the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs as a whole. The two Races were additional honorable and far less treacherous than the vast majority of the human race.

But, of course, there were exceptions. Every race had some black sheep.

Chapter 534 Getting To Know

It was already evening by the time the meeting reached its end. Michael got to know the potential candidates who would likely become his subordinates, and they learned a lot about Michael, his territory, and his situation in the Origin Expanse.

The news was quite shocking since Michael's territory was in an unknown region with only a handful of Lords in his vicinity, yet his territory and people were in constant danger.

Only 30ish Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs, in addition to two Descendants with non-combat Soultraits, were left in the hall. The remaining candidates decided against joining Michael's mission. Their minds and thought process didn't align. Therefore, it was better to go their separate ways.

Michael's eyes lingered on the two Descendants, who stayed behind. He didn't expect any Descendant to be willing to join his territory after showing them the Soul Pact and forcing everyone to undergo a thorough interrogation. Most Descendants left at that point, leaving only those two behind. They were older than Michael, but also at Tier-3, the Lowest rank. The two Descendants possessed non-combat Soultraits and they lost their territories a while ago, therefore, losing the attention of their families.

"I don't know how the other Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs see this, but I would love to see you fight. My friends told me to leave because you're dependant on your Soultraits and that your actual combat prowess is rather low," One of the Descendants, a young woman, said, "I know that you don't possess an Inheritance Technique, but I don't believe that you're weak without your Soultraits. My Soultrait tells me that my friends are wrong...but they..."

"They don't believe you," Michael completed her sentence, offering her a small smile, "You're Rebecca Zaubers, right? We met in the Flag War."

Rebecca Zaubers nodded faintly, not daring to look into Michael's eyes.

"If I remember correctly, your Soultrait is called Greater Analysis which is an inheritable Soultrait. However, your version of Greater Analysis has mutated, which is why your family's Inheritance Technique, Perfect Appraisal, works a little bit differently on you. Is that correct?"

Rebecca nodded her head once again.

Michael retrieved the questionnaire Rebecca had filled out beforehand and read through it once again. He searched for the question [Why do you want to become my subordinate?], and read her answer once again.

'Her family disregarded her after she lost her territory. However, Rebecca ignored that because her territory was not important to her. All she desired was to pursue her research. Rebecca wants to continue researching in my territory...That could be interesting.'

Michael had requested a basic information sheet from every participant of the meeting. Therefore, Michael knew that Rebecca had been researching Soul Techniques and the Tekur for quite a while. Her main goal had been to collect information about the Tekur to find out why they were so strong and if there were ways to replicate their path to acquire strength. She wanted to help the Tritan Alliance grow stronger through her research.

That was a praiseworthy goal, and something Michael adored quite a lot.

"I'm happy that you're still here with me. Since you're not an Adventurer with combat abilities, we will have to find out what you can do to help me and my territory prosper, but I don't think that will be an issue. Research is very important, and I hope we can exchange our knowledge to create miracles," Michael said to Rebecca. The words sounded a bit cringe-worthy, but he ignored the embarrassment he felt and turned to the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs.

"I planned to hold a small sparring session after the meeting, either way. It's important to get to know each other properly, don't you guys think so?" Michael asked, his eyes glowing vibrantly.

The easiest way to get to know a Berserker and Warlock Centaur was not through communication or through their stomachs. No. It was by fighting them. A Berserker's and Warlock Centaur's true personality was exposed through their fighting style, their attitude in battle, and the way they treated victories and losses.

There were other factors as well, but Michael understood the importance of getting to know everyone before he would allow them into his territory. It was important to ensure that all parties involved would be satisfied and that no further problems would occur in the future.

"FIGHT!" The Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs bellowed, raising their arms high in the air. Their cheers resounded through the entire ancient hall, resulting in faint smiles blossoming on the Chieftain and War Priestess' faces.

"We will act as your referees. Go all out. We will not interfere as long as no lives are in danger," The Chieftain announced, resulting in another eruption of cheers.

The official discussions of the meeting ended just like that. From the initial pool of 130ish candidates who were interested in becoming Michael's subordinates, only 33 were left. That was still more than Michael expected from the first batch of applicants, but he believed the number would decrease further in the next few hours.

Small groups formed as the small crowd of Awakened followed the Chieftain and the War Priestess to one of the smaller Colosseums in the ancient city. Thaor, Lokai, and Mekhaz arrived next to Michael, and they occupied him until they arrived at the Colosseum. Rebecca Zaubert wanted to talk to Michael about Soul Techniques, but she could only stare at the towering Berserkers and the Warlock Centaur with quivering eyes.

Michael gave her an apologetic look but he decided to talk to his friends instead of giving them any excuses. He could have a long chat with Rebecca later. It was not as if they were in a rush, either way.

Zeron Polik joined his conversation with Thaor, Lokai, and Mekhaz as well. He was thankful to Michael for giving him an opportunity to show that he was worthy of becoming a Warrior in Michael's territory. Zeron Polik was very excited to work closely with his Lord. Michael didn't expect that if he was to be honest. However, he didn't expect his friends to be eager to join his territory either. Thaor, Lokai, and Mekhaz had applied to become his subordinates.

It felt a little bit weird seeing them seated among the other applicants, but Michael was also quite happy. They decided to join him and his mission. That was great!

The only downside was that Mekhaz lost his territory, therefore also temporarily losing his Champion status. Michael had been quite confused while wondering how Mekhaz must have lost his territory. After all, he was still a Lord when they entered the Interdimensional Flag War.

"I know that look in your eyes. It's pretty simple," Mekhaz explained, "I was pulled out of the Flag War when the Talatan attacked my territory. They were stronger and much higher in number, resulting in a devastating loss. In my opinion, I did a great job decimating the vast majority of the enemy's army, but they had too many advantages, including the element of surprise.

My people, and I, didn't even know that a race such as the Talatan had claimed a territory nearby. We were bulldozed and we barely survived. It was a shame, though I'm glad that all Awakened under me returned home safely. No Awakened working for me died, though that resulted in a loss of honor and the merits we'd accumulated for years..."

On the outside, Mekhaz didn't seem too shaken by the loss of his territory. He was quite open about his disability to act as a Lord. He was more used to fighting at the front lines without the need to bother about providing commands to his subordinates. Nonetheless, the loss of his territory created various issues.

Mekhaz lost majority of the honor he'd acquired throughout his time as a Lord, and the Awakened working for him were blamed for returning without having sustained any major injuries. It looked like they had fled from the battlefield like cowards.

Mekhaz and his subordinates wanted to regain their honor, and Michael provided the best opportunity to make this happen.

"How many applicants are your former subordinates?" Michael asked, not further drilling into Mekhaz's wounds. He was curious about the Talatan, their powers and such, but he could tell that Mekhaz was trying hard to not show how much the devastating defeat he and his individuals had suffered affected him.

"More than a dozen of the remaining applicants are my former Awakened. I vouch for their loyalty, though I believe that you will test that on your own," Mekhaz answered, not trying to push his former subordinates upon him. He understood that Michael will have to get to know his future subordinates on his own. "Using the Interrogation with your mind reading Soultrait was a good decision. However, that also means you have to return the favor by providing your all in the spar. You obtained to know our secrets by reading our minds, so you will have to reveal your true self in the battle against us!"

Michael raised an eyebrow, and glanced at the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs behind him. They were listening to the chat he had with his friends.

"Actually, I wanted to show you how strong I am without the use of a single Soultrait. I cannot remove the passive boosts of Spirit Eyes, or Superior Constitution, but I think it's necessary to demonstrate to everyone that I'm not a pushover without my Soultraits," Michael responded.

None of the applicants was at the Peak of Tier-3. Lokai, at the Mid rank of Tier-3, was actually among the highest-ranked applicants in the first batch, followed by Mekhaz and two former subordinates. The Descendants were too rather talented, but they were not combatants.

"You want a Soultraitless fight? That sounds even so better!" Thaor exclaimed, his eyes brimming with energy, and the Crimson Aura of his unique constitution oozing out of the pores all over his body.

Chapter 535 Soulless Fight

Michael's first fight was against Thaor. The Berserker was curious to find out how much stronger Michael had grown after advancing to Tier-3.

Thaor was still at the Peak of Tier-2, and there was just a thin line separating him from reaching Tier-3 as well. All he had to do was cross the small hurdle and he would be a Tier-3 Awakened. However, that small gap indicated a major difference in strength. Every breakthrough to the next Tier led to a massive surge of strength.

Michael ought to be much stronger than Thaor, however Thaor was in possession of a Unique Constitution. It didn't count as a Soultrait, allowing him to use Crimson Aura in a Soulless Fight.

Of course, Michael had his own advantages. Superior Constitution strengthened his entire being tremendously even if he actively didn't do anything. It was a Soultrait that refined his entire being passively, elevating his natural strength, speed, and every other characteristic of his body to the next level. Spirit Eyes was similar. It had a powerful passive effect that enhanced his eyes significantly.

Last but not least, all 6-Star Soultraits enhanced one's physique to a certain degree. He was not as strong as an Awakened at the Peak of Tier-3 in terms of physical strength, but the gap was not as big as one may expect.

"Are you guys ready?" The Chieftain asked Thaor and Michael. The two combatants stood in the combat ring of the Colosseum, surrounded by dozens of spectators, who came to watch Michael's spars.

Thaor summoned Glove Artifacts, a Helmet Artifact and a complementary leather armor set. None of the Artifacts looked overly impressive at the first glance but Michael's Spirit Eyes detected some energy

fluctuations within the Artifacts. The energy fluctuations circulated through Thaor's body and connected to the other Artifacts.

'A Set of Artifacts? That's quite rare.' Michael realized, his body tensing up a little. It was possible to create custom Sets of Artifacts. These Sets connected the Artifacts and amplified their power drastically. The more pieces of a Set were combined, the stronger the Set's effects.

Possessing three Artifacts of the same Set was already quite rare. Even if their star-rating might not be that high, the effect of the Set increased their star rating passively.

Most Sets were creations of the Will of the Origin Expanse as only few races possessed enough knowledge to create their own sets. Thaor had been lucky to collect three Natural Artifacts with a highly potent Set effect that enhanced his Unique Constitution.

A thick hue of Crimson Aura coated Thaor's body, however, Thaor was not yet done. A minor portion of the Crimson Aura remained outside his body, tightly pressing against him to act as a second layer of skin, whereas the majority of Crimson Aura seeped into his hide. The Crimson Aura merged into Thaor. His skin tore apart and a burst of blood gushed out of him. A pained groan escaped his lips, but Thaor endured it all. His eyes dyed crimson, and he stared ferociously at Michael.

"I take that as a yes," The Chieftain said, his eyes traveling to Michael, who'd already summoned Aethyr in Spear form. His Spirit Armor Set and the Legendary Ring Artifact had been manifested as well. Michael was ready to fight.

He adjusted his stance slightly and stared at Thaor with full focus, patiently waiting for the Chieftain to give the signal.

"Everyone ready? Yes. Alright." The Chieftain asked rhetorically before he started the battle unceremoniously.

"Let the battle begin!"

Thaor kicked the ground with great force as the Chieftain's words resounded through the Colosseum. He burst forth with explosive strength and speed and arrived in front of Michael in an instant. The Crimson

Aura around his fists expanded as he unleashed a flurry of blows. Michael's eyes and body followed the flurry of punches, the Aethyr Spear whirling through the air magnificently. Michael blocked the attacks with minimal force, lightly pushing the Aethyr Spear against Thaor's humongous fists.

The Aethyr Spear couldn't cut through the thick layer of Crimson Aura that tightly enveloped Thaor's fists, but Michael saw through Spirit Eyes' natural strengthening that Thaor had to use a large amount of energy and Crimson Aura to maintain his defense. Each impact of the Spear strike destroyed a small portion of Thaor's Crimson Aura. Thaor was aware of that and he accepted it with a shrug. If he had to sacrifice some of his Crimson Aura to get in Michael's attack range...so be it.

Once Thaor was close enough, a surge of Crimson Aura erupted from within him. The thick layer of Crimson Aura coating his hands transformed into claws that reached out for Michael's throat. Thaor's change in tactic was sudden and unexpected. The spectators didn't know that Thaor could fight like this. He was clearly stronger than some Tier-3 Awakened. However, Michael evaded Thaor's claws with great ease.

From the outside, it looked like Thaor missed him by a hair's breadth, but Michael's movements were calculated with great precision. He retracted Aethyr and manifested it around his feet. Long blades shot out of his soles as Michael twisted his body and kicked upward. Thaor's claw missed his throat narrowly, yet his kick impacted. The Aethyr blades pierced through Thaor's Crimson Aura and cut deep into his flesh. Blood splattered on the ground and Thaor groaned in pain.

Thaor grit his teeth and suppressed the pain spreading through his legs. However, it was already too late. Michael was on the move. He retracted a portion of Aethyr, leaving the rest to coat his boots, whereas the remaining portion of Aethyr transformed into lengthy claws that grew from his knuckles. Michael kicked the ground, lowered his body, and clawed Thaor. It was about time that he changed his fighting style from defense to attack.

Spirit Eyes' natural enhancement allowed Michael to see the energy and Crimson Aura within Thaor. He could see the energy and Crimson Aura circulate through his body and follow its trajectory. It was also not difficult to see the smallest movements in Thaor's muscles. Every move of Thaor was laid out in the wide open for Michael to see. All Michael had to do was sort the movements of Thaor's muscles, energy, and Crimson Aura to connect it to his movement pattern.

That required some time, and it would have taken much longer if the external enhancement of the Legendary Ring Artifact hadn't focused on reinforcing his mind-related abilities. Luckily, Michael was multitasking. He analyzed Thaor's fighting style, his power level, and his next movements, while simultaneously inflicting a wide variety of injuries all over his body.

Every kick issued was either reinforced with Aethyr blades shooting out of his soles, or Aethyr solidifying around his boots, increasing the destructive force of his kick. The same happened to the Aethyr shrouding his hands. A few times, Michael transformed the Aethyr Claws into hardened gloves to smash Thaor's face. Then he transformed the Aethyr Gloves into a sword to inflict a long gash all over Thaor's body.

The sole reason why he was still alive and why the Chieftain hadn't intercepted yet was Thaor's Crimson Aura. It not only enhanced his assault power and defense, but it also accelerated his natural regeneration drastically. The vast majority of Michael's attacks inflicted minor wounds. The injuries were tended to rapidly, allowing Thaor to counterattack with Crimson energy and brute force.

Instead of following traditional combat styles like most Awakened, Michael made use of the countless memories he had collected over the last year. The combat experience he acquired through the Memory Orbs was worth several decades if not centuries. Some memories showed similar combat styles, but the vast majority of combat styles executed by the former owners of the memories used special techniques, whether it was Inheritance Techniques, Racial Techniques, or Basic Martial Arts.

Michael learned everything from their Memory Orbs and he found himself imitating certain fight styles, only to end up switching in-between their combat styles to gradually adapt himself to his enemies' fighting style.

Michael didn't have the time to study all Martial Arts and organize every single memory he'd obtained over the last year, but he progressed rapidly. His progress amid deadly fights was the highest. While fighting, his full focus was pulled toward combat, drastically increasing his understanding of particular techniques and ways to resist his enemy that would otherwise take hours if he tried to simply read.

That was what Michael was trying to do right now. He was trying to counter Thaor's Crimson Aura. He could execute large attacks to finish Thaor with a few sweeps but Michael understood that larger attacks exposed his openings. Thaor willingly revealed a handful of his weaknesses to pull Michael closer to him, attempting to finish him with a few strikes. However, Michael didn't allow that. He went against his instincts and kept a distance to Thaor, only attacking him with swift attacks that inflicted minor damage.

The cumulative damage caused by his weaker, rapid attacks seemed nonexistent but Michael knew better. Thaor looked perfectly fine on the surface but his Crimson energy was about to be sucked dry.

That was also why Michael changed his attack pattern once again. He switched to mightier and slower attacks after kicking Thaor twice. The Aethyr all over his body gathered in his hands, forming a thin longsword like Tigerfang. Aethyr Tigerfang soared through the air and impacted where Thaor's Crimson energy was at its weakest. Tigerfang cut through the Crimson Aura in a single go before proceeding to cut deep into his arm.

Tigerfang reached Thaor's bone, and it was only then that Thaor's fist reached Michael's face. However, before Thaor's punch could impact, Michael ducked and manifested a small dagger in his other hand. He dissolved Tigerfang and kicked the ground to jump up. His right hand reached out for Thaor's head while his left held the dagger pressed tightly against his neck.

Michael crushed the Crimson energy coating his neck before lightly cutting the Berserker. If it was a life-and-death warfare Michael could have killed Thaor.

The Chieftain realized the same and he announced the end of his battle. His thunderous voice resounded through the Colosseum.

"Victory goes to Michael!"

In the next moment, a cacophony of cheers and roars rang out.

Chapter 536 Your Choice

Michael didn't hesitate to fight a few more times. After his first spar with Thaor, he felt refreshed and his mind was overflowing with various ideas to improve his fighting style.

It was not the first time that Michael used the memories of those who fell victim to his might, but it was the first time he didn't use his Soultraits while relying on the combat experience and Martial Arts he'd learned through the memories. In this fight he wanted to use Martial Arts and Experiences derived from the memories of the Awakened he killed in the past to make them a part of his own arsenal.

It was already late at night when Michael finished challenging the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs and sparring with them to his heart's content. Michael was very satisfied with the outcome. Right after he dealt with Thaor, Lokai and Mekhaz approached him. They challenged him to a spar which Michael

accepted without a second thought. He fought with his friends and adjusted his fighting style according to their movements and attack pattern.

Under normal circumstances, Michael could analyze his enemies' fighting style in the blink of an eye, but without actively using Spirit Eyes it took a little longer. He had to fight his enemies at a close distance for a few minutes before he could counterattack by utilizing the weak spots in the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs' attack and movement patterns.

It was actually quite interesting to observe his enemies and adapt to their fighting style. The Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs were natural fighters. Their innate talent and combat awareness was great, forcing Michael to change his strategy quite often.

'Daily spars with them while the Immortal Knight gives us pointers would be perfect!' Michael thought, dreaming about growing much stronger without having to use Soultraits.

His Soultraits were his strongest weapons, by far, but he wanted to not rely on them heavily in the near future. Michael was willing to work hard to turn them into tools rather than necessities. At least, that was what Michael was hoping for.

He loved his Soultraits but he didn't want to be dependent on them. That could be dangerous and come to bite back at him when faced with stronger opponents. Michael realized that after seeing how powerful Energy Seal was and how it restrained Alice. Alice Zenovia's combat prowess was reduced drastically after the Energy Seal targeted her. She was unable to tap into the energy origin residing inside her. It was impossible for her to use her Soultrait, or her Martial Arts since most required energy to be utilized properly.

If Energy Seal was already so powerful against Alice, Michael could only imagine how severe the effect would be if Energy Seal was used against him. Soultraits like Energy Seal were Michael's worst nightmare.

"It would be easier to find a Soultrait that can reverse a Soultrait's effect. But where am I going to find something like that?" Michael asked himself quietly before parting ways with the Subordinate applicants.

Some applicants asked why Michael didn't finish the signing process today, however, Michael's answer was ambiguous. No one was given an early-access pass to sign a Soul Pact, and establish their Link of Loyalty with Michael.

Instead, everyone was given some time to rethink their decision. Michael didn't want to rush anything. He hoped that the applicants could think about their decision thoroughly. Becoming his subordinate would turn into a lifelong commitment in most cases, after all.

As everyone returned to their rooms, Michael heard the sound of muffled footsteps behind him. He halted in his tracks and saw that the War Priestess and the Chieftain had been following him. They weren't skilled stalkers, but it was not like they were required to follow him stealthily.

"Are you busy?" The Chieftain asked his tone a notch more serious than before.

"I have no appointments if that's what you mean," Michael responded, wondering if it was even possible not to be busy as a Lord. He had so many tasks on his to-do list that he wondered whether he could complete all of them soon, or if the to-do list would expand faster than he could finish the tasks.

The War Priestess scoffed, "In that case, do you want to assign a punishment to the Lords who attacked you? We cut their energy veins but the Tritan Council is divided about their punishment. Some say that removing their energy veins will be torturous enough to count as their punishment. Others, however, want to crush their War Rune and imprison them for life. There is also a third group that wants to execute the Lords publicly to make a clear public statement."

"The latter is a punishment for your sake. By killing the Lords who attempted to kidnap you, the Tritan Alliance demonstrates that they're on your side and that we have no tolerance for attempts to harm you in any way," The Chieftain added, making it clear that he was one of the people who voted for the third form of punishment.

"The Tritan Council must be torn," Michael mumbled, guessing that neither of the choices gotten the majority of votes, meaning that the Tritan Council couldn't act merely yet.

"Because we didn't procure the majority of votes, we started a second voting with a fourth choice; to give you the right to decide their punishment. Many were displeased with this proposal, but it appears like some seats in the Tritan Council are curious about your attitude towards these Lords."

Michael fell into deep thoughts. He didn't expect to receive such an opportunity, but the answer was easy. It was quite obvious what his decision would be...too easy.

"These sly bastards!" Michael cursed quietly.

"So you've noticed." The War Priestess noted without a change in her expression.

"It's not that hard to realize what they want," Michael responded with a dry cough, "They want to see how I procure Soultraits and the logic behind my Power to strengthen Soultraits. Observing and analyzing me while I use my Power is their primary goal. Once they know how I use my Power, they'll try to make use of the information to strike deals with me, probably."

"That roughly sums it up. Yup."

Michael licked his lower lip, and the corner of his lip curled upward.

"Okay. I made my decision," He said, "I want to spend 10 days with the kidnappers in an isolated place with no one else in the room. Just me and the three Lords."

The War Priestess and the Chieftain anticipated this kind of answer from Michael. They didn't believe of Michael as a coward who would ignore such an opportunity. It might be dangerous, but Michael was not a cowardly Lord. He was a True Warrior who destroyed the obstacles that tried to hinder his path and face his enemies head-on.

That was also how Michael ended up in a large isolated room underground within the next two hours. The Council had initially prepared a room for Michael with Beast, Veronica Park, and the third Lord waiting for him patiently. The three Lords were chained to the walls, unable to move an inch. All they could do was glare threateningly at Michael and the Chieftain who left Michael alone in the room made of marbled meteorite ore.

["The Tritan Council has granted you 10 days to complete their punishment. You can do whatever you want. Just keep in mind that we can see and hear you"] The Chieftain's voice rang through the speakers placed in the corners of the room.

Michael didn't have anything against everyone listening to him, but he was a little annoyed that they could see what he was doing. Therefore, he did something to solve that problem. Michael retrieved a few Inferior Energy Stones from his War Rune and crushed them in the next moment. A burst of energy flooded the room and it didn't take long for the tendrils of Extraction to shoot out of Michael and devour the energy that permeated the air.

Once all energy was drained, Michael used 10-layers of Enhancement on the Soultrait Symbol of Extraction. Michael unleashed the Dome of Extraction with a burst, coating the entire room in Extraction's Power at once. It didn't require much effort to pinpoint and differentiate the countless devices that had been installed inside the walls of the isolated building and around it.

Michael extracted the video cameras within seconds before he inserted the Power of Extraction inside the marbled meteorite walls to check if he missed any recording devices. He found a few voice recorders, but Michael ignored them. If someone wanted to listen to the screams of three old Lords over the next 10 days...who was Michael to deny that request?

["What the hell did you do merely now?!?"] The voice of an old man resounded through the isolated room, but Michael just scoffed.

"I'm sorry. It looks like my Soultrait destroyed some devices. I will compensate the Tritan Alliance for the damages."

["No no no. We want to se—"] The voice began, only for Michael to intercept sharply, "There is no issue with the safety measurements, so I'll continue executing the Lords' punishment. Since I've been permitted to do WHATEVER I want, I won't need a nanny to look over me, either way."

["Urgh...okay"]

It was obvious that the old man on the other side of the speakers was not pleased, but Michael did not care. He heard some hushed voices through the speakers, but they turned silent after a while. The Chieftain, or the War Priestess, maybe both, must have intervened, lecturing the old human powerhouses that it was their idea to give Michael full authority about everything related to the punishment.

It was not Michael's fault that they failed to trick him.

Michael smiled and diverted his focus back to the three Lords.

However, before he started with their punishment, Michael unleashed Glacicle to freeze the marbled meteorite walls, covering the wall with a thick layer of Glacicle.

'Safety first.' He mumbled, only to break into a smile when a flood of curses reached him through the speakers.

"You should turn off the microphone if you don't want me to hear you cursing me!" Michael advised, a vibrant smile covering his face.

Chapter 537 Image

Now that Michael had no more people spying on his work and power, he felt much better. He was alone with Beast, Veronica Park and the Lord with the Energy Seal Soultrait, and since their energy veins had already been severed, they weren't dangerous either.

Michael was not worried that they could harm him anymore. Therefore, he retrieved dozens of Inferior Energy Stones which he placed around himself. Following that, tendrils of Extraction shot out of his body. They tapped into the highly compressed energy within the Inferior Energy Stones and drained it slowly. As a result, Michael's energy storage was filled to the brim.

He thought about what to do first, but decided to wing it. It didn't really matter with what he started, either way. Thus, Michael inserted traces of Extraction into the minds of the three Lords before he used Mind Reader to read their minds.

[LEAVE ME ALONE! GO AWAY! DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHO I AM?!?]

Michael regretted using Mind Reader on Veronica Park. Her inner voice was not only extremely shrill and loud but it resounded through his head over and over again. Something like that had never happened before, and Michael was not willing to experience it again. With that in mind, Michael

switched over to extracting the three Lords' treasures. He focused on their Artifacts and the treasures they were hiding in their War Rune's storage space.

Michael was not sure if he could remove their Artifacts while they were still alive, but the screams that filled the room in the following two hours were a clear indicator that it worked. And it was painful. Extremely painful.

The Lords were trying to resist Michael's attempt to extract their War Rune's storage and Artifacts, but they were too weak to fight him. The Investigator who investigated the three Lords' kidnapping attempt had used his Soultrait to poison the minds of the three Lords. Their natural defenses had been corroded and it would require several months of painstaking efforts to reconstruct them. Unfortunately, they weren't given that much time. Michael invaded their minds and bypassed their internal security to use Extraction on them.

All the Lords could do was endure the pain and scream at the top of their lungs until they were too tired to scream. Michael would have felt some pity for them if it was not for the fact that the three Lords considered him a mere asset. They would have done even worse things to him if they had succeeded in their attempt to abduct him. He would have been tortured and held captive until the end of time to act as their personal Soultrait Creator and Soultrait strengthening device.

Michael was angry, and he wanted everyone to learn about his wrath. He continued extracting one Artifact after another. Michael didn't stop even after Extraction notified him that there were no more Artifacts to extract. All Michael did was switch to extracting the three Lords' treasures, not minding their shrill cries.

Michael didn't even take a single glance at the Artifacts he'd extracted. He stored them away and continued to invade the three Lords' War Runes to extract their Common Energy Stones, the tomes about their Inheritance Techniques, their Martial Arts and countless other treasures that had been stored in their War Rune.

After 24 hours passed, Michael resolved to take a short break. He glanced at the mountains of loot he'd extracted from the three Lords and inspected them for a while.

All the while, Michael heard some faint whispers through the speakers. Someone must have forgotten to turn off the microphone – once again.

["What the hell is going on inside? Is Michael a monster or what?!"] One of the older men asked, his voice quivering.

The old man was the same who'd considered Michael as a mere asset before. He was the same person who voted for Michael to be confined for the Tritan Alliance's 'well-being'. Everything he did or suggested was for the sake of the Tritan Alliance according to his words.

However, right now, the old man wanted nothing more but to run away and get into hiding. Michael Fang wouldn't demand his head just because he proposed to confine him for the alliance's sake...right?

["They stopped screaming. Are...they dead already? Maybe...that's for the better. I never liked Veronica but hearing her scream for 24 hours...that's inhuman..."]

The corner of Michael's lip curled upward as he listened to their gossip. Others might think that it would have been better to execute the three Lords publicly. It would have been a public stunt to show that nobody was allowed to touch Michael. However, Michael didn't like that.

The demonstration wouldn't clarify anything. All it would show was that Michael didn't possess the necessary strength to deal with his enemies on his own. It would show that he had to rely on the Tritan Alliance for the next few years until he was strong enough to stand on his own two feet. That was not the message he wanted to give the Tritan Alliance, or more precisely, the High Society.

He didn't want to be seen as a weak man who'd have to rely on the Tritan Alliance to stay safe. Therefore, Michael demonstrated what would happen to the power-hungry wolves of the Tritan Alliance, and High Society if they happened to fall victim to him. He created a private demonstration to show everyone wanting to sneakily learn about his powers that he understood the game as well as what would happen to them if they resolved to make a move against him.

All they could do was hear the three Tier-5 Lords' screams, but that was far more impactful than one may think. Unable to see the three Lords and what happened to them, the spectators outside could only imagine what cruelties Michael committed. They imagined Michael pulling out the Lords' skin and removing their nails one by one before moving on to wait until the high natural regeneration of the Tier-5 Lords would kick in. The Lords' wounds would heal promptly and he could start torturing them from scratch over and over again - not that he planned to do anything other than using Extraction on them, in the first place.

Michael's initial plan had been to ensure that nobody could see how he extracted the Lords' Artifacts, a portion of their War Rune's storage, their Memory Orbs, and SoulStar Fragments, but his innocent plan turned into a nightmarish threat to those who had postponed to decide whom to side with.

Even if Michael told the old fogies to keep the punishment a secret, he was certain that news would spread like wildfire. It would reach High Society in the blink of an eye, and reach every nook and cranny in no time. Michael's image would probably worsen, but that might be for the better. A seed of fear would be instilled in the hearts of those who had regarded kidnapping Michael or thought of him as a pushover.

Meanwhile, Michael calmed down a little bit. He was still angry that some people thought of him as a mere asset – not even a living being – but claiming the three Lords' treasures and Artifacts offered him some respite. It was not that bad to be permitted to do whatever he wanted with the perpetrators.

'Maybe, I should offer the Chieftain, and Alice to act as bait to draw out more idiots. I will offer them a Soultrait and they will protect me in exchange. As long as some idiotic, but powerful, Lords attack me, I'll be able to make a fortune,' Michael imagined, a small daydream forming in his mind.

Of course, it was unlikely that more people would attack him here in the ancient city. The surprise effect of Kraft Viton's trap had been revealed and it was well-known that the Chieftain and War Priestess stayed near to protect him if necessary. The safety measures in the Saphirelake Military Academy would increase drastically as well. That was not only because of Michael, but simply because the Saphirelake Military Academy developed into the trademark academy for the Tritan Alliance.

Too many important Descendants, and prodigies of the Berserker, and Warlock Centaur races would attend the Saphirelake Military Academy from next year. It would turn into a target of the Supreme Human Alliance and dark organizations, therefore, increasing the need for high-quality defensive mechanisms.

'Oh. Their Inheritance Techniques!' Michael nearly blurted aloud as his eyes fell onto the thick tomes. There were Martial Art scrolls as well, but Michael stored them away with little to no interest.

The Common Energy Stones, Artifacts, Martial Arts, and other less interesting treasures were thrown in his War Rune's storage, leaving the Inheritance Techniques behind.

Michael retrieved the three Inheritance Techniques and used Extraction on them. It was a long-winded process but Michael managed to extract Knowledge Wisps for each Inheritance Technique in the following six hours. Michael consumed the Knowledge Wisps and digested the information of the Inheritance Techniques, gaining a lesser understanding and mastery of a few of the Inheritance Techniques.

He learned about the Body Refinement, Mind Refinement, Soul Refinement, Breathing, and Soultrait Mastery techniques, along with Legacy Arts that utilized the mastery of the Inheritance Technique as a whole to unleash the Soultrait's full potential.

Michael couldn't use the Inheritance Techniques but he could pinpoint common points and divide each Inheritance Technique into different portions to study them. It was only a matter of time before Michael could create his own Inheritance Technique.

Michael was looking forward to the creation of his own Inheritance Technique. But he was not going to do the same thing as the other big households. Since he had multiple Soultraits, and the means to create his own Soul Techniques, why should he create the same Inheritance Techniques as these old households?

They were outdated, and it was about time for someone to create something better than the old Inheritance Techniques!

Chapter 538 Jungle Points

Digesting the knowledge contained within the Inheritance Techniques took quite a while. Fortunately, he didn't sustain any backlashes from digesting everything at once. All Michael felt was a light headache as he tried to dissect the Inheritance Techniques before mixing them together.

His knowledge about Inheritance Techniques was not yet enough to blindly separate them and put them together in a different order.

"If I digest a dozen or two dozen Inheritance Techniques it should work...right?" He mumbled to himself, nearly blurting his thoughts aloud.

Michael was fine with the others listening to him torturing the three Lords, but he didn't want to give away anymore secrets about Extraction. Not to the High Society, at least.

Thinking about the three Lords, Michael's focus returned to them at last. Now that he had a minor understanding of their Inheritance Techniques, Michael was curious about their memories as well. They were old Lords, whose age had long surpassed 100 years. As Tier-5 Lords, the vitality infused into their bodies prolonged their lifespan to several hundreds of years. Unfortunately, their age wouldn't be of any help right now. If anything, their vast experiences accumulated over the decades would turn into a burden for them and a treasure trove for him.

Michael was going to extract as much as possible, after all!

He extracted the three Lords' Memory Orbs, as many as possible, and consumed them once he could instinctively feel that no more Memory Orbs could be extracted. The Lords' screams died down once Michael stopped utilizing Extraction to extract their memories. However, the desperation and fear in their screams had been imprinted into the hearts of those who'd continued listening to the happenings in the isolated room for hours, trying to pick up on anything that Michael would accidentally give away.

A few human powerhouses, the Chieftain, the War Priestess and some Elders were still listening, but their faces had paled. No one dared to say a word in the listening room, but the atmosphere grew more intense the more time Michael spent in the isolated room to punish the Lords who wanted to kidnap him.

"This is even worse than a public execution..." One of the human powerhouses mumbled half an hour after the screams filled with desperation died down.

"Is Michael really only 18 years old? How can someone be this...cruel? I understand why he is doing this...but I never expected him to be able to do something like that," One of the Professors of the Sapphirelake Military Academy mumbled. He was not as popular as Oliver Zeus, or as talented as Alice Zenovia, but he was still a renowned Professor. He met Michael a few times and always saw him smiling.

Michael might be a little bit different once he entered combat, but that was when the young Lord entered a fully-focused combat state. It was not uncommon for Lords to have such a state. But...this was different.

"He is not a weak sheep that needs to be herded toward its flock. He is a wolf hiding among sheeps."

Michael couldn't hide his smile when he heard the idiots talk about him. By now, he'd realized that the Chieftain had been keeping tabs on the microphone, ensuring that it was switched on all the time. That was fun.

He ignored most comments and continued to digest the memories that flooded his mind. Fortunately, there was no need for him to rush. Michael spent the next 24 hours eating some of the dishes he'd stored in his War Rune all while digesting every little memory of the three Lords.

Once the memories were sorted and the useless ones put into the trash, Michael smiled in satisfaction. The memories contained generations of combat experience against Higher Lifeforms, years of their practice with the Inheritance Techniques, and various other memories that may or may not be useful. He would have to test out a lot in the future.

After several days of 'torturing' the three Lords, Michael finally moved onto the main dish. He began to derive the Lords SoulStar Fragments and Soultraits all while they were alive.

Once again, screams filled the isolated room. However, Michael was already accustomed to their screams. He didn't enjoy them, but he didn't sense any pity toward the Lords either. They tried to kidnap him and turn a young Lord into a mindless puppet to acquire power and assert dominance all over the Tritan Alliance. If not for the trap Kraft Viton had installed, the three Lords would have killed Alice and thousands of innocent citizens.

There was no need to show any mercy to such people.

The 10 day period Michael had been given to carry out his punishment ended right after he finished his job.

He'd extracted 5624 SoulStar Fragments from the living Tier-5 Lords right before getting hold of their Soultraits. Since Michael had been fully focused on their SoulStar Fragments, their Soultraits turned out to be Starless. Using a few SoulStar Fragments was enough to increase their star rating, but Michael was not willing to make that investment. He preferred keeping the SoulStar Fragments for himself, for the time being.

'55,524 SoulStar Fragments and 76 Soultrait Symbols...that's something I can make use of.' Michael concluded after taking a short glance at the content of the emerald box and the SoulStar Fragments residing in his War Rune.

Spending 10 days with the Tier-5 Lords had been worth it. Michael was rich thanks to their treasury, he procured three Inheritance Techniques, and he got hold of a small fortune of SoulStar Fragments as well. That was perfect.

The only downside was that the three Tier-5 Lords turned into vegetables now that they'd undergone days of continuous torture. Their bodies might not have suffered a lot, but their minds and especially their souls suffered greatly. Despite their current state, which was certainly not great, Michael spent a few minutes extracting a portion of their reminiscences of the last few days.

Michael did not plan to remove their traumatic experiences, but he didn't want anyone to be able to glance into their reminiscences to find out what he had been doing to them, or how Extraction worked.

The three Lords' complexion improved as they lost the memories of the last few days. Nonetheless, there were some lasting damages.

Michael considered that the rightful punishment. He didn't feel an ounce of guilt. If anything, he felt that he could have done more to show everyone that he would never forgive those who harm him, his friends, or innocent people. The three Lords did all of that. They didn't deserve to be alive, not even as vegetables.

Michael opened the door to the isolated room and stretched his body as he stepped outside, ignoring the pitiful groans of the chained Lords behind him.

He saw a few human powerhouses, the Chieftain, and the War Priestess as they left the listening room, but he ignored their pale faces and conflicted expressions. It was good if some of them feared him, a mere Lesser Lifeform. They should fear him, and spread news about his actions, lest anyone would be stupid enough to attack him once again.

Ignoring their gazes, Michael returned to his room. He entered the Origin Expanse and crashed into his bed right away. He spent the next 24 hours sleeping before he left the Origin Expanse once again to deal with the subordinate candidates.

He met up with the subordinate candidates and quickly noticed that five candidates were missing. They decided against joining him at the end of the day. Other Lords would have been dissatisfied about this, but Michael was glad. It was a good thing if those, who were not 100% certain whether they wanted to join him or not, wanted to leave. That made future ordeals much easier.

In the next hours, Michael signed 30 Soul Pacts, Links of Loyalty, NDA Pacts, and some smaller contracts with the remaining subordinate candidates. He enlisted a total of 2 human Descendants, 18 Warlock Centaurs, and 10 Berserkers.

"As I've told everyone beforehand, you guys don't have to get hold of the Tokens of Transportation. I will get hold of them," Michael explained once again before he switched to a different topic, "As many of you might be interested in Soultrait Symbols, or the means to improve your Soultraits' star rating, let me tell you something good. Your first 'purchase' from me will be discounted heavily. That means if you want to purchase a Soultrait Symbol from me, I will sell it to y'all for a much cheaper price than everyone else. All you need is enough Jungle Points."

Michael was met with confusion but he only smiled through it.

"You can purchase whatever you want from me using Jungle Points, also called JP. As written in your Soul Pacts, I can either pay you in your currency, or my territory's currency – Jungle Points. Everything in my market is cheaper if you use Jungle Points. You may only purchase my service and Soultrait Symbols with Jungle Points. I do not need dollars, and I'm capable enough to get hold of Energy Stones as well."

Michael's smile widened when he saw a change in his new subordinates' expressions, "Some of you might sense that I'm taking advantage of you, but think about it. Jungle Points allow you to purchase my service and Soultraits without any surcharge. Jungle Points may not be easy to procure but it's not impossible to afford Soultraits as long as you operate hard."

Michael added his very own merit system, Jungle Points, to ensure that his subordinates would operate hard. Purchasing Soultrait Symbols and his service to upgrade their Soultraits wouldn't be cheap but that was only obvious. The supply of Soultraits and SoulStar Fragments was not infinite. Furthermore, Michael wanted to ensure that a veil of mystery shrouded his Soultrait Symbols and a healthy spirit of competition would take root in the hearts of his subordinates. They should never take anything lightly.

He wanted his Soultrait Symbols to be considered a rarity, and procuring one should be celebrated.

That way, Michael could ensure that his subordinates would always operate hard, and that they would never even think about betraying him.

Chapter 539 Preparations

Most of his new subordinates were Tier-3 Awakened already. The rest were still at the Peak of Tier-2, but they would advance to Tier-3 in the following months. It was all a matter of time.

Most importantly, the combat prowess of his territory had increased significantly. As long as his subordinates adapted to the environment in the Untamed Jungle and procured some Spirit Armaments from the Relic of Draka, his territory wouldn't have to fear an invasion from the enemies around him.

The Zentika Empire was still busy, which left the regional war in the Savannah Region as the main issue. Maybe, Michael could give the Trilance a helping hand in exchange for some amends.

Now that the Links of Loyalty and contracts had been established, the only issue left behind was to procure 30 Tokens of Transportation. That ought to be a pain in the ass for most ordinary Lords, but the same couldn't be said about the Bartholomew Corporation and the vast majority of High Nobles, Supreme Families and Great Clans.

A Token of Transportation was not cheap even for them, but they had the means to procure them on a larger scale, contrary to Michael.

Fortunately, that problem could be solved with money, or plain-old bartering. However, instead of bartering, Michael told Kraft Viton that he would allow all kinds of bids in the Soultrait Symbol Auction. He clarified that each bidder had to bid a minimum of 10 Tokens of Transportation in addition to whatever they wished to bid for the Soultrait Symbols of their choice.

Kraft Viton accepted Michael's request but he altered it a little bit. He requested a list of materials from Michael – a list with all the valuable items he needed. Michael spent two hours coming up with a proper list with specific items, but he ended up adding vague terms as well. It was only obvious that Michael was in need of exotic potion recipes for Higher Lifeforms, high-ranked techniques, Unique Named Scrolls such as 2-Star Instructors, valuable blueprints that existed in limited numbers, Summoning Cores of all ranks, and so on.

Despite being a Tier-3 Lord with the ability to fight those of a higher rank, Michael hadn't been a Lord for a long time. It was not yet a complete year since he manifested his War Rune.

Once Michael finished his list, Kraft Viton changed a few terms for clarity before he forwarded the list to every participant of the Soultrait Symbol Auction.

"This might sound really stupid...but where will you hold the Soultrait Symbol Auction?" Michael asked Kraft Viton at some point. The preparations for the Soultrait Symbol Auction were about to be completed and the date of the event was approaching, but Michael had yet to hear anything about the venue.

"The ancient capital doesn't have an auction house as you may know. Thus, we decided to use the more modern, and anonymous approach for the first Soultrait Symbol Auction. We will do a live-streamed auction in the Colosseum. Whoever wants to be present can come, but it will be easier, and more anonymous if you make your bids online. Only the Bartholomew Corporation will have each bidders' classified information."

Online auctions weren't uncommon. However, Michael didn't expect that such an important auction would be held online. But it did make sense.

The Bartholomew Corporation was in a rush to release the first batch of Soul Energy Fusion techniques. To do so, they needed to pave their way into the minds of every somewhat influential, wealthy Awakened in the Tritan Alliance. Using the Soultrait Symbol Auction to create a network throughout the entire Tritan Alliance was the most efficient way to ensure that their name would linger in the minds of everyone who desired to purchase a Soultrait. Word-of-mouth publicity would do wonders for them.

Every merchant, family, noble, clan, and guild all over the Tritan Alliance would follow the Bartholomew Corporation to never miss out on a second Soultrait Symbol Auction, and it was only a matter of time before they would receive a notification about the appearance of mass-produced Soul Energy Fusion techniques and Neutral Common Class Soul Techniques.

By the time the mass-produced products reached the market, the Bartholomew Corporation would turn into a formidable organization surpassing Olympus' reach and might. At least, that was what the prognosis stated.

"Though, I'm pretty sure that nobody wants to remain anonymous. They will have their family names stated in their account names to show off their wealth. Nobody wants to give away the honor they can gain from purchasing a Soultrait Symbol."

"Honor from purchasing my Soultraits?" Michael asked, not quite certain what the hell that was supposed to mean. Was there honor to be gained from something like that?

"You might not understand this because you're already in possession of various powerful Soultraits, but imagine you have only one more or less powerful Soultrait. Your Soultrait's mastery reached perfection and all you can do is experiment with it, trying to break the Soultrait's natural limitation – for decades, maybe even centuries. All of a sudden, someone appears, offering your Soultrait Symbols and the power to do what you sought for the vast majority of your life. What would you think of it?" Kraft Viton explained, "Of course, it will be an honor for them to gain a new Soultrait, or grasp the opportunity to strengthen their Soultrait, unraveling untapped potential."

"Not only will it be an honor, but it will bring back the joy of life within many old fogies," Kaleb added, experimenting with the Neutral Ice Soul Technique Michael created on a whim.

Kaleb, Alice, Lincoln, Zeke, and a few other friends of Michael were currently in Kraft Viton's office. They were curious about the Soultrait Symbol Auction, which was why Michael told them to come over and listen to Kraft Viton instead.

"These old fogies are probably also the reason why you'll earn a vast fortune, and a huge overpay, for every single Soultrait you're going to sell tonight," Alice said right before pointing at her crystal watch, "Allowing everyone to bid for your Soultraits will be great for you as well. If you were adamant about holding a traditional auction, only a few people would have been able to rush over to the ancient capital, especially human powerhouses. We're in a different Stellar System, after all."

Michael agreed silently. It was much easier to auction his Soultraits in a more modern and hassle-free way, allowing more people to bid for the Soultrait Symbols.

"I suppose that your families will bid for the Soultrait Symbols. Did you come to ask me what types of Soultraits I'm going to sell, and what I decided to give to each race of the Tritan Alliance?" Michael asked, hitting the bulls-eye.

It was not that weird for Kaleb to be here. Michael asked him to test out his newest version of the Ice Bullet. But he was not so sure about the reason for everyone else to arrive with Kaleb. They looked uncomfortable as if they were hiding something. Their attempts to hide the truth were miserable, making them likable. Michael wouldn't want his friends to be good at lying. That was a rather unwelcome talent.

"Our families told us to find out more about the Soultraits you're going to offer...yeah..." Lincoln answered truthfully, his gaze lingering on the ground. All of a sudden, the floor looked so intriguing. Everyone looked down.

"It's fine. I'm not mad," Michael chuckled lightly, "Either way, I'm not going to tell you anything about the Soultraits. That wouldn't be fair."

The others agreed silently with Michael, but they couldn't help but frown. Their elders wouldn't be happy about their failure.

"All I may say is that everyone should prepare to pay a lot. Winning the bid for the Soultrait Symbol won't be the end of the negotiations with me. If anything, it will be a new start."

Michael's words took everyone, except Kraft Viton, by surprise. They stared at Michael in confusion but Michael wasn't willing to say anything else. He'd already revealed more than he appeared supposed to.

At the end of the day, the auctioned Soultrait Symbols were only 1-Star. Their power appeared highly restricted and purchasing them like this wouldn't be that helpful. That was why one had to rely on Michael's service to increase the Soultrait Symbol's star rating right after they'd purchased the Soultrait Symbol.

Michael appeared willing to give a discount to the early birds, who successfully bid for his Soultraits. The discount could allow the bidders to purchase his services to upgrade the purchased Soultrait Symbols to 4-Star. Of course, the price would be hefty, but Michael was willing to generously improve six Soultraits to 4-Star to prove the power of his Soultrait.

Rumors had spread about his power. Most of these rumors were bad, saying that he appeared exaggerating or blatantly lying and that his power didn't exist. Of course, that was nonsense, but

Michael wanted to remove possible issues by plucking out the root of all problems. Furthermore, he could make a fortune by selling the Soultrait Symbols right before offering a discount on his Power-Up service.

It appeared all a commercial stunt to increase the importance of the Soultrait Symbol Auction and guarantee receiving higher bids and more interest from all over the Tritan Alliance.

Michael appeared not a businessman but as the Lord of an expanding territory, he had to learn how to market his products well. He had a lot to study and learn, and it was only fortunate that he had Kraft Viton by his side.

The old man supported him unconditionally, and it looked like he appeared growing younger as he spent more time with an aspiring Lord overflowing with youthful spirit.

"Let's earn a fortune!" Kraft Viton winked at Michael, who broke into a smile.

It appeared about time that the Soultrait Symbol Auction started.

Chapter 540 Soultrait Symbol Auction

"Welcome to the first Soultrait Symbol Auction of the Bartholomew Corporation. We hope that everyone watching the stream is having a pleasant time and that you're as excited for today's event as I am," Kraft Viton introduced himself from the large recording device that managed the livestream all over the Tritan Alliance.

The recording device was empowered with several Monster Cores of Higher Lifeforms, allowing everyone who was interested to connect to the stream.

Kraft Viton smiled at the recording device, ignoring the pairs of eyes that lingered on him. He was a true professional.

Michael and the others decided to attend the Soultrait Symbol Auction in person. They sat down in the spectator rows in the Colosseum and listened to Kraft Viton as he introduced a handful of new items of

the Bartholomew Corporation. He didn't jump to the Soultrait Symbol Auction immediately, and stalled for some time instead. The vast majority of bigshots interested in the Soultrait Symbols had yet to join the livestream, after all.

Kraft Viton introduced various herbs, greens and other plants in the stream. It didn't take a genius to determine that the products shown in the stream came from the Agriculture Project.

Was the Bartholomew Corporation bragging about their successes, or was there some hidden agenda behind this?

Michael presumed that it was the latter but a simple analysis of Kraft Viton's facial features and attitude made it seem like they were bragging. Well, everyone felt the need to brag every now and then. It was fine.

Roughly ten minutes passed since the livestream started when Kraft Viton retrieved a small glass vial containing a large, glowing mass. It was a Soultrait Symbol.

"I think everyone is already tired of listening to my voice, but I hope you can stay tuned for the main event," Kraft Viton said, the corner of his lip curling up, "What I'm holding in my hand is one of the six Soultrait Symbols that will be auctioned today, two for each race as demanded by our 'anonymous' partner."

The tension in the Colosseum intensified as all eyes were drawn to the Soultrait Symbol. Lincoln and some other Descendants jumped up from their seats, their bodies tense, and their left hand grasping their right tightly. Small tendrils of energy emerged from their War Runes. They'd sensed the Soultrait Symbol and desired to devour and fuse with it immediately.

"My War Rune is going crazy..." Kaleb mumbled, breaking into a sweat to prevent the tendrils of energy from shooting out of his War Rune.

"That's normal. War Runes are instinctively drawn to Soultrait Symbols," Michael responded, while easily controlling his War Rune. He suppressed its desire to claim more Soultraits with a mental command and observed Kraft Viton. The old man's War Rune was no different from that of the remaining Awakened. The only difference was that Kraft Viton had received enough time to learn how to control his War Rune's tendrils. He had been exposed to the Soultrait Symbols a few days in advance

than everyone else who was struggling to get their War Rune's under control, other than Michael, of course.

"As everyone should be able to see...my War Rune is going crazy. This is a natural phenomenon, which is directly related to the relationship between Soultraits and War Runes. If you manage to bid for the Soultrait Symbol, you will notice that your War Rune will go crazy for the Soultrait Symbol as well. That I can promise!" Kraft Viton said, trying to sound nonchalant and in control. Unfortunately, that was quite hard with greedy energy tendrils shooting out of his War Rune.

He managed to control his War Rune within the next few seconds and cleared his throat to disperse the traces of embarrassment he felt.

"Let me tell you a little bit about this Soultrait Symbol. First of all, it is a Soultrait Symbol that is going to be auctioned to the human race. However, if a member of the Berserker, or Warlock Centaur race thinks that this Soultrait fits perfectly to them, you may bid as well. But keep in mind that we took every races' fighting style in consideration," Kraft Viton explained, his expression turning serious.

"If you bid for a Soultrait Symbol that was chosen for another race, one of the Soultrait Symbols we've picked for your race will be sold to another race. Therefore, stay cautious while bidding for a Soultrait Symbol that has been reserved for your allies," He added, only to smile brightly once again, "Of course, bidding for the most compatible Soultrait is the most important. This is an auction, and a bidding competition. There is no need to be considerate. Who knows how many years it will take before a second Soultrait Symbol Auction will be held?"

Kraft Viton did an exceptional job playing with fire. He warned everyone that they picked appropriate Soultraits for each race, but enticed the other races to bid for other Soultraits as well. Kraft's declaration was nothing short of war – a bidding war. Michael was not sure if that was the best way to generate more profit, but he trusted the old man. If anyone knew what he was doing...then it was Kraft Viton!

"The first Soultrait traded in today's bid can be classified as a rare Elemental-type Soultrait. Like all Soultraits auctioned in today's special event, it is a 1-Star Soultrait."

Nobody was surprised to hear that the Soultrait was 1-Star. Kraft Viton clarified that before in the notifications he forwarded to every participant of the Soultrait Symbol Auction. He also clarified that they can purchase Michael's service with a discount to upgrade the auctioned Soultraits up to 4 Stars.

"The Soultrait is called [Aquarius] and it's very versatile even as a 1-Star Soultrait. It is a water-attributed Elemental Soultrait that can not only control the water in the surroundings, but also manifest water with energy. It's formless but can take shapes as well. You may use Aquarius to cleanse wounds as an infinite source of water for your territory, or in battle to block attacks by summoning walls of water, or attack via water jets." Kraft took a deliberate pause before continuing,

"The potential uses with Aquarius are near-infinite. All you need to be is...creative. As long as your creativity doesn't die, you will be able to find new uses for Aquarius. If used with other Elemental Soultraits, or other types of Soultraits, you may as well create stronger versions of your respective Soultraits..."

Kraft Viton turned the bid into a detailed lecture about Aquarius' potential uses and its uniqueness among Soultraits until he noticed that the first bids had already begun flooding in.

"Oh! It looks like we've already gotten a few bids while I was busy speaking about Aquarius. It seems like the account with the name [God of Thunder Family] is very curious in this Soultrait. That is certainly an interesting choice," Kraft Viton said, clearly noticing which family the account belonged to. It was obvious.

Another bid entered the chat.

"Zenovia's Glory made another bid with 20 Silver Tokens of Transportation, a vast variety of exotic resources, and a Bronze Egg of Destruction! To think that Zenovia's Glory is willing to exchange the Bronze Egg of Destruction. What a plot twist!"

"We've got another bid. 22 Silver Tokens of Teleportation, all resources mentioned in the list of items in section one, and... a Summoning Scroll Set for a Grandmaster Beastmaster Family! A Summoning Scroll Set! It's very rare to see them! For those who've never heard about Scroll Sets, the Scrolls contain a Set of Summons that is linked to each other. Usually it's a family with a Unique Bloodline. Their unique Bloodline allows them to use special abilities that resemble the powers of Soultraits!"

More bids moved in, but Michael didn't pay much attention to them for long. At first, he was a bit curious in incoming bids, but he quickly noticed that he was growing too excited about certain items, only for more valuable – but less exciting – bids to be made.

He was curious about the Egg of Destruction since he had no idea what exactly the Egg of Destruction was, in the first place. However, the Scroll Set for a family of Beastmasters at the Grandmaster level was far more valuable. The bidding for Aquarius continued for a while until the Zeus family – through the account of the God of Thunder family – made a final bid.

"What a shocking bid! The God of Thunder Family bid 30 Silver Token of Transportation, 25 Intermediate Blueprints of Exotic rarity, 8 Advanced Blueprints, including the blueprint for a Hunter Academy, AND a Bloodline Upgrade Token!"

A Bloodline Upgrade Token possessed the power to upgrade the bloodline of a Summon. It couldn't be used on an Adventurer, or a Lord. But that was ideally fine. It was exceptional if used on an appropriate Summon as it upgraded the Summon's potential alongside his/her bloodline. Depending on the target's latent potential, it was possible that their Star Rating would improve in the future.

However, that was not why Michael valued it so highly. Upgrading a Summon's bloodline was comparable to a transmutation – an evolution. If used on the Immortal Knight, it was possible to heal his wounds, rejuvenate him, and allow him to fulfill his much-awaited dream; to join the battlefield once again.

Michael nodded to Kraft Viton, who noticed his action from the corner of his eye. Maybe other bids would be better for others, but the Bloodline Upgrade Token was of tremendous value for Michael. It was probably more valuable than all the other goods that had been bid alongside...together.

"There are more incoming bids but none of them can rival the God of Thunder Family's bid. It seems like we found a new owner for Aquarius! Please congratulate the God of Thunder family for successfully bidding and receiving the first Soultrait Symbol in today's special event!"

Soft cheers rang through the Colosseum, but nobody was actually glad that the Zeus Family won the bid – other than Michael, of course.

Michael was overjoyed. Using the Bloodline Upgrade Token might add a 6-Star Summon with enhanced potential back onto the battlefield.

How could he not be happy?!