

Supreme Lord 681

Chapter 681 Grand Finale [VI]

Dozens of Summons surrounded Zeron Polik. He brandished his pair of blades and slashed the throats of two enemies.

His Soultraits, Swift Steps, Haste, and Tempest Blade were unleashed to the brim, drastically accelerating his movement speed. Each slash and strike released an additional second attack conjured from compressed winds. The strength of the Tempest Blade was directly correlated to the amount of energy and strength used in the initial attack.

That allowed him to turn minor wounds into mortal injuries. A tiny scratch transformed into a gaping wound as the Tempest Blade burst out of Zeron's blades.

He kicked the enemies behind him with his hind legs, hurling them through the air before accelerating again. He weaved around his enemies quickly and agilely, killing dozens of Tier-3 Summons. After he released a bunch of Tempest Blades in all directions, Zeron Polik managed to kill various weaker Summons. The Tempest Blade had enough destructive power to destroy the defense of those who had yet to reach Tier-3. It was powerful and a threat to many Tier-3 Awakened as well.

Once Zeron reached top speed using Swift Steps and Haste together, he was faster than some Higher Lifeforms. The Higher Lifeforms of the Savannah forces noticed that and diverted their attention to Zeron Polik to get rid of him before he became a more significant issue.

The Savannah forces had a hard time dealing with their enemies. Their casualties were tens of times higher than the death rate of the Untamed Army. They haven't even managed to kill a single Awakened yet, either.

The Awakened of the Savannah understood the disparity in their strength quickly. They understood that the Untamed Awakened were leagues above them. There was no need to compare each other. The Savannah's Awakened were too weak. Their Artifacts were not that powerful, and their Soultraits weren't as potent either.

However, the Higher Lifeforms were still stronger than most Untamed Awakened. By combining their strength, the Higher Lifeforms managed to pin down a few Untamed Awakened. They targeted Zeron Polik and entangled his legs, forcing him to slow down until the other Higher Lifeforms confined him.

Zeron Polik's most significant advantage was removed, causing him to struggle desperately against the Savannah forces.

Six Higher Lifeforms struck simultaneously. Some pierced his large lower body, which looked like a white stallion, and others struck his human-like upper body. One attack, a crimson crescent blade, slashed Zeron Polik's neck, tearing his throat apart.

A fountain of blood gushed all over the ground as searing pain swept through Zeron Polik's entire being. His sight grew hazy, and his movements sluggish.

He knew that he was about to die, but he didn't want to acknowledge his fate.

Death might not be something to fear as a Warlock Centaur, but Zeron Polik was unsatisfied with his performance. It hadn't been long since he grew stronger...since he attained true power.

He had always been weaker than the prodigies of his age, but no more. After he met Michael, his fate changed. He surpassed his peak and grew stronger than he expected. As long as he faced only a single Higher Lifeform of the Savannah's forces, Zeron Polik was confident he would emerge victorious.

Unfortunately, Zeron Polik wasn't granted more time. His legs caved in, and his body smashed hard onto the ground.

His blood pooled around him on the ground, forming a warm, crimson puddle.

'Screw this!' He cursed in his mind, rage and frustration accumulating deep inside his heart.

'Beat the shit out of them, Michael. PLEASE!' Zeron Polik thought as the last bits of life escaped his body.

He went still. His body stiffened. The Oath of Loyalty broke.

However, before breaking the Oath of Loyalty transferred Zeron Polik's rage and frustration to Michael.

Michael was bound to fulfill Zeron Polik's last wish. It was fated to happen.

But there was one thing that wasn't in fate's control.

The awakening of the crimson-golden Cursed Seal was not in fate's grasp. It has never been.

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Michael was surrounded by hundreds of thousands of corpses.

Their energy influx flooded his War Rune, refining it repeatedly amid the battlefield.

Michael was fortunate that his soul and body were stronger than the norm. By possessing a Cursed Soul and so many Soultraits, Michael was naturally stronger than others. He also managed to contain so many unprocessed energy influxes and energy shares without feeling stuffy. Others would feel like they were on the verge of exploding, but Michael hadn't noticed anything yet. He barely saw anything in the first place.

The vibrant colors around him were drained and altered as the world dyed crimson.

All he could see were the masses of enemies.

Thousands of Qi Extraction Swords manifested in the sky. Before today, manifesting so many Qi Extraction Swords would have been difficult, but that was not the case anymore. Michael could tell instinctively that he was slowly getting closer to Extraction's Essence. It was only a matter of time before he unraveled his Soultrait's true potential and potency.

His understanding of his Soultraits' properties increased drastically over the last few weeks. However, his sensitivity toward Extraction's power skyrocketed under the influence of the four Cursed Seals.

It was shocking how much Michael understood all of a sudden.

The Qi Extraction Swords had been infused with enough lifeforce to kill any Lesser Lifeform. Michael hurled them in all directions, each Qi Extraction Sword reaping a life.

Some Qi Extraction Swords barely cut the targets, but that was enough to insert the lifeforce into the Lesser Lifeforms, slaughtering them. The lifeforce tore them apart from within, resulting in a gruesome death.

Michael didn't care about how they died. All that mattered to him was that the Savannah forces died.

He teleported to some Higher Lifeforms and circled them with hundreds of Qi Extraction Swords. 7-Star True Extraction merged with 5-Star Reinforced Sword Qi. Michael added bits and pieces of his Elementals Spheres to use spatial and earth-

attributed energy to restrain the Higher Lifeforms' movements before the Qi Extraction Swords exploded forth.

The Higher Lifeforms blocked most attacks, but many scratched them, triggering Insert. Insert a large amount of Extraction's power into the Higher Lifeforms, further draining their lifeforce and origin energy.

Michael couldn't kill many Higher Lifeforms instantaneously, but some of them fell victim to his overwhelming power. He added Heavenly Beast Physique to the fray, appeared the Aethyr Blade, and focused a portion of True Extraction Domain's power on it.

Michael added a few Enhancement layers and applied Reinforced Sword Qi on the Aethyr Blade. However, that was not enough to contain True Extraction. Its potency had been enhanced several times and was strong enough to overwhelm Michael.

He couldn't block the potency and fell victim to it as well.

His body was torn apart, the skin and flesh all over his hands and arms dissected while he was still alive.

It was far more painful than Michael imagined, but he tried to ignore it as much as possible. His expression distorted in pain, yet he killed two Higher Lifeforms by beheading them with the True Qi Extraction Sword that engulfed the Aethyr Blade.

Right after, Michael inserted a massive amount of energy into Archangel's Grace.

Three pairs of humongous white-feathered wings sprouted from his back. However, they didn't look like they used to look.

Michael's wings sparkled in golden mots, and crimson vein-like threads passed through them.

Archangel's Grace manifestation looked bloodthirsty. It didn't seem like a Healing-type Soultrait at this point.

However, Michael knew that nothing significant about the Soultrait had been changed. The only change was that Archangel's Grace merged with the True Extraction Domain. Specifically, it tapped into the energy and lifeforce traversed through the True Extraction Domain.

Michael's body regenerated rapidly, barely countering the effect of the Qi True Extraction Sword that threatened to tear his arms apart.

He healed as fast as he sustained damage. That was just what Michael needed, if not for the unbearable pain that continued to sweep through his arms as they were torn apart and healed countless times.

It was exhausting, but Michael was too happy.

He didn't have to hold back for the sake of his mortality.

He could go all out and break the limits of his mortal body!

Chapter 682 Grand Finale [VII]

Michael understood clearly that the Cursed Seals affected him and that they made it a thousand times more enjoyable to slaughter the Savannah forces.

They were merely fragile peasants, weak ants that dared to go up against him, but it was exciting to kill them nonetheless.

Michael broke into a menacing laugh. He continued spreading the True Extraction Domain until he couldn't control it. After Michael reached that point, he released countless Qi Swords, shrouded in various elements to increase their destructive power or velocity.

He didn't create any more Qi Extraction Swords and focused on the Qi True Extraction Sword that rested in his hands. Michael teleported all over the battlefield, crossing tens of kilometers instantaneously to behead and pierce the Higher Lifeforms, who were desperately trying to pin him down.

However, Michael was as slippery as an eel. Whenever a Soultrait was about to hit him, Michael used Cosmic Stride. Sometimes, the enemies' Soultraits were too weak to affect him. He compressed the Extraction around him to obliterate the effects of their Soultraits before they could reach him in the first place.

The corpses around him piled up. Michael had long since lost count. Time passed rapidly, yet it felt like every second was stretched long. Everything happened in swift succession, but at the same time, nothing happened.

Half of the Savannah's forces fell victim to the True Extraction Domain that continued to reap the lives of his enemies.

Something changed at one point. The four Cursed Seals that had pushed Michael to his mortal limit and beyond stopped listening to him. They stopped thrumming all over his body and turned dimmer. Their effect deteriorated rapidly, and they...disappeared...

Michael heard something crackle loudly in the depths of his being. It sounded like every bone in his body broke, but that was not the case. Something happened, but Michael was not sure what it was.

'Now that I need you...you leave me behind?!' Michael cursed at the Cursed Seals, gritting his teeth. He tried to activate them again, but it didn't work. It felt like the Cursed Seals retaliated against him.

They changed their tactic.

The True Extraction Sword shrouding the Aethyr Blade dispersed, whereas the True Extraction Domain's power exploded, erupting in all directions before dispersing as well.

Michael could instinctively tell that he could still use Extraction, but it was weaker than it used to be. Extraction entered a weakened state, leaving Michael exhausted with the remaining forces of the Savannah Region.

There weren't many enemies compared to before, but everyone could tell that Michael was exhausted and on the verge of collapsing. The first opportunity to kill Michael appeared in front of the Savannah forces.

'What the...'

Something like that never happened. Extraction had always been his strongest Soultrait. It was always overwhelmingly powerful, but that changed now.

Extraction was weaker than his other Soultraits. It was only a temporary state, but Michael could instinctively tell that he couldn't use Extraction to replenish his used-up energy and stamina for a few days.

The timing couldn't have been worse. Michael might have managed to kill the Higher Lifeforms and most powerful Lesser Lifeforms, but there were still hundreds of thousands of enemies for him to deal with. He was exhausted and couldn't refill his stamina rapidly anymore. The only advantage at his disposal was that his energy pool was filled.

Michael could also use Heavenly Beast Physique for a prolonged period if he consumed a bunch of SoulStar Fragments.

"This is a bit annoying," He mumbled, descending to the ground to save more energy.

He had to pay attention to his energy consumption now that he didn't have a near-infinite amount of energy.

Michael changed his stance and readied the Aethyr Blade. He took a deep breath and used Heavenly Beast Physique, enhancing his physical prowess drastically.

He was physically stronger than the remaining enemies, but there were too many for him to deal with alone.

Maybe he could kill a few hundred or a few thousand enemies before exhausting his stamina and energy reserves, but that was it. If he managed his energy reserves well and played some dirty tricks, Michael should be able to deal with a few more enemies.

'I can do it!' He thought, determination flickering in his golden eyes.

Before Michael could charge the masses of enemies, dozens of Summons near him collapsed to the ground. Their heads rolled over the ground, fountains of blood spurting out of their necks.

Invisible Wind Blades whirled around Michael, greeting him in all directions right before shooting.

Michael lifted his head to look at a youth flying through the sky.

"Don't keep all the fun to yourself!" Frederik laughed, diving to the ground to stand beside Michael, where he conjured hundreds of tiny wind blades. He released them in all directions and willed them to move zig-zag at a shocking velocity before piercing their targets' vital points.

"Didn't I order you to leave with the others?" Michael asked.

"You must not have noticed that you terminated the order a few minutes ago. I'm not the first to return to the battlefield," Frederik explained lightly. He pointed to the Untamed Jungle, where the Untamed Army was fighting with their lives on the line alongside the Untamed Awakened and the Valyrs.

"This is not your fight, Michael," Frederik said. He puffed his chest out proudly and shoved a finger into it. "This is our fight!"

Michael was a major – if not the most important – figure in the Regional War, but it was not only his battle. It was the combat of Arx and the Valyrs as well.

Stinger emerged next to Michael and vanished a moment later. He was replaced by the Forest Elves, Tiara, and Legion. Tiara and Legion charged at the incoming enemies, their spears glimmering in the afternoon sun.

They worked together with near-perfect sync and accelerated. Tiara executed Thrust while transforming into the Silvarean Tiger. She used Inner Force while Legion struck and changed her trajectory suddenly as an energy bolt was about to crash into Legion's head. She cut the energy bolt and pushed forward.

The Silverfang pair disappeared in the crowd of enemies. However, it was not long until they were visible once again. The enemies surrounding them collapsed lifelessly to the ground. At the same time, Hiraku and Frederik propelled forward. Frederik jumped on Hiraku's shoulder, where roots and vines coiled around him to hold him down.

Frederik could quickly pinpoint his targets at the elevated position on Hiraku's shoulder. He unleashed countless wind lances to kill the diminished forces of the Savannah. Hiraku did the same since almost no powerful enemies were left to deal with.

The Untamed Awakened caused havoc. The lack of powerhouses in the enemies' armies was taken advantage of. They were slaughtered like livestock, merciless and swift.

The Valyr Lordess and the Valyrs tried to keep up with the Untamed Awakened, but even the few Higher Lifeforms among them couldn't push any harder. They were exhausted from the earlier battle, and it was already surprising that they could keep up with the others.

No. Even more surprising that the Untamed Awakened were still overflowing with strength. Where did their stamina come from?

"Monsters!" Zira mumbled, a trace of envy contorting her expression.

The Regional War against the 106 Lords was about to end.

Chapter 683 Sold?

The days after the Regional War ended flashed by quickly.

Michael and his subordinates dealt with the 106 Lords of the Savannah Region. They overwhelmed them, killed the Awakened, and decimated the remaining defenders spread through the territories of the 106 Lords.

There were no more surprises if one excluded that Michael was still having issues with Extraction.

His main Soultrait was no longer weakened, but the Cursed Seals caused problems. Something about them was off, but Michael couldn't tell what it was. He guessed that they were drained after they had been used too often and too long in a short period. However, that was merely a guess.

But it was a fact that the Untamed Jungle's outer ring and the Savannah's eastern area were no more. The abandoned settlements in Savannah's eastern area had been torn apart by the True Extraction Domain, just like everything it engulfed.

Michael ripped the towering trees, the densely grown bushes, and the wide variety of plant life that grew in the Untamed Jungle's outer ring for decades into shreds.

The damage caused to the Savannah didn't matter to Michael, but the Untamed Jungle was not the same. Something profound in his chest tremored violently whenever he thought about his debt to the Untamed Jungle for damaging it.

Michael was indebted to the Untamed Jungle.

He collected saplings of the towering trees and a wide variety of seeds from the bushes, flowers, and herbs found all over the Untamed Jungle and planted them in the outer ring with Insert. After that, he requested aid from the Botanic Sorcerers and the Greater Nature Spirit to accelerate the plant life's growth.

The outer ring reconnected to the Untamed Jungle and received enough nutrition and origin energy to grow. However, Michael could tell that it was not enough. His debt had not been repaid yet.

"Calm down a little, and I will give you more than enough fertilizer," Michael spoke into the depths of the Untamed Jungle, even though he had no clue whether the Untamed Jungle could hear him or if it bothered him in the first place.

He had more than enough corpses to give the Untamed Jungle as fertilizer, but Michael had yet to loot them. The Will's goods were still waiting for him to take.

Michael would have extracted the goods of the Will if the flood of energy influxes that ravaged his body wasn't blocking his energy veins.

Even using Insert on some plants had been a heavy burden. That was something Michael had never expected to happen. However, he could understand why his body was in such a bad state. He obliterated the army of nine Lords, Higher Lifeforms, and their subordinates – hundreds of thousands of them – before rushing back to the Untamed Jungle, where he dealt with more than 1.5 million Summons and Awakened.

He killed more than 50 Higher Lifeforms and 200,000 Tier-3 powerhouses. The remaining deaths were mostly Tier-2 Summons. That was what Michael guessed from the potency of the energy influxes that ravaged his body.

If not for the energy influxes, Michael wouldn't be able to tell the difference between Tier-2 Summons and Summons at a lower rank. After all, they died just as quickly in the True Extraction Domain.

Too many energy influxes flooded Michael's body for the last few days. His body was not on the verge of tearing apart just yet, but his War Rune occupied most of his energy veins and Pillar of Light to digest the energy influxes rapidly. His War Rune's refinement degree increased quickly, and he was about to reach the Mid rank of Tier-3 shortly.

"What are we going to do with the Savannah Region?" Lilica asked at some point.

The Untamed Awakened gathered alongside the Valyr Lordess, her daughter, and the most influential Summons of Arx.

"We lost 34,000 soldiers in the battle. There is no way that we can claim the Savannah Region with an army of 6,000 members," Siegfried announced, "The strongest soldiers of Arx might have survived the Regional War, but they're exhausted and injured as well."

The Untamed Awakened talked a lot about the Regional War. The Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs were excited about their gains and the fierce battles they fought near the end of the large-scale battle. Their opinion of Michael improved even more as well. They witnessed the true extent of Michael's power and learned his limits.

Their Oath of Loyalty grew even firmer as their trust, respect, and loyalty toward Michael improved. The Berserkers and Warlock Centaurs subordinate to Michael would never go against his words at this point. They might wonder about his reasoning, but they would obey nonetheless.

"We are not going to conquer and claim the Savannah Region," Michael announced, stirring the Untamed Awakened.

"Wait wait wait?" Mika exclaimed, jumping up from the chair, "We fought with our lives on the line to defeat those motherlicking Lords, but we are not going to claim their territories?"

"We will raid their settlements, but we are not going to claim the Savannah Region," Michael changed his phrasing with a smile.

"So, you're saying that we should profit as much as possible before pulling back into the Untamed Jungle?" Lilica inquired to reaffirm Michael's decision.

Tiara tilted her head, "We don't have the workforce to claim the entire Savannah Region in the first place. Our workforce will increase soon, but it won't be enough to establish tens of border settlements. Maybe we can build a second settlement, but that's about it. The Untamed Jungle is too big to be controlled by two settlements. We shouldn't stretch our forces too much, otherwise, we will end like the Lords of the Savannah Region."

"Are we really going to leave the Savannah Region behind like this? Lords living near the Savannah's border will probably invade the Savannah soon. We will have to deal with other opponents by then... It's such a hassle..." Frederik grunted, but Michael shook his head.

"We won't have to deal with threats from the Savannah Region for a while. After all, we have a cushion," Michael gestured to the Valyr Lordess and Zira, "I traded the Savannah Region to the Valyr a few weeks ago."

Michael considered selling the Savannah Region to the Forest Elves, but they didn't like the region. They needed extensive, densely-grown forests. The Silverfangs were not allowed to terminate their Link of Loyalty with Michael either. Therefore, no Silverfang could become a Lord, let alone claim the Savannah Region.

The Silverfangs would die when they tried cutting their Link of Loyalty with Michael. It was a little weird, but it was probably a restriction cast upon the Silverfang Tigerfolk by the Will.

Michael could have sold the Savannah Region to the Berserkers, Warlock Centaurs, or Hiraku and Frederik, but he didn't want to do that. He had to ensure that no one from the outside world would get hold of the Savannah Region.

Nobody he knew from the outside world should be allowed to establish a foothold near the Untamed Jungle. The Origin Expanse was his hideout, and he didn't want the problems from the outside world to affect him in the Origin Expanse as well.

Hiraku was an exception, but Michael could discern Hiraku would stay in Arx. The Descendant's Link of Loyalty was even firmer than Frederik's Link of Loyalty at this point. It would be a big surprise if Hiraku decided to leave now.

Michael came up with multiple reasons for selling the Savannah Region to the Valyr.

First, he didn't have the resources and manpower to claim the entire Savannah Region. Even if he had the resources and manpower to claim the Savannah Region in its entirety, Michael wouldn't do that – not before he was stronger than the strongest powerhouses of the Trilance.

Michael was not yet ready to claim an entire region because it would morph it into a secure territory for more Human Awakened to emerge. The Savannah Region – if asserted by him – would transform into a Human Domain. That would make everything a lot more complicated than it had to be.

He might even have to deal with High Society and others inside the Origin Expanse. Michael wanted to prevent that if possible.

By claiming the Savannah Region and focusing on his territory's expansion into the Savannah, Michael would have to deal with more than 30 enemies bordering the Savannah Region.

He didn't like the pondered of jumping from one danger into the next since it felt like fate was going to throw more issues at him either way.

Michael did not need to expose himself to more danger than necessary, whether it was other Lords or High Society.

Of course, selling the Savannah Region to the Valyr didn't mean Michael gave up the resource deposits within the Savannah. That would be foolish.

Selling the Savannah Region created countless opportunities for the young Lord of the Untamed Jungle.

That was also why he sealed various deals with the Valyr before they learned about his combat prowess and the Untamed Awakened's true power. He ensured the Valyrs pondered they were at a disadvantage until it was too late.

Some might think that Michael was a fraud, especially the Valyrs, who were foolish enough to underestimate him, but it was not like it was Michael's fault that the Valyrs didn't believe he could deal with the Savannah Region's Lords.

In their eyes, he had been a mere Low Tier-3 Lords with above-

average combat strength.

To their misfortune, it looked like they were as blind as moles.

Lucky for Michael.

Chapter 684 Controlling The Regional Ruler

The Valyr Lordess and her subordinates would have died without Michael. He achieved the 'impossible' by killing the 106 Lords and clearing the Savannah Region. That was something nobody managed to do in the last few decades. It was a fantastic achievement and the reason Michael could make ridiculous demands of the Valyr Lordess.

First, he told the Valyr they had to eliminate the remaining soldiers and Awakened, who continued roaming the Savannah Region. Their corpses had to be brought back to Michael.

Since every Lord had an average of 100,000 Soldiers and they killed less than four million over the last few days and weeks, there were still millions left to kill.

Traveling through the Savannah Region to search and eliminate the remaining Combat Summons and Awakened was dirty work. Others could have done it, but Michael didn't want to deploy his Soldiers or the Untamed Awakened to slave away for weeks, if not months, to do something the Valyrs would have to do if they wanted to claim the Savannah Region, either way.

Michael made another atrocious demand besides the Combat Summons and Awakened corpses. The contracts said that if Michael killed more than half of the 106 Lords, he would be given 50% of all profit generated in the Savannah Region. The Valyr Lordess would have to work tirelessly before she could generate profit in the Savannah Region, but Michael was not in a rush. He would wait patiently to earn a fortune from the Valyr Lordess once she reclaimed territory to expand and generate profit from conquering the Savannah Region.

Michael would earn a fortune from his initial investment in a few years or maybe a year or two. He wouldn't have to protect the border with the Valyr Lordess because she was bound to ensure that no monster or Valyr was to invade the Untamed Jungle. The Valyr Lordess would deal with the enemies bordering the Savannah Region once she claimed the Savannah Region. Therefore, she would protect her land, acting as a cushion for Michael.

Enemies from the west would have to crush the Valyr Lordess before reaching Michael. That was supposed to give Michael some peace.

He also demanded something particular from the Valyr. It was pretty simple.

Michael told the Valyr that they would only be allowed to claim the Savannah Region if they handed over their criminals. Awakened criminals, to be precise.

The Valyr Lordess would have to create a temporary Link of Loyalty with the criminals and use a Silver Teleportation Token, but it was possible. The criminals couldn't be stronger than the Valyr Lordess to establish the Link of Loyalty. Using a Silver Teleportation Token for each criminal brought to the Origin Expanse would be extremely expensive, but Michael didn't care. His demand didn't change. He wanted Awakened Criminals.

If the Valyr didn't accept this condition, he wouldn't allow the Valyr Lordess to regain her Lord Power and conquer the Savannah Region.

Others might consider this short-sighted, mainly because the price of every Silver Teleportation Token was ridiculously high, but the value of every Tier-4 Awakened was enormous for Michael.

Since he gave up the Savannah Region to the Valyrs, they had to sacrifice something as well. That was only fair.

The higher-ups of the Valyr were confused about his demand. It didn't make sense, but Michael didn't answer any questions.

He remained silent even after Zira asked him dozens of times about the reason for his weird demand. Michael was not ready to tell the Valyr that he would extract the SoulStar Fragments and Soultraits of the Awakened Criminals after reading their mind to ensure that they were terrible people and hadn't been victimized.

Extracting hundreds, if not thousands, of Awakened criminals while still alive should procure enough SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Soul Grimoire to 7-Star. Simultaneously, the Soultrait Symbols extracted from the criminals ought to be numerous and versatile enough to solve all potential issues with Danny's rescue mission.

The Valyr were free to reject him. That was fine. But it was most efficient if the Valyrs accepted his conditions. It was far less brutal than trying to escape Michael's control.

At the end of the day, he demanded a Race Pact with the Valyr to ensure that the Valyr wouldn't try to harm him in any way as long as he didn't harm them either.

Whereas the demand for criminals was weird, the Race Pact was considered over the top. The higher-ups of the Valyr race did not think signing a Race Pact with a single individual was necessary. However, after learning that Michael wielded all Elements and that he had ten or more Soultraits, they quickly changed their opinion.

The most important aspect was that Michael managed to strengthen his subordinates. The Valyr Lordess and her subordinates were unsure how Michael did it, but they could tell that the Untamed Awakened's Soultraits were stronger than they used to be. Their Soultraits were stronger and they managed to procure more Soultraits.

Every member of the Untamed Awakened had at least three Soultraits. Each of them was a 4-Star Soultrait as well. Even the weakest Soultraits of the Untamed Awakened were strong enough to compete with the Soultraits of the Valyrs' Elite.

It was merely a matter of time before the Untamed Awakened could be compared to the Valyrs' prodigies.

Once the higher-ups learned about Michael, his power, and his various incidents with other Lords since he entered the Origin Expanse, they understood why he was so vigilant. They accepted his conditions and signed a Race Pact.

Several weeks passed in the blink of an eye.

Nature reclaimed the Untamed Jungle's outer ring and expanded further, stretching across the border to the Savannah Region.

The Valyr Lordess left Arx with her subordinates. They teleported straight to the Savannah Center, where the Valyr Lordess used the Lord Seal, procured from her people, to re-establish her territory.

She used the resources supplied by her higher-ups to expand her territory rapidly. Hundreds of Elite Valyrs were sent to the Savannah Region to help the Valyr Lordess claim the entire Savannah Region.

Three months passed until the Valyr Lordess managed to claim the Savannah Region. There had been some complications, but she managed to transform the Savannah Region into a domain of the Valyr Race.

In the meantime, Michael advanced rapidly. Digesting all energy influxes took longer than expected, but Michael hadn't been in a rush. He reached the Mid rank of Tier-3 and advanced straight to the upper threshold of the Mid rank. It was merely a matter of time before he advanced to the Late rank.

His body, mind, and soul refinement progressed rapidly in the last few weeks. He was stronger than ever.

But the most important thing was that Michael regained complete control of Extraction. His Cursed Seals were still stirring trouble, but he could activate them again. Their effect on his mind and emotions was even stronger than it used to be, however, that was something Michael expected to happen.

After all, the fourth Cursed Seal was a lot more potent than the first three.

Michael was still unsure what to think about the Cursed Seals and their influence on him. However, he was glad that he could activate them once again.

At last, he could use the strongest form of Extraction again.

That was about time.

A few million corpses were waiting for him to extract, after all!

Chapter 685 Divine

?Three months passed in the Origin Expanse since the Regional War ended, but Michael had yet to return to the Sapphirelake Military Academy once.

He was too focused on his progress and Arx's development that he forgot the time.

But Michael was not the only one who improved. Everyone's pace and progress were rapid at first. The energy influxes from the grand finale of the Savannah Regional War skyrocketed the progress of the entire Untamed Army. The overflowing energy influxes granted a unique effect. They stimulated the body, mind, and soul, accelerating their refinement drastically.

The stimulation lasted three months for Awakened like Frederik, Hiraku, and everyone else who'd wreaked havoc during the Regional War.

Fortunately, Michael and his subjects harvested enough resources from the settlements of the 106 Lords to supply everyone with everything they needed to grow stronger. Frederik advanced to Tier-3, and Hiraku was a hair breadth away from ascending to a Higher Lifeform. All Hiraku needed was a slight push, and he would metamorph into a Higher Lifeform.

The resources hoarded in Arx's warehouses were enough to rebuild the Untamed Army. To be precise, the Untamed Army grew stronger than it used to be.

But there was more to it.

Michael managed to procure the Summoning Cores of all 106 Lords. Simultaneously, the trading cycle with his business partners earned him a fortune. It was possible to expand the trading cycle using the surplus resources. No matter how Michael looked at it, he was sure to earn a vast fortune every month at this point. He wouldn't have to participate in territorial battles to earn a fortune. His connections and business contracts earned him more than most ordinary Lords could earn in years – if not decades.

Unfortunately, not everything was excellent. Michael had been forced to practice Sanctum of Life daily for three months to strengthen his soul. He had to ensure that the Cursed Seals wouldn't overwhelm him again.

Simultaneously, he was practicing Sanctum of Life, expanding his soul, creating a larger foundation to store Soul Power and fuse Soul Traits.

Michael could use the Cursed Souls once again because of his tireless efforts and the use of mountains of resources over the last three months.

They affected him slightly, but he barely noticed them while he was in an emotional-neutral state. Even when he was emotional, Michael could control them better than three months ago. It was far from perfect, but Michael knew he had to use his advantages to make the most out of his circumstances.

The Zentika Empire hadn't stirred any trouble in recent months, and the Savannah had been silenced, yet Michael didn't feel comfortable. He knew his 'luck' better than anyone. It was only a matter of time before someone in the Origin Expanse or High Society would stir trouble. Michael had to grow stronger by all means to overcome the ordeals.

He didn't have the luxury to take it slow.

Thus, Michael went all out—using the Soul Tears, Enhancement, and all Cursed Seals—to extract the massive mountain range of corpses that had accumulated in his spatial rings.

He began extracting the bodies of the Summons, Awakened, and Lords, who had once reigned over the Savannah Region. It took him a while to get started as he wasted months before he could use his Cursed Seals again, but Michael knew that True Extraction would produce far better results than Extraction used without the four Cursed Seals.

Several days passed in the blink of an eye. Michael didn't leave the main warehouse yet. All one could see were hundreds of workers entering and leaving the warehouse with spatial satchels and other storage devices.

They entered with empty storage devices and left the warehouse with thousands of lifeless bodies stored away. The bodies were spread throughout the Untamed Jungle's outer ring to repay Michael's debts to the Untamed Jungle.

It took ten days before Michael was done extracting 8,000,000 Summons. Almost 3.5 million Summons had been killed by Michael and his people, which played a major role in the extraction of the Will's loot.

However, the most important gains came from the Awakened corpses, like always. Unfortunately, there had only been 6500ish Awakened, including the Lords of the Savannah Region. There were fewer Awakened corpses than Michael had been hoping for, but his hope had been wishful thinking.

Michael and his people had already killed close to 4,000 Awakened before the grand finale. Adding the reinforcement they received, every Lord had an average of 100 Awakened under their control. That was a lot more than most average Lords could handle. It showed clearly that the higher-ups of the 106 Lords thought highly of the Savannah Region.

The 6,500ish Awakened corpses paled in comparison to the eight million Summons, but both sides were essential for Michael. He needed the loot generated by the Awakened corpses and the Summons.

"How much did we get?" Michael asked the attendants who calculated his gains.

Michael could count them on his own, but that would take eons. That was how much he gained from the Regional War.

"My Lord, s-starting from the gains produced by the Summons, we calculated that you gained 192,000,000 Summoning Scroll Fragments, 4,955,000 Ordinary Summoning Scrolls, 2,853,000 blueprints of varying quality, and 245,500 Artifacts ranging from 1-Star Tierless to 4-Star Tier-4..."

Michael couldn't suppress his emotions when he heard about the gains. His entire body shuddered wildly, and the Cursed Seals within him screamed as if they were trying to tell him that they were why Michael had gained so much. If that was what they wanted to convey...they were probably right. He would have never gained so much without the Cursed Seals activated alongside Soul Tear and several layers of Enhancement.

Michael's hair stood up to its end, filled with excitement. Combining all Summoning Scroll Fragments should be enough to create a new type of Scroll. It should be enough to find out if there was a Scroll that was even more valuable than Legendary Summoning Scrolls!

However, instead of jumping around and combining the Summoning Scroll Fragments immediately, Michael cleared his throat and tried his best to contain his emotions.

"That's great. What about the Awakened?"

The attendant was just about to say something when Michael recalled something.

"Forget it. I forgot that I stored the Soultrait Symbols and SoulStar Fragments already."

Michael's mind was in a mess after hearing how much he had gained from the Regional War. He gestured for the attendants to leave and closed his eyes to examine the profits hoarded in his War Rune.

'6625 Memory Orbs, 509 Soultrait Symbols, and...553,539 SoulStar Fragments'

He shuddered when he realized how much he'd gained. The most significant profits came from Higher Lifeforms and the 'Elite' Awakened, who had been deployed to help the 106 Lords to suppress their enemies. Most Elite had decent Soultraits and were Late or Peak Tier-3 Awakened. Those factors combined transformed into a much better boon than Michael expected.

He didn't have any expectations when he compared the meager number of Awakened corpses with the massive pile of Summons, but that had been a misconception from his side.

550,000ish SoulStar Fragments, as well as 509 Soultrait Symbols, could change everything.

'What am I supposed to do now? Spend the SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Soul Grimoire? No. I can first use the Summoning Scrolls and Summoning Scroll Fragments to accumulate more Soul Power. If Soul Grimoire grows strong enough through the influx of Soul Power, I might not even have to invest too many SoulStar Fragments to rescue Danny!'

Even though Michael gained more SoulStar Fragments than ever, he was more excited about the Summoning Scroll Fragments.

He retrieved millions of Summoning Scroll Fragments from various storage devices. His heart began to beat wildly as the Scroll Fragments swirled around each other. At first, hundreds of Fragments swirled around each other, but it didn't take long before a small typhoon of Scroll Fragments formed. Hundreds

of Scroll Fragments transformed into tens of thousands. Tens of thousands accumulated quickly to hundreds of thousands, which formed into millions.

A maelstrom of over a hundred million Summoning Scroll Fragments formed in the warehouse – or what was left. The surge of power created by the maelstrom tore the warehouse apart. Michael could barely warn his subjects to retreat while extending his energy to store the goods in the warehouse inside his War Rune storage.

Tens of minutes transpired before the maelstrom controlled every Summoning Scroll Fragment. 192,000,000 Summoning Scroll Fragments had turned into a deadly stream of energy and Fragments. They tore everything in their path apart.

'That's not enough?' Michael screamed in his mind. He retrieved the 4,955,000 Ordinary Summoning Scrolls, manifested the Soul Grimoire, and unleashed a Soul Tear, ten Extraction layers, and all Cursed Seals to rip the Summoning Scrolls apart with True Extraction.

Tens of millions of Summoning Scroll Fragments spurted out of the massive mountain of Ordinary Summoning Scrolls. They were pulled into the Maelstrom of Scroll Fragments until 250,000,000 Summoning Scroll Fragments were linked.

The maelstrom shrunk as the Summoning Scroll Fragments congregated.

Michael swallowed hard and waited patiently as the maelstrom shrunk further. He ignored the destruction caused by the massive pile of 250 million Summoning Scroll Fragments and initiated Spirit Eyes to witness the first of a Summoning Scroll ranked higher than the Legendary Summoning Scroll.

It seemed like hours transpired before Michael caught a glance of a pristine white Summoning Scroll.

The Summoning Scroll was flawless, unblemished.

It was a Divine Summoning Scroll.

Chapter 686 World

Michael smiled from one ear to another as he approached the Summoning Gate.

He had no idea what to expect from the pristine Summoning Scroll that rested in his hand, but the uncertainty transformed into even more excitement. There was no way that the Divine Summoning Scroll would summon something useless.

The Untamed Awakened, Siegfried, Tatjana, and various influential members of Arx gathered near the settlement center to witness the birth of Arx's first Divine Summon.

Michael took a deep breath as he stopped before the Summoning Gate. His eyes locked onto the Divine Summoning Scroll and the unblemished seal that contained the Divine Summon.

He didn't dare to touch the seal. Instead, he released origin energy and broke the seal with a burst of energy.

The moment the seal broke, a terrifying pressure swept through the settlement center. The pressure expanded and stretched far beyond Arx. Everyone sensed that something miraculous was about to happen. Nobody could focus on their task ahead, forcing them to stop working. Their heads flicked to Arx's center, where the pressure was the strongest.

Michael could barely breathe in the center of the pressure. His legs quivered, and his vibrant golden eyes widened in terror when the true horrors of the Divine Summoning Scroll were unleashed.

The Scroll unfolded, revealing millions of incomprehensible miniature runes. The runes were alive. They freely moved through the pristine white parchment and connected until they transformed into the humongous image of something that felt both impossible and incredibly simple.

The image disappeared from Michael's view, and a moment later, he forgot about what he had seen. It felt like his memory of the image had been ripped out of his mind.

Michael swallowed hard as the Divine Summoning Scroll disappeared inside the Summoning Gate's energy pool.

The Scroll's pressure dissipated when it disappeared in the energy pool, but Michael didn't ease up. Nobody did. Instead, Michael felt the tension all over his body rise. His Cursed Seals tremored, and a

hoarse growl escaped the depth of his being. The growl was more like a whisper, but Michael heard it clearly. It resonated through his entire being, both warning and threatening him.

It was almost as if the being at the depth of Michael's being feared what was about to happen.

Michael clenched his fists and stared at the Summoning Gate as it vibrated. A semi-translucent glow coated the Summoning Gate's frame when the first stars etched in it lit up.

The following stars lit up quickly.

At first, all ten stars of the Summoning Gate lit up, and everyone observing it gasped in shock. However, the Summoning Gate changed again. The stars dimmed down again until no star glimmered in the afternoon sun anymore.

The Summoning Gate's energy pool cracked as currents of white energy spilled out. The energy coiled around the Summoning Gates, instantly illuminating eight stars. A few seconds later, a ninth star lit up brighter than any other star.

In the next few minutes, the stars etched into the Summoning Gate lit up and dimmed down one after another.

All of a sudden, the Summoning Gate's metal frame cracked. However, this time, the crackling was not just a sound that echoed through the surroundings. This time, the crackling came from the metal frame, which couldn't endure the tremendous pressure that weighed heavily on it.

A large crack formed in the metallic frame. The crack expanded rapidly, exposing the ferocious aura that the Summoning Gate should have contained.

Michael shuddered when the ferocious aura reached him, but he didn't back off. Instead, he stepped closer to the Summoning Gate and smiled lightly.

The crimson-golden Cursed Seal manifested all over his chest, his dark pupils turned crimson, and a thunderous roar escaped his lips.

Something about the Summoning Gate changed as his roar reverberated through Arx's center. The spectators retreated several steps, but Michael didn't notice anything anymore. Only the thing shrouded by the depth of the Summoning Gate attracted his attention at this point.

He expected the Link of Loyalty to be initiated at any point, but nothing like that happened. Michael should have been worried that something was going wrong, however, his instincts told him nothing was wrong. His mind screamed at him, telling him to run for his life, but Michael didn't move. He straightened his back and stared into the Summoning Gate, which creaked and twisted as the metal frame expanded.

The Gate was on the verge of bursting apart as the tip of something massive pushed through the energy pool.

The following seconds went by in the blink of an eye. A huge creature shot out of the energy pool. It brushed by Michael and shoved him aside before ascending high into the air.

Much like the winged mythical serpent, a horrifying presence – only worse – appeared in the Untamed Jungle. It swept through the outer rings in a second, only to be redirected upon Michael.

Michael couldn't move, and time around him slowed as his eyes fell upon the massive creature, whose golden elliptical eyes locked upon him.

A trail of energy pierced through Michael's forehead.

[A juvenile Curse User. No, you are not yet a Curse User, but you have been marked. Interesting. You are a Lesser Lifeform who defies the marks... It seems like I'm not the first of our kind you've encountered, young one.]

A voice, a hissing, to be precise, resounded through his mind.

Michael swallowed, falling back. He regained balance before crashing onto the ground, but the others were less fortunate. Every lifeform in the outer rings of the Untamed Jungle collapsed to the ground, unable to move an inch.

[Your willpower is not too bad. It could have been better, but I cannot sense the presence of a master upon you. All I can feel is a weak Cursed Soul attached to yours. Can you see me?]

Michael twitched. His head thrummed, and his heart palpated like crazy.

Of course, he could see the monstrosity that had emerged from the Summoning Gate. How could he not see it?!?

The massive serpent covered the sky all over Michael's territory. But that was not the true extent of the gigantic monstrosity. It also shrouded the Untamed Jungle's outer ring in darkness. One scale of the ginormous serpent covered Arx's center entirely.

[Was it destiny or bad luck that brought us together, Cursed Child] The humongous serpent asked.

The creature continued to stare at Michael, who managed to make eye contact with it.

A chuckle resounded through Michael's head.

[May the future tell us.]

The serpent lunged forth and dived to the ground. Its head covered Arx's center at once. The serpent's snout crashed heavily into Michael, who was still petrified and unable to move.

He anticipated his body to be mashed and unbearable pain to wash over him, but nothing like that happened.

There was no pain or pressure.

The serpent smashed into him...and disappeared inside him.

The picture of a massive, black-scaled serpent with golden eyes slithering across his entire back and neck was engraved into his body and weaved into his existence.

[Long time no see—...] It said, but Michael knew the serpent wasn't talking to him.

A ferocious hiss and a frightening roar reversed through Michael's body.

The World Serpent collided with Michael's Curse.

[End of Volume 11]

Chapter 687 Settlement

A few months passed in the blink of an eye.

At last, the Valyr Lordess established a stable foundation in the Savannah Region. In the last six months, they struggled a lot and suffered various defeats, but they overcame all ordeals and managed to transform the Savannah into the domain of the Valyr race.

But that was not without help. The territories adjacent to the Savannah Region heard a lot about the massacre of the 106 Savannah Lords and decided not to follow their desire to expand into the Savannah Region. The news about the destruction caused by Michael spread quickly into the surrounding regions. Those who escaped Michael's grasp by a hair's breadth fled and shared their information with the other Lords. In their stories, Michael was an invincible devil. He was not someone a mortal should enrage if they desired to keep their lives and territories intact.

Only a small batch of Lords didn't believe the refugees' stories. They invaded the Savannah and tried to establish a foothold in the Savannah Region. The Valyr finally defeated them, pushing them away, but their victory didn't come without any casualties. The Valyr lost a lot. However, it was all worth it. They claimed the Savannah Region.

The Valyrs were thankful that Michael's image instilled fear in the hearts of the enemies bordering the Savannah Region, drastically decreasing the difficulty of conquering.

Therefore, it was no wonder the higher-ups of the Valyr race were willing to send Michael many criminals. The criminals were all crippled Higher Lifeforms, but they were only at the 4th Tier because the Valyr Lordess was only a Tier-4 Lord. It would have been better if the crippled criminals were stronger, but Michael accepted the crippled criminals nonetheless.

Up until now, the Valyr shipped 100 criminals to the Untamed Jungle. Michael read their minds before he extracted their Soultraits and SoulStar Fragments while they were still alive.

He managed to procure 100 Soultraits in total and 1800 SoulStar Fragments per criminal. The gains were good enough to satisfy Michael. After all, the SoulStar Fragments and Soultraits were produced without a fight. Michael obtained them without any additional work. The criminals were a source of passive income.

However, Michael had heavy expenses to pay. The SoulStar Fragments and Soultrait Symbols extracted from the criminals were used up quickly.

Michael chose to upgrade the Soul Grimoire to 6-Star after inserting another Soultrait called 'Soul Container' into it. He first upgraded Soul Container to 4-Star before using Insert to merge Soul Container with Soul Grimoire. Thereafter, Michael utilized 100,000 SoulStar Fragments to upgrade the Soul Grimoire to 6-Star. The upgrade was expensive, but it was worth it, in Michael's opinion.

The Soul Grimoire's capacity increased drastically, and even the Soul Tear ability grew stronger. Although Michael wasn't focused on the Soul Tears, he figured they would be useful as well.

There was only one problem with Soul Grimoire. It was a tiny function that confused Michael a little.

"Purification. The souls stored within the Soul Grimoire will be purified," Michael mumbled, "That doesn't seem like a good thing for Cursed Living Souls. If the Curse is connected to the Living Soul's spark of life, purifying it will be...disastrous..."

Michael wondered if it was better to upgrade Soul Grimoire to 7-Star before attempting to rescue his brother, but he could tell that the Soul Grimoire was already large enough to contain Daniel's Living Soul. The only issue was that Michael couldn't be sure whether Danny's Curse would cause trouble or not.

Unfortunately, he had to research a little bit more before he could rescue Danny.

The only good thing was that the Miniature Coffin Keychain's preservation lasted longer in the Origin Expanse than outside. His mother told him that Danny had only a year. Ten months, to be precise. However, the Miniature Coffin Keychain could last almost two years in the Origin Expanse.

It looked like the time dilation between the outside world and the Origin Expanse also affected the Miniature Coffin Keychain.

Of course, that didn't mean Michael's patience would last this long. He was anxious and wanted to rescue his brother as soon as possible. His anxiety was big enough to convince Michael that he should talk to his mother as quickly as possible. There was only one problem with that.

He had to stay in the Origin Expanse until his Summoning Gate had been fixed.

Michael's territory didn't welcome a single new Summon in Arx for three months. That was not because Michael disliked Summons, but it was owed to the World Serpent's summoning. The World Serpent's emergence through the Summoning Gate damaged it.

The Summoning Gate was severely damaged. It was impossible to summon anything through it, but that was only a tiny issue compared to the real deal. Michael couldn't leave the Origin Expanse without threatening to annihilate the Summoning Gate.

His presence and constant maintenance were why the Summoning Gate didn't break. His presence stabilized the Summoning Gate. If he'd left Arx or the Origin Expanse, the Summoning Gate in Arx would be no more. Michael would have lost his Lord Power with the destruction of his Summoning Gate. That was certainly not something Michael wanted.

He needed his Lord Powers to rescue Danny. The Soul Power granted through the Links of Loyalty was necessary to strengthen Extraction. Extraction might be a 7-Star Soultrait, but the massive amount of Soul Power accumulated within the Soultrait Symbol was part of why it was so powerful. The Soul Power was needed to safely extract Danny's Living Soul and insert it into the Soul Grimoire.

Fortunately, Michael and his subjects managed to repair the Summoning Gate. It took them three months and a bunch of spare parts from the 106 Savannah Lords' Summoning Gates, but they repaired it. To be precise, the Summoning Gate was more prominent and sturdier than it used to be.

Michael and his subjects determined to initiate the Summoning Gate's upgrade to the Intermediate rank instead of wasting precious resources to repair the Basic Summoning Gate. The extra costs weren't too high. The only issue was that Michael missed a single part to complete the upgrade.

Fortunately, the last part wasn't required to activate the Summoning Gate. Michael could activate it once again, so he did right away. He didn't want to waste any more time—it was time to expand his territory, after all!

Even though the population in Arx didn't increase, that didn't mean Michael and his subjects were idle. Countless things have changed in the last few months. Everything in the territory expanded. A second settlement had already been established.

Michael and his people prepared the second settlement for the surge of Summons that would stream into the Untamed Jungle once the Summoning Gate was ready. Everything necessary to expand Michael's territory had been prepared.

The siege tower defense had been installed throughout the middle area of the Untamed Jungle. Not even Higher Lifeforms were resilient enough to survive the bombardment of the weapons Michael and the engineers created in the last few months.

The second settlement wasn't too deep inside the Untamed Jungle. Instead, it was in a different spot in the middle area, slightly closer to the inner circle. Its location was very advantageous because it connected perfectly to the Underground Forging Hall, Arx, and the Savannah Region—if necessary. The location was also well-hidden in a shroud of thickets and towering trees. It was easy to get lost in that area. Of course, that only applied to strangers.

Michael's subjects knew enough about the Untamed Jungle to find their destination blindfolded.

The second settlement was close to the inner circle. It was much easier to go out and hunt the monsters in the inner circle – though Michael stopped actively hunting monsters.

Michael had enough resources to decide that actively hunting monsters was not worth it unless it was to regulate their population.

He and his subjects altered into the forest rangers of the Untamed Jungle, at least for now.

The combat experience gained from hunting monsters was great, but it was not like they had to go out to hunt. Instead, more than enough monsters came their way to hunt.

The Greater Nature Spirit and the masses of summons gathered in the settlements attracted various monsters from the deeper parts of the Untamed Jungle. After all, the energies and essence congregating in Michael's territory—and the settlements—were ever-present and highly attractive to various monsters.

Chapter 688 Repaired

Now that the Summoning Gate was repaired, Michael could resume summoning more Summons. He'd hoarded the Ordinary Summoning Scrolls procured from trading Mythic Summoning Scrolls at the Bartholomew Corporation and combined them to 1-Star Named Scrolls whenever he had enough Scrolls to spare.

After several months of anonymous trading at the Bartholomew Corporation, Michael had hoarded more than 100,000 1-Star Named Scrolls and 400,000 Ordinary Summoning Scrolls.

He didn't hesitate to break their seals, summoning 500,000 Summons.

At last, Michael could expand his territory properly. He had enough resources to support the rapid expansion of his population. It was a happy day.

Michael spectated the spectacular summoning process. Dozens of Starless Summons emerged from the Summoning Gate's energy pool at a time. A tour guide approached the batches and welcomed them into the territory. They introduced the new Summons into Michael's territory and shared all necessary information as they strode through Arx.

Not all Summons would stay in Arx, but most would be introduced to Arx before they could move to Brynud, the second settlement in Michael's territory.

Arx was Michael's main settlement for now, but that was only for now. Michael had already planned to transform Arx into an indestructible border settlement. Therefore, Arx wouldn't continue to expand at some point. Instead, it would be fortified until it was near-indestructible.

Brynud was similar. However, instead of being a border settlement, Brynud would transform into the second line of defense. It would develop similar to Arx. The sole difference was that Brynud was bound to grow into a much larger settlement.

Arx was the first border settlement, but it wouldn't be any more than one of many in the future. Michael was not in a rush, but he planned to conquer the portion of the Untamed Jungle that bulged out of the True Untamed Jungle in the next two years. If his subjects continued to work as hard as they worked currently, two years should be more than enough to claim the entire bulging part.

All he needed was enough workforce, which was not a problem thanks to Extraction and Insert, resources, and measurements to block and eliminate all threats.

As long as Michael had enough space and resources to provide for his subjects, he could summon as many as he wanted. The anonymous trading of Mythic Summoning Scrolls was far more lucrative than he had expected.

He didn't lack resources anymore, either. The trading cycle generated mountains of resources. For now, the mountains of resources were utilized to expand the trading cycle. Still, it was only a matter of months before he could use the resources to expand his territory rapidly.

The only thing Michael 'lacked' was military might. That was not entirely true. Michael had enough military might to man four to five settlements with guards. However, Michael was not satisfied with the bare minimum. He didn't want to expand his territories and construct several settlements if he couldn't ensure that invaders—whether Monsters, Summons, or Awakened—couldn't enter his settlements and harm his people.

Michael desired to protect his people. He was responsible for them. Therefore, he wouldn't summon more Summons than he could handle. 500,000 new Summons were a lot, but Michael was confident he could take care of them. Among the 100,000 1-Star Named Summons, 50% were Combat Summons. Michael would add them to the Untamed Army and have them undergo hellish training to advance to Tier-2 as quickly as possible.

Once they reached Tier-2, they would be perfect to guard his settlements as ordinary Guards. The Elite Guard position would be staffed by Tier-3 Summons, preferably Holy Knights or veteran combatants unwilling to continue fighting at the frontlines.

The Regional War against the Savannah's rulers ended half a year ago. That was more than enough time to take care of one of the most important tasks: finding suitable Awakened to bring to Arx.

Because the Summoning Gate had been broken, it wasn't possible to bring the second and third batches of Awakened to his territory. However, that didn't mean Michael didn't take care of them. On the contrary, Michael ensured that they used the last three months – six months passed in the Origin Expanse – to study, practice and grow stronger.

Michael had Rebecca Zauber and her friend take care of the Awakened Agency. She tested the most suitable candidates multiple times and gave them enough resources – Michael's – to grow stronger. Their progress, determination, and willpower were tested several times until they were found suitable or unsuitable for becoming Michael's subordinates.

Now that the Summoning Gates had been fixed, Michael welcomed 175 Awakened into his territory. They had to be flown to the Sapphirelake Military Academy to establish the Link of Loyalty and allow the Awakened to anchor in Michael's domain before they used the Silver Tokens of Transportation to appear in Arx.

The transportation fees and the cost of training the Awakened were not something everyone would be willing to pay. A single Silver Token of Transportation was already extremely expensive, yet He hired a spaceship to pick up 175 Awakened and bring them to the Sapphirelake Military Academy, which was a 30-day-long trip across the Stellar System. However, Michael was willing to invest that much into his Awakened.

They may look weak in other people's eyes, but to Michael, they were unpolished diamonds...and he had the only means to polish them. After all, he was the only one who could give these 'failed' Awakened what they lacked the most. He could reward them with Soultrait Symbols and Soultrait Upgrades!

Michael granted the newcomers a huge loan of Jungle Points, allowing them to purchase two Abilities and the means to upgrade them to 4-Star right away. The Awakened's Links of Loyalty were growing much faster than the other Links of Loyalty. They never expected that Michael would give them several Soultraits and the points required to upgrade them. In the first hour of being in Michael's territory, they

transformed from weaklings with useless Soultraits into Elite Awakened with several Soultraits. Their Soultraits weren't even at a low rank.

Their lives changed instantly. Nobody would frown upon them anymore. That was all thanks to Michael.

Their trust, gratitude, and loyalty toward He skyrocketed.

Michael could sense that, but he was too overwhelmed by the massive influx of Soul Power and the creation of 500,000 Links of Loyalty to focus on the Awakened.

Newly established Links of Loyalty were fragile and known for getting stimulated the most 24 hours within their creation. Population would get to know their Lord through other subjects, and they would learn a lot about the territory, dangers, and the territory's condition in the first few days of their summoning. Every bit and piece of information would affect the firmness of their Link of Loyalty and their opinion of their new Lord.

Michael was not worried about that. If anything, he was curious how strong everyone's Link of Loyalty would grow in the next few days.

Maybe the Soul Power generated by the firmest Links of Loyalty would reinforce his Abilities enough to resurrect Danny without their mother's help.

But He doubted that. He would have to approach his mother soon.

Unfortunately.

Chapter 689 Living Image

It was an amazing feat that Michael had more than 700,000 Summons and just about 200 Awakened in his territory. He had the means to transform the Awakened into real powerhouses once they were also nurtured properly. However, instead of being overjoyed, Michael thought about his mother.

A single thought about his mother soured his happiness instantaneously.

Michael might not like his mother, but she was his only link to the Nest. He was unsure what to think about the Nest, but given his mother's power and abilities, it was obvious that the Nest was strong and knowledgeable. They knew a lot about Curses and the Cursed Seals.

'I wonder what she will think about the World Serpent.'

The World Serpent hasn't resurfaced in the last three months. It stayed inside Michael and spoke to him occasionally. However, it didn't provide any helpful information. Michael didn't even know what exactly the World Serpent was. It merged with him, creating an intricate and detailed image that spread all over his back.

Michael never heard of a Summon capable of merging with their Lord. In the first place, no Link of Loyalty was established between Michael and the World Serpent. Since the Summoning Gate didn't manage to trigger the Link of Loyalty between the two parties, the World Serpent must have been too strong for Michael to handle. But that didn't make any sense.

The Summoning Gate always summoned Tierless Summons. Even the Legendary Summons were Tierless entities until they regained some of their strength. The Silverfangs didn't even die, yet summoning them takes away their progress. That was how it was supposed to be.

However, the World Serpent was different. The moment he summoned it, Michael knew that it was much more than a Summon. It was different, almost like it was never integrated into the Origin Expanse like it was never supposed to be there.

But that didn't make any sense. How could Michael summon something that wasn't supposed to exist in the Origin Expanse? That was not possible. Michael knew he missed an important piece of information, but he had no idea what it could be. That annoyed him far more than his mother. After all, his mother didn't turn his insides into a habitat for a massive serpent.

The World Serpent didn't act up much, but it moved in his skin all over his back. It slithered across his back – or through his back – and sucked the surrounding origin energy in their direction.

The World Serpent's presence was a much stronger origin energy magnet than the energy absorption technique, Pantheon's Dawn, but that didn't make Michael happy. He was still worried that the World Serpent would devour him from within once he showed a sign of weakness.

Even though the World Serpent told him it wouldn't consume him in one of their short talks, Michael couldn't trust it. The massive serpent merged into his body without asking for consent, either. It would do whatever it wanted to, and Michael didn't doubt that for a single second.

"Are all Divine Summons like you?" Michael asked in a whisper. He was not surprised when he didn't receive an answer.

'Cleave Fenrir was not like the World Serpent. Cleave managed to practice the Wicked Spear Arts, and he would have escaped the confinement of the Link of Loyalty sooner or later, but there was a Link of Loyalty in the first place. But there is none with the Link of Loyalty. Our only connection is...that this fucking serpent is inside me.'

Michael felt a sting in the back of his head.

"Show some courtesy and stay out of my head. I don't need a World Serpent rummaging through my mind while the Cursed Seals play with my emotions," He grumbled.

Interestingly enough, the Cursed Seals didn't stir any trouble since the World Serpent and the thing sealed within him clashed. The World Serpent never attacked him, either. If anything, it felt like the World Serpent was curious about him.

'But then again, it sealed itself inside my body.'

Michael could feel the World Serpent's presence inside him. It was similar to the Cursed Seals' presence, but it was intense...

different..., and weird...

The World Serpent entered his body and clashed with the thing sealed inside him before creating countless Seals to contain the Living Image that slithered within Michael's back. At least, that was what Michael presumed the seals were there for when they manifested all over the World Serpent's Living Image.

He had been mistaking the Seal's purpose. The World Serpent's Seals existed to seal its power.

Michael would never be able to contain the power of the World Serpent within him. His body was not strong enough.

Only a single Seal of the World Serpent was accessible. Michael triggered the Seal to unleash a fraction of the World Serpent's power. He had been curious, wondering if he could use the World Serpent like he could use the Cursed Seals or if it was even more dangerous and unstable.

A scale on the back of the Living Image lit up when Michael triggered the Seal. The Seal affected Michael somehow, but it also strengthened him physically. It was almost as if another Curse had entered his body.

'What are the Cursed Seals, in the first place? Is there actually a Curse inside us? It felt more like something was sealed deep inside him, and their existence was like a curse affecting his existence. It was weird...but it made sense somehow.

[I will not enter and leave your body as I please, little one. Your vessel is too fragile to contain my true self for long. But your potential is excellent. You might have what we need. Make sure not to attract too much-unwanted attention, Cursed Child. Trust me when I say that you do not wish to attract too much attention. The universe is ruthless and unforgiving.]

Despite being able to speak to him occasionally, the World Serpent was not further helpful than the Cursed Seals. If anything, the Cursed Seals didn't confuse him as a lot as the World Serpent. They were silent and left him alone.

'I yet don't understand why they stopped fighting. None should have won the battle. I would have noticed...right?'

The World Serpent didn't explain much to him, but Michael sensed that some things about his Curse had changed.

Many things were bound to change in the near future. Michael felt that in every cell of his body.

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Since he was previously thinking of his mother, Michael decided it was necessary to leave the Origin Expanse for the first time in what felt like an eternity. He had questions and needed answers before he could rescue his brother.

The Runic Gate manifested in front of Michael, and he stepped through. He disappeared inside the Runic Gate and emerged in the Sapphirelake Military Academy.

Leaving the Untamed Jungle's energy-dense region after staying for half a year was a lot further challenging than Michael thought. He shuddered upon sensing the scarcity of energy particles in the surroundings.

Michael complained inwardly but nonetheless activated Spirit Eyes to hunt for his mother.

Some of his Soultraits felt distinct since the World Serpent merged with him. His physical Soultraits felt stronger. Different.

It didn't take long to pinpoint his mother's energy fluctuations. Michael utilized Cosmic Stride a few times to cross the campus and emerged in his mother's room.

His mother read something, but she noticed him the instant he appeared. However, upon looking up, Evalynn Fang's eyes widened in confusion and surprise.

Evalynn's eyes turned glassy, and several Cursed Seals manifested all over her body, releasing an ominous mist that shrouded her.

"You...."

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Evalynn Fang stared at her son through glassy eyes.

"You have changed."

"That's not a very nice way to say hello," Michael responded.

"No. That's not what I meant. Your Curse. Something about it changed. And why can I sense another presence inside you?"

It was not difficult to understand what Evalynn was talking about. However, Michael didn't expect the changes of his Curse to be so easy to perceive. He could barely sense the changes.

Meanwhile, Michael had known that his mother would sense the World Serpent. The Living Image contained countless seals. They weren't accessible, but the Living Image wasn't stored deep inside Michael's being. Instead, it slithered through his back as it pleased. Michael figured that his mother could sense the World Serpent's seals.

The seals were not like the Cursed Seals, which were linked to create several chains that covered Michael's entire body upon activation. The World Serpent's seals formed the Living Image, which was greyed out under normal circumstances. Only by activating the Serpent Seals, the only ones Michael had access to, did a single scale light up.

He didn't plan to activate the Serpent Seals, but the World Serpent had different plans. It activated the Serpent Seal to speak into Michael's mind.

[No need to be startled. I won't attack your mother. It would be best not to get killed by that menace.]

Was the World Serpent talking about his mother? Michael was startled that the World Serpent activated the Serpent Seal without his permission, but he figured it made sense.

'It is not talking about my mother.' Michael figured.

It was almost like the World Serpent talked about something else – to someone else.

"You have two Curses? That cannot be. W— I sensed only one Curse inside you before. What did you do? Where did you get this...thing?!? It is not even sealed!" His mother was hysterical. She charged at Michael and grasped his shoulders tightly.

Various emotions flickered in her eyes, but Michael couldn't pinpoint how she felt. Was she confused? Afraid? Disgusted? In disbelief? Or was there more to it?

Michael was unsure.

"It is not as violent as the Curse. There shouldn't be a problem for now. Furthermore, I don't think that the Worl— That it is a Curse. I summoned it. It is ...hiding inside me, I guess?" He felt that saying 'World Serpent' aloud would cause trouble. The World Serpent tugged at the back of his mind, telling him not to reveal anything.

"But that is imposs—..."

"Whatever," Michael dismissed his mother's worries with a wave. At least, he thought that she was worried. He had difficulties reading Evalynn Fang's mind.

"I didn't come here to tell you about the second Curse or whatever it is," Michael said dead seriously, "I came here because I think I can rescue Danny now."

Evalynn Fang was about to say something, but her mouth closed when she heard why Michael approached her.

Michael didn't trust his mother, but she was his best option. He began revealing information about Extraction. He told his mother what Extraction was capable of – only the information she had to know –, before revealing his other Soultraits as well.

He told Evalynn about the Soul Grimoire, the Soul Tears, and Enhancement and that he could control the 4 Cursed Seals to a certain extent. Michael shared that they drastically strengthened 7-Star Extraction and that he had more than 700,000 firm Links of Loyalty, which provided Extraction with a mountain of Soul Power.

There were some things Michael didn't want to share, but his secrets were not as important as making sure that his brother could be safely stored and nourished in the Soul Grimoire. His secrets weren't worth anything compared to how much Michael valued his brother.

Michael explained that he would create a customized Elite Class Soul Technique for Extraction. The Soul Technique's sole purpose would be to extract Danny's curse without affecting his Living Soul. After that, Michael could extract the Living Soul from the Miniature Coffin Keychain without harming Danny.

He revealed his plan about Insert and the other functions of Soul Grimoire to store Danny in the Soul Grimoire and nourish him until he found a way to create a perfect vessel for Danny's Soul. While revealing his plans, Michael mentioned the ability to insert Soultraits to strengthen them.

Evalynn was mostly quiet, but she asked a few questions. Since she witnessed Michael's last fight against Oliver Zeus, Evalynn researched much about her sons. She discovered how they'd lived and what obstacles they had to overcome to grow stronger. Evalynn was sorry for leaving her children, but she was also proud that the brothers managed to grow this powerful. When she read about the rumors stating that her oldest son had been betrayed, Evalynn was in fury.

Unfortunately, her mission prevented her from wreaking havoc in the Trilance. She was not supposed to attract too much attention. That part of the mission failed, but attracting some attention was not as bad as hunting down several Supreme Families. Evalynn was not allowed to destroy the balance in the Trilance. She couldn't do anything.

But Michael could. Michael was not part of the Nest yet. He could deal with the bastards who orchestrated Daniel Fang's death! The only problem was the Nest. No matter how Evalynn looked at it, Michael would be found. It was only a matter of time.

The only thing she wanted to prevent at all costs was about to happen.

'Maybe he can block the Geas. As long as he can...it should be fine, right?'

Evalynn was deep in thought but half-listened to Michael's explanation and plans. A heavy sigh escaped her lips, bringing Michael to a stop.

"Do you think that won't work? I experimented with the Living Souls of some criminals, only the worst of the worst, but I think I learned everything I need to know to extract Danny's Living Soul without touching his spark of life. The only uncertain factor is the weakened Curse. Do you think I won't be able to extract it if I used 7-Star Extraction with ten Enhancement layers, Soul Tears, and the four Cursed Seals?"

Michael asked, worry filling his heart.

His mother knew much more about their bloodline's Curses. She was probably right if she said he wasn't strong enough. Michael might not trust her, but he had to consider her opinion. It would be foolish to be full of himself or childish and ignore his mother's opinion.

Michael decided to put his emotions aside for Daniel's sake. He wasn't going to lose him. Not again.

"You said you can strengthen Danny in the Miniature Coffin Keychain. As long as you can keep his Living Soul stable while extracting the curse...it should be fine. But you need to find a better vessel to attach the Curse to. Otherwise, the Curse will tear Danny's Living Soul in shreds before you can extract it properly," Evalynn said after pushing her worries aside.

She knew that the Nest would seek her youngest soon, but that was not something she could change. However, she can help Michael rescue Danny. Her past actions might have harmed her children, but she did everything to protect them from the worst evil. Evalynn had always tried to protect them from the worst. Unfortunately, Cursed Children had never been able to escape their fate.

"Once extracted, the Curse will spread and seek another host to consume. Prepare the vessel beforehand, otherwise, Danny's Living Soul won't be the only casualty."

Michael was just about towards say something when the World Serpent's voice resounded in his mind.

[As long as you bring the 'Curse' towards our playground, we will deal with it, little one.]

The corner of his lips curled upward.

"I will insert the Curse inside me," Michael said.

Evalynn frowned deeply, "Don't be greedy. No one can handle two malevolent Curses. I don't know what is happening inside you, but you've will not accept Danny's burden. It will kill you!"

Michael flashed his white teeth.

"Don't worry. I'm not alone," he declared. We are not going towards accept his burden either."

"We will devour it!"