

Supreme Lord 711

Chapter 711 Research Method

The Underground Forging Hall expanded further, occupying most of the vast hall underground. That was only possible with the resources earned through the trading cycle. The Blacksmiths continued working on their projects, including the creation of more defensive mechanisms for the settlements in the Untamed Jungle, new enemy detection markers, forest traps, and various miscellaneous items that were needed to improve the living standard in Arx and Brynud.

The Blacksmiths' progress was interesting but the happenings deeper in the cavern system were even more impressive. The Elementals Empire spread far. The Elemental Empress created thousands of Lesser Elementals and more than a dozen Noble Elementals. The Noble Elementals also had the power to create Lesser Elementals of a certain element. They took much longer to make one Lesser Elemental, but their power aided the Elemental Empire's expansion.

It was only a matter of months before the Elemental Empire's population crossed 10,000 residents. At that point, many things would change drastically. First, more elemental crystals would be created in the presence of 10,000 Elementals. The quality of the elemental crystals wouldn't increase, but the quantity would. As the lands of the Elemental Empire transformed into a place overflowing with elemental crystals, more Lesser Elementals would be stimulated naturally. They would comprehend the elements that are the most natural to them and trigger an evolution.

The probability of Lesser Elementals evolving naturally was low, but it was not impossible. They only had to accumulate enough energy within their cores over months or years and stimulate their cores with impulses.

Michael's influence on the Elemental Empress was enormous. She couldn't be stopped anymore. She expanded in all directions and occupied everything underground. The sole exception was the massive gate sealing the cavern tunnel leading to the hibernating monstrosity below.

Michael and the others were still uncertain about what kind of beings lived deep underground, but it was not like they were eager to find out. It was already scary enough when it spoke into Michael's mind. He didn't want to meet it again. Not yet, at least. In fact, the hibernating beast could stay underground forever.

It was a little bit worrisome that there was no news about the hibernating beast because Michael expected something to happen after the World Serpent's presence swept through the Untamed Jungle.

However, neither the mysterious winged serpent nor the hibernating beast acted. That was nice, but Michael couldn't help but feel a bit worried. No news was never good news in Michael's case.

That was also why he focused on the good news that reached him. He visited the Elementals Empire for a while and retrieved some goods that would aid the creation of more Lesser Elementals. Simultaneously, Michael brought a device that purified elemental energy in the air. As the elemental energy in the Elementals Empire is purified, more Lesser Elementals would meet the requirements to evolve naturally.

The artificially evolved Elements would also aid the purification process. Their presence increased the quality of the elemental crystals created in the vicinity.

Slowly but steadily, all Lesser Elementals would transform into ordinary Elementals.

The Elementals Empire looked better than expected, but Michael didn't stay behind for long. He visited the Alchemists to hand out presents. The Alchemists had worked hard in the last few months to improve their knowledge. They tended to various plants and worked closely with the Farmers and Botanica Magicians to create and expand their herbal garden.

Michael rewarded the Alchemists with more seeds, many of which were exceedingly rare to find anywhere. Some of these seeds cost hundreds of Common Energy Stones, which was even more ridiculous than the pricing of some high-quality potion recipes. Even recipes for potions that could only be efficiently used by Higher Lifeforms weren't as valuable as some of the exotic seeds Michael had procured for the Alchemists.

The Alchemists were overjoyed. They thanked Michael multiple times before returning to work and leaving their Lord alone in the Alchemy Lair's meeting room.

"I will leave the books here then..." He mumbled, a little bit flabbergasted.

[Weird people. They fit perfectly into your settlement.]

After Michael visited the Alchemists, he visited the Architects, the Farmers, the Tamers, the Mages, and others.

His meeting with each party didn't take long. He gifted the architects a few new projects, including the expansion of the Ranches and the training grounds for the mages. Like always, Michael purchased countless books and research materials for his subjects. He also bought a bunch of blueprints for the architects to study. Some of them said they were on the verge of a breakthrough. Michael hoped that the goods he purchased could help them somehow.

The architects were crazy with their inventions. Unfortunately, most of them didn't work out. Some were implemented into Arx and Brynud but were only torn down later. It was painful to watch their inventions fall apart and be torn down, but the architects didn't even think about giving up. Their ambition had been ignited. It flickered brightly in their hearts, pushing them to move onward and to keep trying.

Michael liked that everyone in his territory was doing their best to improve. Some tried to enhance by strengthening, whereas others focused on studying and experimenting. Only a tiny fraction of all subjects decided it was not worth giving their all to improve. The ambition has been extinguished for a long time. They didn't dare to try other things anymore, for fear that they would fail...once again.

The Untamed Jungle has changed a lot in the last six months. However, one of the most apparent changes happened to the Greater Nature Spirit and its vicinity.

The Greater Nature Spirit's root network stretched farther and farther. The Forest Pixies multiplied and showed signs of evolving, and the first Dryads formed from the trunk of the Greater Nature Spirit's main body and the towering trees around it. Dryads and Treants were given birth to. Their presence changed a lot. Plant life's growth was accelerated. Flowers blossomed brighter than before, and the potency of medical herbs increased as well. Even mangoes and cacao tasted much better than they used to.

Michael was overjoyed by the changes happening in his territory. Even the Untamed Army enlarged rapidly. The construction of the Advanced Sacred Knight Temple had begun a few months ago and was already on its way to completion. But that was not all.

Another Sacred Knight Temple was being built in Brynud. For the time being, it was only a Basic-rank Sacred Knight Temple, but that was good enough to train Starless Summons into 1-Star Blessed Squires and 2-Star Holy Knights.

Arx was still the headquarters in his territory, but Brynud was being constructed and enlarged to fit several times the number of residents. It wouldn't be a border city built to protect the borders of his territory. Instead, it was a mixture between a highly populated city and a training ground for various academies and places like the Sacred Knight Temple. Many soldiers would stay in Brynud's barracks to be read and move toward the adjacent border cities on command.

It was the second line of defense and the first line to counterattack those who dared to attack his territory.

Chapter 712 Completed Evolutions

The Elementals and the Elemental Bilrox looked a little different from their lesser versions. The Elementals' presence was more intense and prominent. Their racial limit changed as well, but that wasn't visible. It was merely something Michael could sense.

Elemental Bilrox were sturdier than ordinary Bilrox. They weren't much more significant, but their physical traits were several times higher. Elemental Bilrox were unique due to their inborn ability to perceive and absorb elemental energy. They could hoard elemental energy and create elemental seeds in their energy pool. However, every energy pool had only a little space for elemental seeds. Therefore, most Elemental Bilrox focused either on one elemental seed to reinforce it as much as possible by refining it several times or they created two elemental seeds in their energy pools.

Their elemental seeds could be refined, which ordinary Pyro Bilrox and other mutants of ordinary Bilrox couldn't do.

Both Elementals and Elemental Bilrox were powerful creatures. They could advance to Tier-2 without any obstructions, and Tatjana was certain they could reach Tier-3 if they were given enough resources. However, Tatjana pointed out that the resources required to aid the Elementals and Elemental Bilrox breakthrough were probably too high. It wasn't cost-efficient.

Michael didn't consider the cost-efficiency too much right now. It was more important to understand the value of high-ranked monsters. The offspring of Tier-3 Elemental Bilrox were naturally stronger than the descendants of Tier-2 Elemental Bilrox. Their offspring with stronger parents would have a slightly higher inborn talent, which would make it much easier to reach Tier-3 with fewer resources.

The cost efficiency may be low for several generations, but it would be worth it after some time had passed. The investment would be worth it in the long term, especially with someone like Tatjana in his territory. The Elemental Bilrox didn't have many Evolution Paths, and most of them were dangerous as

well. However, by strengthening the Elemental Bilrox over generations, the danger of the Evolution Paths would decrease considerably.

The Elemental Bilrox's probability of surviving the next evolution would increase with every generation. That was worth investing a small fortune--at least, that was what Michael thought.

But the Elemental Bilrox and Elementals weren't the only ones who needed more future investments. The Heavy Armored Elephant, Blood Oath Demon Monkeys, the Greater Eagles, and the Golden Stinger Bee also finished their evolutions.

Everyone was satisfied with their gains, especially the Blood Oath Demon Monkeys. Their power level had skyrocketed, and they were going crazy. Sun Demos was the only one who wasn't going crazy. He finished his evolution and surpassed his racial limit, but nothing significant about his powers or appearance had changed.

Sun Demos was the only one of his kind who didn't change much.

Even the Tier-1 Heavy Armored Elephant changed drastically. The Heavy Armored Elephant evolved into a Behemoth Elephant, triggering its breakthrough to Tier-2. Now that it was a Superior Existence at the 2nd Tier, purely focused on its incredible defense, the Behemoth Elephant couldn't be hurt easily anymore. Not even Elite Awakened at the 2nd Tier could injure the Behemoth Elephant anymore. They couldn't even reach its vital spots easily.

The Behemoth Elephant was close to 15 meters tall and covered in several layers of defense. At first glance, it was hard to see the layers, but the Behemoth Elephant was covered in a thick layer of hide covered in metal-like plates. The Behemoth Elephant would be shrouded in a semi-translucent hue as long as it circulated its original energy through its body.

The semi-translucent hue didn't block incoming attacks. The impacting force was distributed across the hue before it reached the Behemoth Elephant's monstrous defense. It required a considerable amount of force to pierce through the semi-translucent hue. Even Siegfried Dragoon had to use his special techniques to break through the hue only to fail to pierce the Behemoth Elephant's natural defense.

Sun Demos was frustrated just by looking at the Behemoth Elephant. However, the evolution of Greater Eagles and the Golden Stinger Bee made him feel even worse. How was it possible that everyone but him transformed into a powerhouse after evolving once?

Michael had pampered the Greater Eagles a lot. He provided various natural treasures to them even before Tatjana used Eye of Evolution to determine their most suitable Evolution Paths. The Greater Eagles were given options to choose from. Michael was glad to hear that they picked the Evolution Path with the most future potential. He looked forward to their next evolutions now that they transformed into Minor Typhoon Rocs.

Despite the Minor prefix, the Typhoon Rocs were massive. Their wingspan alone was already 50 meters. They were swift and could carry heavy loads on their backs. Once they unleashed their wind affinity, the Minor Typhoon Rocs could cross the distance to the center of the Savannah Region in no time.

Michael didn't have many Minor Typhoon Rocs yet, but their number increased slowly. Sooner or later, Michael would have a whole aerial army filled with Minor Typhoon Rocs—or their evolutions. That was something worth working for. The Minor Typhoon Rocs could advance to Tier-3 rather easily, after all!

Stinger, the MVP of the last several dozen of large-scale battles, didn't disappoint Michael either. He was already overjoyed with the Behemoth Elephant and the Minor Typhoon Rocs, but by far, Stinger's evolution was the best.

The Golden Stinger Bee evolved into the Golden Queen Bee. Michael had been sure that Stinger was a male, but he found out only now that the Golden Stinger Bee didn't have a gender. Why was that important?

It wasn't crucial to determine the gender of the Golden Stinger Bee beforehand. That changed now that Stinger evolved into the Golden Queen Bee. But why? The answer was simple.

Upon evolving into the Golden Queen Bee, Stinger learned to reproduce asexually. Stinger's evolution taught him an efficient reproduction method without involving a second parent. The offspring produced through asexual reproduction are usually exact copies of their parent, but it was a little bit different in the Golden Queen Bee's case. Tatjana said that there could solely be one Queen Bee of a kind. Therefore, the reproduced copy was reduced to its 'lesser' form, the Golden Stinger Bee.

The Golden Queen Bee could produce copies of Stinger before it evolved.

It was solely a matter of time before hundreds of Golden Stinger Bees joined Michael's territory. The strategies he had been forced to use with only one Golden Stinger Bee could then be used with hundreds of Stinger copies.

Michael never anticipated Stinger to evolve into the Golden Queen Bee. Initially, Stinger's Evolution Path was that of the Heir of the Queen Bee. The name was lengthy and sounded more like a title than the name of a race, but Michael did not care about that when he chose this path for Stinger.

The Evolution Path was perfect because it would possess allowed Stinger to transport instantly freely to all the places it had been before while still doing all the Golden Stinger Bee tasks. But the Forest Pixies and the Greater Nature Spirit connected to the Golden Stinger Bee and triggered a change in the evolution.

The Golden Queen Bee did not lose its powers. Instead, Stinger would be able to still do the same as before and transport instantly everywhere. Stinger would also be connected to its offsprings, creating a system for better coordination in future battles.

Michael looked forward to future combats as well. The future was bright.

Excitement filled his heart.

Chapter 713 EmeraldLeaf Growth & Power

??Mika twisted his body, evading the razor-sharp blade of a dagger that whizzed past his head. The corner of his lips curled up as he spun his own blade around to stab his enemy. His opponent had to retreat to avoid getting cut, granting Mika enough space and time to retreat.

He retrieved the Wyvernwood Bow and accessed the Drake Soul infused inside it while nocking an arrow on the bowstring. He then used his Soultraits Pierce and Rapid Fire in quick succession.

Several arrows cut through the air in the next few seconds. Mika's opponent, a young Forest Elf around the same age, jumped to the side and rolled over the ground before jumping up in a hurry. He evaded most arrows but didn't realize Mika didn't aim at him. Mika's arrows focused on blocking the Forest Elf's retreat paths.

It was only a matter of seconds, but Mika pushed his opponent into the corner of the arena. The last arrow nocked on the bowstring. An ear-deafening roar escaped the Wyvernwood Bow at the same time as the arrow began to glow. Arrow Duplication was applied to the arrow several times alongside Pierce.

Mika remained serious even after he pushed his opponent into the corner. The young Forest Elf noticed what Mika was about to do and lifted his hands. Countless roots burst out of the ground. They were as thick as the Forest Elf's arms and intertwined, forming a root wall before him.

The Forest Elf couldn't see anything that happened behind Root Wall, but he wasn't too worried. His Soultrait might not be suitable for attacking, but its defense properties were extraordinary. Root Wall was a 5-Star Soultrait, yet given that it had only one major function, its entire potency was used to reinforce its defensive properties even further. Even the attacks of mighty Awakened at the Peak of Tier-3 would have difficulties breaking through Root Wall.

Mika expected Root Wall to manifest between them at this point. He knew enough about his opponent's Soultrait to prepare the perfect attack to...humiliate the Forest Elf.

He produced some Soul Energy by merging Pierce's Soul Power and origin energy before utilizing the Common Class Soul Technique, Superior Pierce. Not long ago, Michael created customized Soul Techniques for the Untamed Awakened.

It took Mika a while to comprehend the Soul Techniques that had been customized for him, but Superior Pierce was something he could use well enough at this point. The arrow nocked on the Wyvernwood Bow's string glowed in a silver light as the Soul Power accumulated within Pierce's Soultrait Symbol was sucked dry.

A bead of sweat trickled down his cheeks, and he let go of the bowstring. The arrow propelled to the Root Wall and duplicated multiple times in an instant. It transformed into a batch of 64 brightly glowing arrows. The silvery light engulfing the arrowhead cracked, unleashing Pierce's full potential as the arrows impacted.

Only a small number of arrows were blocked by the Root Wall. Most managed to inflict a gaping hole into the Root Wall and pierce through it before threatening to kill the Forest Elf behind it. The young Forest Elf's eyes widened as he fathomed the piercing power of Mika's attacks, but he couldn't do anything. It was already too late. He couldn't protect himself anymore.

He knew his life would have been on the line if this hadn't been an ordinary spar. A middle-aged Forest Elf appeared before the young Forest Elf. He flicked his wrist to catch the duplicated arrows out of the air and turned to Mika with a faint smile.

"You've grown stronger," The middle-aged Forest Elf praised while removing the remnants of the Root Wall.

"Thank you very much, Elder Elvan. I have been training hard," Mika responded with a polite gesture.

"I can tell. You understand your Soultraits very well, but that's not all. The Wyvernwood Bow has accepted you. The Drake Soul has acknowledged you!" Elder Elvan pointed out.

He turned to the other Forest Elf and scowled, "I told you not to underestimate Mika, Lexion. He is not the same foolish Elfling you used to fight!"

Lexion's lips parted, but he shut his mouth and bit his lower lip instead of complaining to his teacher in frustration.

Mika didn't say anything to Lexion. He merely eyed the Silverwood Town's 'genius' with a mocking smile. He couldn't remember how often Lexion had humiliated him for manifesting a stronger Soultrait. Lexion's Root Wall was a mighty defense Soultrait that fit perfectly into the Forest Elves' teachings as a nature-attributed Soultrait.

One of the Forest Elf Elders, Elder Elvan, picked up Lexion to teach him the Forest Elf's history and ancient techniques. Lexion became one of the Forest Elf's prodigies from that day onwards. His strength increased rapidly as Root Walls' compatibility with the Forest Elf's ancient techniques ended up higher than predicted.

Lexion turned into a menace to his peers, especially those born into strong bloodlines. Mika was someone prefer that. His family was known for their Arrow Duplication Soultrait. It was a powerful Soultrait, but it was incompatible with the ancient techniques of the Forest Elves. Lexion made fun of him because of that. He humiliated Mika often, and he could afford it. He was the Elder's direct disciple and one of few Forest Elves with a Soultrait compatible with the Forest Elves' ancient techniques.

Mika envied Lexio for his fortune in the past, but not anymore. If anything, Mika pitied Lexion for thinking too highly of himself.

What was the utilize of a 5-Star Soultrait and a compatible Legacy Arts if he wasn't strong enough to block a mere Common Class Soul Technique? Mika now had three powerful Soultraits compatible with each other – including customized Soul Techniques. If he'd wanted to, Mika could have released hundreds of duplicated arrows at Lexion to eliminate him in the first few seconds of the battle. However, Mika was curious to discover how much stronger he had grown. He was curious if he could defeat Lexion without using his Soultraits.

It would have been much more challenging to defeat Lexion without his Soultraits, but Mika sensed that he had been at an advantage for a while. Lexion's strategy annoyed Mika too much, so he started using his Soultraits to push Lexion into the corner and finish him with a final attack.

Mika turned to Lilica and Opars and smiled lightly. They looked a little disheveled, but they smiled as well. They had overwhelmingly defeated their childhood rivals as well.

Defeating their childhood rivals, considered prodigies since they could remember, had been easier than expected. Their spar wasn't even worth mentioning. It had embarrassed the Forest Elven Elders, who'd taught their prodigious students.

Lilica and Opars gave Mika a thumbs up.

"You fought great!" Lilica praised, "Superior Pierce is pretty good, isn't it?"

Mika nodded. His proficiency with the Soul Technique was not yet great, but he was slowly getting the hang of it.

"The EmeraldLeaf Team did great," A loud voice resounded through the vicinity. It crept closer to the trio, who turned in all directions, only to land on an old Forest Elf who appeared next to them.

He appeared out of nowhere, spreading goosebumps all over the trio's body.

"I'm very curious about our youngest powerhouses~"

Chapter 714 Elders' Plan

714 Elders' Plan

Elder Silram smiled at the trio of the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer team with a genuine smile. He ruffled through Lilica's hair and gestured them to follow.

"How are things in the Untamed Jungle? We noticed that Michael has been sending us more weapons over the last few months. His trading business seems to be booming."

"Grandfather, you know as much about Michael's business as we do. Didn't he explain his strategy to you before?" Lilica asked her great- great-great grandfather.

"That..." Elder Silram smiled lightly, "It looks like I cannot fool you anymore. Yes, I know about his trading cycle. Michael informed me beforehand to gather information about the Forest Elves' demands for armaments, Artifacts, and even Spirit Armaments. As you can imagine, we are very interested in his Spirit Armaments. He gave us three Spirit Armaments as presents. They're outstanding."

Mika couldn't hide his grin after hearing what Elder Silram said.

"Michael got you hooked really bad."

Lilica glared at Mika, but Elder Silram nodded.

"You could say that he got us hooked with the Spirit Armaments. We cannot afford to do that even if we were hoping to ask for more Armaments in exchange for less Agriculture Blueprints. Who knows what Michael will ask for once he sells Spirit Armaments in masses? We must please him to ensure we'll stay in his favor. But that is nothing new, right?"

He smiled at the trio, who knew precisely what the Elder was talking about.

"His Soultrait Symbols and Soultrait Upgrades helped us grow stronger quickly. We have yet to tap into the true potential of our

Soultraits, but we're already stronger than Lexion and the other direct disciples. Only the Blessed Children are stronger than us..." Lilica said, only for her grandfather to finish her sentence, "...for now."

"Yes, for now." Lilica acknowledged in a whisper.

"Spirit Armaments will be very important, but the entire clan is more interested in Michael's Soultrait Symbols. Imagine how much stronger the Blessed Children could grow if they received one or two extra Soultrait Symbols. The Blessed Children who've already ascended to Higher Lifeforms would instantly transform into the strongest Forest Elves of the last few centuries. We could change our Clan's destiny altogether!"

Elder Silram's eyes glimmered. He recalled the Forest Elves' history much better than any other. After all, he'd lived through the centuries and both ups and downs of his people. He was one of the few survivors of the Great Elven War who was still alive. The other survivors died centuries ago, while Elder Silram stayed strong. He overcame all kinds of obstacles and was certain it was all for his granddaughter's encounter with Michael Fang.

"I don't think that Michael likes handing over Soultraits without having a safety net. The Untamed Awakened, including us, had to sign a Soul Pact with Michael. We know that he sold some Soultraits to his people, but I know for a fact that everyone had to sign something."

Elder Silram nodded understandingly.

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"That is understandable. Michael is doing a great job by making sure that his investments cannot come back at him. Betrayal is nothing new for Forest Elves. We have been betrayed way more often than you think. That is also why the Elders decided to offer Michael a Racial Pact. If the pact is broken by one of our kind, all Forest Elves will be bound to Michael. Breaking a single clause will transform the entire

Forest Elven Clan into Michael's subordinates. You don't have to look like that, Lilica. It tarnishes your beauty."

Lilica's expression was distorted as she listened to her grandfather.

"Why would you sign a Racial Pact with Michael?"

"Because we want to benefit from Michael's power. He is still looking in our direction because he needs us, but we are not a powerful race. We have lived for a long time, and our knowledge is vast.

However, we are not the smartest or strongest race. Once a stronger and more knowledgeable race offers to replace us...why would he reject them?"

"Michael is 1-..." Mika was about to say, but Elder Silram intercepted him.

"Michael is loyal? I can tell he is a trustworthy and loyal man, but he is also a businessman and a Lord. His priorities are being a Lord, protecting his people, and expanding his territory. He will terminate his deals with us once his connections improve. And that...is just a matter of time. The High Elves wouldn't hesitate to offer their national treasures for the opportunity to procure dozens of Soultraits, which are not only upgraded to a high star rating but also highly compatible with their existing Soultraits. Their combat prowess would increase tens of times instantaneously. Their enemies would crumble, and their territories would expand. They would form the next Grand Empire with Michael's help!"

The trio of the EmeraldLeaf Adventurer group looked at each other, but Elder Silram was not yet done.

"The Racial Pact alone won't be enough to attract Michael's attention. We possess nothing we can give him that other races cannot give him. That's also why the Elders granted Michael 10% of the Forest Elven future racial achievements. The achievement points granted to the Forest Elves will be divided, and one-tenth will be given to Michael. In exchange, he will have to give us some Soultrait Symbols and Soultrait Upgrades!"

Elder Silram shared the Forest Elven's plan and continued telling the trio more and more about their plans. As the full extent of the Forest Elven Clan's plan unfolded in front of them, Opars, Mika, and Lilica frowned deeply.

"I think we understand what you're trying to do, Gramps...but I'm not sure what you want us to do. Michael doesn't mix business with private matters-at least, not in cases like this." Opars pointed out the obvious.

"I don't want you to convince him to accept the proposal. It will be enough if you hint that the Elders are trying to come up with a proposal. You don't need to be obvious. Saying it once or twice will be enough. He will be curious about our offer, and eventually, we can throw a great offer at him, an offer he won't reject once he knows the true value of Achievement Points."

The EmeraldLeaf trio wasn't convinced, but they nodded. They talked to Elder Silram about a few other things and received permission to retrieve a few more Artifacts from the treasury. They continued using the Pseudo-Legendary Bow Artifacts but added a few Epic Arrow Artifacts and one retrievable Legendary Arrow.

Natural Arrow Artifacts were hard to procure. It was possible to produce them, but most wouldn't reach the Rare rank. A few artificially produced Epic Arrow Artifacts existed, but only two with the Retrieve Rune had been created successfully. The rest were like Mika's Heirloom Arrow-one-time consumable.

The EmeraldLeaf Trio was already stronger than their peers. However, they didn't feel special. Maybe they would have felt different in the past, but as a member of the Untamed Awakened, they could only be considered average or slightly above average. There were too many powerhouses who'd grown strong with Michael's help.

The competition was fierce, and it would only grow more vicious.

Chapter 715 Valyr

The Forest Elves were not the only race preparing to approach Michael for his Spirit Armaments, combat prowess, and Soultrait Symbols. The Valyr Lordess, her daughter, and the higher-ups of her family's Clan were all present.

"We have sacrificed a good portion of the Clan's resources to claim the Savannah Region, but we're still facing too many issues. The Lords and monsters bordering the Savannah Region are intentionally creating as much trouble as possible to slow the construction of the border settlements!" One of the higher-ups, a Valyr with four horns, said annoyed.

"But isn't that obvious?" An elderly woman, the Valyr, seated at the end of the table, asked with a shrug, "My daughter lost her territory in the Regional War. She was betrayed and forced to retreat but managed to claim the entire Savannah Region at the end of the day. The Savannah Region is roughly 70 times larger than before. Valkyria didn't have enough time to prepare for such a large-scale expansion. It is only obvious that the enemies bordering the Savannah Region test Valkyria's defenses to determine if she's a threat or if they can attack to claim her land instead."

The burly Valyr seated next to the elderly woman groaned.

"Valkyria didn't do anything. No, she did something. She lost her territory because she was foolish enough to believe her allies wouldn't betray her. Then she tarnished our reputation by seeking asylum in another Lord's territory, only to end up relying on that Lord to claim the Savannah Region."

The burly Valyr was the Valyr Lordess' father. Valkyria always had issues with her father, who was never satisfied with her. The worst, however, was when she married someone her father hated to the core and when she gave birth to Zira.

Her father loved his granddaughter from the bottom of his heart, but he was disappointed in his one and only daughter. She was a disgrace in his eyes.

"I..." Valkyria's lips parted, but she didn't know what to say.

Zira hated seeing her mother like this. She was usually not that flustered. Valkyria was strong and determined. The Valyr Lordess knew what she wanted and would do everything to acquire what she desired. However, in front of her father, Valkyria was powerless.

"Gramps, please don't be so harsh on Mother. It was obvious that the Trilance would lose. The Zynur Lord's betrayal was bad, but I never expected that we would survive this long against the massive power of 106 Lords. Their council was filled with flaws, yes. Nonetheless, their numbers were more than a hundred times greater than ours. Don't you think it was already a miracle that we survived so long against their council?"

Zira's grandfather wanted to say something, but his wife elbowed him gently. That's enough. Her eyes said with a dangerous glimmer in them.

"How about we pay more attention to the main topic of today's meeting?" She asked lightly but with a trace of determination in her voice.

The main topic. That's what they called their worries and doubts about the Lord of the Untamed Jungle, the man who managed to obliterate an army of millions singlehandedly. He was still a Lesser Lifeform, but his Soultraits and horrifyingly high physical strength pushed his combat power above the thresholds of an ordinary Higher Lifeform.

The Lord of the Untamed Jungle killed dozens of Higher Lifeforms, both Awakened and Summons.

"He has at least seven Soultraits. One of his Soultraits altered his physique drastically, increasing his physical attributes. It should be a High-Class 6-Star Soultrait. His eyes are special as well. It's very hard to notice in your visualized memories because his eyes usually glow. However, the marks around his eyes intensify alongside his glowing eyes right before his enemies falter. I think he can unleash either mental or spiritual attacks through his eyes. Given that the attack also affects Higher Lifeforms, it should be another High-Class 6-Star Soultrait," A young man pointed out. He projected several short clips that had been extracted from the memories of the Valyr Lordess, Zira, and the Valyr Reinforcements that had survived the final battle of the Regional War.

"He can teleport through space while carrying multiple people. His teleportation is near-instantaneous and consumes little energy, resulting in an insignificant release of spatial fluctuations. That makes it harder for his enemies to detect him when he appears nearby. It is probably a Supreme Class 5-Star Soultrait or an Elite Class 6-Star Soultrait."

An image of Michael teleporting all over the battlefield at will appeared on the projection before everyone.

"However, this Soultrait is the weirdest. If you cannot block it, your body will be dissected. However, there are multiple functions to that. Sometimes, golden tendrils burst out of the ground around the Lord of the Untamed Jungle. The tendrils attach to his enemies and suck them dry. Their lifeforce and origin energy are drained as the Draining Touch Soultrait can achieve. But that's not the end of it. He can create a domain with this power. The domain was strong enough to kill everyone below Tier-3 near-instantly. Even our Elite forces at Tier-3 had to retreat once the domain manifested," The young man explained, all while various clips played in front of everyone present.

Zira's grandfather shot up from his chair when he noticed a particular clip. He gestured for the young man to stop and focus on the clip before him.

"Curses," He groaned, his eyes flicking to his wife, who also noticed the Cursed Seals, "Is he an Apprentice Curse User? I heard that only Higher Lifeforms..."

Her attention flicked to her husband.

"That's good," She mumbled.

"Good?! We will be dead if the SHA finds out!" Zira's grandfather, the patriarch, cursed.

"Wouldn't we be dead when the Supreme Human Alliance finds out? It's not like they like us 'lesser beings' either way. At least, we now know that the Lord of the Untamed Jungle won't join the Supreme Human Alliance at any time. He is a Curse User. They don't fit well into the SHA."

Zira's grandfather shook his head, "But that doesn't mean he's a member of the Nest. He cannot even control himself!"

He pointed at one of the last clips from Zira's memories. They showed the Lord of the Untamed Jungle as he lost control of his body. The memories demonstrated the destructive power Michael could unleash if he used his whole power.

"According to my calculations, his main Soultrait is a Mythical Class 7-Star Soultrait. These marks all over his body enhanced this Soultrait's power drastically, granting him a decisive advantage against the council," the young Analyst from before pointed out. He had been waiting for this moment for a while and couldn't hold back anymore.

"I consider that his Mythical Class Soultrait can dissect the living with so much precision that he can rip his enemies' Soultrait Symbols out of their souls!"

Zira nodded vigorously when she heard, "I knew Michael was weaker before. He must have gotten his hands on more Soultraits after he defeated the Kitsun Lord. His Soultrait is probably also how his Subordinates got so much stronger. He gives them Soultraits and strengthens them!"

Zira's grandparents looked at each other, understanding dawning upon them.

"That's also why he queried for living criminals. He takes their Soultraits," The grandfather said, only for the grandmother to nod slowly.

"We're feeding him with Soultrait Symbols...What a sly fox. He didn't lose anything by selling the Savannah Region to us. "

The Valyrs continued to watch the visualized clips of the conversations the Valyrs had with the Lord of the Untamed Jungle. More details and slightly more private topics were mentioned every now and then. A snippet where Michael queried about Zira's Soultrait appeared as well. Usually, the Valyrs would frown upon that question because their race was known for their low-ranked Soultraits, but the expression on the Lord of the Untamed Jungle's face attracted the viewers' interest instead.

It was almost like there was a hidden intention in his expression. Everyone got more serious as they continued watching the projected snippets of memories. The Lord of the Untamed Jungle was dangerous. It was essential to find out what he wanted and if he could become a threat to the Valyrs. However, at the same time, the Lord of the Untamed Jungle was an opportunity. Maybe it was possible to change the Valyrs' fate with Michael's power.

Over several hours, the Valyr learned a lot about Michael. They understood enough about his business deals, tactics, the powers he'd exhibited, and personality to conclude that the Lord of the Untamed Jungle wouldn't attack them as long as they were useful to him.

They understood that Michael didn't have the means to control larger areas of land yet, that his race didn't support him like the Valyrs supported their kind.

The Valyrs finally found something they could make use of.

If the Lord of the Untamed Jungle didn't have a race to rely on...how about the Valyrs become his pillars of support? For an equivalent exchange, of course!

Michael knew nothing about the Valyr race's ideas but would be happy to hear about them. He had always known that the Valyrs' Soultraits were below average. Providing them with some Soultrait

Symbols and Soultrait Upgrades would help the Valyr Lordess keep the Savannah Region safe. That meant Michael would have fewer adversaries to face from the Savannah's direction.

Of course, Michael wouldn't hand over his Soultrait Symbols and SoulStar Fragments for free. He was a Lord and businessman, after all!

Chapter 716 Sweat

Beads of sweat trickled down Hiraku's temples. His back was drenched in sweat, and his muscles were sore. It had been a while since he had worked out so much that his body felt like it was tearing apart. Unfortunately, the last 24 hours hadn't been kind to him.

The sweat stung in his eyes as he forced them open. Hiraku glanced at the holographic screen of his crystal watch and frowned deeply.

'21 missed calls.'

His family never called him. They abandoned him after he told them he would focus on the Titan Spirit Soultrait and use the Creation Soultrait as an aid in combat. That was not the path the Star of Creation family pursued with unbending determination. They were obsessed with the path the first ancestor had paved for them and expelled everyone who wanted to walk a different path.

Hiraku knew that very well when he announced that he wouldn't focus on the Creation Soultrait. He had always been burlier than the rest of his family. He had always been aware that he was not like them and didn't fit into the stereotype of the Star of Creation. His family was just...different.

Several years passed without a single call. His family told him to never mention them, or they would come to find him. They were good at threatening, but it was not like Hiraku cared about that. After struggling in the Origin Expanse for a few months, he forgot about his family. But now...the same family who had abandoned him called Hiraku countless times.

"They probably heard that I officially joined Michael's territory," Hiraku burst into laughter, only to groan in pain as his abs twitched mindlessly.

Michael was a good guy. Hiraku couldn't say that about many powerful people, but Michael was genuinely good. He was a little bit naive, but not to the extreme. Michael was not obnoxious about his

influence on the entire Tritan Alliance. He knew that his Soultrait Symbols and Soultrait Upgrades were valuable.

Despite that, Michael offered them to his Subordinates like candies. Michael was also willing to invest heavily in his friends. He helped Frederik a lot without demanding anything in return. Initially, Hiraku wondered if Michael wanted to exploit Frederik with his initial investment, but he never forced Frederik into anything. If anything, Michael offered Frederik an easy way to 'repay' his debts by joining the Untamed Awakened.

But even that was good for Frederik. He could stay by Michael's side, gain more Soultrait Symbols and Soultrait Upgrades, and grow strong enough to attain his goals.

'Goals...'

Hiraku didn't know what Michael was planning or what his goals were, but he thought Michael would be fine. Michael was the type of person who'd survived all kinds of ordeals to attain what he desired.

But what about himself?

'What are my goals?' He wondered.

The image of someone flashed through his mind, but Hiraku could only force a smile. Thinking about her was painful. She was the only reason he'd thought about staying with the Star of Creation, yet she was also why he left. Her words when they parted stung even after years had passed.

A heavy sigh escaped his lips. He stayed in the arena, his drenched back covered in the sand that covered the entire arena.

Life would go on even without her, but Hiraku was not sure how much longer her presence would influence him. He was unsure if he'd liked to stop thinking about her or if thinking about her held him back.

Hiraku was a Higher Lifeform, and his strength was bound to increase with Michael's help. Michael offered him Soultrait Upgrades and new Soultraits, but Hiraku has rejected his offers until now. Maybe it was time to change that. It was time to grow...to become a different man.

Just as a flicker of determination formed in his eyes, Hiraku received another call.

'Can't they read the fucking roo-....' Hiraku shouted in his mind, only to freeze in his tracks as his gaze landed on the holographic screen.

He received a call.

[Hellen Zuro] – [Accept/Decline]

"W-why?"

**

Frederik fell from the sky. His legs were limp, and fountains of blood burst from his arms.

'Maybe I shouldn't use Aeroan like that until I understand more about the changes made by Enhanced Wind and Wind Mastery...' Frederik cursed himself while retrieving potions from his War Rune storage. He removed the cap mid-air and swallowed the contents quickly. A moment later, he controlled the winds beneath him to unleash several blasts of compressed air.

His fall slowed down, and he wasn't squashed to death as he crashed onto the ground. It wasn't long until Maria appeared next to him. She used Archangel's Grace, healing his legs and arms swiftly.

"Thanks," Frederik groaned as he turned to lay on his back. Maria frowned deeply, but she didn't respond. Her gaze lingered on Frederik only for a second before she looked at the others, who weren't doing much better than Frederik.

Zeke was bleeding from his eyes most of the time. He collapsed every ten minutes, forcing Maria to tend to him to avoid further complications. Meanwhile, Kaleb and Lincoln clashed. Lincoln was trying to increase his brawn and pain resistance. At the same time, Kaleb unleashed a fury of ice, forcing Lincoln to either withstand the pain of getting hit or destroy the incoming attacks with his Stone Giant Soultrait.

However, the group of four wasn't the only one who trained like crazy. Maria saw Killian earlier as well. He trained using his Inheritance Technique with King of Thunder, his main Soultrait, and the new Soultrait his family had acquired during the first Soultrait Auction, Aquarius.

Killian's mastery of the Zeus family's Legacy Arts and Inheritance Technique was extremely high, but adding another Soultrait, a Soultrait that didn't fit into the techniques' criteria, wasn't easy.

Maria noticed that Killian grappled a lot. It was obvious that Killian was stronger than he used to be, but she had never seen Killian sustain injuries while practicing. Yet, that was exactly what happened every other minute as he exercised mixing his techniques with both Soultraits.

Everyone was fixated on getting stronger. Only Maria mused her next move. She was already the strongest Healer of the Tritan Alliance. Even among other races, Maria was the strongest Healer she knew. What else was there for her to do? She could focus on expanding her territory and growing her army. As long as they grew stronger, Maria would have an easier time accumulating more Soul Power. She could use her Soul Technique more often and experiment a little. But, for now, Maria couldn't do much.

'Why do I feel so useless then? I am a powerful Healer! I can do a lot as well, ' she told herself inwardly, only to recall that her power had been useless several times, times in which she had been in danger.

'I am weak. My Soultrait doesn't protect me. I can only heal and regenerate. I cannot fight. No, I cannot protect myself.'

She wouldn't be so burdened if she were powerful enough to protect herself. However, Maria didn't have another Soultrait to defend herself.

But was it really necessary to have a Soultrait to protect herself? Couldn't she learn how to defend herself without a Soultrait?

'Of course, I can. A defensive Soultrait would be neat, though!'

Chapter 717 Wait for Me!

After Frederik finished his training session – something others started to call a suicidal workout –, he left the other psychos in the arena. Frederik went to his room and considered returning to the Origin Expanse to grow stronger.

"I haven't called Dad for a while," he recalled, opening the holographic screen of his crystal watch.

Frederik called his father.

[Frederik! I didn't expect to hear from you today. Is something wrong?] Igor Kolbenheim asked.

It was rare for his sons to call, especially Frederik, as he was the busiest, keeping up with Michael and the other Awakened working for Michael. Igor Kolbenheim heard about everything Michael had done for his family. He knew that Michael had sent someone from the Seraph family to tend to his wounds and that he had hired someone from the Sun Guild to remove the minor curse from Frederik. Neither was cheap. Most families weren't influential enough to employ a member of the Seraph family. Their service cost was exorbitant. Nobody would pay for the Seraph family's service if they weren't desperate.

But that was exactly what Michael did. Without hesitation, according to the rumors.

"Everything is fine. I noticed that I haven't called you for a while now, and I wanted to check on you. Are my brothers taking care of you, or are they still..." Frederik couldn't even finish his sentence when he heard his father groan.

[Your brothers are...your brothers. You know them as well as I do. They're unique and not fans of taking care of other people. I haven't seen them for a while now. I only know that they're not dead. Other than that...They could be everywhere.]

'I could have expected that.' Frederik murmured in his mind.

"I guess they're fine then. The last time I heard from my brothers, they'd asked me about Michael and demanded that I should get them a bunch of Soultraits. They don't even listen to me when I tell them I'm soulbound never to give anyone the Soultrait Symbols I procure from Michael's territory."

[I spoiled them too much. Well...I spoiled everyone too much. My children, all of them, were pampered too much.]

Frederik smiled wryly but had to acknowledge that his father was right. If he hadn't met Michael only a few months after he manifested his War Rune, he would probably still be a spoiled brat. Michael's beating and mocking had been painful, but they had helped him grow stronger.

[I'm proud of you. You grew up so well. Your mother would have been proud.] Igor Kolbenheim said. His voice cracked mid-sentence, and a somber veil shrouded the father-son duo, [You are the best son I — No we — could have wished for!]

Frederik choked a little bit, and his eyes got watery. A vibrant smile blossomed on his face.

"You are a great father, too," He mumbled before changing the topic.

Frederik chatted with his father for quite a while. They talked a lot about the past until they moved on to recent issues, worries, and incidents. At some point, Igor Kolbenheim mentioned Jacqueline Orlando.

Frederik still had some issues with the Orlando family, but his confidence in their relationship skyrocketed shortly after he joined Michael's territory. With three compatible Soultraits and the means to grow stronger quickly, Frederik felt more comfortable approaching Jacqueline once again.

They couldn't meet up often, but he called Jacqueline more frequently. He was confident that he could get her back.

"I know I'm selfish when I say this...but please wait for me. I will grow stronger, and I will show the whole Tritan Alliance that I'm worthy of you!" — Frederik had declared in one of their last calls.

Jacqueline burst into tears at that time and bawled her eyes out, saying that she would wait as long as it took.

The communicate was cut off after someone entered her room. Frederik couldn't see everything but was pretty sure Jacqueline was under surveillance. She didn't reveal everything she'd gone through since they 'separated'; however, Frederik could tell him the clues she'd given him.

Recalling that scenario, Frederik clenched his fists tightly. The white of his knuckles was visible even after opening his palms. The Runic Gate manifested before him as he willed it to open.

"That's not enough. I need to grow even stronger!!" He declared and stepped into the Runic Gate.

Frederik returned to the Untamed Jungle, where he would continue the suicidal workout he'd stopped earlier. There was no time to waste.

**

Kraft Viton sighed heavily. He leaned over large bundles of paper and could hardly suppress his urge to tear the reports into a thousand pieces. Several holographic screens surrounded him with live updates about the Sacred Desert and the number of Undead forces spreading in all directions.

"Why are these idiots still waiting? What are they waiting for in the first place? They don't think the Undead forces disappear just like that...right?" He cursed High Society for their lack of action.

High Society had always been passive and slow to react, but this was a new low for them. It was almost like they didn't look after about the Sacred Desert.

"Are they giving up on the Sacred Desert? But why? Decades of our effort will go to waste if we lose it now!"

Kraft Viton wasn't that connected to the Sacred Desert. It didn't have any sentimental value. However, mankind generated a good portion of their wealth from the Sacred Desert and the surrounding areas. If they were to lose everything, mankind would suffer a lot. It was only obvious that they gained a fortune

from other regions as well. Many anomalies generated a fortune even though their territories were relatively small. However, the Sacred Desert was unique due to its connection to other high-ranked territories with energy stone deposits and many other resources that were hard to come by elsewhere.

"The other human domains will gain more importance if we lose the Sacred Desert. But that doesn't help the other members of High Society a lot. The Bartholomew Corporation will gain the most."

The majority of the Barren Lands belonged to the Bartholomew Corporation. That didn't mean they'd claimed the Barren Lands. It was more accurate to say that most Lords in the Barren Lands signed Soul Contracts with the Bartholomew Corporation. The reason was simple; The Agriculture Project.

Transforming the wastelands of the Barren Lands into nourishable soil was far from easy, but the Bartholomew Corporation made it possible. They generated enough food for the other Lords in dire need. After all, everyone had to feed their subjects. The better the food, the easier it would be to strengthen their subjects' Links of Loyalty and to strengthen them as well.

The Bartholomew Corporation solved the food shortage, but they were not yet done expanding the Agriculture Project. The Bartholomew Corporation prepared for a large-scale expansion and decided to stock enough food to feed billions of Summnons across the territories.

The biggest problem with the large-scale expansion was that the Bartholomew Corporation desired to expand out of the Sacred Desert. It had the best connections to other highly valuable regions and offered the best conditions for expansion

—that was until the Undead forces appeared.

"Maybe it's time to gather reinforcements on my own."

Chapter 718 Combine

Evalynn Fang was nowhere to be found.

Since that was the case, Michael decided to focus on his territory. He had a lot to take care of even after he distributed the treasures he bought for his subjects.

One of the most interesting objects in his possession was a Basic Summoning Core. 251 Basic Summoning Cores, to be precise.

The Basic Summoning Cores were all Neutral Cores Michael obtained in the Regional War against the council of 106 Lords. Michael got hold of them since the Lords didn't need their Summoning Cores anymore. He used a Soul Tear on the Extraction Soultrait and removed as many impurities from each core as possible.

Purifying the Summoning Cores didn't take too long. Michael was already familiar with the process. However, he wasn't familiar with combining Summoning Cores.

His first attempt at combining Basic Summoning Cores using Insert didn't end that well. Michael didn't know that it was possible to break a Summoning Core this easily, but he made it happen. The first Summoning Core he wanted to transform into an Intermediate Summoning Core cracked and shattered.

After failing once, Michael cursed himself. He got his act together and proceeded with the experiment. Michael was a little bit more careful now. He vigilantly combined the Basic Summoning Cores using Insert. It wasn't easy and required several hours of utmost focus, but it worked.

Michael didn't even realize that he worked through several nights before he produced the first Intermediate Summoning Core via Inset. 20 Basic Summoning Cores transformed into one Intermediate Summoning Core. For most people, that would be a loss. Every Basic Summoning Core was worth a fortune. Sacrificing 20 Basic Summoning Cores to create an Intermediate Summoning Core didn't seem worth it.

But Michael didn't lack money. He missed an Intermediate Summoning Core before, but not anymore. Michael was more familiar with the process after his first experiment succeeded. He spent another week combining the remaining Basic Summoning Cores.

Once he was done, Michael had 12 Intermediate Summoning Cores and 10 Basic Summoning Cores left to use. 19 Summoning Cores were still installed in the Summoning Gate, but he missed the Summoning Essence to upgrade the Basic Summoning Gate to the Intermediate Rank. Otherwise, he would install the Summoning Cores right away.

"It shouldn't be too difficult for Kraft Viton to procure the Essence," Michael stared at the head-sized Intermediate Summoning Cores with a faint smile.

Once the Soultrait Auction was over, Michael could upgrade the Summoning Gate to the Intermediate Rank with 12 Intermediate Summoning Cores and 29 Basic Summoning Cores. From that day onward, both the quality and quantity of his daily summons would increase drastically. Michael looked forward to it.

He slept almost a full day after staying awake for more than ten days and woke up reinvigorated. Michael was ready to get back to work right away. He had countless experiments to initiate and various doubts to be answered.

Therefore, Michael began combining Scroll Fragments to create new Named Scrolls. He desperately needed various specific Named Scrolls to distribute his Summons equally in Arx and Brynud. Organizing everything and ensuring that all processes were optimized was far from easy. Fortunately, Michael had Rebecca Zaubers and many highly intelligent subordinates, who helped him plan everything to expand his territory efficiently. They made a list of Named Scrolls he would need for a highly efficient expansion, leaving Michael only with the task of creating the Named Scrolls.

He combined various Ordinary Scrolls to create 1-Star and 2-Star Named Scrolls before experimenting with inserting Mythic Scrolls. First, Michael inserted Mythic Scrolls into Named Scrolls before he combined Mythic Scrolls with other Mythic Scrolls. He created 3-Star Named Scrolls and was lucky enough to initiate a mutation to create one 4-Star Named Mythic Scroll.

Michael's experiments didn't stop with Summoning Scrolls. He combined Artifacts again, this time with ordinary weapons to find out what would happen to them. He added Extraction into the fray to extract components of Artifacts and insert them into ordinary weapons. Michael's plan was to find out whether he could artificially create Spirit Armor that way, or if inserting components of Artifacts would create another Artifact—just a weaker version of the complete Artifact.

The result was interesting but disappointing as well. Some components of an Artifact could create a different type of Artifact once inserted into another weapon. Other weapons broke apart. They weren't resilient enough to endure the pressure and energies that entered the weapon's essence through Insert.

Most experiments with the Artifacts failed, but Michael learned a lot. He comprehended that Spirit Armaments and Artifacts were very similar, and the biggest difference was that Spirit Armaments didn't

put any pressure on the wielder. Their effects were weaker due to their lack of potency, which was why Summons could use them.

Summons lost something that all Awakened possessed: their War Runes and Soultraits. A War Rune and a Soultrait could act as mediators between Artifacts and the Awakened, decreasing the pressure an Artifact put on the Awakened's soul.

With that in mind, Michael considered the creation of a mediator that Summons could use. It was a new invention, but if he'd managed to create a properly functioning Mediator, he would be able to change....everything. His Summons would be stronger than the enemy soldiers at the same rank and Tier. Michael's Untamed Army would be able to overwhelm everyone.

That was something worth looking forward to, and Michael considered it valuable enough to invest in researching it!

The mediator would probably aid his experiments with Artifacts and monsters as well. Michael's strategy to form an army of monsters equipped with mighty Artifacts was worth investigating, but it was more of a foolish dream than realistic. The Untamed Jungle was overflowing with monsters. Michael liked fighting alongside the Untamed Jungle against the Zentika Empire's forces. The monsters of the Untamed Jungle were powerful, and they granted him a great advantage against the Heart of the Blazing Lion army.

No matter how Michael looked at it, he was drawn to the Untamed Jungle and its inhabitants. He had stopped hunting them mindlessly. His entire focus was on regulating the population in his vicinity and that everyone benefited from each other's existence. Michael was unsure when it started, but a symbiotic relationship had formed between his territory and the Untamed Jungle. He didn't want to give that up either. If anything, Michael wanted to deepen his relationship with the Untamed Jungle. He was certain that it would be worth it.

The symbiotic relationship with the Untamed Jungle also aided Michael's attempts to create new plants and explore mutations of various plants more intently.

The Farmers, Botanica Magician, and others helped him examine the depth of the Untamed Jungle's flora and use Insert on multiple plants to insert the elemental energy within elemental crystals into them.

Michael created multiple new plants for the Farmers and Botanica Magician, creating joy and excitement. Everyone was curious if the new creations would survive or break and succumb.

Michael had a good feeling. He was certain that the Untamed Jungle would protect its newest creations.

It was weird.

Michael felt like he was part of the Untamed Jungle. It was almost like he had always been supposed to be there.

He couldn't imagine how his life would have been if his region hadn't been in the Untamed Jungle.

It was hard to imagine.

Michael didn't want to imagine it. He was happy in the Untamed Jungle.

[Weirdo!]

"Shut up, Danny!"

Chapter 719 Fun Part

?Michael also experimented a lot with the blueprints procured from the Regional War. He hadn't used or sold them until now because it was obvious that he would need them at some point. However, using more than 2.8 million blueprints in experiments was easier said than done.

Michael didn't know how many days he spent using Insert and Extraction to combine fragments and extract certain components of a blueprint in an attempt to create rare, high-quality blueprints. He managed to create Specialized Training Range blueprints, an upgraded version of an Advanced Infirmary, Superior Ranches, Treehouse Apartment Complexes, and the like.

It was very interesting as each completed blueprint advanced the progress within Arx and Brynud. The creation of high-quality blueprints would help simplify the construction of new settlements. The cost

efficiency and time required to construct a proper settlement would decrease drastically. That was even more so after Michael combined more than one million blueprints to form a Basic Settlement Blueprint.

He spend another 500,000 blueprints adjusting the Basic Settlement Blueprint to fit into the Untamed Jungle. Once completed, Michael showed the humongous blueprint to the Architects, who were exhilarated. One of the Master Alchemists gained enlightenment and was promoted following several days of working on the Basic Settlement Blueprint.

Excited and curious about the efficiency of the Basic Settlement Blueprint, the Architects requested to alter Brynud. Michael denied that request because it would affect the livelihood of too many Summons, but he permitted them to work on another settlement. Since most of his Starless Summons had yet to be given a long-term task, Michael thought it might be best to expand his territory. His territory's population could be expanded rapidly now that he had the resources to focus on it.

Brynud was still not completed, but the surplus of workers allowed the creation of a third settlement. The settlement would have various specialized training ranges, another Hunter Academy, and various other places that focused on training, enlightenment, and promotions. It would be a scholarly settlement perfect for everyone who desired to focus on studying, experimenting, and attaining enlightenment to increase their star rating.

Once Michael was done taking care of the experiments he'd postponed way too long already, he wanted to focus on his Soultrait Symbols and the SoulStar Fragments accumulated in his War Rune.

[Finally, we're getting to the fun part!] Danny exclaimed in his mind.

"Fun part? Well...that's not wrong," Michael grinned. It was fun to throw around Soultrait Symbols and upgrade them as he pleased.

He had close to 1,000 stored in the sealed container and still 360,000ish SoulStar Fragments left to use.

"The only issue is that I need to feed you quite a lot of SoulStar Fragments to strengthen your Soul and that I'll have to upgrade Soul Grimoire to 7-Star to ensure that I can contain your Soul once it regains full power," Michael pointed out.

[What?! I'm the issue now? Just ignore the Soul Grimoire for the time being. Didn't you say that you'll beat the shit out of the Tekur soon? If they bring many Elite Tekur to this year's Flag War, you'll get 1000 or more SoulStar Fragments from each corpse, either way. If you extract them alive, you get Soultrait Symbols and even more SoulStar Fragments.]

"That is not wrong either," Michael responded. It would be great if the Tekur would throw 1000 Elite Tekur into the Interdimensional Flag War. That way, he could procure roundabout one million SoulStar Fragments. That was enough to upgrade Soul Grimoire and fill Danny's Soul to the brim.

[See. So upgrade your Soultraits!] Danny declared.

Michael could only nod. He knew upgrading his Soultraits would slow his progress to a Higher Lifeform. However, Michael would also learn a lot more about his Soultraits. Furthermore, every Soultrait with six or more stars would enhance the User's being according to their properties. That would come in handy against the Tekur.

Michael could also do a lot more with stronger Soultraits. For example, by upgrading Insert to 6-Star, Michael would be able to do things he couldn't do beforehand.

[Upgrade Insert to 6-Star and then upgrade a few more Soultraits, please! Insert is good, but let's be honest. Upgrading it to 7-Star right now isn't worth it. Your other Soultraits need some attention as well, especially Reinforced Sword Qi...I think.]

"Reinforced Sword Qi doesn't fit me. It's your Soultrait. I want you to take it back once your vessel is ready for you. I can upgrade Reinforced Sword Qi to 6-Star, but the Soultrait isn't compatible with me. It's yours," Michael declared.

[Mine? Well, I always loved Reinforced Sword Qi. I can show you some tricks if you want. Even if you're incompatible with it, your Qi Extraction Sword and the like will be much stronger once you upgrade Reinforced Sword Qi. If you want to give it back to me...give it to me once it is a 6-Star or 7-Star Soultrait!]

Michael frowned deeply but he smiled as he blurted out, "Greedy bastard."

[So what? I'm a soul stuck in your Soul Grimoire. Let me have some fun!]

"Sorry about that," Michael pressed his lips together, but he couldn't contain his facial features. He smiled lightly. It was nice to have Danny so close to him after losing him. His brother was also not serious about being 'angry' about being confined by the Soul Grimoire. He was comfortable being with Michael—as comfortable as a Living Soul could be.

"Okay. Upgrading Insert and Reinforced Sword Qi it is then," Michael concluded, "Enhancement deserves another upgrade as well. Taming, probably, as well. Taming combined with Tatjana's Eye of Evolution will be a horrifyingly powerful long-

term combo."

[What about Cosmic Stride and 4-Star Sphere of Elements? The only Soultraits you don't have to upgrade or can't upgrade right now are Soul Grimoire, Extraction, and Spirit Eyes. Even upgrading Superior Constitution to 7-Star is worth it. In fact, Superior Constitution at 7-Star should help you refine your War Rune faster. The barrier obstructing every Awakened from ascending to a Higher Lifeform won't be that troublesome for you either with 7-Star Superior Constitution.]

"Brother...I don't have that many SoulStar Fragments. I can either upgrade one Soultrait to 7-Star or most of my other Soultraits to 6-Star," Michael rolled his eyes slightly annoyed, but his brother was too excited.

[Demand more criminals from the Valyrs then. They can throw hundreds of Higher Lifeforms at you. Then, you can upgrade all Soultraits without having to worry about your expenses!]

"The contract says that they have to hand me only a handful of Higher Lifeforms every month. Silver Teleportation Tokens are wasted on criminals under normal circumstances. The Valyrs wouldn't give me more criminals without demanding more in return as well," Michael said, but Danny didn't accept his reasoning.

[Just give them a bunch of Soultraits in exchange. Your 900ish Soultraits are collecting dust, either way.]

"They'll find out about my powers then," Michael reasoned, only to realize how stupid that sounded.

[They understand about you, either way. Just give up trying to hide your power from other races. Throw Soultrait Symbols and Soultrait Upgrades at everyone who benefits you. That will draw them closer!]

"Okay, okay," Michael said lightly before deciding that it might be best to prepare a few documents for the Valyrs, the Tritan Alliance, and the Forest Elves. Maybe it was actually better to openly distribute Soultrait Symbols and Soultrait Upgrades in exchange for criminals. It was morally wrong, but as long as the criminals were not wrongfully incriminated and their crimes were bad enough, Michael didn't see anything wrong with trading them for Soultraits and Soultrait Upgrades.

[I think I'm a bad influence. You would never have listened to me in the past.] Danny noted when he saw the first drafts of the documents Michael had prepared quickly.

Michael forced to smile, "You don't realize how much I've changed."

His voice sounded somber and silence reigned supreme in Michael's head for a few seconds. Danny took a while before he spoke again.

[Maybe I don't. Maybe I can only view my little brother when I speak to you. I might not have realized that you are an adult already...and that you have to bear a much heavier responsibility than I ever could.]

Michael felt a clot in his throat as he listened to his brother.

[But you're doing an excellent job. I understand that you can do it. I'm proud of you!]

Chapter 720 Upgrades

All drafts were sent to Rebecca, who read through them with her friend. They weren't sure what to think about Michael's plan but understood it could work. It was likely to work pretty well. The only issue was that some powerhouses might think Michael's Soultraits should belong to them.

There were many selfish powerhouses in every race, and it was unlikely that Michael would not encounter them, especially now that he had planned to create a new system to distribute Soultrait Symbols.

Of course, Michael would implement the system only after the Soultrait Auction ended. He would wait another month or two before sharing the Soultrait Symbols with everyone in exchange for a 'fair' price.

Once the drafts were taken care of, Michael proceeded to upgrade his oldest Soultraits to 6-Star. He spent 32,000 SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Enhancement to 6-Star. Upgrading Enhancement to 6-Star slightly altered his body, mind, and soul. His physique grew stronger while his mind and soul refined rapidly.

The slight enhancement attained by upgrading Enhancement to 6-Star was a great bonus, but it was not the main course. The main attraction of 6-Star Enhancement was the Soultrait's new function. Every layer of Enhancement reinforced the target by 50%, just like before. However, the Enhancement Layer could be customized. He could apply Enhancement to upgrade specific properties of the target instead of enhancing everything equally. Therefore, Enhancement's full potential was concentrated in a particular point. Consequently, it would Enhance the specific property by more than 50%

"That is perfect for Extract and Insert. It can be useful for all Soultraits and whenever I want to upgrade specific body parts. Amazon!" Michael exclaimed once he finished experimenting with 6-Star Enhancement.

[Enhancement is very powerful. It's an overpowered Soultrait, but only if you have enough Soultraits or other means to apply Enhancement properly. Others wouldn't be able to unleash Enhancement's power like you can.]

Michael smiled, glad to have upgraded Enhancement. However, he was not yet done upgrading his Soultraits. Taming was next.

Since Taming was a Soultrait Symbol locked into the Middle Area of the Soul Sphere, Michael had to invest almost 80% more to upgrade it to 6-Star than he would have to invest to upgrade Insert. The price was steep, but Michael had enough SoulStar Fragments. He fetched 43,500 SoulStar Fragments from his stockpile to upgrade Taming to 6-Star.

Taming's Upgrade was surprising, yet not. Michael had expected a similar upgrade whenever he thought about the changes Taming would undergo as its star rating increased. The Soultrait's Taming Circle grew stronger. It was more potent now and, therefore, much easier to tame monsters. Taming's capacity

expanded drastically as well. Michael could tell he could bind many more companions to him now that Taming reached 6-Star.

He even felt that Taming was potent enough to bind a Mythical Creature. He'd expected that to happen much later, but it was a good thing.

However, the most important change about Taming was that he could finally store his companions. Michael called the Elemental Empress to test out the storing function. It was much easier than he'd expected.

Michael had to access Taming's storage function with his will and touch the Elemental Empress. The Elemental Empress would be sucked inside his body, and an image of her would be etched on Michael's body. It was similar to the World Serpent's Seal, but it was smaller and much easier to access.

The Elemental Empress formed a huge image of her on his left arm. It was a sizeable azure-colored tattoo that formed on his arm. It fits perfectly with Michael's appearance. He had a few Seals and Stigma on his body. A few more wouldn't change a lot.

[You look like a gangster!] Danny exclaimed in his mind, only for the Elemental Empress to agree wholeheartedly.

As long as his companions were stored inside him, they could also access his senses. The Elemental Empress could converse in his mind...and talk to Danny.

"This is not weird at all. Danny, the World Serpent, Zeroa, and Sun Demos can chat in my head...That is not weird. Nope. Never."

[Don't be a crybaby. You can bring your companions out of the Origin Expanse now. If you use that well, you can turn entire planets into the home of Elementals or a breeding ground for your companions...though I'm not sure if I should recommend that.]

"If you don't recommend that to me, why do you even point that out?!" Michael cursed quietly as he imagined a whole planet for Zeroa.

[Yaaaa. I want!!] The Elemental Empress screamed in his mind in her broken universal tongue. Zeroa diligently studied the universal language, but it was much harder than expected. She couldn't pronounce most words even though she knew how they were written and what they were supposed to sound like.

"Maybe we can get you a planet outside the Origin Expanse in the future. For now, however, your underground empire is enough. Didn't you say you have more than enough space for several years?"

[Future! I want!]

Michael was unsure if Zeroa was throwing a tantrum, but he heard Danny laughing in the back of his mind. They were way too annoying. Unfortunately, he liked Zeroa and Danny too much to hold a grudge.

Evolving the Elemental Empress was possible, according to Tatjana's research. Tatjana noticed that Zeroa had some hidden evolution paths, but she has had difficulties discerning them yet. The young Forest Elf would have to grow stronger and get closer to the Elemental Empress to unravel the hidden Evolution Paths. She couldn't do that outside the Origin Expanse. Therefore, it was of utmost importance that Zeroa stayed with Tatjana for the time being.

Michael once again removed the Elemental Empress from Taming's storage. Zeroa complained, but Michael shooed her away. It was time to upgrade the Reinforced Sword Qi.

It was more expensive than Michael had expected. Even though Reinforced Sword Qi was locked in the Inner Area of the Soul Sphere, upgrading it to 6-Star cost around 50,000 SoulStar Fragments. That was even more expensive than a 6-Star upgrade in the Middle Area.

Fortunately, Michael's confusion and doubts were replaced quickly as he noticed that Reinforced Sword Qi evolved into Qi. Just Qi. That was all left from Reinforced Sword Qi after he upgraded it to 6-Star.

Both Michael and Danny were surprised. They didn't expect the Soultrait to change like this. But both were happy. Qi was much stronger than Reinforced Sword Qi and far more versatile.

[Fascinating! Can I use Qi to test a few things?] Danny requested, and Michael complied. He never had a deep connection to Reinforced Sword Qi, and even Qi didn't seem to suit him very well.

Michael was sure he could easily remove Qi from the Soul Sphere once Danny obtained a suitable vessel. That was how low his compatibility with Qi was.

Michael gave Danny complete control of Qi. His brother could experiment with Qi as much as he wanted, as it was his Soultrait.

Instead of paying much attention to Qi, Michael immediately switched to upgrade Insert. He invested 27,000 SoulStar Fragments to upgrade Insert to 6-Star, yet he couldn't sense any significant changes after the upgrade was completed. Fortunately, experiments with Insert showed that the Soultrait was much better than expected.

Insert's potency and control improved by leaps and bounds. Michael obtained more power to decide what kind of combination of objects he could create. It was not perfect, but it was a lot better than the haphazard combinations Michael made by mixing Extraction and Insert.

It was a major change!

Michael felt like switching to experimenting with Insert again, but he wasn't done upgrading his Soultraits yet. He didn't even use half of the SoulStar Fragments in his stockpile.

He still had 210,000 SoulStar Fragments left to advance his other Soultraits.

But He was unsure what to upgrade first. He had many options, but he lacked the resources to upgrade everything simultaneously. That was a boon and a plague at the same time.

It was a bittersweet curse, just like the World Serpent and the Curse hibernating in the depths of his body.