

Supreme Lord 541

Chapter 541 Filthy Rich

The Soultrait Symbol Auction continued. The first Soultrait Symbol for the Berserker race, Ferocious Beast, was presented and sold for a small fortune. The Berserkers didn't hesitate to outbid each other, throwing more treasures into the bidding field one after another. It was as if the Berserkers returned onto a bloody battlefield in the middle of a fierce bidding war.

Michael loved their bids. They seemed reckless at first, but there were precise calculations behind their actions. At first, they wanted to outbid each other to push their foes into a tricky position. Their intention was simple: Everyone wanted to find out each other's bidding limit.

It was not uncommon for families to restrain themselves during auctions. They determined a specific limit before the auction started and wouldn't go above the limit.

The Berserker were the same. There was only one problem; they didn't want to lose. An auction was a war for the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs. The only difference was that they had to bid their valuable treasures instead of fighting with their life on the line.

The Berserkers' bidding for the first Soultrait ended in a massacre. Michael gained mountains of resources, 35 Silver Tokens of Transportation, and 10 Vouchers to create customized Epic Tier-3 Artifacts. The Berserker race was not only known for their love for war, but also for their crazy obsession with weapons. Almost all Berserkers were Master Blacksmiths with enough qualifications as Enchanters to create Ordinary Tier-1 and Tier-2 Artifacts. Customized Epic Tier-3 Artifacts, however, were on a whole different level.

Grandmaster Blacksmiths with unique Soultraits could create Epic Tier-3 Artifacts, but it was difficult for them to create customized ones. Nonetheless, it was possible. All they had to do was spend enough time and effort to fulfill their job.

Other than the Vouchers for Customized Epic Tier-3 Artifacts, Michael was also granted access to special blueprints, ores and other resources that could only be found in the territories of the Berserkers. The Berserkers were even willing to give their Racial Summoning Cores. That was a little bit unexpected, but Michael was happy about that as all Berserkers, even Starless Summons, were capable fighters. Every Berserker and Warlock Centaur had the innate potential to become a great Warrior.

Michael presumed that Starless Berserkers were as powerful as 1-Star Warriors. However, he was not sure how strong Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs could grow after Immortal Knight taught them. What if they became Blessed Squires, or Holy Knights? Their tremendous physical strength and high combat awareness would turn Berserkers and Warlock Centaur Summons into the core members of his territory's military power.

That didn't sound too bad.

Michael retrieved a notebook and began to write down a few things. He didn't want to lose count of the items he obtained and how to use them properly. Kraft Viton would probably give him an inventory list of the items he'd procured in today's special event, but there were certain things Michael wanted to do with specific items so he quickly began scribbling, lest he forgot them later.

The remaining Soultrait Symbols were sold in the following two hours. The Zeus family purchased the Elemental Soultrait, Aquarius, the Seraph Family managed to win the bid for the Healing-type Soultrait, Healing Surge, the Berserkers succeeded in bidding for the Soultraits Ferocious Beast and Scale Amore, whereas the Warlock Centaurs purchased Stompede and Rider of Hell.

Each Soultrait was powerful in its own way. It all depended on the User's race, understanding, and mastery.

One way or another, Michael gained a lot. He procured 205 Silver Tokens of Transportation – more than enough to hire a second and third batch of subordinates – 162 Intermediate Blueprints of Exotic and Extraordinary rarity, 75 Advanced Blueprints with core structures like a Hunter's Academy, and Recipes for various sought-after potions and elixirs.

Other than that, there was the Bloodline Upgrade Token, 10 Vouchers for Customized Epic Tier-3 Artifacts, a Legendary Artifact called Domain of Natura, an Orb of Resurrection, a Sacred Charm of Detection, and a Pillar of Territorial Awareness.

Michael would probably use two Vouchers for Customized Epic Tier-3 Items for himself before offering the remaining Vouchers to his subordinates. They could purchase the Vouchers using Jungle Points. It was an attractive offer.

Domain of Natura was a unique Legendary Artifact that did not possess a Tier. It was installed in the center of a Lord's territory, usually in the wooden manor, and created a domain that would nourish the surrounding flora and fauna, further accelerating the growth of all living beings, whether Summons, Monsters, or plants. All beings maturing in the Domain of Natura would be more attuned to their Lord, creating a stronger Link of Loyalty, and a connection toward their territory. Even if their Lord wouldn't order his subjects to protect their territory, every member of his territory would instinctively feel the need to do something to strengthen Michael's territory against unwanted visitors and potential dangers.

The Domain of Natura was a wonderful Artifact. Michael loved it, and he hoped that it would be as useful as promised. The same applied to the Orb of Resurrection, the Sacred Charm of Detection, and the Pillar of Territorial Awareness. The Orb of Resurrection could resurrect a deceased, whether Summon or Awakened, within five minutes of their death. It worked only one time and would shatter right after, but that was certainly worth it.

It would have been great to possess the Orb of Resurrection during the time he spent in the Lord Rift with Tiara and Danny...

The Sacred Charm of Detection was a great item that worked even better with the Pillar of Territorial Awareness. The Pillar of Territorial Awareness was installed in the center of the territory. It created a map of the surrounding regions using the memories of those who touched the pillar. Everyone could share their memories to create a large map of the surrounding regions.

The Pillar of Territorial Awareness would then create districts to determine the location of their enemies, unknown forces, their allies, potential allies, and their territory. Everything would be organized via the Pillar of Territorial Awareness, making it easier to plan war tactics and hunts.

The Sacred Charm of Detection was embedded in the Pillar of Territorial Awareness, upgrading the Pillar to detect mana frequencies and the essence of their intentions. That meant Michael and everyone else in his territory could pinpoint potential enemies with ill intentions and predators using the Sacred Charm of Detection.

Of course, neither of the items were cheap to maintain, but Michael was glad to have obtained them. It was not like he lacked the resources to empower them, either way. He obtained enough resources to empower all of his items for decades just from today's auction.

The resources he'd obtained were more than enough to start the construction of the Intermediate Sacred Knight Temple. Michael was only missing a few major materials required for the Advanced

upgrade of the Sacred Knight Temple as well. It was only a matter of time before the Sacred Knight Temple would be fully restored and its full prospects unraveled.

Michael procured various unique methods as well. Many families auctioned a wide variety of Superior-grade Breathing Techniques, Core Techniques, Soul Refinement Techniques, Body Refinement Techniques, and Mind Refinement Techniques.

Michael was already in possession of various techniques, but there was no harm in getting further as the saying goes: The more the merrier!

Furthermore, there were certain methods Michael never possessed. It was the first time he procured a Soul Refinement Technique and a Core Technique. Other than that, Michael's Breathing Technique was old and certainly outdated. He even forgot that he had been using the Sun Soldier's Breathing Technique as he reached perfect mastery of the technique a long time ago.

Michael was quite happy about the earnings he made from his first auction. He was also pretty sure that the next auction wouldn't be this crazy. At least, he didn't think so. It was always worth hoping that his gut feeling was wrong when it came to things like this, but it didn't matter much. Michael knew that he could always obtain a fortune by selling Soultrait Symbols and his service to upgrade Soultraits for an exorbitant price.

He had a monopoly, and he sincerely doubted that anyone could take it away from him. Even if that were to happen in the future...was it really important? By the time someone else with a similar Soultrait as Extraction appeared on the horizon, Michael would already be a powerhouse that towered above the High Society. Was it really necessary for him to fear losing his monopoly over the Soultrait Symbols and Soul Techniques?

Michael glanced at the eight Basic Summoning Cores he'd procured and smiled brightly. Two bidders had been too invested in the auctioning process to notice that they ended up bidding for four Basic Summoning Cores respectively. That was how Michael got hold of four Basic Summoning Cores for the Berserker and the Warlock Centaur clan each.

The quality of the Summoning Cores was quite bad with large amounts of impurities damaging the most basic effects of the Summoning Cores, but that was no problem for Michael.

He could extract the impurities within the eight Summoning Cores and install them in his Summoning Gate, expanding the number of his daily summons significantly. However, that had to wait for a while. Michael had other things to do first.

He was waiting for his prizes to arrive before he could proceed with the next step on his to-do list.

Interestingly enough, the bidders didn't waste any time and handed over the goods they bid on shortly after the main event of the auction ended. They sent their goods to the branches of the Bartholomew Corporation that transferred everything to the headquarters in the Origin Expanse, where Kraft Viton collected uttered goods.

In return, Kraft Viton was supposed to send the 1-Star Soultraits to those who returned to claim the goods they'd won in their bids. However, none of the bidders asked for the Soultraits immediately.

All of them were hoping that Michael could upgrade the Soultraits. After all, they wanted to fuse with powerful Soultraits...not with lousy 1-Star Soultraits.

Chapter 542 Surprise

It was not a surprise that everyone who purchased a Soultrait Symbol wanted to have it upgraded as much as possible. Michael accepted their wishes, but he decided to send Kraft Viton to negotiate the contract terms instead of doing so by himself. Michael did that because he wanted to show everyone that he trusted the Bartholomew Corporation and used Kraft Viton as his manager. At least, that was Michael's intention since he was pretty sure that Kraft Viton was a much better negotiator.

"You want the remaining items in section three and four from your item list in addition to their Inheritance Techniques, and Legacy Arts... The last two points will be far more problematic than the first two, but I doubt that you're going to use their Inheritance Techniques, in the first place," Kraft Viton mumbled, "Are you going to use their Inheritance Techniques to create your own? If that's the case, I will add a clause to promise them that we won't share our knowledge about their Inheritance Techniques' secrets with anyone."

Michael didn't have to think a second before he answered, "That's totally fine. It's like you said. I want to use their techniques to create my own in the near future."

"That should be fine then," Kraft Viton replied, taking a few notes before he continued, "I will also tell the bidders that the Bartholomew Corporation will have more treasures to sell in the near future if that's okay with you."

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The treasures Kraft Viton mentioned weren't Soultrait Symbols or SoulStar Fragments, but Soul Energy Fusion techniques, and Neutral Soul Techniques. 'Now that I think about it. I have yet to create my own Soul Technique. Even Soul Glacicle Bullet is merely an altered technique.' Michael realized. He didn't count Heavenly Realm as his Soul Technique because it was created for Maria and Archangel's Grace. Michael was only in possession of a small shard of Archangel's Grace, and couldn't unleash its true potential. He might be able to use the technique but Heavenly Realm was certainly not created for him.

"It's a good idea that you offered to upgrade the first batch of Soultraits to 4-Star, but you shouldn't overdo it. More people will want to use your service and if you don't create a tangible service, you will end up suffering," Kraft Viton advised, "Of course, I don't know how difficult it is for you to upgrade a Soultrait, but from what you told me...it's not worth offering your service to everyone. It should be special."

"I know," Michael sighed, "Either way...did you finish the Mythic Scroll Trading Post?"

Kraft Viton smiled seeing Michael change the topic so quickly, but he nodded.

"I did. The web designers created a whole featured website for your Mythic Scrolls. Currently, we offer one Mythic Scroll for 20,000 Ordinary Summoning Scrolls. The Bartholomew Corporation will charge 10% as the transaction fee since we're doing most of the work, either way, but you know that we could take much more than that if we wanted to. You were given special treatment once again."

Kraft Viton teased Michael a little bit, but it was quite obvious that a trace of truth lingered in his words. Michael was given special treatment, and it was not exactly difficult to tell. "Thank you for your help. And please give my kind regards and my thanks to the president as well. I'm glad to be a partner of the Bartholomew Corporation!" "No problem. We're happy that you chose to stay with us." Michael and Kraft Viton had barely completed their discussion when a flood of notifications flooded Kraft Viton. He received several calls from the bigshots who'd successfully bid for the Soultrait Symbols.

"I will get you a good deal. See ya," He stated to Michael, who waved him goodbye.

After Kraft left, Michael finally had some time for himself. He returned to his room and entered the Origin Expanse to take a short break and let his thoughts roam freely.

'18,000 Ordinary Summoning Scrolls for a single Mythic Scroll is a great deal. By extracting an average of 1.5 Summoning Scroll Fragments from old scrolls, I can easily construct 2 Mythic Scrolls for every Scroll I trade. I'll have enough excess to stock up and create a Legendary Summoning Scroll later. All I need is to be patient.' As long as his plan worked out, Michael would never have an issue with a lack of Summons again. He would possess enough Ordinary, Mythic, and Legendary Scrolls to expand the population in his territory at any point. It would take some time before he achieved that feat, but it was possible. And that made it even more exciting.

The only issue – if one could call it such, in the first place – about today's Soultrait Symbol Auction was that Michael had to use his SoulStar Fragments to upgrade the six 1-Star Soultraits to 4-Star. Since the Soultraits were not fused into his body, Michael had to use more SoulStar Fragments to weave them into the fragment of the Soultrait Symbols as well. Therefore, upgrading one 1-Star Soultrait Symbol required 400 SoulStar Fragments.

He spent a total of 2,400 SoulStar Fragments to upgrade all six Soultrait Symbols. To make up for the cost, Michael would have to kill a few Peak Tier-3 Awakened. But that was fine. Michael gained more than enough from auctioning the six Soultrait Symbols. He was a wealthy man, at last. Though Michael doubted that the wealth would stay with him for a long time as he already had more than enough things to utilize his funds for. But that was the good thing about wealth. It existed to be used, not to collect dust in his War Rune, or in his bank account.

Once Michael had rested his mind long enough, he left the Origin Expanse once again. He met up with his new subordinates and gave each of them one Silver Token of Transportation. He made sure that the Silver Tokens of Transportation were linked to his Summoning Gate before he stored the remaining Tokens back into his War Rune.

Michael returned to the Origin Expanse where he waited for his subordinates to arrive. He informed the Forest Elven Adventurer team, Immortal Knight, Tiara, and a few others about the arrival of more subordinates, which they took with a grain of salt. They expected Michael to expand his arsenal of Awakened pretty soon, but they hadn't heard a lot from Michael in the last few days. Hence, it was a great surprise to hear that their Lord added a batch of 30 Awakened all of a sudden.

However, nobody was displeased. They trusted Michael, and hoped sincerely that their territory was going to prosper even more now that their military power expanded.

It was only a matter of minutes before the first Awakened emerged through the Summoning Gate. Rebecca Zauber and her friend were the first to arrive. The first thing the two human Descendants noticed was the overwhelming presence of nature all around them. Even though they'd known about the Untamed Jungle from Michael's explanation, they were shocked by the flourishing fauna and the strong scent of nature that was ever-present.

"So greatly energy..." Rebecca mumbled, shocked at the quality and quantity of the ambient origin energy. How was it possible for so greatly origin energy to permeate the air all around them, naturally, at that?

It was wonderful!

The Warlock Centaurs and Berserkers arrived shortly after Rebecca Zauber and her little friend stepped through the gate. They were just as surprised as Rebecca, but they could handle their emotions much better. They bowed to Michael to thank him once again for accepting them into his territory before they introduced themselves one by one to the citizens.

Michael didn't ask them to introduce themselves, but he figured that the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs were noble and prideful beings. They were honest, friendly, and sociable races – though a little bit too violent at times.

"Since it's the first time for most of you to see a region such as the Untamed Jungle, I believe that it will be necessary to adapt to the environment and the lifestyle. Most of us live in treehouses, but I'm not sure if you would like to do the same. Please inform the Architects where you want to live, and they will come up with a proper design to adjust the buildings to your...sizes," Michael welcomed them with a smile.

He was not sure if his new subordinates wanted to stay and sleep in his territory since everything was still new for them, but he surely hoped that his subordinates would spend more time in the Origin

Expanse – in his territory – once they got used to everything. The Untamed Jungle was a treasure trove when it came to finding means to grow stronger, after all.

"Settle down and get used to my territory in the next few days. After that, we will take care of the work distribution, your training schedule, and so on. There is no need to rush anything for now. We're not at war." Michael suggested, only for Mika to add quietly, "...just yet."

The Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs looked over to the young Forest Elf, who could only swallow hard as two dozen pairs of eyes landed on him. Their eyes were filled with excitement hearing about the possibility of war breaking out. However, all Mika could see was the towering giants staring intently at him.

Michael and the others chuckled quietly. Thanks to Mika's interference, the ice between the citizens and the new subordinates broke quickly.

The Berserkers, Warlock Centaurs, and the two Descendants spent the next two days with Michael and his subordinates. They grew closer and learned a lot from each other. The Awakened's Links of Loyalty with Michael grew stronger and the Soul Power accumulated inside his Soultraits increased. Michael was happy. "How about we come back now? The Chieftain wanted to talk to you before you depart for the Saphirelake Military Academy," Thaor asked, and everyone else agreed. They had some stuff to do and it was about time they returned.

However, Michael felt a little odd. Why did it feel like everyone was pushing him out of his own house? Was it really important to depart the Origin Expanse right now? Couldn't they do it later?

Unfortunately, the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs left. Even the two Descendants didn't stay back. Michael frowned deeply, but he figured that he shouldn't let the Chieftain wait. He manifested the Runic Gate and left the Origin Expanse once again. Michael stretched his body after he returned to his room, only to freeze in his tracks when he noticed that he was not alone.

His body tensed up and he turned around, just to see two beauties sitting on his bed- Maria Seraph and Alice Zenovia.

"Finally you're back!" Alice and Maria exclaimed simultaneously, only to eye each other weirdly. Maria blushed hard, whereas Alice frowned deeply. "What are you guys doing in my room?" Michael asked,

but he didn't receive an explanation. Alice and Maria reached for his arms and pulled him out of the room and across the hallway. They didn't say a word until they arrived in a dark room at the terminate of the hallway.

The two girls pushed him into the room and switched the light on, unraveling more than 30 people, including Kraft Viton, Kaleb, Lincoln, Zeke, and more.

The Chieftain and the War Priestess were present as well. 'What the hell is going on here?' Michael wondered, his eyes traveling across the room, only to find out that even Killian was there.

All of a sudden, a cacophony of voices reverberated through the room.

"Happy Birthday!!"

Chapter 543 'Happy' Birthday

"Happy Birthday!!"

Michael's ears twitched as the hysterical shrieks disguised as birthday wishes reached him. He was not sure what was going on, or if he was just at the wrong place at the wrong time, only for realization to strike him hard in the back of the head.

'It's my birthday...'

"Happy Birthday, Michael!" Kaleb exclaimed right before giving Michael a brotherly hug. Michael pressed his lips together and sighed heavily in his mind, "Thank...you..."

He patted Kaleb on the back, hoping that his friend would let go of the death grip. He sincerely hoped that everybody would leave him alone soon. Unfortunately, that was not the case. Everyone walked over to congratulate him personally. It started with Kaelb, Alice, and Maria, and moved to Lincoln, Zeke, Thaor, and the rest. At the end of the queue, the Chieftain, War Priestess, and the professors of the Sapphirelake Military Academy gave him their sincere wishes for a life filled with fame and fortune. Michael was not sure if their wishes were sincere, but he could only nod in response. He eyed Killian Zeus, who had had yet to move and smiled wryly. Killian raised an eyebrow but he didn't say anything. There was no need to wish Michael a happy birthday. It was evident that Michael didn't like the special surprise event the others had been planning for the last few days. So, why should he wish Michael a

happy birthday, if he could as well observe the torture and pain in Michael's eyes? "Hah. What a...great surprise event this is... Who planned this?" Michael asked, the corner of his lip twitching. Maria and Kaleb raised their hands, "We were worried that we would miss your birthday so we planned it together. We didn't want to miss our friend's birthday. It's your first big anniversary as a Lord, after all!" Michael felt like bashing Kaleb, but seeing the joy in his friend's eyes, he couldn't get himself to say anything. Maria smiled at Michael as well. However, she felt that something was off. She seemed to sense that something about Michael was not quite right, but the atmosphere in the room was great and everyone was smiling – other than Killian. Even Michael seemed happy on the outside. But that was all to it. Michael smiled on the outside, but he didn't feel the same on the inside.

The connection between Maria and the Mark of Fate showed her that there was more to it. That something was wrong.

It was actually pretty simple. Michael didn't like events such as birthdays, New Year's Eve, and other holidays where families gathered to spend time together. Birthdays, however, were especially bad. Hesta disappeared two weeks before his eighth birthday and his parents vanished the day before his birthday as well. They left him and Danny to fend for themselves the day before he turned eight. He spent his birthday crying all day, screaming for his parents to return, but nothing happened. His parents never returned.

Danny tried hard to keep himself and his little brother together, but he was only 12-years-old at that time. He was not supposed to become an adult and raise his little brother. But that was exactly what happened. A heavy responsibility was thrown at Danny from a young age, and it was increasingly difficult for the two youths to take care of themselves. The only advantage they had was that they had a roof on top of them and that they received pocket money. If not for that, their lives would have turned out even worse.

Michael was grateful for having such a great brother, but it was painful to think about him. Danny sacrificed so much all his life to provide for Michael, only to die by sacrificing all he had left. His life.

After the disaster on his 8th birthday, Michael never celebrated his birthday again. Danny tried to show him the magic of certain holidays and give him back some of the youthful experiences he'd lost, but nothing helped. Michael never learned to appreciate his birthday. Sometimes, he even wondered if it would have been better if they had never been born. If their parents could abandon them so easily, why did they even give birth to the brothers? That was something Michael asked himself a lot when he was younger. Right now, he was happy to be alive, but he would have been even happier with Danny by his side. He missed his brother. Terribly.

"Is something wrong, Michael? Do you not like it?" Alice asked, finally noticing that something was not right with Michael. He lifted his head to look at Alice, but it was at this moment when the door to the hallway burst open. Michael used Spirit Eyes instinctively and his eyes widened. He paled, his face turning as white as paper, and his hands began to tremble violently.

Alice and everyone else turned around, their battle instincts erupting at once. Dozens of Artifacts manifested simultaneously and various Soultraits were unleashed in the blink of an eye, all pointed at a youthful woman who looked like she was in her late 20s.

The woman had a fairly pale complexion. Her skin seemed as white as a sheet of paper at the first glance, but it was only the stark contrast between her pale skin and long, wavy hair that created the illusion of her white, porcelain skin. A pair of dark, almost black eyes traveled through the room for a mere second before the woman furrowed her eyes at the sight of a bunch of balloons that formed the words 'Happy Birthday'.

"Who the hell are you and how did you trespass the city security?!" A young Descendant standing near Killian asked, his voice quivering. The presence the young woman exuded naturally was powerful and eerie.

The Descendant couldn't hide his anxiety, but he didn't want to look weak in front of the others. Therefore, he released a bolt of compressed energy at the young woman without waiting for an answer. There was no second warning. The trembling Descendant attacked the woman. It was better to ask questions later, probably.

The others didn't attack. They increased their guard against the unknown woman and readied themselves for a fight with their lives on the line. That was not exaggerated as even the Chieftain and the War Priestess had great difficulties remaining calm and composed facing the unknown woman's tremendous pressure. She was far from weak. Maybe...she was even stronger than the Leaders of the Tritan Alliance.

The unknown woman lifted a single finger to block the Descendant's energy bolt. That was all the attention the Descendant received from her. She diverted her focus, her eerily dark eyes traveling to the small compass she held in her left hand. Her gaze followed the arrow slowly, and her eyes narrowed on Michael.

The unknown woman scanned Michael's body from head to toe until she looked him straight into the eyes. Micheal was gritting his teeth, his hands clenched into fists so hard that his fingernails cut deep into his palms. Warm blood trickled to the ground, while the shock and disbelief that reverberated through Michael's entire being slowly transformed into anger and hatred.

The woman raised one eyebrow and released a burst of energy to amplify her natural presence. Thaor, Lokai, Mekhaz and the other Awakened lost control of their bodies and crashed to the ground. Kaleb, and Maria groaned, their legs trembling like thin branches amid a thunderstorm. Even Killian was having problems retaining control of his body. He had to circulate origin energy through his body and merge it with a portion of his thunder attribute to stay on his feet while facing the unknown woman.

On the other hand, Michael continued to stare at the unknown woman. His body reacted subconsciously to the increased pressure by inserting several layers of Enhancement into his body. "Interesting," The unknown woman mumbled, her sonorous voice resounding through the room.

She didn't sound threatening in the slightest, but nobody dared to lower their guard. Everyone could tell clearly that a single mistake was all it took to die at the hands of the unknown woman.

At last, the woman took her first step into the room.

The moment she took her first step into the room, everyone made their move. The War Priestess, the Chieftain, and the other powerhouses appeared around the unknown woman in an instant, circling her. They didn't know what the woman was planning to do, but everyone could sense that she was dangerous. She didn't belong to the group of human powerhouses who'd come to the ancient city, and nobody realized her. That could merely mean she was part of a dark organization, or, in the worst case, the Supreme Human Alliance. One way or another, the unknown woman didn't belong to this place. She had to be apprehended before she could harm the younger generation.

An enormous amount of energy erupted from the powerhouses, causing the walls and ground around them to crackle. They were ready to kill the unknown woman before anything worse might happen.

"That's not nice," The woman clicked her tongue reproachfully and raised her right arm where eerily dark marks manifested. The pressure in the room intensified also further, forcing Killian to the ground. Darkness oozed out of the eerie marks that traveled along the woman's right arm, alarming the powerhouses that were about to strike her.

However, it was just a moment later that the darkness oozing out of the woman's arm disappeared. All Michael could see was that she consumed the darkness oozing out of her arm to activate something, probably her Soultrait. His vision suddenly grew hazy. He couldn't properly see what was going on inside the woman. All he might tell was that she did anything and that her move restrained the powerhouses around her. Even the Chieftain and War Priestess lost his/her ability to move. They couldn't control their bodies anymore!

6th Tier? No. The way the woman restrained everyone's movement while several Tier-6 Lords were present indicated that she was stronger. 'A Divine Lifeform?' Everyone wondered, but Michael didn't care. He might merely stare blankly at the woman in front of him.

He never realized that she was this strong...that his mother was this powerful.

Chapter 544 Soul

Even though the powerhouses around Michael were restrained, he was not. His body trembled wildly. Something deep within roared. It felt similar to the last battle in the Interdimensional Flag War...yet, it was different.

The Mark of Spirit Eyes around his eyes glowed brightly and expanded slowly. At the same time, golden stigmata formed on his upper body, where nobody could see them. He was itchy all over his body but focused on the not so unknown woman in front of him...his mother.

She looked at the compass once again and strode slowly through the room. Her path led her to Michael, whom she studied intently. Michael could tell that his mother hadn't aged at all. She looked exactly the same as before. His memories about her were hazy but seeing her again made it seem like she'd never left. But she did.

He grit his teeth, the hatred in his eyes overflowing. His fury was overwhelming, resulting in Spirit Eyes to activate on its own. The fabric of space around Michael twisted. His mother noticed that Michael could move even though she'd released her power, but she ignored the confusing feeling that blossomed in her heart and arrived in front of Michael, her ice-cold eyes staring into the depth of Michael's soul.

Michael heard Alice groan in pain as she tried to escape the invisible forces that restrained her movements, but she couldn't move. No matter how much she wanted to help Michael, she could not

escape the invisible restrictions. Even the Chieftain was having difficulties moving. He regained some strength to move a little, but the movements were sluggish and slow.

Michael's mother reached him and killing intent emerged from her eyes as one of her right arm lunged forward. Her fingers coiled around his neck and her grasp tightened. She strangled Michael.

"Who are you, and why do you have my son's soul?!" She thundered, while lifting Michael from the ground.

Alice and the others tried to move. They had no idea what was going on, but they knew that they had to help Michael. He was going to die!

But Michael didn't show an ounce of fear even as his mother held him high into the air, strangling her own son with tremendous force. The hatred in his eyes intensified as he sent a message of Whispering Energy to everyone in the room to let him handle this.

["You're asking who I am? Are you serious, right now?"] Michael asked his mother, who raised an eyebrow as the telepathic message reached her. Her grasp around his neck didn't tighten but it didn't loosen either.

["I didn't expect a lot from our reunion, but it's amusing to think that a mother cannot even recognize her own flesh and blood. You really don't deserve to be called a mother."]

The woman's eyes widened and she momentarily lost control of her energy as her eyes locked onto the hatred and disgust oozing out of Michael's eyes. All Michael could see was disbelief in the eyes of the person whom he called mother in the past. The stigmata all over his upper body erupted on his command. True Extraction with 10 layers of Enhancement was unleashed in an explosive burst.

True Extraction destroyed everything in its path, its power far more potent in the area immediately around Michael. The invisible force spread throughout the room was feasted on and devoured by it. His mother let go of Michael as 10-fold Enhanced True Extraction leached on her energy. Michael used Insert to insert traces of Extraction inside her arm and body right before he was released from the iron grip.

His mother's hand left deep imprints on his neck, but Michael did not pay any attention to the pain in his neck. It was difficult to breathe, yet all Michael did was stare at the woman whom he'd once called his mother. His hoodie and shirt were torn apart, revealing his naked upper-body and the golden stigmata that covered his broad torso.

"Cursed Seals..." His mother exclaimed, the disbelief in her eyes transforming into shock and horror. The telepathic messages of the young man in front of her were still deeply imprinted in her mind, the truth unraveling itself slowly.

Her ice-cold expression changed dramatically. Warmth returned to her eyes and Michael could see tears forming in the corner of her eyes. However, all he felt was disgust and pure loathing as he watched his mother's reaction. He took a step back as her feet moved forward. At that moment, Alice, the War Priestess, and the Chieftain appeared around Michael, their weapons pointed at his mother. They were still unsure about what had just happened, but they felt a sudden surge of power from Michael and a loss of control from the unknown woman. This combination allowed Michael to escape the woman's grasp and the others to destroy the remnants of the woman's invisible force.

"Who are you?!" The Chieftain thundered, his vigilance reaching new heights as he coated himself in a layer of highly compressed energy.

However, the woman didn't pay the slightest attention to the Chieftain. Her watery eyes were locked on Michael.

"M-Michael? Is...that really you?" She asked, tears trickling down her cheek.

Michael grit his teeth, trying hard to control his emotions. He felt like cursing his mother, shouting at her, and insulting her for abandoning her...but he knew that she was not worth the effort. She didn't deserve his attention. Not after she abandoned him...them...for almost an entire decade.

"Is that supposed to be a surprise visit?" He asked Alice, who was taken by surprise.

Was that really the best moment to ask if she had planned his surprise event? An unknown – extremely powerful – woman had just infiltrated the ancient city and strangled him. They had better things to do than talking about his surprise event.

"You know, I should have told you guys that I really hate surprise events. I hated them since Danny and I were abandoned the day before my 8th birthday," He mumbled, confusing the powerhouses around himself even more than before.

However, the woman opposite them responded dramatically to the words escaping Michael's lips.

She appraised Michael from head to toe once again and even channeled a trace of energy into Michael, just to come to the same conclusion. The youthful Lord standing in front of her...was her youngest child.

"H-how can that be? What are you doing here, son?!" She asked, tears streaming down her cheeks like a waterfall.

Her words took everyone by surprise and even the Chieftain did a double take. "You grew up well," She remarked quietly after sensing the tremendous power that coursed through Michael. Even though she was lost in emotions, she was glad to see her son. It had been long since she last saw him. Too long.

But Michael didn't reciprocate the warmth. His hatred grew worse with every tear that trickled down her cheek.

"I did. Thanks to Danny. You wouldn't know, of course," He spat out, "And don't call me your son, Evalynn. You don't deserve to be called a mother!"

Evalynn Fang looked like someone had delivered a tight slap to her face. Her expression faltered as she looked at her son, her lips tightly pressed together.

Silence enveloped the chamber for a while until a telepathic message arrived Michael via Whispering Energy.

["I'm not sure how to break it to you, but everyone is in a tricky position right now. Are we supposed to attack your moth— this woman, or leave you alone with her?"]

Michael would have loved to leave his mother with the others. However, a nagging sensation in the back of his head stopped him from storming out like a little child that had been neglected. He recalled his mother's words from a few minutes ago when she was busy strangling him.

"I don't want to talk to you any longer, but tell me what you meant when you said that I have your son's soul. If it's about Danny's Soultrait, I have it. It dropped in a Lord Rift." Evalynn Fang was still in a trance, imprinting every single detail about Michael into her mind. Her tears ceased after a while and her lips parted only to shut tightly once again.

She looked at the remaining people in the chamber and waved her hand, releasing invisible forces that were strong enough to throw the powerhouses out of the room.

"Is she your lover? She's cute, and very protective," Evalynn asked her offspring as her eyes landed on Alice Zenovia. Alice's ears flushed red, but Michael could only curse, "Whether she is my girlfriend or not is none of your business. How about you answer the damn question before you return to wherever you came from?!?"

Evalynn's expression soured again but she tried to force a smile on her face. She didn't have to use her invisible force anymore as the remaining participants of Michael's shock event left on their own accord. They were confused by the turn of events, but it was obvious that Michael wouldn't be harmed. If anything, it was more likely that Michael would harm the unknown woman, who turned out to be his mother.

Once the mother-son duo was alone in the room, Evalynn released a dome of force around them to isolate them from the rest of the world. Now, nobody could eavesdrop on them anymore.

"I'm so glad to observe you aga—" "Answer the damn question!" Michael cursed again, the Stigmatas all over his physique flickering vibrantly.

Evalynn sighed deeply. She didn't expect the reunion with her children to be easy, but she didn't expect to face this much hatred either. But what did she expect? A hug? Or a teary-eyed greeting, "Finally, you're back. We've been waiting for you for the last 11 years!!?"

She had to understand that fantasy and reality were different. It was foolish to dream about a happy reunion, especially after what happened to her oldest son.

"You want an answer to my question? I will give you a very simple answer then," His matriarch said, clearing her throat before pointing at Michael.

"You're in possession of Danny's Soul." Michael's eyes widened in shock and disbelief, but his matriarch was not yet done.

"And I want it!"

Chapter 545 Alive

It was today, on his birthday, when Michael found out that Danny's Soul had always been with him. Was that fate?

His mother was not talking about Danny's Soultrait, Reinforced Sword Qi, but his Living Soul. Michael was not sure what exactly a Living Soul was, however, his lack of knowledge didn't matter. All that mattered was that Danny might still be alive.

"We just need his Soul..." Evalynn clarified, "We can bring him back!"

Michael's heart skipped a beat, his eyes following his mother's finger. She pointed at the Miniature Coffin Keychain that had been with Michael since he returned from the Lord Rift.

His eyes widened and he retrieved the Miniature Coffin Keychain to inspect it closely.

"Danny's Soul....is stored inside this?" He asked the anger and wrath he felt toward his mother slowly being replaced by hope.

So what if he hated his parents? If there was the slightest chance to get his brother back, Michael would take it. He would risk it all to bring his brother back to life!

However, something felt off. He couldn't sense anything from the Miniature Coffin Keychain. Michael had been experimenting with the Miniature Coffin Keychain quite often, but he never found out what use it had. By now, he had forgotten about the keychain. It was more of an accessory than a useful Artifact. All of a sudden his mother showed up and said that the useless keychain contains Danny's Soul?

That didn't make any sense. He was appalled, but despite having been abandoned by his mother, Michael believed her. It was odd.

"Yes, his Soul is stored inside the Coffin. Give it to us, and we will take care of his reincarnation. He might forget about you, but we will make sure that he will grow up well!" Evalynn promised, but Michael retracted his hand. "Reincarnation? Losing his memories? That's not what you said earlier! And who the hell is stupid enough to believe your promise? You promised us so many things, only to abandon us when we were too young to take care of ourselves! Why the hell should I trust you?!" Michael bellowed and the emotions he had accumulated over the years erupted from deep within him once again.

The hatred resurfaced. "Hell no. I won't give you the keychain!" He said, his grip over the keychain growing firmer.

Where the hell had his mother been all these years? Why did she never search for her children? Now that Danny died she cares about him...his soul... all of a sudden? That didn't make any sense! His family couldn't be trusted!

"His Soul is decaying. Danny has only a year left before his Living Soul cannot be salvaged anymore. The damage will be too big and we won't be able to reincarnate him anymore. He will not only lose his memories but the curse wi—...." Michael couldn't listen to his mother's incessant rambling anymore. "One year? That's more than enough time to search for a solution on my own. I don't need your help, or whoever you're talking about when you say 'we' and 'us'. If it's father, tell him to fuck off and to never even think about coming here!" He snorted.

Michael was angry, but he felt like he had been given a new purpose in life. If...his mother's words held even an ounce of truth and Danny's Living Soul had been preserved in the Miniature Coffin Keychain...then he could rescue him, probably. He had Extraction, Insert, and various other Soultraits that he could use. As long as Michael worked hard enough to search for the Soultraits and techniques he needed, he was confident of rescuing his brother. It wouldn't be necessary to throw Danny into the cycle of reincarnation. If he rescued his brother he had to do it properly. Not some sort of reincarnation that made him forget who he was. Could that be considered 'rescue' in the first place? Michael's mind was overflowing with the confused feelings due to the sudden reunion with his mother and the news about Danny's soul. He was having a hard time believing his mother, but he could use simple means to verify if she spoke the truth, or if his mother was lying to him.

Only remnants of the golden stigmata were left. It was just enough to use True Extraction once more with 10 layers of Enhancement.

Michael unleashed True Extraction on the Miniature Coffin Keychain, tapping into the inside of the coffin with a tremendous surge of raw power. Before today, Michael had never sensed anything within the keychain, but it was different now. Michael thought specifically about Danny's Soul...and there it was. A mass of energy, intertwined with a trace of life...and something else – something that felt like Danny.

The trace of life was weak, and it fluctuated wildly as Michael's 10-fold Enhanced True Extraction reached it. It felt like the trace of life would break apart if he pulled any harder.

'A Living Soul cannot be extracted in portions...I have to extract it in one go, altogether. Extraction is not strong enough...' Michael realized, all while tears trickled down his cheeks. The cogs in his mind rumbled as millions of thoughts, ideas, and theories began to form.

'But it's possible. I can extract his preserved Living Soul once Extraction is potent enough. But what about after that...where do I put his Living Soul? Do I Insert it somewhere? Is there anything better than the Coffin to preserve a Living Soul?' As the thoughts flashed through his mind, Michael felt a weak pulling force from the deepest parts of his consciousness, the Sphere of Light, to be precise. The pull was weak, but Michael noticed it, nonetheless. He entered his consciousness instinctively and followed the pulling force until he reached the source.

"The Soul Grimoire!" Michael exclaimed, his eyes glowing vigorously. Soul Grimoire was his only 1-Star Soultrait, and if he was to be honest, Michael had completely forgotten about it. He forgot that he wanted to extract Soul Grimoire and replace it with another Soultrait, a better one. A Soultrait with additional use.

But he was happy that he didn't substitute Soul Grimoire.

'Soul Grimoire can preserve and preserve Souls as a 1-Star Soultrait. If I upgrade it a little bit...it should be able to store a Living Soul, preserve it...and maybe nourish it...right? Will it be enough if I upgrade Extraction to 7-Stars? What about Soul Grimoire then?'

"A Living Soul is like a sentient soul without a vessel, right?" Michael inquired his mother, his gaze commanding submission. Evalynn blinked several times. Her son's sudden change in attitude toward her

surprised her. He didn't seem angry at this point. If anything, he regarded his mother as...nothing of importance, right now. "Answer me!"

Evalynn ignored her son's disrespectful tone and regarded him for a while. She observed the stigmata all over his body and witnessed them as they dispersed slowly. It was not difficult to tell that Michael had no control over the stigmata and that they manifested and dispersed as they pleased. At least, that was what it looked like. "Because of our Ancestor's Curse, our Souls are different from the norm. It rarely happens that one of us can be resurrected as a Summon in the Origin Expanse. However, that is exactly what happened to Daniel. His Soul spent several months in a foreign, yet familiar body...right next to another Cursed Child, giving him just enough time to prepare for the inevitable. However, it seems like the Will of the Origin Expanse had different plans," Evalynn mumbled, trying to contain her emotions. She wanted to give Michael a fair share of her opinion. His attitude was not acceptable, but she knew that he wouldn't care about her emotions. It made sense. "We were looking for Danny's lost soul, only to find out that it was preserved somewhere...with someone. But yes, to answer your question, the current state of Danny's Soul can be considered a Sentient Living Soul. It's just that he is hibernating right now to conserve the last remnants of his sentience and life." "He is hibernating? Is that why I never sensed him? Will it wake him up if I extract him in one go? That will probably happen. I guess? That means I need to upgrade Soul Grimoire quite a lot. Maybe, I need another Soultrait that can nourish and strengthen Souls as well. That is if Soul Grimoire doesn't improve as I upgrade it. Upgrading Soul Grimoire to 7-Star...will be enough to host a Living Soul with sentience...right?" Michael was ready to get hold of various Soul-type Soultraits and experiment with them. He could test out if it was possible to Insert Soultraits into each other to stimulate fusions. Maybe, it was possible to create a suitable Soultrait to keep Danny's Soul safe and sound. After he could ensure the safety of Danny's Soul he could search for ways to resurrect him without a loss of memories, or anything along those lines.

"Since his Soul is tainted by a curse, he should stay close to other Cursed Children. The additional Cursed Seals they unleashed, the easier it will be to take care of Danny's Soul. I unsealed more than enough Cursed Seals to take care of Danny. Trust me, I will reincarnate him without inflicting any more pain. I...don't want to see him suffer anymore," Evalynn said, but Michael scoffed once again.

"If you were this engaged in our lives and Danny's suffering, you wouldn't have desolated us. I don't need you...No. WE don't need you!"

Evalynn gazed at her son, her eyebrows furrowed deeply. She was getting angry. "Why are all of my children so difficult? First Hesta was throwing a tantrum, and now you're acting like the world revolves around you. Get your act together!" She screamed, "I'm doing all of this for your sake. I want to assist Danny!!"

"Hesta?" Michael laughed lightly, his eyes lingering on his mother in disgust, "Seems like she is alive."

"Not that I care."

Chapter 546 Cursed Seal

Evalynn never had so many issues getting what she wanted except when it came to her children. She was not sure why, but her children were like bulldozers. They destroyed her defenses and hit her where it hurts the most.

She clenched her fists in an attempt to calm her nerves but failed miserably.

"You don't even know what you're doing right now. To ensure that Danny's Living Soul can be saved and returned to the cycle of reincarnation, we have to initiate a ritual. Only those who broke enough Cursed Seals can start this ritual to break the curse on Danny's Living Soul and absorb the Cursed Essence residing within him! If the curse stays on Danny's Living Soul for long, it will devour him and grow stronger, which will turn into an even bigger issue. Think Michael! We need his Living Soul!!"

"I won't have that problem," Michael retorted coldly. As long as Extraction reached a high enough level and mastery, Michael could extract portions of Danny's Living Soul, including the curse fused into the soul. There was no need to depend on his mother's help. "You don't understand! If you continue like this, you will not only take away Danny's only chance of salvation, but you will go down with him as well!!" Evalynn screamed, "Don't you understand our situation? Our families are cursed. Every member of our families is cursed! We can break down the curses, but you won't be able to do it. Not alone! With every Cursed Seal you break, you'll become more dangerous. Unsealing the Cursed Seals unlocks the potential of our being, but it also unleashes something far more dangerous." His mother continued grimly, "The more Cursed Seals you unleash, and the more often you activate them, the harder it will be to control your emotions. It will be more difficult to stay calm when provoked. Even minor provocations will enrage you bitterly. You might even want to feel like killing people who merely look at you with mild interest. For now, you might only sense the tremendous power you receive whenever your Cursed Seals are activated, but you need to control yourself better, otherwise, it will devour you from within!"

Michael raised an eyebrow at that but he remained silent. He could roughly visualize what the Cursed Seals were, but he didn't consider them bad. It was just like his mother said. For now, he could only sense tremendous power from the stigmata, or 'Cursed Seals' as his mother called them.

"I've never seen so many Cursed Seals on a Lesser Lifeform. Even Hesta was not like that. She broke her first Cursed Seals when she ascended to her Higher Lifeform. Though...she broke dozens of Cursed Seals at once, resulting in...well, difficulties," Evalynn mumbled, her thoughts wandering.

"I never asked about that," Michael responded but his heart skipped a beat.

'Hesta disappeared shortly after she advanced to Tier-4. Is her disappearance related to the Cursed Seals, or was she taken somewhere? Did she really run away?' His mother conversed a lot about Hesta, which made it quite obvious that Hesta was either with his parents or that they had been together for quite a while. One way or another, Michael didn't like where this conversation was going.

His heart was in turmoil. On one hand, it was nice to hear that his parents and Hesta were still alive, but on the other hand, ... if they had been alive all along why did they never search for him and Danny? It hurt.

No matter how much time had passed, Michael was still hurt by the way they abandoned him and his brother.

"How about you come with me as well? We can help you control your Cursed Seals and teach you about our families. We're not as simple as you may think!" Evalynn offered, but Michael shook his head without hesitation.

"I don't want to have anything to do with you, Hesta, or anyone else from 'our families', whatever that means," He said, his voice filled with sadness as he added, "You know, you didn't even ask how I have been after you guys threw us aside 11 years ago. You didn't even bother to ask about Danny's life, or how we grew up. What about an apology? Saying the word 'sorry' never crossed your mind, did it?"

"Did you expect me to run up to you and give you a tight hug just because you returned? You didn't even return to reunite with us. No. All you want is Danny's Soul. But let me tell you something... I won't give you shit!" "But his Living Soul will turn into Hellbound Cataclysm if we don't do anything!" Evalynn retorted, shutting her mouth right after the words escaped her lips, "He...will never come back without our help!!"

She tried to salvage the situation, but the damage was already done.

"Hellbound Cataclysm? Whatever that is...it means that you didn't come back for Danny..." Michael stared at his mother in disbelief, a dry laugh escaping his lips, "Woah. Why was I so stupid? I'm so fucking stupid to believe that you worried about Danny's afterlife. Wow. Just WOW!" Michael broke into laughter, tears trickling down his cheek. A minute later, silence filled the room once again.

"No. I won't give him to you. If you want Danny's Living Soul, you will have to take it from my dead body!" Michael responded, his teary eyes turning menacingly ice-cold, "But I'm not sure if you're ready to kill me or not. I wouldn't be surprised if you could do it." Evalynn took a step back. She stared at her son in disbelief, clutching her chest tightly. "I know that Danny will come back to me. I will make sure that it happens. It might be faster if you help, but...I don't need you! Danny would never forgive me if I accept help from...the likes of you and father!" "You cannot keep talking to me like that! I'm your mother!!" Evalynn exclaimed, her voice stocky and shrill.

"You are? I thought Danny and I lost our parents a decade ago. I'm still pretty sure that they're dead. At least, to me...and Danny."

Evalynn was about to say something but Michael didn't want to hear more of her bullshit.

"If that's all you're going to say...how about you leave me alone? That is if you don't plan to kill me to get Danny's Living Soul!"

"Leave! Us! Alone!"

However, Evalynn didn't move. Her feet were rooted to the spot.

Michael took a deep breath, his lips pressed tightly together and he was shaking from the effort to not start throwing things around just to force his mother out of his room and his life.

"If you're not leaving, I will." He walked past his mother without taking a second glance at her. It took only a moment to arrive the door to the hallway but it felt like an eternity passed until he reached the door. Michael swung the door open and left the room. He didn't even notice that Alice and the others had been waiting outside as he walked past them.

Their eyes trailed behind Michael, whereas Alice peeked into the room after seeing the fury in his eyes. All Alice could see in the room was Michael's mother sobbing quietly, tears streaming down her face. "That was a big mess," Kaleb mumbled.

"A huge surprise, for sure," Killian responded, still feeling the terror Michael's mother had inflicted by merely spreading her presence through the entire room. 'No wonder Michael is so strong. His mother is a monster!'

Meanwhile, Maria could only look down to the ground, "I shouldn't have suggested to celebrate his birthday. If I had known—...."

"It wouldn't have changed anything," Alice intervened, "Maybe, it was a bad idea to celebrate his birthday, but his mother would have located him, either way. She didn't recognize him at first, but she looked at a compass and was searching for something. His mother would have found him with our birthday party, or without it."

The Chieftain and the War Priestess looked at each other. Their gazes moved from Michael's retreating figure to his crying mother. Even if they had no idea what was going on, it was pretty obvious that the situation was complicated. "She uttered something about 'Son's Soul', right? What do you believe that means?" The War Priestess inquired the Chieftain.

"I have no clue. That woman didn't even recognize her child. They must have been separated for quite a while and not on good terms, that's for sure." "She is powerful. I cannot sense any Divinity from her, and the seed of Divinity hasn't germinated within her either. She is still a Tier-6 powerhouse, yet she could restrain us easily. If she wanted to, she could have killed everyone in the room within seconds."

The Chieftain nodded. He didn't want to acknowledge the War Priestess' analysis, but it was true. Michael's mother was not yet a Divine Lifeform, but her combat prowess was high enough to eliminate several Tier-6 powerhouses in no time. "What are we going to do now?" He asked, his gaze landing on the human powerhouse, whose strength surpassed the combat prowess of the High Society combined together, and maybe even the entire Tritan Alliance. "She is a human, right?" The War Priestess inquired instead of answering the Chieftain's question.

"Her energy fluctuations are similar to humans. When she restrained us, something felt different, so I guess that she is mostly human. But I cannot say for sure." "Then let the humans deal with her. Since she is so powerful, High Society will want to befriend her to get to know her secrets," The War Priestess said, "One way or another, she will either leave as suddenly as she arrived, or she will follow Michael back to the Saphirelake Military Academy to get whatever she came for. No one in the Tritan Alliance can stop her, either way. Let them solve their problems..."

"What a mess."

"Indeed. What a messy family."

Chapter 547 Lost

"Who the hell does she think she is to act like a mother all of a sudden?!" Michael roared, smashing the door behind him. He'd returned to his room to be alone and think about what happened. However, being alone made him recall his mother and everything she said. Just seeing her through fresh memories was enough to fill Michael with uncontrollable rage and anger all over again.

'She didn't even recognize me, her son. What a bad joke.' Michael scoffed and continued to curse his mother in his heart.

"Does she think she can leave and come back whenever she wants? Why the hell should I trust her with Danny's Living Soul? And what even is that bullshit about reincarnating Danny? I sensed the lifeforce and sentience in his Soul. Why is it necessary to reincarnate him rather than trying to find a new vessel for him or something along those lines?!"

If his mother was still powerful, Hesta and his father must be just as strong at this point. They should have the means to find people who could transfer a Living Soul into a suitable vessel...right? At least, they should have the capability to search for someone and collect the materials needed to create a new vessel.

Why did they have to reincarnate him at the cost of his memories? Was it because of the Hellbound Cataclysm? Michael had no idea what that was, but his mother said something about the curse devouring Danny's Soul. If he removed the curse with Extraction, everything would be fine. In fact, if every member of the Fang family was cursed, wouldn't that mean that his mother, Hesta, and Michael possessed the same curse? They were still alive and nobody was afraid of them being affected by the Hellbound Cataclysm.

'Does that mean I need to find a suitable vessel for him to restrain the curse? Well, if I can remove the curse without a vessel that would be fine as well.' Michael's mind was a mess. He tried using Extraction on the Miniature Coffin Keychain once again but only sensed Danny's Living Soul. He didn't want to touch it, knowing that he didn't possess enough power to extract his Living Soul in one go for now. Observing the mass of energy that had fused with Danny's sentience and lifeforce, Michael's eyes grew moist.

However, instead of turning into a weeping child from happiness, his expression soured quickly. His thoughts drifted back to his parents and the fact that they were still alive. They never searched for their children even though they had been living in their old place until last year. What did that mean? It was simple. Their family never thought of meeting them in the entire decade the two boys were left to fend for themselves. All they did was send a message into their family group chat every blue moon. The content of their messages was useless as well. Something within Michael rumbled, and the turmoil of emotions deep within him intensified. At first, he didn't feel much. Michael thought that he had gotten a little bit more emotional because he saw his mother again. However, the anger and fury deep within him grew stronger and more terrifying. Killing intent oozed out of Michael and for the first time in forever, he wished that his parents were actually dead.

'Danny died because they abandoned us. They deserve to die...' Michael thought, finding himself shocked and in disbelief as the thought formed in his head.

Was that really what he thought? Did he really think Danny died because his parents abandoned them? Thinking about it, it might not even be that far-fetched to think that his parents, and Hesta, were at fault for their misery. But did that mean it would have been different if their parents had been with them until now? Maybe, Danny would have died, either way? What about himself? Would Michael be this powerful if he didn't have to become independent from a young age? Would he have thrown himself into one danger after another if he hadn't required power and hadn't been desperate to grow strong? Michael didn't know.

But he knew that the hatred and anger within him was growing more intense by the second. 'I should let off some steam,' Michael thought, manifesting the Runic Gate to the Untamed Jungle in front of him. However, the anger didn't subside as the Runic Gate opened. On the contrary, it felt like his mood was getting worse.

The moment he entered the Runic Gate, Michael lost control of his emotions. A roar resounded from the deepest part of his existence and golden stigmata spread through his entire body. The stigmata were intricate and highly complex. Their faint golden light flickered as they connected one by one. However, only stigmata glowed brightly. They unleashed tremendous amounts of altered energy. But that was not all.

The three isolated stigmata, the Cursed Seals he'd unsealed in the last battle against the Tekur, were fully activated, bursting forth with an ancient presence that affected not only the living around him but Michael himself as well. Something was different compared to before. Something was wrong...really wrong.

Michael's vision blurred and everything around him turned black for a second.

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The next time Michael opened his eyes, he found himself in the Untamed Jungle. At least, he hoped that it was the Untamed Jungle.

A disgusting stench permeated the air all around him, and it didn't take long to find out where the stench was coming from. Monsters were the source, or their corpses, to be precise. There were thousands of them, spread out all around him and stashed up in large piles for everyone to see.

Michael was in the middle of a large clearing, and the nearest towering tree was at least 100 meters away from him. Yet, not a single inch in between those 100 meters was void of blood, intestines, or monster parts. Even the trees all around him were covered in blood, body parts, and entire corpses, hanging down the thick branches of the unmoving giants.

The small mountains of monsters all around him had been decimated – quite literally. Michael's eyes went wide. 'What happened?!' He wondered, his heart skipping a beat. 'Did I do that?'

Numerous questions flashed through his mind, but there was no answer. At least not until he was assaulted by a bad headache. Snippets of memories resurfaced in his mind as he held his head to fight the pain. Michael recollected bits of what happened after the world around him turned black.

Everything around him was blurry but he remembered having entered the Runic Gate. He emerged in his territory but didn't stay for long. Tiara and the Forest Elven Adventurers approached him, but they retreated in fear upon reaching the range of Michael's presence. Even though everything else was blurry, Michael clearly recalled the fear in their eyes. They didn't know what happened to Michael, however, everyone could tell that they were going to die if they dared to take a step closer to Michael.

Tiara ignored the warning and was about to approach Michael, but Lilica held her back. A mere moment later, the area around Michael disappeared. The energy around him was devoured in an instant and the ground disappeared as if someone had neatly cut it out of the fabric of the Origin Expanse.

Michael's memories revolving around his territory faded. The next thing he remembered was fighting the monsters of the Origin Expanse. Fighting might be an overstatement. He wasn't fighting them. He obliterated them, one monster horde after another as the Dome of True Extraction, amplified with three Cursed Seals, decimated his enemies. He dissected them layer by layer while they were still alive, and fiercely fighting against the invader.

Michael recalled that Lilica and the other Forest Elves said that the population of monsters in the Untamed Jungle was too high and that they had to take countermeasures to cull a few monster hordes around them, so he didn't expect himself to have ventured deep into the woods all by himself to decimate the overpopulation of monsters single-handedly.

He didn't even know how deep exactly he had ventured. The clearing was new to him and so were the monster corpses around him. Some of those monsters hadn't been reported yet. Was he still in the middle area of the Untamed Jungle, or did he already venture into the main part of the Untamed Jungle where the truly terrifying monsters resided?

Michael couldn't remember how much time passed since he blacked out, but given the number of monsters he'd massacred, it must have been a while.

He wanted to stand up, but his body didn't obey his order. Michael endeavored to channel energy through his body, but his energy veins cried aloud in protest.

'Did I overexert my energy channels? Or did I injure myself again like I did against the Tekur?' Michael wondered before using Archangel's Grace with the Heavenly Realm Soul Technique.

It was painful to use his origin energy to create Soul Energy, but Michael was fortunate that exerting Archangel's Grace didn't drain his energy. All he had to do was access Archangel's Grace and utilize the power the Soultrait Shard accumulated while he had been with Maria.

The soothing feeling of Heavenly Realm shrouded Michael. It alleviated the pain of his screaming energy veins and the pain that spread all over his body.

However, his mind was not in sync with his body.

Michael recalled his mother's warning and realized just how dangerous the Cursed Seals were. He understood that he had to learn how to control them and that he could never allow the thing within him to take control of his body. Michael didn't want to push his luck, and he certainly didn't want to imagine what could happen to the people around him if he were to lose control of his body once again.

Today, he killed thousands of monsters, but what would happen if he lost control of the Cursed Seals in a city, or with his friends around himself?

Michael was afraid. The power residing within him was extraordinary, but also exceedingly dangerous and violently explosive.

But something else drawn his attention. His eyes fell onto the Miniature Keychain and a soothing feeling washed over his entire being.

Soon, tears began streaming down his face.

"I...can save him..."

Chapter 548 Seals' Corruption

It took Michael a while to calm down. However, once he was calmer, Michael quickly reverted back to his usual self. Meeting his mother had been frustrating and certainly not something Michael had wanted to happen, but if he had to search for something positive in all the negative things that happened, he would consider finding his brother's Living Soul.

The reunion with his mother caused an emotional turmoil, but it also informed him about the possibility of resurrecting his brother. Michael figured that it wouldn't be as easy as using the Orb of Resurrection to bring his brother back to life. However, it was possible. That was all that mattered.

Once he recuperated long enough to move around painlessly, Michael got up and spread his energy in the surroundings. He collected the corpses and body parts in one sweep and decided to head back to his territory.

'But seriously...where am I?' He wondered, closing his eyes to sense the location of his Summoning Gate and the Wooden Manor with his Lord powers. 'I am quite far away from my territory.' Michael realized,

feeling slightly surprised. His territory was south from him, which was expected since he was still in the Untamed Jungle, but he sensed that it was much farther away from his position than he thought.

"These Cursed Seals are really dangerous," He mumbled, afraid that he might lose control of his body once again. Michael had to find out more about the origin of the Cursed Children and Cursed Seals. However, he was not going to ask his mother about any of that. He didn't want to talk to her again. She was dead to him. Michael knew that he was being unnecessarily stubborn, but he was not going to forget about the last decade just because his mother decided to be generous enough to return when it suited her. She didn't even return for him, but for Danny's Living Soul. And it was not as if she wanted to resurrect Danny. She wanted to remove the curse merged into his Living Soul to prevent a Hellbound Cataclysm. She was selfish so he couldn't trust her.

On his way back to the territory, Michael moved smoothly through the Untamed Jungle. The terrain was somewhat familiar to him, but it was also new. The origin energy's density was much higher in the deeper parts of the Untamed Jungle. That was reflected in the rapid growth of towering trees and the evolution of powerful monsters. Michael encountered several powerful monsters on his way back home. Some of them were even Higher Lifeforms with tremendous life force and huge bodies. Their massive bodies broke the trunks of smaller trees and squashed bushes and other plants easily. Michael's bones would break like some of the smaller trees, unable to retaliate in any way, if he found himself underneath their massive hooves.

Fortunately, none of the massive monsters attacked him. In fact, Michael felt like they were avoiding him. It was almost like they were afraid of him.

'Did I encounter them before? Maybe, I clashed with them when the Cursed Seals flooded me with hatred and anger...But if they avoid me that means I was strong enough to deal with them using True Extraction...'

Michael was a bit confused, but it was a relief that no monster attacked him. He was still weak and his body was sore all over. Fighting was the last thing he wanted to do right now. He didn't want to get beat up, after all.

The only reason he rushed back home was to start researching ways to resurrect Danny. According to his mother, Danny's Living Soul had only one year left before it deteriorated completely. That meant he had to find a secure place to put his Living Soul, a place where the Soul couldn't deteriorate.

Michael sincerely hoped that upgrading the Soul Grimoire was the solution he sought so desperately.

'I might be able to bring back Danny...He might not be gone forever!' Michael hoped sincerely, a smile blossoming on his face. The thoughts of destruction and death he'd caused in the Untamed Jungle disappeared from his mind as well as his mother's return. The only thoughts left in his mind revolved around his brother and the possibility of bringing him back.

A large tear trickled down his cheek, onto the Miniature Coffin Keychain which hummed gently in return, the trace of lifeforce within resonating with him.

Michael chuckled lightly and accelerated. He moved faster through the Untamed Jungle, hoping to reach home as soon as possible.

But despite his attempts to rush home, Michael had to expend an entire day traversing through the Untamed Jungle before he reached his territory once again. Tiara was the first to notice his return.

"Master!!!" She exclaimed, tears welling up in her eyes.

Tiara rushed to Michael and embraced him tightly, "W-where have you been?"

Michael couldn't reply the question. He returned Tiara's hug and patted her back gently. The Battle Maid continued to sob for quite a while, but she let go of him when she observed that more people had arrived near them while looking for Michael. The Forest Elves stared at him intently, shock and a mixture of other emotions flashing through their eyes. They didn't approach him immediately, not until Lilica took the first step, at least.

Lilica approached Michael, her heart palpating, "I know that it's not my business to ask this...but what did you do in the last week? You emerged from the Runic Gate, your body covered in those golden glyphs, only to disappear. But that's not what I'm asking. You don't have to tell me what those golden glyphs are or anything like that..." Lilica included carefully, "It's just that I...No. We have never sensed a forest being terrified before, especially not a forest like the Untamed Jungle. What the hell did you do?"

Michael's lips parted but he couldn't reply her properly. He could only guess that the Untamed Jungle was terrified of his Cursed Seals, or the power they unleashed within him. Or, it was not even related to him. Maybe, the Untamed Jungle was terrified because of something else. However, Michael was pretty sure that this might have been his fault.

"I'm really not sure," Michael answered honestly, "I lost control of my body. My emotions overwhelmed me. I met my mother again, but...it was a disaster."

Michael forced a smile, meanwhile, Lilica studied his expressions.

"Either way, I found out that those golden glyphs, as you call them, are actually Cursed Seals. I've currently unsealed three Cursed Seals but I seem to have a lot more Cursed Seals than the rest of my family," Michael said, realizing too late that he never told Lilica and the others about his family, "Ah. I forgot to mention that our family is uttered to be Cursed. Apparently, every member of our family has these Cursed Seals, which unleash power if unsealed. But they also make it harder for us to control our emotions. By the looks of it...we can also lose control of our bodies and wreak havoc."

"So you lost control of your body because you reunited with your mother?" Mika asked, taking a few steps closer to Michael.

He was a nosy little brat, which won over the newfound fear he felt for Michael. Michael was a good guy. He was one of the nicest people Mika knew, but when Michael lost against the corruption of the Cursed Seals...he was scary. Mika and the others had been terrified for their lives even though they knew Michael better than most people. They knew he would never hurt them, yet they were afraid to die at his hands at that moment.

"It's not only because of my mother's return, though it plays a huge role. Meeting her was not exactly nice," Michael responded honestly. He felt quite good talking to someone about what happened, "But I also found out that my brother's Living Soul has been with me since he died in the Lord Rift."

Michael retrieved the Miniature Coffin Keychain and grinned gently at it, "His Living Soul is preserved in there." He decided to trust the Forest Elves with these new pieces of information as he needed their help. His attention traveled back to Lilica, who looked right back at him.

"Could you ask your Elders if they understand anything about Cursed Children, Cursed Seals, Living Souls, and how to resurrect a Living Soul that contains a trace of life force and sentience?" Michael was going to ask Kraft Viton, the Chieftain, and the War Priestess to research Cursed Children, Cursed Seals, and Living Souls as well. If their research ended up in failure, Michael would travel to the Trilance to ask them for help. And if that was not enough...he would have to ask his mother. Even though he told himself not to ask her anything, Michael's pride was worth nothing if he could find out more about

Daniel's condition and possible means to rescue him. He could find his own answers by strengthening his Soultraits, but Michael wanted to understand if there were any 'normal' ways to create a vessel for a Living Soul, or what he could do to preserve and nourish a Living Soul artificially.

"That's a lot to digest," Lilica mumbled, but she nodded her head, "But, of course, I will help you." "We want to help you as well!" A somewhat familiar voice reached Michael from behind.

It was Rebecca Zaubers. She stood next to her friend, the Warlock Centaurs and the Berserkers, who'd joined his territory not too long ago.

"Please let me help you with the research! I think I can be of some help with Greater Analysis and Perfect Appraisal. No, scratch that. I will be of great help!" She declared whereas the other new subordinates stared at Michael with a mix of curiosity, respect...and a trace of fear. They had been sent into the Origin Expanse right after Michael vanished into the Runic Gate. But all they could sense upon entering the Origin Expanse were the remnants of Michael's ancient power, and the killing intent permeating the air like dense fog.

However, that was enough to sense primal fear erupting from within them.

Chapter 549 Soul Grimoire

Warlock Centaurs and Berserkers being afraid of someone was very different than was the case for humans. It was not easy to make them feel fear. They didn't even fear to die in battle. However, if they feared someone because of his tremendous power, it was considered a praise, one of the highest praises a Berserker, or Warlock Centaur could give. Most humans couldn't understand this because they had different traditional values, but it was a sign of respect and a stamp of approval of your might if a Berserkers, or Warlock Centaur acknowledged that they were afraid of you. And Michael could sense their fear. Their Links of Loyalty shoved their feelings into his face. It was near-impossible not to sense how they felt about him, and it confused him. The Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs' Links of Loyalty grew stronger even though they sensed fear. If Michael didn't know much about the war-loving races, he would be wondering if he was about to turn insane.

Well, even without the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs, Michael felt like he was slowly turning insane. The events of the last few weeks continued to torment his mind, and they made him feel like he had already gone crazy.

But instead of letting the events of the past affect him, Michael focused on the most important aspect. "I have one year before our family's curse devours my brother's Living Soul. That means, I have one year to find a solution, and upgrade both Soul Grimoire and Extraction," He figured.

The next thing he did was to push Soul Grimoire to the next level. He spent 7,500 SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Soul Grimoire to a 5-Star Soultrait. The upgrade cost was astronomical but Michael had already considered this possibility. Soul Grimoire was located in the outer area of the Sphere of Light where he had to spend more than twice the usual price to upgrade his Soultraits. Soul Grimoire was tightly locked in place and couldn't be moved around.

If upgrading Soul Grimoire had been any cheaper, he would have considered upgrading it to a 6-Star Soultrait right away. Unfortunately, he didn't have enough SoulStar Fragments despite having more than 45,000 SoulStar Fragments to distribute freely. Michael waited patiently for the influx of information, his eyes shut tightly so as to not miss even a single piece of information. 'Please be the right one!' He pleaded in his heart.

Even if Soul Grimoire was not the perfect Soultrait to rescue his brother's Living Soul, Michael hoped that Soul Grimoire would be helpful to overcome his future ordeals.

Fortunately, it didn't take long before the influx of information arrived.

He channeled a considerable amount of energy through his brain and used Enhancement on his brain. The result was great. The influx of information was digested immediately and a slow smile formed on his lips.

"I can store and preserve souls. It's possible to nourish Souls as well...That's great!" Michael exclaimed, only to feel a bad headache creeping up from the back of his head. More information flooded his already overworked brain without a warning.

"Living Souls, especially Cursed Souls are too potent...Soul Grimoire cannot even hold a single Living Soul right now, let alone a Cursed Soul. It won't be able to nourish a Cursed Soul either. Not at 5-Stars, at least." Michael found out that he could store and preserve Souls with Soul Grimoire. Soul Grimoire could also harvest Souls from the deceased. The probability was extremely low, but it was possible. As for what he could do with these Souls...Michael wasn't sure about that. He could sense that Soul Grimoire could consume the souls it stored, but Michael had no clue what would happen after the Soul Grimoire did that. Was Soul Grimoire a growth-type Soultrait that consumed Souls to grow stronger? Could he use the Soul Grimoire to do something other than harvesting, storing, preserving, and nourishing Souls?

Because he was not certain about Soul Grimoire's pool of abilities, and the potential danger it could pose to Daniel's Living Soul, Michael had to postpone transferring his brother's Living Soul into the Soul Grimoire for the time being. It was not large enough to store a Cursed Soul, either way. He would have to experiment a lot with Soul Grimoire before he could use it to store his brother's Soul. He would have to harvest a few souls, preserve them and attempt nourishing them. If possible, it would be best if he experimented with other souls first before he would throw his brother's Living Soul into hellfire. He didn't want to harm his brother, after all.

'I should extract the Souls of my enemies. At least, I won't feel bad experimenting with them.' Michael thought, somehow hoping that more idiots would try to kidnap him. He could punish them again. This time, however, he would take their Souls instead of just beating them into a pulp.

Michael felt like a mad scientist to devise such a plan, but after the last incident, it was quite obvious what would happen to those who were foolish enough to attack him. If they tried to kidnap him despite knowing what might possibly happen to them, then they didn't deserve any mercy.

Why should he be merciful to those who want to harm him? There was no need.

"I'm sorry to bother you when you've just returned from the depths of the Untamed Jungle, but is it possible for you to leave the Origin Expanse for a few hours?" Rebecca Zuber asked hesitantly. Michael eyed her for a moment until Rebecca realized that she should explain the situation, "Everything for our return has been prepared. We've been waiting for you to return from the Origin Expanse to pick up the new students and return to the Sapphirelake Military Academy. All you have to do is anchor your Runic Gate to the spaceship. After that, you can return to the territory right away."

"Oh! I forgot that we wanted to leave the ancient city a while ago," Michael recalled that Kraft Viton said something like that earlier, "Sorry for the delay. I'll return right away."

Michael wanted to hide in the Origin Expanse but he returned to the ancient city nonetheless. He contacted Alice and inquired her about the spaceship's location and began to walk over right away.

"You might not like this, but your mother is still around. She made it clear that she would come to the Sapphirelake Military Academy as well. If we could do something to stop her we would give it a try, but she is a Peak Tier-6 Lord who is stronger than the Chieftain and the War Priestess combined. It's...quite difficult to order her around. I'm sorry," Alice informed Michael. She was apologetic toward him but there was hardly anything she could do about it. Michael's mother was probably closer to ascending to a

Divine Lifeform than any other Awakened in the Tritan Alliance. "It's fine. I can ignore her if she bothers me," Michael responded, but Alice was silent for a while.

"I understand that it's not my business to intervene in your private matters for I know too little about the history between you and your family, but I don't think the situation in your family is that simple," She said hesitatingly, "Of course, I could be wrong. Maybe, it's wrong of me to even say something, in the first place. But your mother has been silent for the last few days and she is crying all day." when Michael did not reply, Alice continued,

"I know what she did to you and Danny. I am fully aware of every single detail you told me about your past, but something is bothering me. I don't think your mother will annoy you while she stays in the Saphirelake Military Academy. I doubt that she will approach you in the spaceship either. But...I hope that you can talk to her once you're ready. You should ask her the questions that have been bothering you for the last ten years. You deserve to receive your mother's honest answers. Maybe, her answers will hurt you, but at least you will receive the answers you were longing for."

Michael had opened up to Alice and Kaleb and told them everything about his family matters. He felt good talking to them about the time his family abandoned them and what happened afterward. The Zenovia siblings knew about the possibility of their family being cursed as well. Daniel could always try to ease Michael's mind by saying that the curse didn't exist and that they were just incredibly unfortunate, but the truth was that their family had been cursed for a while. Michael also told the Zenovia siblings that he didn't understand where the curse came from and that he had numerous questions that had yet to be answered. Now that his mother returned, Michael could ask the questions.

He could ask about the Cursed Children, the Cursed Seals, why his mother was so powerful, what happened to Danny's Soul, what the Hellbound Cataclysm was, and what exactly she meant with "our families". Were there more families that had been cursed just like them? If so, did they gather in a small group to find a way out? If not, why was his mother always talking in plural? However, Michael had been telling himself that he wouldn't speak to his mother at any cost. That she didn't deserve to talk to him. She was dead to him.

"I..." Michael hesitated. He didn't like that Alice was butting into his private matters, but he could also tell that she genuinely cared for him. Would it really help him if he talked to his mother? Would he feel better after obtaining the answers to all the questions he had? Michael was not sure about that. However, he could tell that leaving the questions unanswered forever could torment him until death. Maybe, it was better to talk to her no matter how devastating her answers could be. At least, he could hear the truth from his mother directly.

'Fuck this shit!'

Chapter 550 Time To Retaliate

Even though Michael accepted that he had to talk to his mother at some point, whether it was for his brother's sake or to get the answers he had to find out after their parents abandoned both their sons, it was not like he was willing to talk to his mother right away. Michael was not willing to take the first step anytime soon. He wanted to see how she was going to behave in the next few weeks and if she was going to leave him for good yet again shortly after she realized Michael was not going to listen to her.

He entered the spaceship, went straight to the room with his room number and manifested the Runic Gate to transfer his anchor to the spaceship. It was time for them to travel back to the Saphirelake Military Academy on Kelta. The trip back was going to take a little bit longer because they had to make a small detour through the major cities in the Lumina Stellar System. They were going to visit a dozen places to pick up young Awakened from all over the Lumina Stellar System. The young Awakened were new students of the Saphirelake Military Academy, prodigies with tremendous potential to grow into great powerhouses, or highly intellectual individuals. Of course, there would also be instructors and professors from the Berserker and Warlock Centaur races. It was a good thing that they didn't have to rush back to the Saphirelake Military Academy. The next semester was not going to start until the reconstruction of the academy had been completed, either way. The Saphirelake Military Academy received various generous funds from the Tritan Alliance and countless powerful individuals who paid for the privilege of transferring their child to the Saphirelake Military Academy and ensuring that he or she received the best tutelage. Those funds were going to be used up to strengthen the academy's foundation and top-up their defenses by a large margin. The Saphirelake Military Academy would develop into an impenetrable fortress against the forces of the dark organizations and the Supreme Human Alliance.

It was only fortunate that the Supreme Human Alliance's forces weren't anywhere nearby, otherwise, mankind would have already been suppressed and forced into submission...probably.

"How long are we going to stay in space?" Michael asked Alice, while finishing the last preparations before he would return to the Origin Expanse. "If there is no delay, it will take three weeks. But the Chieftain said that we're probably going to take four weeks. Delays are not exactly abnormal when it comes to the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs," She responded nonchalantly. Michael could tell that Alice wanted to say more, but he was not willing to listen to her after their earlier talk. He was certain that she wanted to talk about his family, his mother, to be precise, again. Michael didn't want to hear anything about that.

"In that case, I will leave for a while. I neglected the Origin Expanse for too long, and I've got a lot to do, more than ever now that I found out that I have my brother's Living Soul," Michael said, bidding Alice a

goodbye before he entered the Runic Gate. He returned to the Origin Expanse where life was easier, less complicated.

Alice was left behind in his small cabin all alone. She sighed deeply.

"Maybe, I shouldn't have said anything about his mother..."

Michael emerged on the other side of the Runic Gate in his small room inside the wooden manor. He stretched his body, ready to spend the next few weeks working his ass off to develop his territory.

But before he could focus entirely on his territory, Michael had to solve another issue. He had to find a way to accumulate as many SoulStar Fragments as possible.

He wanted to work on the expansion of his territory and proper development plans, but the question revolving around his SoulStar Fragments was far more important.

'If Extraction requires roughly 300,000 SoulStar Fragments to be upgraded to 7-Star, maybe even more, Soul Grimoire as a Soultrait in the outer area of the Sphere of Light will need 700,000 SoulStar Fragments.' Michael felt like cursing himself. He wanted to move Soul Grimoire to the inner area of the Sphere of Light, but something seemed to block his advances. Extracting Soul Grimoire didn't work either. Using Extraction on the Soul Grimoire was extremely painful. It felt like he had to tear his Soul into tiny shreds before he could remove the Soul Grimoire.

'But why is that the case? I could remove Spirit Whip easily as well. It was painful but it didn't feel like my soul would sustain any temporary injuries. Removing Soul Grimoire will lead to a backlash by inflicting severe permanent injuries to my soul if I continue with Extraction.'

Many theories revolved around Soultraits and their characteristics. Some people said that certain Soultraits were not compatible with their Awakened. They might have manifested the Soultrait, but that didn't mean they were suitable for each other. Michael felt something similar with Spirit Whip. He never felt a deep connection to Spirit Whip. That did not mean he was incapable of using it properly, but Michael never felt like experimenting with Spirit Whip. 'Is that why I could remove Spirit Whip, but not Soul Grimoire? Soul Grimoire is highly compatible with me, so it's anchored deep inside the Sphere of Light?' Michael wondered, 'Did I never consider removing Soul Grimoire because of that? Because I subconsciously knew that Soul Grimoire is highly compatible with me?'

Michael didn't have enough data to make a proper decision, but he felt like he was on the right path. Unfortunately, that didn't help in the current situation. It was a fact that he couldn't remove Soul Grimoire from his Sphere of Light without damaging it permanently. He couldn't even move it.

'That means I need roughly 1,000,000 SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Soul Grimoire and Extraction to 7-Star. If I can find other Soultraits that are compatible with Soul Grimoire and fuse with it, creating a more advanced version, it might be enough if Soul Grimoire stays a 6-Star Soultrait. But that means I need to find one or multiple Soultraits that can not only fuse with Soul Grimoire, but also evolve it into a suitable Soultrait to house and nourish a Cursed Soul.'

Time was ticking, especially because he had only one year to solve the problem, but it made one thing clear. Michael had to change his strategy from playing kingdom-building in an uncivilized jungle to spreading out his wings and becoming more active in the surrounding regions.

He was in need of SoulStar Fragments, and the wars brewing to his left and right were perfect locations to get just that.

That was also why the recent events in the Origin Expanse were quite helpful to make a few decisions.

First of all, the monsters in the Untamed Jungle had taken note of Michael and his territory. They didn't charge into his territory just yet but the number of stronger monsters nesting near his territory had increased over the last few weeks. There were multiple reasons for that, one being the development of his farmland. The combined effort of the evolving Nature Spirit, and the Forest Pixies gathered the ambient energy and spread it through the ground, allowing flora and fauna to flourish even more.

Michael knew that the threats looming over him would intensify once he installed the Domain of Natura. The quality of the ambient origin energy would improve whereas the nutritious soil would grow even more fertile. Even High Beasts, which were the equivalent of Higher Lifeforms for most Awakened, would travel to his territory to find a place to inhabit and mark a piece of his territory as their own. But the monsters of the Untamed Jungle were not yet a problem. The massacre caused by losing his control and rationale against the corruption of the Cursed Seals was more than enough to slow down the monsters' advances for some time. Michael and his subjects wouldn't have any issues killing more of them once they advanced further in his territory's direction.

Simultaneously, with the appearance of stronger monsters near Michael's territory, two large incidents happened in the regions around him.

Taros lost the battle against the Zentika Empire. He did not die, but his territory was destroyed, eliminating his Lord Powers. Interestingly, despite losing his Lord powers, Taros was not restrained anymore. He charged into the Zentika Empire with his Dragon companion and traversed through the large plains, causing death and destruction wherever they passed by. After a few weeks of causing terror and destruction all over the Zentika Empire, Taros and his Red Dragon disappeared. When Michael heard that Taros' companion was a Red Dragon, he felt miserable. He could tell that Taros enraged the Red Dragon in the Lord Rift by stealing its egg. Taros' action resulted in Masked Saber's death...his brother's death as his Summon. Rage filled Michael once again, but he calmed down quickly. Thinking about his brother and the possibility of bringing him back to life was enough reason to take charge of his emotions and stay level headed. He couldn't afford to lose his reasoning and mess up. Not with something as important as this!

One way or another, the Zentika Empire was weaker than ever. Michael would have considered invading the Zentika Empire if he hadn't heard that the Zentika Empire considered invading the Untamed Jungle. At first, Michael couldn't believe what he heard. He was certain that some of his scouts messed up big time and that they forwarded the wrong information. However, there seemed to be underlying reasons for the Zentika Empire to consider invading the Untamed Jungle – one of them being a lack of food and other resources.

Taros and the Red Dragon destroyed all farms and towns all over the Zentika Empire, burning them down to ash and leaving the lands scorched. The merchant routes had been destroyed and the citizens' trust was lost over the last few weeks. That was what Michael's scouts presumed after they witnessed the destruction alongside the Zentika Empire's border.

Since Michael never sent his scouts deep inside the Zentika Empire, he couldn't be certain that the news had been affirmed. However, that was going to change pretty soon. He equipped a troupe of scouts with a wide variety of new equipment, including a veil of invisibility. The veils were rare and wouldn't execution in combat, but that was not necessary for a mission similar this. "Acquire more information and use the Charms of Communication if you cannot reach me through the communication crystals!" Michael ordered, and the group of Scouts nodded their heads politely. They bowed deeply to their Lord, bid him farewell, and moved out of the way. In the next minutes, they began their journey to the border of the Zentika Empire.

The Scout's invasion into the deeper parts of the enemy's territory began.

Other than the end of the war between Taros and the Zentika Empire, and Taros' disappearance from the surface of the Origin Expanse, an even bigger event occurred on the other side of Michael's territory. While a situation in the Zentika Empire and their future actions were still uncertain, the situation in the Savannah Region was the complete opposite.

The Trilance was in a tricky situation. They were pushed back and lost a fraction of their territory after a other alliances within the Savannah region decided to combine their forces and attack them. Michael was not well informed about the happenings in the Savannah Region, but he heard that the other Alliances agreed to a temporary truce to take down the Trilance. As for why that happened, Michael was not too sure.

The combined forces of a alliances transformed the region that looked similar a patchwork of dozens of territories into one large piece of land. The internal conflicts between the alliances didn't cease, but they had one goal in common; They wanted to eliminate the Trilance.

The Patchwork Alliances as Michael decided to call them, turned into a Quasi-Kingdom at this point. All they were missing were powerhouses above Tier-4.

"Once a Trilance perishes, the Untamed Jungle will be their next goal." Michael concluded, his eyes traveling to the Berserkers, and the Warlock Centaurs who trained diligently with Immortal Knight, the Blessed Squires and his Holy Knights. "I think it's moment for our initial expedition."