

Supreme Lord 651

Chapter 651 Strike Force

Some Valyr were displeased with Michael's demand, but interestingly enough, nobody rejected the use of Mind Reader after he made a Soul Contract that stated that he wasn't going to spill any of their private –possibly dirty– secrets and that he wasn't going to use his Soultrait to manipulate them.

The result of utilizing Mind Reader on the Valyr was pretty one-sided. None of them were traitors. The Valyr didn't even think about betraying him, let alone the Valyr Lordess. The majority of their thoughts were filled with revenge and the desire to tear apart some idiots, aka the Council of Xylon.

It was a good thing that nobody was going to betray him or the Valyr Lordess. However, it was also surprising, and oddly boring compared to the things he had to go through in the past. It was unusual that he wasn't thrown from one hellhole into another. Luckily, he didn't say that out loud. There was no need to jinx it.

The Forest Elves hoped that Michael would deploy the Untamed Army soon. They desired revenge just like the Valyr. However, Michael told everyone to calm down and stay patient. He used the pieces of information gained through the Valyr Lordess and his subordinates to research a few things, forward the development of his territory, and seal some deals with the Valyr Lordess, her Clan, and therefore also the higher-ups of the Valyr race.

"Rest up until you're ready to fight again. By then, I will pick you up to join the fight," Michael said lightly to the Valyr Lordess and her injured subordinates, after he finished all preparations, "If you take too long, it will be over and my contribution to the Regional War will exceed yours by a lot. Our pact wi–..."

"I know...We will be ready to fight soon. Don't worry," The Valyr Lordess interrupted him, but Michael merely shrugged.

"Take your time. The higher my contribution in the Regional War the more I will benefit."

The Valyr Lordess frowned, which Michael took as a sign to turn around and leave the infirmary once again. A sly smile formed on his lips. He gained everything he could have hoped for. The only thing left for him to do was to stir trouble in the Savannah Region.

He walked over to the Pillar of Territorial Awareness and updated the Savannah region's map using the knowledge acquired from the Valyrs' minds. Thereafter, he called over the Untamed Awakened, Zeroa, and Stinger.

Everyone could tell that something was about to happen, but it was quite difficult to tell what was on Michael's mind. His actions were hard to predict even though they seemed simple and logical most of the time.

"We are going to head out in a few minutes. Immortal Knight will continue to train the Untamed Army, the newcomers included, alongside Master Tigris, Legion, and the other Instructors. That leaves the Untamed Awakened, and a dozen Valyr to create chaos all over the Savannah Region."

Michael glanced in the direction of a small house, where Zira and some Valyr were hiding. Zira stepped forward, her lips pressed together. She stared at Michael but didn't say a thing.

The others gossiped and asked each other how Michael noticed them, but nobody asked him aloud.

"Since you guys are already here, I might as well give you a mission as well," Michael declared.

"I will split the Untamed Awakened for the first mission. Since Zira and her colleagues know each other best, Zeroa will join them to act as their teleporter and support," He announced right before telling Zeroa via telepathy what she had to do.

["Survival is the most important, but I hope that you and the Valyr can move through the Savannah Region to execute small-scale terror acts. Never attack a large group of enemies with several Higher Lifeforms. Your mission is to attack the small and mid-scale groups led by Tier-3 Awakened. Once you eliminate the groups, you will use your space affinity to change your location right away."]

The mission was simple.

-Keep moving and attack the enemies where they don't expect you. Teleport, strike, kill, leave. Rest and repeat.

"Hiraku will lead the other group and Mekhaz alongside the Warlock Centaurs, who've been subordinate to him in the past, will follow him. Stinger will accompany you to adjust your location. However, since Stinger's racial trait is not a simple teleportation, you guys will have to move around a lot. That shouldn't be an issue since everyone in your group has great stamina but stay focused and rest whenever it's possible."

"The others will come with me. Our focus will be to hunt down the reinforcement deployed by the families, clans, and governments of the Council of Xylon's 106 Lords," Michael pointed out, his attention drifting to Tiara, the Forest Elves, Thaor, Lokai, and everyone else he hadn't mentioned yet, "The main goal of our strike force will be to kill a few Lords, while Hiraku's group and the Valyr make use of your prowess and traits to distract everyone all while obliterating as many enemies as possible."

Frederik's hand shot high up into the air, "I have a question!"

'We are not in school, you know?' Michael was about to ask but he gestured toward his friend in silence.

"Wouldn't it be better if I join Hiraku, or execute you think it will be necessary for me to join your strike force? I am a little bit too...weak...to deal any considerable damage to Higher Lifeforms. Even Tier-3 Awakened are very hard for me to deal with."

Michael nodded, "I know that you're still not strong enough to deal with the strongest enemies, but your Soultraits are perfect to deal with all Summons and Awakened below Tier-3 swiftly. Hiraku and the Warlock Centaurs are heavy hitters. Aeroan won't enhance their overall combat prowess drastically. On the other hand, your Soultraits can aid the Forest Elves."

Frederik looked like he had something else to say, but Michael raised his hand to stop him.

"I have a plan, don't worry."

It would be a lot easier if Michael had a few powerful Awakened with area of effect Soultraits. Unfortunately, it was not easy to find someone like Alice Zenovia or her brother. Frederik's Soultrait allowed him to move rapidly through the surroundings, granting him enough protection to survive the attacks of Tier-3 Awakened – all while continuing to attack those weaker than him. That was perfect for the plans Michael had come up with.

"So, we act as a distraction and assault smaller groups before moving along while your strike force will be the main attacking force?" Zira asked, her brows furrowed.

The other Valyr didn't seem to be pleased with their assignment, and Zira looked like her opinion didn't differ from her people either.

"Feel free to transform your unit into the main strike force if you can jump through space without getting noticed, kill several Higher Lifeforms in an instant, and escape within seconds if necessary," Michael responded calmly, not even allowing Zira to voice out her doubts.

The other Valyr scowled deeply, but Michael showed no mercy. He didn't restrain the Extraction Aura and allowed it to naturally fuse with his Legendary Ring Artifact's dragon might.

The Valyr sensed a prickling sensation sweep all over their bodies. Their eyes widened as they realized that their hair and snippets of their skin had gone missing.

Everyone could tell that Michael hadn't used his Soultraits yet. Not a single trace of energy left his body, yet his natural aura and presence were enough to affect them. Goosebumps covered their bodies as the Extraction Aura merged with dragon might, and shrouded them.

Michael stared coldly at the Valyr, who backed off in unison. The sensation of threat coming from Michael was too terrifying. Not even the two Valyr who'd already ascended to Higher Lifeforms could handle Michael's natural pressure. He was dangerous.

Zira, just like some of the Valyr, recalled Michael's fight against the Kitsun Lord. However, they clearly remembered him to be weaker. A lot weaker.

"I think..." Zira mumbled, "You're good to go. You will execute a better job than our strike force..."

"It's good if you know," Michael responded lightly, clasping his hands to disperse the tension that had enveloped everyone. The atmosphere eased, and some couldn't help but breathe out in relief.

"How about we stop wasting our precious time?" Michael asked, smiling brightly. He sensed pretty good right now.

His gut feeling told him that today was going to be a good day.

"We've got some Lords to slay!"

Chapter 652 In The Savannah

A loud buzzing rang through Arx as the teleportation array was activated for the first time.

The surroundings were filled with golden motes and sparks as energy gathered in the array that enveloped a large open area. The bushes and branches circling the open area rustled faintly as they played with the gentle gusts of the surroundings.

Everyone stood in the teleportation array, waiting impatiently to be thrown through space.

Once the teleportation array was charged with the Inferior Energy Stones that had been spread evenly around the array, the fabric of space twisted and distorted.

"No vomiting!" Mika joked lightly, catching a slap against the back of his head right after. Lilica glared daggers at him.

Mika screamed aloud, only for his voice to disperse as everyone vanished with a plop.

Michael and the others weren't quite sure what to expect from the teleportation, but the ride was a lot easier than expected. At least, that was what Michael thought.

Mika, Zira, and some Berserkers didn't think like that. They emptied their stomachs once they emerged from the space tunnel that led them into the middle of nowhere.

Michael's stomach revolted a little bit, but he focused on the surroundings right away. They had been teleported into the center of the Savannah Region, after all.

Since the Savannah Region was too large to move around swiftly without getting noticed by the 106 Lords, their subordinates, scouts, Orbs of Hostility, and the like, Michael decided that it was time to use the teleportation array. The space fluctuations of the teleportation array were noticeable in the surrounding area, but that wasn't something Michael was concerned about.

The temporary anchor of the teleportation array was set up at the coordinates of a small Forbidden Zone. The Valyr Lordess remembered the coordinates and exact location, which made everything a little bit easier.

"So that's the center of the Savannah Region?" I expected a large fortress or the like," Thaor mumbled, once he regained control of his stomach. He patted Mika lightly on the shoulders, consoling him for vomiting thrice in a row, and glanced over to Michael, whose attention was locked onto something in the south.

"That's the center of the Savannah Region," Michael nodded without averting his attention, "And this is the High Beast that turned this area into a Forbidden Zone!"

His introduction arrived merely a quarter of a second before a huge, winged Lion emerged out of nowhere. It crashed hard into the ground, creating a small crater as rubble and debris hurled through the air.

The High Beast that appeared in front of them was majestic. It had huge, black-feathered wings that spanned more than 20 meters and towered above the Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs.

Its ruby eyes locked on Michael, who broke into a bright smile. He retrieved a large Energy Stone and threw it toward the mighty beast.

The Energy Stone was pitch-black, fueled with the purest darkness energy that Michael had ever seen. The Stone of Darkness was something Michael procured not too long ago from Kraft Viton. Its value was enormous and it was something Michael had prepared for Sun Demos.

Michael had been certain that Sun Demos would evolve further down the path of a darkness-attributed monster.

Since that was not the case anymore, Michael thought that he might as well distract the mighty Devil-winged Lion King for a few seconds. It loved snacks, after all.

'Good thing I read their minds.' Michael praised himself quietly. The Valyr Lordess and the Valyr didn't know a lot about the Forbidden Zone in the center of the Savannah Region, but they'd heard that the Overlord of the Forbidden Zone demanded treasures and resources in exchange for never leaving its territory.

Michael had been uncertain about the safety of the plan, but everything seemed fine – for now.

The Devil-winged Lion King sensed his amiable intentions and ignored him for a few seconds. These seconds were more than enough for Michael to use Taming's Powershare and Fusion with Zeroa. He transferred a tremendous amount of space-attributed energy into Zeroa's space affinity and used his advanced understanding of space to shroud everyone in a golden hue.

The Devil-winged Lion King eyed Michael for a second but it continued to drain the purified darkness energy within the Stone of Darkness. Michael teleported everyone outside the Forbidden Zone using a mixture of the Elemental Empress' space affinity, his space energy, and Cosmic Stride.

Michael had to jump through space three times to leave the Forbidden Zone in the Savannah's center properly, but that was worth it. They were finally deep into the Council of Xylon's territory and it was highly unlikely that anyone sensed anything. The Devil-winged Lion King's territory was large enough to hide the spatial fluctuations he and his people had left behind.

"Nobody will expect us, right?" Hiraku asked lightly. It was not sure whether he was genuinely curious, if he was scared, or if he was just bored. Somehow, Michael presumed that it was the latter, though it was unsure why Hiraku would feel bored.

'Maybe, it's just his face. Or he was born a nonchalant tsundere.' Michael shrugged before answering, "They might expect us, but I don't think so."

"Nobody would expect some suicidal idiots to invade their territory with 30ish people," Lilica said seemingly seriously, but the corner of her lips curled upward. She enjoyed this.

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"How much longer do we have to guard the borders? This is stupid. We're literally in the middle of nowhere and must guard the border to restrict our allies. We're not even enemies!!" A young Awakened cursed aloud, his huge mouth wide open and ready to spit out a few more curses.

He groaned in anger and kicked a large rock through the vicinity. The Savannah was hot and it was certainly not helpful that everyone was obliged to wear the full-metal Armor Set of the Xylon Council.

"Allies? Official, maybe. But unofficial? Unofficial, we're already enemies and scheming against each other. Why else would our Lord be so scared to leave the borders open and unprotected? They expect an attack any minute. Though, I don't think that anything bad will happen anytime soon." An older Awakened responded with a shrug.

It had been decades since his Lord entered the Origin Expanse, and it felt fancy it had been just as long that his Lord had been struggling to grow stronger and create a prospering territory in the Savannah Region.

It was not the initial moment that his Lord participated in a large-scale Regional War. However, this time, too many Lords allied against a small number of enemies. The Council of Xylon had too many members. They might have defeated the Trilance, but the damage sustained from scheming, stalling time, and other unnecessary troubles had been severe as well.

Some Lords had ordered their subordinates to attack their allies in the last battle against the Valyr Lordess. The Trilance went down and perished, but the Council of Xylon's 'trust' cracked. Their common goal had been accomplished, leaving the 106 Lords' individual goals and their uncontrollable desire to their behest.

"Attack? The Kalivera has been allied with us for years. They would never atta—..." The young Awakened couldn't even finish his sentence.

His eyes widened in terror and he was about to scream aloud when a golden flash brushed past his head.

A fountain of blood spurted through the air. The upper part of the Awakened's head was sliced off neatly. It slid down his head and landed on the ground with a thud.

If the older Awakened was still able to say something, he would have screamed for help and reinforcement. Unfortunately, Michael's initial target had been the old man. Aethyr Tigerfang's blade was coated in Reinforced Sword Qi, a sheen of Extraction, and layers of Enhancement jutted out of the Awakened's chest.

The old Awakened managed to look right where he saw a glimpse of Michael's ice-cold golden eyes. However, that was all he managed to see before the world around him twisted dark. Eternal darkness swallowed him, pulling him into an eternal sleep.

A wisp emerged from the old man and ascended into the air. But before it could disperse and merge with the Will of the Origin Expanse, Michael summoned the Soul Grimoire. The wisp's trajectory was forcefully altered, pulling it to the Soul Grimoire.

The Soul Grimoire swallowed the wisp and devoured the power within to form several Soul Tears before spitting it out once again. The wisp was only a small snippet of what it used to be, but Michael didn't pay any attention to that anymore.

His attention lingered on the others who were dealing with the remaining Awakened.

"Seems fancy the Council of Xylon's internal struggles are even worse than we thought," Michael mumbled, prepared to make use of that fact.

They could transform the battlefield into beautiful scenery and leave behind some well-hidden 'clues' that point toward the Kalivera. Michael was not a well-trained conman but he could trick some idiots who have never been able to expand their territory, not even after ascending to a Higher Lifeform decades after they entered the Origin Expanse.

The Council of Xylon didn't seem to have much brain, let alone other talents.

'But it will be difficult to transform this into something useful...' Michael thought, suppressing a groan as he observed the Forest Elves and Tiara.

The Princess of the Silverfang Tigerfolk finished her half-

transformation into a Silvarean Tiger and weaved through the rows of dozen Awakened. Her spear burst forth several times in a second, but she never lost any momentum thanks to her well-coordinated use of Inner Force.

Tiara made it seem fancy she was dancing through the rows of enemies easily, however, she was fully focused on the use of her Soultraits and staying in top form, while also avoiding getting hit by all means.

Spirit Whip helped her achieve that. The Soultrait she'd obtained from Michael a long moment ago was fully integrated into Tiara. She intertwined several Spirit Whips and lashed out at several enemies in quick succession. The sudden mental attacks came out of nowhere and struck the targets heavily.

They were prepared for physical attacks and some hand-to-

hand combat with the fury of the Silverfang Princess but weren't guarded well against the mental attack.

They were struck by the whip right before a blade pierced through their throats.

The Awakened and Summons guarding the border fell fancy flies in front of Tiara, and the same scenario happened in other areas as well.

It was just that the Forest Elves were not as peace-loving as they used to be.

Rage filled their beings.

Their minds were filled with revenge.

Chapter 653 Slaughter

Lilica twisted her upper body evading an icicle while using Invisible Projectile on her daggers. The daggers didn't turn invisible right away. Instead, they were camouflaged first, only to merge with the surrounding colors as she threw one of them at the closest enemy.

The Awakened was taken by surprise, but he reacted fast enough to raise an ice wall. The wall cracked as the dagger impacted, but it didn't shatter. Lilica inched closer to the Awakened while evading a downpour of a dozen icicles. Not a single icicle managed to touch her, however, her movement speed suffered greatly in response to her actions to evade all incoming attacks.

She retrieved another dagger from her War Rune and threw it at the Awakened. With Weakness Detection activated, Lilica found a fragile spot in the ice wall, shattering the Awakened's defense at once.

Lilica kicked the ground with great force and appeared in front of the Awakened, who'd readied his weapons as well. Their weapons were just about to collide when the Awakened noticed that one of Lilica's weapons was missing. Lilica had thrown the weapon right before her other dagger was about to clash with the Awakened's blade.

The Awakened's eyes widened in terror when his danger sense tingled like crazy. He knew that something was wrong and was about to retreat when Lilica used her empty hand to grasp something out of the air. The invisible dagger turned visible once again in Lilica's hands. She slashed down, piercing the dagger deep into the Awakened's collarbone.

The Awakened pulled away, glad that he was clad in a full-body armor set. There were only two things he didn't take into account; Lilica was not the same friendly Forest Elf that she used to be, and her Soultrait, Weakness Detection, does not only work on living entities. She could pinpoint the weak spots in heavy-metal armor as well.

The dagger pierced through the seams of the heavy-metal armor and cut deep into the Awakened's collarbone right before he backed away. He conjured several icicles and was ready to kill Lilica before she could charge at him once again. However, it was at this moment he noticed that Lilica was smiling.

Something was wrong.

Suddenly, the Awakened's shoulder felt like it burned from the inside. He broke into a cold sweat and glanced at the dagger that was still stuck in his armor and collarbone. His heavy-metal armor set had been well-maintained and polished until it shimmered. Yet, at this moment, the area around the blade looked like it was rusting. The rust spread rapidly, corroding the heavy metal armor set rapidly.

However, the armor was not the only thing that corroded.

The Awakened looked left, his eyes filled with shock. His veins protruded through his skin and turned purple. The dagger had been poisoned and the poison spread rapidly through his body!

Distracted from feeling unbearable pain for the first time in years, he noticed too late that Lilica appeared next to him. Her arm shot forward and the sound of metal cutting something resounded in the Awakened's ears. Only as the fountain of blood filled his view did he realize that his neck had been sliced.

Lilica left behind a gaping wound in the Awakened's neck. She retrieved the dagger in the next instance and her Bow Artifact, Silent Reaper, appeared in her hands. She conjured an arrow using an archery technique and applied Invisible Projectile before starting her rampage against the Council of Xylon.

She released one invisible arrow after another in quick succession, reaping the lives of the border guards without paying any attention to her allies' situation.

Fortunately, nobody was in a tricky situation. Their surprise attack was a great success.

Mika focused on using the Wyvernwood Bow with Pierce and Rapid Fire fully unleashed. He eliminated even more enemies than Lilica.

His expression was filled with anger and guilt. Even if he grew stronger during the last few weeks, Mika felt weak and helpless. He was useless.

Nobody would consider Mika useless. He killed more enemies than the rest and had more than enough energy reserves left to keep fighting for a long time. However, the battle at the border ended before he could go all-out.

"That's not even a warm-up," Frederik mumbled, his attention drifting to the Forest Elves soon after the skirmish ended. He tried to distract them, but his attempt failed miserably.

The Forest Elves stared coldly at the corpses. Mika kicked one of the lifeless bodies in the face.

Lilica and Mika acted unusual since they entered the Savannah Region. It was almost like someone haunted them. Even Opars wasn't feeling alright.

Michael looked at them for a moment. He made a mental note to keep an eye on them before diverting his attention to the corpses. Tens of Extraction tendrils shot out of him on command. The golden tendrils burst forth and smashed heavily into the lifeless bodies, extracting. SoulStar Fragments, Soultraits, Memory Orbs, and the like.

"Are any Kalivera nearby to kill?" Michael asked lightly.

Creating an illusion on the battlefield to make it seem as if the forces of the neighboring Lords clashed wasn't supposed to be too difficult. The only issues were that he didn't have any bodies of the Kalivera and that the Untamed Awakened took down the guards way too easily. There was little to no struggle visible on the corpses. They had been killed within two to three exchanges.

Anyone with two " maybe three " brain cells could tell that the guards had been killed too swiftly. The Kalivera were not strong enough to take down these idiotic guards that easily. Most of them, at least.

"I don't think so," Tiara responded.

Michael channeled some energy into Spirit Eyes and looked around. Nobody was in their proximity.

"That's fine as well," He shrugged and unleashed the Dome of Extraction.

The Dome of Extraction spread across the entire battlefield, extracting the traces of the battlefield. The corpses, their spilled guts, rolling heads, and missing body parts were collected after Michael finished extracting their Memory Orbs and other goods. Following that, Michael extracted the blood that had been spilled all over the battlefield.

It might not be possible to remove all traces of the battlefield within two to three minutes, but it was no problem for Michael to turn it into a challenge to find out that there had been a fight. It would be even more difficult to figure out who killed the border guards.

Michael fused the Extraction Aura with the Dome of Extraction to accelerate the cleansing. He retracted both once he was done and retrieved the Memory Orbs of the Awakened he'd just killed.

There was no need to waste any more time. Michael consumed the Memory Orbs, his focus lingering on the location of the strongest Awakened and the Lords.

He closed his eyes and digested the memories swiftly. The influx of memories was interesting, but it looked like none of them had an idea where their Lord could be.

However, the memories shared some other pieces of information that could come in handy.

'If I can't find the Lords, I might as well look for their most trusted subordinates!' Michael thought as he found a piece of memory that revealed the location of some Awakened, who were aware of their Lord's location.

That was not the best scenario, but it was more than enough for Michael. He wouldn't want to miss out on eliminating a few more Awakened. After all, Awakened are like walking treasure troves to him!

"I found some Awakened who's meeting up with another Lord's embassy. They're also Awakened," Michael announced, "Get ready, we're going to move."

The embassy was going to meet on neutral grounds instead of a settlement. That was an advantage Michael could exploit.

The others gathered around Michael, who utilized Cosmic Stride to transport through the Savannah with the least spatial fluctuations.

In a matter of minutes, they discovered themselves close to a well-guarded camp.

Dozens of Awakened and hundreds of combat Summons guarded the camp. They paid attention that no one could enter the camp unsupervised. It would be difficult to enter the camp without getting noticed.

Fortunately, Michael never planned to go unnoticed.

He didn't have to leave any hostages, either. All he truly needed was their corpses!

Chapter 654 Weak

?The Forest Elves prepared a bombardment of arrows. They summoned their Pseudo-Legendary Bow Artifacts moved into position and used their Soultraits.

Michael unleashed Cosmic Stride to teleport everyone closer to the well-guarded camp. The teleportation didn't remain unnoticed. They were noticed, resulting in a commotion from the camp.

However, it was already too late to raise their defenses. Mika was the first to release an arrow. He'd used Arrow Duplication multiple times on the arrow, transforming the lonely arrow into a flock of 32 arrows in no time. The downpour killed three Summons who were struck by eight arrows.

They would have survived, under normal circumstances, but the increased penetrative force granted through the Pierce Soultrait added enough damage to kill the three Summons.

Opars used Herculean Strength to draw the Dryadwoven Bow properly. He released his arrow a second after Mika, killing one of the burlier Peak Tier-2 Awakened with a single attack.

Lilica focused on swift attacks with the deadliest potential. Silent Reaper was full in action and her Soultraits were all activated.

The Forest Elves managed to kill a dozen enemies in the first few seconds of the battle. Unfortunately, the surprise effect wore off afterward. They had to change their position and work harder to kill more enemies.

Tiara, Thaor, Lokai, and the other Berserkers, on the other hand, reached the well-guarded camp only now. They were a little late to arrive at the camp to use the surprise effect to their advantage. It was not important, either way.

Thaor's body expanded as he unleashed Crimson Aura only to infuse it straight back into his body. He activated Red Giant and paid full attention to controlling the merging process of the Crimson Aura and Red Giant. Master of Combat aided the fusion process, while also granting Thaor the necessary combat awareness to evade a few incoming thunderbolts and other projectiles. He picked up a large rock from the side, spun around his axis without losing any momentum, and hurled the rock at the annoying pests that kept attacking him.

The rock whizzed through the air in a beautiful arc and hit the designated target, squashing a Summon underneath its heavy weight. A muffled scream was all the victim could utter before he was squashed like an ant.

Tiara and Lokai were the first to reach the camp. Lokai used her brute strength and a combination of Burning Fury and Life Conversion to tear apart the makeshift walls. They were supposed to hold the forte against ordinary monsters, not a physical monstrosity such as a Late Tier-3 Berserker whose physical strength had been reinforced twice. After all, they were in the middle of the Savannah Region. There weren't supposed to be any enemies other than some lowly monsters.

Nobody was prepared for a sudden attack. However, that didn't mean that they would die without putting up a fight. The only problem was that the enemy of the strongest Awakened was none other than Michael.

Michael appeared in the commando tent with Cosmic Stride, the Aethyr Blade raised to slice his enemies. However, what he saw in the commando tent attracted his interest.

The Awakened formed the embassy and the rest stood opposite each other with their unsheathed weapons. Their Soultraits were unleashed and they faced each other with killing-intent glimmering in their eyes.

"You betrayed the Golden Command?!?" One of them screamed, only for the other side to respond just as loudly.

"I was about to say the same thing, you ugly fucker! How dare you attack the camp on neutral grounds?!?"

The corner of Michael's lips curled upward. Both sides thought that the other betrayed them. They didn't think that a third party – a total stranger – appeared in the middle of the Savannah Region.

That made sense, somehow.

Who would be stupid enough to charge into the center of the Savannah Region to attack the most influential Lords' embassy?

Michael was. But he was not stupid, most of the time. He was merely confident that he could beat the shit out of everyone.

'That's fun.'

He manifested the Soul Grimoire and used several Soul Tears at once. Simultaneously, he applied 10 layers of Enhancement to his body while producing enough Soul Energy to exert Heavenly Beast Physique. An Extraction Sword covered the Aethyr Blade alongside several layers of Reinforced Sword Qi.

In the next second, Michael unleashed a dazzling light that filled the entire commando tent. That was pretty simple. All he had to do was to draw some light energy out of his body and compress it instantaneously.

Michael covered his eyes with darkness energy to protect them from the dazzling light. The others were not as fortunate as Michael, who conjured some Qi Swords to kill the weakest fools in the commando tent in an instant. The Qi Blades shot through the surroundings, impaling a dozen enemies, whereas Michael cracked the ground as he dashed to the Tier-3 powerhouses.

His physical force rivaled a Lowest Tier-4 powerhouse at this moment. He utilized Spiritual Domination at the lowest level to weaken the Tier-3 Awakened and beheaded them with a swift slice or thrust through their throat or chest to kill them swiftly.

Once the dazzling light dimmed down, only the embassy leaders were left alive.

They stared at each other first, but it didn't take long before they noticed their comrades' corpses. Michael appeared next to one of them. He laid his arm around the High Awakened, who tensed up as the Extraction Aura removed his clothes, hair, and skin layer by layer.

Michael smiled lightly at the High Awakened, however, his gaze were ice-cold and ruthless.

"Surprise~" Michael uttered, the Aethyr Blade slicing across the High Awakened's throat.

Blood splashed onto the ground. It splattered in all directions, but not a single droplet hit Michael. Extraction Aura shrouded his body in a membrane that removed the blood before it could touch him.

"You guys are pretty weak," Michael said while teleporting next to the other High Awakened.

"The Zentika Empire's High Lionhearts were stronger than you guys."

The High Awakened was not as perceptive as other Awakened, but he was far more experienced than most. He expected Michael to appear next to him and was ready to pierce his chest.

Michael didn't move after he teleported next to the last survivor in the commando tent. His golden gaze shimmered brightly. It felt like Michael's eyes expanded and transformed. The High Awakened froze in his tracks. He was petrified and couldn't move anymore, no matter how much he screamed at his body in his mind.

"That worked better than expected," Michael uttered to himself, a single droplet of sweat trickling down his temples.

Michael did a lot more things in the week of isolation than most thought. He did not only focus on the combination of Summoning Scrolls, or Soul Grimoire's fusion to prepare everything for Danny's rescue. Michael created a few Common Class Soul Techniques for his other Soultraits as well!

Basilisk's Petrification was one of the Soul Techniques he'd created to unleash the full potential of Spirit Eyes' Spiritual Domination. He was not confident about the potency of Basilisk's Petrification, but it was apparent that his worries were unfounded. The Soul Technique was strong enough to petrify weak-willed Higher Lifeforms for...three seconds.

He lifted the Aethyr Blade and drove it deep into the High Awakened's chest.

'Inflicting fear into the enemy before using Basilisk's Petrification strengthens the effect.' Michael considered as he looked into the dying gaze of the High Awakened, 'His battle spirit shattered when I killed the other High Awakened. What a shame.'

Michael couldn't help but be disappointed at those two Higher Lifeforms. They were the worst example to showcase the tremendous prowess of proper Higher Lifeforms.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, in this case, Michael didn't have to go all-out to deal with the two High Awakened. He didn't have to cause a massive commotion or unleash his Cursed Seals to deal with them. That was great. It was just disappointing.

Michael had hoped that he would have to combat desperately and sustain some serious injuries to deal with the two High Awakened. That was what he expected after dealing with the Heart of the Blazing Lion army. But that wasn't the case. The Council of Xylon was not the same as the Zentika Empire.

They were different. Not everyone in the Council of Xylon was powerful.

However, that didn't mean the council was weak.

Chapter 655 Raw Power I

Michael didn't have to do much other than kill the Higher Lifeforms. The others were powerful enough to deal with the remaining Awakened and Summons in the camp.

If Michael had to rate the combat prowess of his enemies, he would probably consider it 'Lesser', or 'Ordinary'. It was average at best. If anything, the Awakened were a lot weaker than expected. It was almost like they didn't own a Soultrait, and that their Artifacts didn't amplify their strength at all.

On the other hand, Michael could consider the Untamed Awakened as entities with Superior combat prowess since their strength allowed them to fight one rank above their weight class without any difficulties. As their combat prowess increased, they may as well learn how to defeat enemies that ought to be much stronger than him.

In the meantime, Michael's combat prowess was ranked 'Mythical' because he could easily fight above his weight class, at this point. He was a Low Tier-3 Lord capable of fighting Higher Lifeforms. How many Awakened all over the Origin Expanse could do that? Not many.

"Is everyone alright?" Michael asked rhetorically after the last enemy fell victim to Lilica's Silent Reaper.

He knew that his people were doing fine and that there was no need to worry. As long as they didn't have to fight against the forces of the whole Council of Xylon simultaneously the Untamed Awakened shouldn't have an issue escaping fights unscathed.

"We're fine," Lilica answered for the Forest Elves.

Tiara agreed silently as well as she transformed back into her original appearance.

"This is boring," Frederik mumbled, and the Berserkers agreed not so silently.

They growled and bellowed loudly, voicing their complaints. Only Thaor and Lokai remained silent as the sibling duo saw a glimmer in Michael's eyes.

"If this is too boring for you guys..." Michael stopped mid-sentence and used Extraction.

More than 100 Extraction Tendrils burst out of the ground around him. They impaled the bodies of the deceased and plundered as much as possible.

The SoulStar Fragments, Soultrait Symbols, Summoning Scrolls, and other loot were stored in his War Rune at once. Only the Memory Orbs remained in his hands for a few seconds before Michael consumed them.

He digested the memories of the dead swiftly and broke into a smile. The Memory Orbs showed him some very interesting things.

"...we should alter our plans a little."

"It's time to make a big move!" Michael declared, his vibrant smile transforming into a devilish grimace.

As Michael shared the new strategy with his people, Hiraku and the Warlock Centaurs stirred trouble in another area of the Savannah Region.

It had only been a few hours since they parted ways, but many things had changed.

The burning afternoon sun shone brightly upon Hiraku and his temporary followers as they passed through the vast, open grassland. Their view of the scenery was unobstructed. Tall grasses stretched across flat terrain with scattered trees and occasional bushes highlighting the beautiful scenery of the Savannah region.

The golden green grass swayed with the breeze as Mekhaz and the Warlock Centaurs traversed fast and nimble through the Savannah's plains, forcing HIKARU to speed up a little.

He glanced up to the wide and expansive sky where Stinger moved around impatiently. Despite being a small monster, the Golden Stinger Wasp was much faster than Hiraku and the rest as they jogged lightly to their next destination.

The landscape was beautiful, bathed in sunlight, and overflowing with peace. It was near-impossible to imagine that a large-scale Regional War hit the Savannah Region not too long ago.

Unfortunately, the peaceful sight was about to change as Hiraku and the Warlock Centaurs were about to reach their destination.

They brushed past some herbivores such as Horned Zebras, Scaled Giraffes, and other weak monsters that added life to the serene and natural beauty of the Savannah, but they focused on something else.

Stinger descended and used his golden stinger to stab Hiraku and the Warlock Centaurs. That was Stinger's sign, telling the Awakened to prepare for battle.

"We found a small army of Rievers two kilometers northeast. There shouldn't be more than 400 Summons and a small batch of Awakened. None of them seems to be a Higher Lifeform," One of the Warlock Centaurs reported, his attention on a small compass that levitated in front of him.

The compass didn't look special. It was made from argent metal and had three needles. However, only one of the needles was magnetized and pointed north. The other needles pointed toward nearby natural treasures and enemies. Another interesting factor about the compass was that it gave the user a rough indicator of the number and potency of his enemies. It was a perfect radar to use in times of war.

It was also the Warlock Centaurs' Soultrait, a Soultrait that had been deemed useless because it was only a 1-Star Soultrait before the Warlock Centaur joined Michael. The compass was now a 4-Star Soultrait and was far more useful than before, providing all the necessary pieces of information to prepare for battle.

Stinger hummed loudly, attracting Hiraku and the Warlock Centaurs' attention.

Everyone readied their Artifacts and Soultraits for the upcoming battle. A few seconds passed before Stinger could tell that everyone finished their last preparations. Stinger disappeared, replaced by a small bird that chirped loudly in shock. It looked left and right and flapped its little wings to escape the grasp of the towering human and Warlock Centaurs.

Mek haz cracked a faint smile, but he remained silent as a dazzling light blossomed from Stinger's golden stinger.

Hiraku and some Warlock Centaurs disappeared, their bodies replaced by Stinger, who switched position with one of the birds in the flock above the Rievers Army.

Stinger used his special ability several times to switch places with others. He scared the flock of birds, but that was of no importance. Important was only that Hiraku and the Warlock Centaurs fell from the sky. They dived down and battered heavily into the center of the Rievers army.

The Riever Summons and Awakened didn't expect a bunch of towering Awakened to fall from the sky, but they regained composure quickly. And that was necessary because Hiraku and the Warlock Centaurs didn't waste much time observing their surroundings.

Hiraku pinpointed a large caravan filled with goods nearby, but he had to evade a spear thrust before he could take a proper look at the goods. His body expanded as he transformed into the Silver Titan. But instead of being in his basic form, Hiraku sensed something within the surroundings that allowed him to change his form slightly.

Strength filled his body and his humongous figure expanded further, crimson vein-like lines spreading all over his body, etching themselves deep into his skin.

'That is...new...' Hiraku thought, manifesting a large meteorite-steel shield and a large double-headed conflict axe to block two attacks and cleave one of the Rievers near him in two.

Blood and internal organs spilled all over the ground, but Hiraku didn't pay much attention to it.

He had to pay attention to his surroundings and ensure that the Warlock Centaurs wouldn't do anything stupid.

After all, he became the leader of the second strike force. Michael trusted him. That was a weird feeling.

Michael didn't know much about him. He never asked Hiraku about his past and didn't force him to do anything he disliked. If Hiraku didn't want to join the battle against the Council of Xylon, he could have uttered so. Hiraku was certain that Michael would have been disappointed, but Michael wouldn't have forced him to participate.

Michael never seemed to force anything. Yet, simultaneously, it felt like Michael had an odd presence around him. A type of presence that made it hard to reject him and stay away from him.

Michael pulled people close to him without forcing anything. It was weird.

However, it was also comforting. Nobody had to act in front of Michael. They could be their true self in front of him. He didn't judge anyone.

'Maybe, it wouldn't be too bad to jo—...' Hiraku thought, only for his thoughts to be interrupted as a group of Rievers rushed at him.

Mekhaz, coated in the Living Armor brushed past him, moving nimbly with a halbert in his hands. One of the Rievers fell victim to Mekhaz's first strike, while the others backed away.

Hiraku released a thunderous roar and rushed ahead, bulldozing his enemies.

Now was not the time to think about the future. Hiraku knew that he had more than enough time to think about his plans soon. There was no rush.

The present was more important. A large-scale Regional War was waiting to be won by the Lord of the Untamed Jungle!

Chapter 656 Raw Power II

Mekhaz didn't have to worry too much about getting injured. He was already a Tier-3 Awakened and his defense was high enough to block most incoming attacks.

The Living Armor covered him entirely, whereas his other Soultraits, Energy Absorption, and Repel could be applied wherever he wanted. He applied several Repel Runes all over his body and connected them with Energy Absorption to increase their storage capacity.

Combining Energy Absorption with Repel made it easier to absorb more of the incoming damage and increase the power output once enough energy had been accumulated within the Repel runes.

Mek haz accepted most attacks without paying attention to the inflicted damage. He only blocked or evaded the attacks that would cause too much damage to the Living Armor. It would be a hassle if the Living Armor shattered or if he sustained a heavy injury.

He missed some attacks but wasn't injured. As for the Living Armor, it recuperated using origin energy. Combining this function with Energy Absorption and the fact that every incoming attack was weakened and drained of a portion of its origin energy, Mek haz could ensure that all scratches and minor damage were healed instantaneously.

Mek haz cut a nearby Rievers' throat while blocking a dozen attacks with the Living Armor. Each attack that hit his Living Armor transferred a portion of energy into his body and the Repel rune, ensuring that he never lacked energy. Mek haz twisted his body and kicked a Rievers with his hind legs.

The Rievers hurdled through the air and crashed into his colleagues. A moment later, Mek haz released the power accumulated within the Repel rune.

The rune broke, unleashing a burst of compressed energy toward the enemy he kicked just now. The energy blast did not unleash Repel's full power but it was enough to burst the Rievers' head and injure the Rievers standing right behind his now-dead fellow.

Mek haz didn't pay much attention to the dead. He accelerated, swung his halberd, and beheaded the injured Rievers with a swift strike.

The Rievers tried to block the attack but it was useless. His morale shattered when his comrade's head exploded before him.

Hiraku appeared next to Mek haz as he was about to continue the carnage of brute force. However, Hiraku was much better at that game. His physical strength crossed the threshold of a weak Higher Lifeform easily. He blocked some of the stronger incoming attacks with his humongous shield and cleaved through his enemies with the double-bladed war axe like they were weeds.

Some of the stronger Awakened tried to block Hiraku, but their attempts failed miserably. Only one of the Peak Tier-3 Rievers managed to slow Hiraku a little bit. He used his Soultrait, a debuff, also known as Slowness, to slow Hiraku – quite literally.

Hiraku's movement speed slowed down a little bit. It was not more than 10%, at most, but that was more than enough to grant the Rievers an opportunity to strike back.

Unfortunately, slowing down was not enough to eliminate Hiraku. He changed his tactic and used his Creation Soultrait to create a batch of cannonballs. The massive shield and double-headed war axe dispersed. They were replaced with the cannonballs, which lingered in Hiraku's hands like little marbles.

Hiraku used the remaining bits of momentum left within him to take the incoming enemies by surprise. He hurled the cannonballs at the incoming targets with every ounce of strength left in his body.

The cannonballs whizzed through the air with shocking velocity, taking the Rievers by surprise. They tried to evade the projectiles but there were simply too many of them. The cannonballs were too fast as well.

Two Rievers threw their bodies to the ground, barely escaping a one-way ticket to the afterlife, while the others were either too stunned and overwhelmed to think of a solution, or were too confident in their capabilities to block and evade the attack.

The latter didn't end up as well as they expected. Their weapons, shields, and armors were crushed, and their bodies followed swiftly. Their ribs were crushed into smithereens while their innards ruptured in several spots.

None of the Rievers, who attempted to block the cannonballs, died instantaneously. They would bleed to death in the next few minutes, unable to move an inch. Their arrogance and confidence stole their opportunity to be granted a quick, painless death.

Those who didn't move at all were a little bit luckier. Some cannonballs smashed into their heads, cracking their skulls, and breaking their necks, whereas others were even luckier. Their shoulders or legs were hit and crushed into thousands of tiny bone fragments. However, they were still alive and could move. If they responded fast enough, some of them may survive as well. At least, their chances of surviving were not nil.

Unfortunately, Hiraku didn't leave them with a high chance of survival. He was not merciful enough to give them enough time to realize what had just happened and to think of a path to escape. Two large daggers conjured in his hands right after the cannonballs left his hands.

He ignored the energy influxes and kicked the ground. The ground underfoot broke apart, leaving deep imprints behind as he crossed the distance to the injured Rievers in an instant. He might be humongous and covered with bulging muscles, but that didn't mean Hiraku was slow.

He was faster than ever and regained some of his flexibility in his current form. His well-trained dexterity came into play. He slashed one dagger diagonally, slicing through a nearby Rievers' chest and armor, while his other dagger pierced through another Rievers' head, penetrating his skull and brain in one go.

The crunching noises of breaking bones and the clinking of metal colliding resounded in his ears, but Hiraku didn't pay much attention to it. He was more focused on the changes within his body and the tremendous raw power that surged through him right now.

He didn't feel the slightest bit tired and his transformation Soultrait, Titan Spirit, didn't indicate to him that his transformation would end soon either. It was almost like he could stay in this form for several days, maybe even weeks without growing tired.

That was interesting and something worth experimenting with.

The Rievers quickly realized that Hiraku and the Warlock Centaurs were hard to fight. No. It was impossible to defeat them with their small army of 400ish members. Hiraku alone was already enough to overwhelm them.

In mere minutes, Hiraku and his team managed to crush the Rievers' spirits. Their morale was crushed and what followed was a one-sided slaughter.

"That was a good fight," Hiraku praised the Warlock Centaurs emotionlessly.

"You mean slaughter," Mekhaz added, but Hiraku merely shrugged.

It didn't matter if they fought head-on, or if they slaughtered their enemies. They needed to kill them.

Hiraku walked over to the cadavers and stored them in his War Rune. He inspected the goods that had been guarded by the Rievers but didn't think much about it. There was only one confusing part.

"Why are they transporting corpses?" One of the Warlock Centaurs asked, pointing at the insides of one caravan. The caravan was stacked with cadavers of other races.

"They could have stored the corpses in War Runes, spatial satchels, or the like," Mekhaz added, his expression turning sour.

Something didn't make sense.

"We found another army escorting a caravan further north. They're heading in our direction," The Warlock Centaur with the Advanced Compass Soultrait reported before Mekhaz and Hiraku could continue their discussion.

"Merchants?" Hiraku mumbled, tilting his head.

'If they came to trade the corpses...Well, whatever.'

"No need to break our heads about that. Let's kill them and find out what these idiots were trying to trade."

Everyone prepared for the upcoming battle. The fight – slaughter – against the Rievers had been rather boring. It was a warmup, at best. The real fight was waiting for them.

Hiraku and the Warlock Centaurs made a detour around the caravan and inspected it from far away.

"There are more people. One Low Tier-4 High Priest. There is no combat Higher Lifeform in the army."

Hiraku listened to the Warlock Centaur's comment and nodded. He was about to give a comment when he heard the Warlock Centaur mumble, "Something is weird. I can sense a monster...or something monster-alike amid the caravan."

Hiraku raised his eyebrow and glanced back at the caravan that was still far away.

'They're Kaliveras. There is no need to hesitate.' He told himself, before giving the command to attack.

A moment later, they disappeared with a plop and reappeared above the Tier-4 High Priest.

"Good afternoon~" A Warlock Centaur exclaimed, crashing into the ground next to the High Priest right before turning dead serious.

"Die for me, please"

Chapter 657 Slaves

The High Priest of the Kalivera race reacted in time to cast the Divine Shield spell, blocking the incoming attacks. He was shocked by the sudden appearance of unknown enemies, but that wasn't even the worst. His Divine Shield cracked and shattered into countless fragments, revealing Hiraku and the Warlock Centaurs.

Hiraku blocked two Light Shards, weak attack spells from the High Priest and manifested a mace in his right hand. The mace was as thick as Hiraku's thigh and covered in spikes, adding another level of 'spice'. It plunged toward the High Priest's head.

The High Priest manifested several small Divine Shields, but their durability was not the same as the original version. They shattered one by one as the mace smashed heavily onto them. A shockwave reverberated through the surroundings, followed by the crackling of several bones breaking.

The High Priest and the Kaliveras near him screamed and roared, but neither Hiraku nor the Warlock Centaurs thought about stopping the attack.

If anything, Mekhaz and Zeron Polik joined Hiraku in the attack against the Higher Lifeform. Hiraku lifted the mace high above his head and smashed down once again. The High Priest tried to retreat but Mekhaz blocked him. His halberd pierced deep into the High Priest's side, dying his robe in blood.

The High Priest's body glowed and a tremendous amount of energy swept through him all of a sudden. Something about the High Priest was changing, and it was certainly not something advantageous to Hiraku and the Warlock Centaurs.

Hiraku observed the transformation of the High Priest for a quarter of a second before his attack commenced.

Only fools would wait patiently until their enemy finished their power-up. Hiraku was no such idiot. His mace impacted heavily, crushing the High Priest's skull with a deadly strike.

The Kaliveras around the High Priest screamed out once again, but they didn't have enough time to think about what was happening. They were the next to be hunted.

Hiraku and the Warlock Centaurs didn't hold back. They went all-out against their enemies and slaughtered them mindlessly.

Not only were Hiraku and the Warlock Centaurs stronger in terms of battle awareness, and martial arts mastery, but their Tier and physical strength were also much stronger. That didn't even include the tremendous advantage of possessing multiple high-ranked Soultraits that were highly compatible.

It was no wonder that the army escorting the caravan was obliterated in less than half an hour.

Close to 1000 corpses littered the surroundings, but not for long. Mekhaz and another Warlock Centaur collected the corpses for Michael to extract later.

Hiraku walked over to the caravan, ready to store everything in his War Rune's storage, only to realize that it was not possible.

'Hmm?'

Something blocked him from storing everything in his War Rune. That either meant the goods were too unstable to be stored in a pocket dimension, that the War Rune's storage repelled some of the items, or that there was something alive in the caravan.

"Ah right. He said that there are some 'monster-like'-things in the caravan. Whatever that's supposed to mean," Hiraku mumbled to himself. He was about to find out at any moment, anyway.

Hiraku pushed the curtain at the back of the first carriage aside and glanced inside. Rays of the afternoon sun shone into the carriage, illuminating the inside for the first time in weeks. At least, that was what Hiraku gathered from the groans and squeals that resounded from the inside.

Hiraku furrowed his eyebrows and transformed back into his original appearance to get a better view of the situation. However, what he saw took him by surprise.

"Are...well. Were those idiots slave traders?" Hiraku wondered, his eyes lingering on a dozen cages of varying sizes. A dozen pairs of eyes stared at him, their eyes filled with desperation.

However, there was also a trace of hope in their eyes. They could smell the blood hanging in the air, and death permeating the surroundings. The people who'd enslaved them were dead.

Hiraku scanned the carriage and discovered that there were monster younglings as well as young juvenile Awakened, whose War Runes hadn't fully formed yet.

That was not common, and it was rather rare, but it was not impossible. If two Awakened gave birth to a child in the Origin Expanse, it wasn't uncommon for the War Rune to form prematurely. The child would be exposed to origin energy in its mother's womb already, after all.

While it was normal that Awakened born in the Origin Expanse were stronger than others, it was also a fact that they had a much harder time leaving the Origin Expanse. They didn't have an anchor in the outside world, and it was usually much harder for them to survive in places without origin energy. Most Native Awakened would feel like they were about to suffocate outside the Origin Expanse.

That was also why it was uncommon for Awakened to give birth to their child in the Origin Expanse. It wouldn't be able to escape the Origin Expanse. Under normal circumstances, that is.

But there was also another factor that attracted Hiraku's attention. It was something he got to know only after he found out about Tiara and the Silverfang Tigerfolk.

'Were they born in the Origin Expanse, or are they from one of the races that sought asylum within the Origin Expanse?'

The answer to this question didn't matter right now. However, it might be crucial for Michael. Michael would have to decide what to do with these monster cubs and juvenile Awakened. He was the Lord, after all.

Hiraku retrieved a communication crystal and called Michael right away.

["Hiraku? Did something happen? Are you guys fine?"] Michael's worried voice rang out of the communication crystal within seconds.

The corner of Hiraku's lip twitched upon hearing Michael. He cleared his throat and reported the situation.

["You found monster cubs and juvenile Awakened with exotic monster traits? That's odd."]

Michael didn't say anything after that. He thought about what to do for a few seconds before he gave Hiraku his next order.

["Free them. Allow them to leave. We will make sure not to hunt them while we're conquering the Council of Xylon. IF they do not want to leave, or if they follow you, assist them to get to the Untamed Jungle. Stinger learned to jump through space not too long ago, but his golden stinger is much more powerful than it used to be. It might take a few hours, but you should help them. They're just kids. Nothing that happened in the Savannah region is their fault."]

Even though Michael couldn't tell that it would be 100% secure to bring monster cubs and Juvenile Awakened into his territory, he couldn't leave them behind. If they stayed with Hiraku, which was something his gut feeling told him was about to happen, the situation would get a little bit tricky. Michael wouldn't be able to tell Hiraku to jump into deadly battles if some monster cubs and juvenile Awakened clung onto him like little leeches.

Hiraku sighed heavily as if he was annoyed, but he was secretly relieved. The battle against the Council of Xylon was very important, especially in the next 48 hours. The Council of Xylon should be able to wonder of some countermeasures against them in the next 48 hours. Until then, Michael and his forces would have it a little easier to wreak havoc and kill as many enemies as possible.

That was their mission. To slaughter their enemies and weaken them enough to instill fear deep in their hearts.

However, that wouldn't be possible if Hiraku and his people were busy dealing with kids for half a day.

Hiraku tore the gates out of the iron cage's frames and helped the little creatures and Awakened out of their cages. They were starving, parched, and sleep deprived. Their bodies weren't covered in wounds, but it didn't take much to kill them. It was not hard to tell that they wouldn't survive long if left alone.

Hiraku pressed his lips together and walked over to the other carriages to take a look inside. There were even more cages.

'Were they about to trade slaves and creatures with corpses?' Hiraku wondered, his heart filled with fury as he broke the cages open to assist the fragile cubs and Awakened out of the confinement.

The cubs and Awakened escaped their prison, but they did not yet survive the aftermath. The Savannah would kill them.

Nonetheless, Hiraku decided to follow Michael's order. If any of the monster cubs or juvenile Awakened wanted to leave they could go. He wouldn't stop them. That didn't mean it didn't hurt Hiraku if they were about to leave because he knew that they were going to die out there, but he wouldn't deprive them of their freedom once again. He wouldn't be better than the slave merchants in that case.

"H-Help us...." A young juvenile Awakened uttered weakly, his body looking like he was about to melt, "..Plea...se..."

He had a special monster trait. It was something neither Hiraku nor the Warlock Centaurs had seen before. He was a slime monster, yet somehow...he wasn't.

Hiraku gripped his fists, frustrated about killing the Kaliveras painlessly, but he bent down and forced to smile at the youngster.

"Of course. We will assist you," Hiraku said, his voice filled with kindness for the first time.

Hiraku stared at the communication crystal for a second and thought about Michael.

A genuine smile formed on his lips.

"I can bring you to a great place."

Chapter 658 Valyrs & The Settlement

"Are you sure that we're strong enough to take this down?" Zira asked, her attention lingering on the Elemental Empress.

Zeroa levitated next to the young Valyr, a giggle escaping her lips. The vast grassland of the savannah stretched out as far as one could see, highlighting the small settlement that towered in the middle of nowhere.

The settlement was the Elemental Empress' target. It wasn't well protected given the guards' lackluster attitude, and they didn't have an active Orb of Hostility either, otherwise, Zeroa and the Valyr would have been noticed a long time ago. However, the deciding factor that determined Zeroa's confidence to conquer the small settlement was that she couldn't sense any spatial restrictions.

There was no spatial lock in the settlement.

To be more precise, there was probably a device that could lock spatial movements in the surroundings, but it was probably deactivated because these devices were too expensive to maintain. Even an Advanced Orb of Hostility was extremely expensive to maintain all day. It consumed a considerable amount of energy within Monster Cores and Energy Stones.

In the first place, most territories with multiple settlements cannot afford to use Orbs of Hostility, spatial locks, and the like for a prolonged period. In fact, even one active spatial lock would drain the funds of most territories if activated every day throughout the year.

Most Lords didn't have the means to 'waste' their scarce resources on a spatial lock, especially not in small settlements that were located in a safe environment. The small settlement targeted by the Elemental Empress was in the middle of a territory without any threats in the surrounding area. There were no powerful monsters, and the distance to the nearest border was also far. The borders were not dangerous either since the adjacent territories belonged to allies. Allies rallied together to fight against their soon-to-be enemies in the Council of Xylon.

Spatial locks would only be activated in emergencies and with immediate danger in the surroundings, not in a peaceful place.

"I'm in," One of the Valyr said, patting Zira's shoulder.

"These Huglaiv bastards killed my sister. I will burn them to death!!"

Zeroa's flames flickered brightly. She was ready to rumble and more than willing to jump into action right away. However, she calmed down a little bit for a moment to relay a message to the Valyrs by drawing letters into the air using her mythical flames.

[Focus Soldiers, Awakened, Treasures. Collect all!]

Zeroa was not that good with letters. She could barely speak in the universal language with Michael. Unfortunately, her mastery of Whispering Energy was not that great yet. Zeroa had to talk with the Valyrs using letters instead. She didn't want to accidentally harm them by executing Whispering Energy wrongly, after all.

"Yes. We will focus on their combatants and the Awakened. Their corpses will be collected as well. We didn't forget what Michael told us," Zira said.

She was not sure why Michael needed their corpses, but the reason didn't matter. Zira did what she was told to do.

[Ready?]

Zira looked at the other Valyrs upon seeing the azure flames flickering in front of her. Her comrades-in-arms were more than just ready. Their eyes burned in fury, blazing flames coating their bodies.

"I think so," She smiled lightly, manifesting her leather armor set and two Dagger Artifacts.

Zeroa didn't waste anymore time. She conjured a portal and gestured to the Valyrs to get moving.

Zira was the first to act. She took a deep breath and pushed forth, entering the portal right away. Upon emerging on the other side of the portal, Zira was greeted by an empty room. She looked left and right but didn't see anyone nearby. Her senses didn't pick up the energy fluctuations of any living beings nearby. All she sensed was a small treasure trove of magical devices.

There was an Advanced Orb of Hostility – deactivated obviously – and a few more gadgets that ought to protect the settlement from invaders. However, they were all deactivated due to their enormous power consumption. Zira considered crushing them for a moment but she decided against it.

"All of this can be considered valuable," She murmured, storing the space lock, the Orb of Hostility, and everything else of value inside her War Rune's storage.

The Valyrs, who had also emerged from the space portal, glanced at her for a moment, but they didn't say anything. They guarded the door and waited patiently until everyone was present.

The Elemental Empress was the last to emerge. Her power was a bit drained from teleporting everyone deep into the center of the small settlement, but she had enough reserves to fight.

One of the stronger Valyr used his Soultrait, Charge, to barge through the metal door. The commotion caused by that stunt was enormous, but nobody appeared in the hallway for several seconds. It was only after ten seconds that two sleepy guards emerged in the hallway. They rubbed their eyes and glanced at the Valyrs in disinterest until they realized that they were not in a dream.

Their eyes widened and they were about to sound the alarm when Zira appeared in front of them. She flicked her wrists in a simple motion and inflicted a deep gash in the two guards' necks. The Huglaiv's

eyes widened and they tried to scream for help and warn their people, but it was already too late. Their bodies slumped to the ground, a puddle of blood forming underneath them.

Zira reached out for their corpses, coated their bodies in a layer of energy, and stored them away. Zeroa brushed past Zira and discovered two more Huglaiv in the room the other guards had emerged from. She conjured two arrows with her mythical flames and hurled them toward the targets. The Huglaiv tried to react in time, but the arrows burned a hole into their chest long before they could sound the alarm.

The Elemental Empress continued to proceed through the hallway. She used her high perception to scan the surroundings for enemies and released blazing azure arrows through the doors. The Huglaiv, who'd wanted to take Zeroa and the Valyr by surprise to kill them with one strike, were surprised and killed instead.

Zira and the other Valyr followed Zeroa, but they couldn't help but be surprised about the Elemental Empress' extraordinary fire affinity. Mythical Flames were incredibly hard to control. They were too powerful to be contained by most Valyr.

Only two Valyrs managed to cultivate their flames into mythical flames without burning to death. It was no wonder that those two Valyr were the strongest existences in the Valyr race's history. One was the founder of the first Valyrian Empire, whereas the other one was known as the Conqueror for expanding the Valyrian Empire to several times its former size.

The Elemental Empress' control of the mythical flame was not yet perfect, but she was on the right path.

It didn't take long before the guards in the building had been eliminated. They stepped outside and entered a large plaza where hundreds of Huglaiv moved around busily. Zira hesitated for a moment, but the others didn't share her hesitation.

The Valyrs conjured several head-sized fireballs and lobbed them through the plaza. The fireballs weren't aimed at the civilians, but they crashed into the surrounding structures, setting the buildings on fire.

Explosions resounded through the surroundings, and buildings collapsed. Screams of terror and desperation followed suit.

The residents ran for their lives. They pushed each other aside to escape the dangers as fast as possible. Nobody paid attention to their kin. It was almost like they never cared for each other. The young and old were shoved aside and left to fend for themselves. It was a miserable sight that unfolded in front of the Valyrs. But, of course, they didn't care.

Their eyes were overflowing with fury and they could barely contain themselves from burning the residents to cinder. Some of them would have done that if they weren't in a rush. They had to strike as hard as possible as quickly as possible if they wanted to conquer the settlement, kill all guards and Awakened, and take all treasures before someone could send reinforcement to deal with them.

Zeroa was the first to move. She detected a large group of guards led by two Awakened. They rushed over in a hurry and triggered their Soultraits upon reaching the plaza. However, before they could do anything grand, hundreds of fireballs covered the sky in front of them.

The searing hot downpour of fireballs ensued, burning the guards and awakened alive.

Only now did the Regional War against the Council of Xylon begin for real.

Chapter 659 One Down

Michael was not sure what the other groups were doing, but the energy shares reaching his War Rune increased exponentially suddenly.

Dozens of energy shares nourished his War Rune every few seconds, slowly increasing its refinement degree.

The sensation of growing stronger without the need to do something was extraordinary. It was addicting. Michael wasn't too worried either. He sensed that Hiraku and the Warlock Centaurs were fine and that most energy shares reached him through Zeroa.

The interesting thing about that was that Zeroa hadn't established a proper Link of Loyalty with Michael for a long time. She had a Taming Bond with Michael as his tamed monster, but she wasn't 'part of his territory' officially. That changed when the Elementals requested to be more integrated into Michael's territory.

Michael formed a Link of Loyalty with all Elementals, including Zeroa, who wreaked havoc somewhere on the other side of the Savannah's center. He had no idea what she was doing, but Michael could gauge that the Elemental Empress and the Valyrs were doing something more dangerous than Hiraku and the Warlock Centaurs. At least, that was what the influx of energy shares indicated.

"She will be fine," Michael mumbled, his attention drifting to Hiraku and the Warlock Centaurs, "But what am I going to do with the juvenile Awakened? Monster cubs are still fine, but juvenile Awakened? That can become quite troublesome." free.c om

Michael didn't have much time to think about what to do when Hiraku called. He allowed the juvenile Awakened and monster cubs into his territory, but he was not too sure what to do now.

Fortunately, he didn't have to think about that too much. He had a very naughty Lord to kill first.

The Kalivera Lord was currently located in one of his mid-sized settlements, screwing with a few Awakened. Apparently, that was one of the Kalivera Lord's hobbies.

His strength didn't increase much after he ascended to a Higher Lifeform, yet he used the status as a Higher Lifeform to gain various benefits. He suppressed his people and forced them to do things they loathed.

Michael was not in favor of such behavior, but it didn't matter, at this point. He would kill the Kalivera Lord soon.

Upon reaching the mid-sized settlement by jumping through space a few dozen times, Michael focused on replenishing his used-up energy reserves. He released the Extraction Aura and used his energy absorption technique to speed up the process. Thereafter, he activated Spirit Eyes with enough origin energy to see what was hidden from everyone else.

'A spatial lock.' Michael pinpointed almost instantaneously when he saw the semi-translucent dome that covered the entire settlement and some of the land around.

It was a little bit unfortunate that there was a spatial lock since he wouldn't be able to use Cosmic Stride properly. The spatial lock was not perfect because the device used the lowest form of spatial restrictions

to reduce energy consumption as much as possible, but Michael couldn't teleport everyone inside the settlement.

That was a shame as it would take away the surprise effect.

Michael tilted his head and thought of something.

"Wait here," He commanded before using Cosmic Stride to circle the spatial lock's dome.

Michael didn't waste much time. He continued using Spirit Eyes and circled the spatial lock dome with quick jumps to satisfy his curiosity.

'It's symmetric. That makes everything a lot easier,'

If the dome's shape was a little bit more complicated, Michael would have a harder time. Fortunately, a symmetric dome was likely the easiest to maintain.

Michael used Enhancement on Spirit Eyes and jumped high up into the air with Cosmic Stride. A large Qi Sword manifested underfoot as he reached the desired altitude.

It consumed a little mental power to maintain the Qi Sword and keep it from getting pulled to the ground, but Michael had gone through worse. Levitating mid-air with a Qi Sword didn't seem like a particularly difficult task at this point.

Michael observed the mid-sized settlement from a bird's point of view. It didn't take long to find the center of the symmetric dome. A large building towered in the center of the settlement. The building was surrounded by smaller buildings, but it attracted Michael's interest nonetheless. The energy congregating within the building was several times higher than the surroundings.

'Found you!'

The corner of Michael's lip curled upward.

"If you're already paying the exorbitant price to maintain the active costs of the spatial lock, you should be generous enough to fork out enough money to create a permanent protection barrier as well, idiot!"

There was no use in being stingy after spending a fortune to keep the spatial lock dome activated. To the Kalivera Lord's misfortune, he wasn't smart enough to do so. He contemplated that the spatial lock and the guards were enough to block all potential threats.

'What an idiot.'

Michael closed his eyes for a moment and gathered some of the altered energies that had been accumulated within the Elemental Spheres. He used thunder and lightning power alongside several other types of energy to form a large cloud above the settlement. The appearance of the cloud attracted some attention, but it was not impossible for a storm to brew all of a sudden.

The weather in the Origin Expanse was odd at times, after all.

Michael gathered lightning power within the clouds, slowly compressing them while also using Insert to add several layers of Enhancement to the fray.

The lightning currents within the clouds crackled and thundered through the surroundings. They threatened to escape Michael's control at times, but he managed to keep the bolts of lightning under control.

They intertwined with one another and grew larger. Stronger.

'This is much harder than it looks,' Michael cursed in his mind as he influenced the movements of the bolts of lightning. He made a few minor adjustments and 'convinced' the bolts of lightning to move in a particular direction.

Finally, he released the reinforced bolt of lightning upon the mid-sized settlement.

The bolt crackled through the sky as it burst down. It crashed heavily into the large building in the center of the community and shrouded it entirely. Explosions resounded through the vicinity while the semi-transparent dome dispersed.

The spatial restriction was lifted, and chaos ensued following the destructive power of the reinforced bolt of lightning.

Michael used this opportunity to use Cosmic Stride. He appeared next to his people shrouded them in a golden light and used Cosmic Stride a second moment to appear in a large room with a queen-sized bed and a dozen women. The women were naked and some of them looked like they'd been beaten up quite frequently. However, Michael and his people didn't pay any attention to them.

Their eyes lingered on the Kalivera who was hurriedly putting on some pants.

The Kalivera Master heard the explosion and jumped up from the bed to find out what was happening. He was in such a hurry that he didn't even notice Michael, the Forest Elves, and the rest as they appeared in the room.

One of the women, on the other hand, noticed them. She screamed at the top of her lungs, alarming the Kalivera Lord. His head flicked to the intruders, killing intent flickering in his eyes.

He was just about to summon his Artifacts and charge at the intruders when he noticed that something was amiss. Something felt wrong.

His hair stood up to its end and he instinctively turned around only to lock eyes with Michael's vibrant golden eyes.

"Too late."

A silver blade flashed past his eyes.

The Kalivera Lord's head separated from his neck a moment later.

'That was number one.'

Chapter 660 Raid

The Kalivera Lord died way too quickly.

Michael thought that he was mistaken for a moment. It shouldn't have been that easy.

'Did I kill the wrong one? Is that not the Lord?' He wondered, his eyes lingering on the headless body.

The energy influx that entered his War Rune was quite potent. It was from a Low Tier-4 powerhouse, a Lord, to be precise. The energy influx ought to be more than enough evidence to tell that he had just killed the Kalivera Lord, but Michael couldn't help himself. He doubted that a Higher Lifeform, a Lord with more than one decade of experience, would die so easily.

'Well. I took him by surprise.' He shrugged.

The Kalivera Lord welcomed him half-naked after enjoying the presence of a dozen women. He had been struggling to pull up his underwear as Michael arrived in the room.

The women in the room were screaming at the top of their lungs. However, it was not only fear of Michael that made them scream. The death of the Kalivera Lord destroyed the Links of Loyalty connected to them, freeing them at last.

Losing contact with the Link of Loyalty suddenly was uncomfortable. It was a weird feeling of emptiness. The Kaliveras felt like something had been torn out of their souls.

Two women, Tier-3 Awakened, manifested their Artifacts and charged at Michael suddenly. He raised his hand and pointed at the Awakened with his index finger. An electricity current cracked at the fingertip and two bolts of lightning were discharged in quick succession. The Awakened twisted their bodies to evade the electricity currents, but they didn't see the follow-up attack coming.

Michael unleashed Spiritual Domination to strike the two Awakened heavily. They collapsed to the ground with a pained groan and struggled to stand up once again.

Michael sighed and sliced their throats with the Aethyr blade.

Now was not the time to show mercy.

He glanced at the remaining women and scanned them to figure out if there were more Awakened or combat Summons among them. That was not the case. The women shuddered and screamed helplessly under Michael's scrutiny, fearing to die just like the Kalivera Lord and the two female Awakened.

'No. I don't want to turn into a mindless monster.'

Michael shook his head and stored the corpses of the deceased away. While combat Summons and Awakened were dangerous, Michael couldn't see any value in killing the civilians. Of course, it couldn't be avoided sometimes. Some civilians would inevitably die in the crossfire. However, he felt like he would lose the last bits of his humanity the moment he started slaughtering innocent civilians for energy influxes and the loot generated by the Will.

Michael would be lying if he said that the gains weren't enticing, but this was a matter of honor and integrity. If he couldn't even keep hold of his principles and idealism...what or who would Michael turn out to be in the future? Would he be better than the Kitsun, whom he despised, or would he be just like them?

Michael didn't want to find out.

Despite that train of thought, Michael felt like a hypocrite. He knew that he was lying to himself, but he didn't want to acknowledge the lie. It made him feel like he would lose something very important if he revealed the truth.

He spread his energy through the surroundings to ransack all valuable goods in the room and used Cosmic Stride to teleport everyone outside.

They appeared on a rooftop near the center of the mid-sized settlement.

The settlement, like the other settlements of the Kalivera Lord, was in chaos. Various Kalivera, ordinary citizens, rushed through the settlement, trying to find a secure place. However, they didn't even know what was going on, in the first place. All they could tell was that their Lord died and that the Links of Loyalty had been terminated.

The Summons regained freedom and the Awakened could act more freely as well. But with freedom came uncertainty.

Losing their Leader, whether he was tyrannical or not, created chaos.

That was exactly what Michael was hoping for. Killing the Lord of a territory was the easiest way to get rid of an enemy.

The armies of the Kalivera Lord would split up, internal conflicts would erupt, and many Awakened would run away now that they didn't have a Lord to rely on anymore.

Most Awakened had only a few choices. They could either escape the Regional War by leaving the Origin Expanse, raid their Lord's treasure trove, and run away within the Origin Expanse to find a secure place to set their anchor and become Rogues, or hope that other Lords were willing to take them in.

The former was problematic because leaving the Origin Expanse in the middle of a Regional War increased the potential of never being able to return to the Origin Expanse – safely that is. The probability that someone would claim the Kalivera Lord's territory in their absence was high, and it was uncertain what the new ruler of the Kalivera Lord's land would do to the Awakened, who appeared in their territory.

None of the options were great, but the latter was the most efficient if they desired to grow stronger in the Savannah Region. They would receive resources from their Lord to grow stronger. However, at the same time, they would be sent to far more dangerous missions as Subordinates of a Lord from another race. The chances of dying were much higher in the hands of another race's Lord.

Abandoning their Lord's territory and becoming Rogues was the best answer given the circumstances.

That was what most Awakened concluded once they realized that their Lord was dead and what that entailed.

None of them thought about battling their Lord's murderer or doing something to protect the Kalivera Summons. The Awakened didn't even know who or what killed their Lord. They didn't care.

Michael and his people observed the chaos with interest.

"What now? Do you want to move from one Lord to the next like that?" Tiara asked, tilting her head to get a better view of Michael's side profile.

"No. We're going to spend the next few hours raiding the Kalivera Lord's treasures and killing all Awakened," Michael shook his head, "We'll kill all combatants who obstruct us as well. But that's it."

Michael considered obliterating the Kalivera's army before doing anything else, but he was in a race against time. It would be best if a few dozen Lords perished before they found a countermeasure against him and his people. However, Michael didn't want to leave behind the treasure troves. He couldn't permit the Awakened and other materialistic treasures to fall into the hands of other Lords.

There was no way that he would allow anyone to escape with his walking SoulStar Fragments – the Awakened –, or his fortune.

The Forest Elves readied their bows and arrows, whereas Tiara and the Berserkers jumped to the ground. They break up and began slaughtering the combat Summons and the Awakened that entered their sight.

Meanwhile, Michael had an easy time finding the strongest Summons and Awakened using Spirit Eyes. He located their power fluctuations and teleported near them using Cosmic Stride. A single compressed Extraction Qi Sword was enough to slaughter most Awakened and combat Summons in the mid-sized settlement. The Kalivera Lord had been the only Higher Lifeform in the settlement. There was no way that anyone else could block Michael's attacks.

He killed a few enemies, stored their corpses, and moved ahead using Spirit Eyes to locate the warehouses and treasures within the settlement. Unfortunately, there was not much to plunder. The settlement wasn't that big, and it wasn't anywhere near a mineral deposit, or the like.

They had to move to the main settlement for the big gains.

It didn't even take half an hour to conquer the mid-sized settlement. The civilians were going crazy, but neither Michael nor his people cared about them. They attacked everyone wielding weapons indiscriminately while leaving everyone else alone. That ought to be enough to warn everyone to drop their weapons if they didn't want to be poked by a razor-sharp blade.

Tiara and the others returned to Michael and transferred their gains to one of his spatial rings.

"Ready?" Michael asked lightly.

The others nodded just before the golden light of Cosmic Stride shrouded them.

They traveled through the Kalivera's territory, crossing dozens of kilometers in no time to reach the Kalivera's main settlement at once.

Michael replenished his power by extracting the energy within an Inferior Energy Stone while paying attention to the surroundings. They couldn't enter the main settlement with Cosmic Stride because of a spatial lock, but it was no problem to barge into the main settlement. The chaos of the Lord's death covered their intrusion.

They jumped across the walls and killed some of the guards who continued guarding the settlement walls even though their Lord was dead and the Links of Loyalty had been terminated. Michael ignored the people around him and charged straight to the wooden manor where he set everything on fire without a second thought.

He charged through the hallway and reached the office where a bunch of expensive devices were located. One of the devices created the spatial lock. Michael was ready to destroy it when he saw an Awakened deactivating it and ransacking it. The Awakened pocketed a few more devices and was ready to leave when he saw Michael.

Michael smiled at the Awakened, kicked the ground, cracked the wooden planks underfoot, and shot forth. Aethyr conjured a dagger in his hands as he appeared before the Awakened, who tried to block his approach with a desperate flying kick. Michael stabbed the Awakened in the leg and twisted the blade in his calf. He tore the blade out of the Awakened's calf and pushed ahead.

The Aethyr Dagger flashed across the Awakened's chest, leaving a gaping wound behind. Blood gushed out of the Awakened like a fountain, whose body glowed faintly. The wound recuperated rapidly, but it was not fast enough to grant the Awakened an opportunity to take Michael by surprise.

"Interesting Soultrait," Michael mumbled, bending down while unleashing one Cursed Seal. The Cursed Seal spread across his face instantaneously, enhancing Extraction's power drastically as he unleashed it with a burst of energy.

A huge tendril of Extraction emerged from Michael's palm and shot straight into the Awakened's chest. It entered the Awakened's body through the healing wound and spread rapidly, draining the young Awakened.

A horrifying shriek escaped the wounded Awakened's lips, but it lasted only for a second. The scream perished down as the Awakened collapsed lifelessly to the ground.

Michael retracted the Extraction tendril in dissatisfaction and was about to leave silently when he noticed something.

A Soultrait Symbol emerged from the Awakened's body.