

Bloodline 331

Chapter 331 Remove the artifact

The human girl and two elves stared at Kyle in shock. They had been fighting the frogs for hours, but Kyle had effortlessly defeated so many in just a minute. They gasped and looked at him with awe.

Sinon opened one of his eyes as he felt the temperature dropping with each passing second. He glanced at Kyle and clicked his tongue.

"Show off."

Kyle's ears twitched when he heard Sinon's remarks. He dusted his shirt softly and raised a brow with an expression that seemed to say, 'So what?'

Sinon laughed but was too tired to continue talking. He decided to rest on a branch for a while.

With a hum, Kyle looked at the ice, which transformed into bright particles and floated in the air, further astonishing the trio.

As the ice vanished, two round orbs dropped to the ground.

-'Oh... skill cores.'

Bia's voice was flat because being with Kyle had made her a bit numb to these types of things.

Kyle examined the cores. One was larger, almost the size of his palm, while the other was relatively small.

At first, he ignored them, thinking about the frogs' ugly appearance. But suddenly, an old memory flashed in his mind.

In that memory, he and Nine found a small core after defeating a tiny goblin. At that moment, his thoughts were, It's a Goblin core, what skill can such a small goblin, not even (F)-Rank, possess?

That's why he tossed the core to Nine, only to later discover that the small goblin core actually had a very useful skill.

That's why Kyle immediately changed his mind and grabbed the cores.

Sinon, who was just about to jump towards the cores, thinking that Kyle didn't need them, stopped in his tracks. He sighed with regret and leaned back against the tree branch.

'I need to increase my speed.'

Bia was surprised. She gazed at the two cores in Kyle's hand as he peeked inside.

Kyle's face lit up, and he threw the bigger core at Sinon, who caught it with surprise.

"Why are you giving me the bigger one? I thought the bigger the core, the stronger the skill. Or is my knowledge wrong?"

A doubtful expression appeared on Sinon's face as he stared at Kyle. The trio sitting on the trees sighed because they knew they would get nothing.

Kyle let out a chuckle and waved his hand.

"It's because the small one is useful to me, the other one is not."

With an 'Oh', Sinon spread his wings and approached Kyle.

"Is it a unique skill?"

He waited with anticipation. Low-rank skills weren't useful when fighting high-rank monsters, so he was sure Kyle had found a unique low-rank skill, like breathing underwater or having clear vision underwater. But Kyle's next words left him speechless.

"It's an (F)-Rank water skill called 'Aqua ball'."

Sinon's expression was screaming, If it's just a normal water skill, why the hell are you smirking? Yet, he composed his expression and gave a pat on Kyle's shoulder.

"Indeed, it's a... very good skill."

Kyle's eyes sparkled as he nodded in response.

"Of course. It is! I have been searching for a water-type skill for ages!"

Sinon gazed at him with a blank expression, thinking that maybe low-rank water-type skills were really strong. However, he then thought about his skills. He had five low-rank water-type skills, but they were never useful in actual combat.

'Wait, maybe I used them incorrectly?'

He was doubting his skills, unaware that for Kyle, the water-type skill was only useful for a quick bath or cleaning his hands.

Suddenly, Haylee's voice echoed inside Kyle's head, and he hurriedly said goodbye to Sinon. Unfortunately, before the winged demi-human could properly reply, he vanished.

Sinon gazed at the space in front of him with a blank expression. He retracted his hand that was ready to flick one last pat on Kyle's shoulder as a goodbye.

'Next time, for now, I think I should go practice my water-type skills.'

Bia cursed under her breath. Her wings fluttered as she dived in the direction where she sensed Kyle's presence.

On the other hand, Kyle stopped in front of the winged boar, who stared at him with an ugly expression. The boar's white fur was covered in dirt, mud, and all sorts of filth.

Kyle's body was floating as he circled Haylee with an innocent expression.

"What happened?"

Haylee felt like crying. He just got beaten up by Ris because he stopped the latter, who was hell-bent on breaking one of Kyle's legs.

'He's not even thankful! I should have just let Ris smack him once or twice!'

Haylee glared at Kyle but almost coughed out blood when he saw a faint, barely visible smile at the corner of his lips.

The boar's eyes narrowed dangerously as he raised his paw to wipe that smile off, but before he could, Bia appeared and asked him the same question.

- 'What happened to you?'

The boar's eyelid twitched because, just like Kyle, the corner of Bia's eyes trickled upward with mirth.

He retracted his paw, unwilling to speak further with the infuriating duo.

"Just tell me what you want to ask. I have more things to do."

'Or more specifically, I have to go check on the lizard that I tossed inside a pit.'

Kyle's expression hardened when he heard the boar's words. The previous mischievousness evaporated from his eyes. His feet touched the ground, and he grabbed his chest.

Haylee was surprised when the human stared at him with a deadly serious expression.

"Can you... sense something dangerous inside my body?"

"Huh?"

Haylee blinked, but when the meaning behind Kyle's words dawned on him, he knitted his brows.

"Something dangerous?"

Kyle nodded and waited for his answer, but after a few seconds, Haylee gazed at him with a speechless expression.

"First, remove the presence concealing artifact you're wearing. I can't sense anything because of it."

Kyle's eyes narrowed.

'Bia, are you sure he can help? He can't even go past the artifact...'

Bia rolled her eyes.

- 'Just remove the artifact. It's not a big deal.'

'Jeez, alright.'

Chapter 332 It's eating his soul

? Kyle unclasped the white earring from his ear and stared at Haylee.

"Now?"

The boar immediately sensed Kyle's rank and gasped with surprise.

"Wait, why are you still (S-) Rank!? I believe you found a lot of treasures in the past two months!"

Kyle let out a sigh and eyed the clear, bright sky.

"I am just a tiny bit away from the next rank."

Bia let out a chuckle. Indeed, it was strange. Even she broke through to the next rank a week ago.

- 'Just tell him you're stronger than your rank.'

Kyle gazed at his stats, and his face fell.

Stats:

Name: Kyle

Bloodline: Celestial

Rank: S-

Strength: S+

Mana: SS

Agility: S+

Talent: SSS+ Rank

Luck: A

Skills;

.....

'All my main stats are already so high! Why the hell can't I break through? It's like there's a thin wall blocking my path.'

He shook his head with a serious and determined expression.

'It's okay, I have a feeling that just one more step and I'll break through!'

Kyle stared at Haylee with a deep expression.

"Just tell me, can you sense anything dangerous inside my body or not?"

With a nod, Haylee dispatched his mana inside Kyle's body. He couldn't peek inside because he wasn't strong enough, but he could probably sense it if he used his mana.

Kyle's brows knitted together when a probing sensation appeared inside his body, but he relaxed and let the sensation roam.

After two long minutes, an astonished expression appeared on Haylee's face.

"Why do you have so much mana in your body? Also, there's something cold and very powerful flowing inside your body."

Kyle gave him a nod. He already knew this much from the moths.

"What about the thing I asked? Can you sense any dangerous object or not?"

Haylee paused, a thoughtful expression apparent on his face.

"I can't sense anything dangerous, but there's a strong force inside you. It completely destroyed my mana when I got close."

While they were talking, Ris stomped towards them from behind. He grumbled and cursed under his breath.

"You sneaky boar! When did you learn to cheat? I just slept for a while and the whole world changed!"

He paused when he saw Kyle. Instantly, his eyes narrowed at the earring in Kyle's hand.

"Oh... what's this little thing doing here."

Haylee wanted to stop him, but in a flash, he appeared beside Kyle and sniffed the earring.

"It's the same. I remember, it's a defective artifact."

Kyle stepped back and a puzzled expression appeared on his face.

"Huh?"

Ris was furious with the human, but after faintly hearing Kyle and Haylee's interesting conversation, he pushed aside his thoughts of revenge.

"Don't you know? Odiak actually tried to create a huge storage space that could completely conceal everything inside, just like the mind space. But he failed halfway, and even though the earring has the concealing effect, it doesn't have a storage space. Tsk tsk, he failed so many times I can't even count."

Kyle's eyes widened, not because of the information, but because of the mention of the 'mind space'.

"This lizard knows about the mind space!?"

Haylee raised his paw and smacked Ris's head.

"Show some respect! Odiak is your master!"

The chameleon hissed and glared at him.

"So what? That old dwarf left me behind, saying it's dangerous and all that! Besides, he can't even hear, so who cares if I badmouth him?"

Haylee groaned and closed his mouth. He understood how Ris felt because he had felt the same in the past.

Ris clicked his tongue and turned his head towards Kyle, his eyes filled with curiosity.

"I can feel a tremendous power flowing within you, even stronger than that dwarf. How did you acquire it?"

Kyle raised his hand to stop him.

"Wait, can you sense anything else, like something dangerous inside me?"

Ris paused and his eyes flashed with a bright light. After a few seconds, his eyes widened.

He opened and closed his mouth repeatedly.

Both Kyle and Haylee tensed, waiting for him to speak, alarmed by his ugly and angry expression.

Ris took a deep breath, then angrily slammed his tail on the ground.

"Who in the world put that disgusting thing inside your body!?"

Kyle clenched his jaw, and a look of astonishment spread across Haylee's face. The boar always knew Ris was stronger than him, but he couldn't believe that Ris could sense what he couldn't.

Kyle looked around and settled on a nearby boulder. Bia landed on his shoulder. The duo, along with Haylee, patiently waited for Ris to calm down. For some reason, the chameleon's expression was filled with both anger and disgust.

After two long minutes, Ris locked eyes with Kyle. His gaze held a sense of pity, an emotion that Kyle rarely witnessed before.

Taking a deep breath, Kyle braced himself, his face devoid of any emotion.

"Just tell me what it is."

Ris turned his attention to Haylee and settled himself opposite Kyle.

"Just as you suspected, it's an object... more specifically, it's an artifact. I'm not certain about its rank as it is currently dormant."

He paused for a moment.

"I haven't sensed something so repulsive in my entire life. There's an eerie, yet strangely divine, glow surrounding the artifact. It's likely feeding on you. Even when I was with Odiak, stumbling upon something like this was extremely rare."

Kyle's expressionless face crumbled, and he paled as an ominous feeling surged inside his heart. Haylee let out a sharp breath.

"Is it harming the kid's body?"

Ris shook his head.

"You know, Haylee, it's rare for me to express pity for someone. If only the artifact was harming his body, it would have been great, but it's not."

"It's eating his soul."

Haylee's eyes widened, and he subconsciously gazed at Kyle, who paled even more.

However, Ris spoke again, and this time his voice was even more solemn.

"As I said, it's dormant. So, I believe it has already eaten its fill. Kid, didn't you feel extreme pain when a part of your soul was torn?"

After a long silence, Kyle's eyes traveled to Ris. Indeed, when he was in the tower, a sudden pain wrecked his body, making his mind go blank. But at that time, he thought it was because of his bloodline. But now, he realized how wrong he was.

"Is it possible to remove it?"

Ris shook his head again.

"It's deep inside your heart and if someone forcefully tried to remove it. You won't stay alive."

Haylee stared at him, and Ris let out a tired sigh.

"There is a way, the person who put it in your body can remove it. But I don't think you know who did it."

Chapter 333 A blank fate

?After a long silence, Kyle massaged his temples. He wanted to curse, but the problem was, who should he curse? After all, he didn't even know who put the artifact in his body.

Bia sensed his discomfort, so she gently nuzzled her head into his neck.

Haylee observed the pair and then turned to Ris. His voice echoed within the chameleon's head.

'Is there any other way? I don't want the kid to die.'

Ris looked towards the boar.

'Have you become attached to him?'

Haylee paused, unsure of how to respond. Without even realizing it, spending time with Kyle had caused him to develop a subconscious care for him.

Ris closed his eyes.

'I am not certain if there is another way. However, you know my mind has problems. How about seeking advice from the realm guardian? He is a divine rank individual, and he might have better insight.'

Haylee nodded and looked over at Kyle. Without hesitation, he asked if Kyle would like to seek the guardian.

Kyle agreed immediately. After all, anything was better than nothing. He stood up and turned to face Ris.

"Thank you... And do you have any idea when the dormant artifact will activate again?"

He paused for a moment.

"Also, could you give me more details about the mind space?"

Ris blinked in surprise. It was fine for the human to ask about the artifact but he wondered why Kyle was asking about the mind space. How did he pick up on those specific words from the previous sentence?

He examined Kyle from head to toe.

"You're familiar with the concept of mind space?"

Haylee furrowed his brows.

"It's a separate space that opens up when someone reaches the divine rank. I know about it because master opened his mind space before leaving."

He turned toward Kyle.

"You know about it?"

"Just a little..."

Two pairs of eyes stared at him, eagerly awaiting an explanation.

Kyle raised his hand in surrender.

"Alright, I know about it because I have got one."

"Huh!?"

Ris's eyes widened, looking at Kyle as if he were some kind of freak. Haylee's expression mirrored the same astonishment.

The chameleon's body flickered around him.

"Wait, wait, wait! You have a mind space? Are you kidding me, kiddo? You haven't even reached the (SS)-Rank!"

The two beasts were stunned by this revelation, but after a few moments, they regained their composure. Suddenly, Ris's tail grabbed Haylee's paw, and he stared at him with deadly seriousness.

"Go, go to the guardian! Hurry up, don't waste any time!"

Kyle let out a sigh and pushed the matter of the mind space to the back of his mind. Regardless, he already knew almost everything about it anyway.

Before Kyle left, Ris gave his body one last examination with narrow eyes.

"The artifact is dormant right now. So, I think it'll wake up in a year or two. Or maybe three. I am not too sure about the exact time, but it's a soul-consuming artifact. So, I believe it's gonna consume your soul until it's fully brimming with energy."

Kyle thanked him one last time and left with Bia and Haylee. After the trio had gone, the chameleon crystal body flashed with countless sparks. Its large blue, beady eyes turned faintly red, and it hurriedly rubbed them with a pained groan. A drop of blood trickled down from its left eye, and it quickly closed it to avoid further damage.

"Tsk, I really hate using the fate skill... If I hadn't seen talent in him, I would have never used it. But it's strange that the kid has no future, no past... It's completely blank. Why is he even here in the first place? Even though my head is all jumbled up, just after using the skill for a few seconds I sensed that he shouldn't have been part of the people who entered this realm."

"Clearly, he should have died because of the artifact before even turning eighteen... Or maybe I saw it wrong? Hmm, whatever, it's too complicated to figure out. Also, it's not like my skill is a hundred percent accurate. Ah... even in the past, it's always been 50% inaccurate. I probably sense it wrong."

The chameleon mumbled under its breath and, after resting for a while, went in another direction to observe someone else.

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After traveling for two days straight, Kyle, Bia, and Haylee arrived in an area that was completely wrecked.

The trio peeked from behind a large leaf held in Kyle's hand. The air around them was filled with violent mana. The land was barren, devoid of any greenery. Additionally, a faint dark energy permeated the air.

Kyle narrowed his eyes and sniffed the air after activating the scent perception skill.

"What's happening"

Haylee blinked and narrowed his eyes at him.

"Why are you sniffing the air? Ah... don't tell me you learned the bad habit from Ris."

Kyle hurriedly pinched his nose when a foul smell entered his nostrils.

"It doesn't smell good. I think someone's fighting in the distance. Is it even safe..?"

Haylee's eyes showed surprise. He cleared his throat, clearly reluctant to show that he couldn't sense anything.

"The last time I saw the guardian, he was fighting with Guil, so it's safe. The guardian is strong enough to restrain him!"

Kyle let out an 'Oh' and pointed towards the distance with the huge leaf they had grabbed along the way.

"Let's go then. We need to find the guardian!"

With a nod, the duo started moving forward. Bia circled above their heads, trying to see as far as she could. However, her sight was limited by the massive dust clouds billowing towards the sky.

After a few minutes, a powerful tremor shook the land, causing the ground to quake beneath their feet. A flash of dark electricity appeared in the sky.

Kyle narrowed his eyes and observed the electricity. Haylee spread out his wings to inspect it as well, but at that exact moment, the duo spotted a faint dark dot hurtling towards them with lightning-fast speed.

They watched as the dot grew larger within a second. Their trance was broken when Bia let out a loud cry.

"Oh, shit!"

They cursed together, and Haylee quickly leaped in another direction. He glanced back, momentarily forgetting that Kyle was weaker, but before he could worry about him, a body landed with a resounding thud in front of him.

Haylee coughed as another cloud of dust billowed into the air.

Suddenly, a relieved sigh sounded from behind him, nearly causing his heart to jump out of his chest.

The boar turned around to see Kyle wiping his forehead.

"That was a close one."

The faint, illusionary old man appeared in the air, but instead of focusing on the massive pit, he stared at the human and the boar with a speechless expression.

"Why the hell are you two crawling around in such a dangerous place?"

Chapter 334 It could be fatal

Haylee's face stiffened, and Kyle obediently went behind him, clearly shifting the blame to the boar. Just like Kyle, Bia hurriedly hid her presence behind the boar's huge body.

The duo fell silent as if they didn't exist at all.

Haylee's eyelid twitched as he stared at the guardian with a blank expression. The illusionary old man stared back at him with narrowed eyes.

"Why are you here again?"

The boar let out a deep sigh.

"There's something we want to discuss."

The illusionary figure replied with an 'Oh'. His eyes traveled to Kyle, and a hint of curiosity flashed in his eyes. Instantly, he waved his hand, gesturing for the trio to follow him.

However, before they could leave, a hoarse voice echoed from the pit. Guil crawled out, laughing like a maniac.

"Hahaha, you can't kill me! I'll tear apart all the outsiders!"

The illusionary old man gazed at the dark bloodied figure and waved his hand. In the next second, a few chairs and a table materialized in the air as he gazed at the boar and human.

"Let's talk here. I need to keep an eye on someone."

Haylee nodded, but before he could move, Kyle's figure flashed and he sat down opposite the old man. Bia followed suit.

The boar's eyes flickered as he shrank in size and sat down on the table.

The old man stared at Kyle with a profound expression. After a few moments, Kyle felt a familiar probing sensation within him. A strange feeling stirred in his chest, but he remained calm and allowed the old man to examine him.

The man let out a thoughtful hum.

"I think I know why you're here kid."

He tapped the table and pointed his finger at Kyle's chest.

"Tell me, how did you find out? Haylee isn't strong enough to sense it."

Kyle gazed at the finger with a solemn expression. He could tell that the old man opposite him was powerful, even though it was just a fragment of the latter consciousness.

'He can sense everything even though I'm wearing the earring. So, does that mean the earring can't hide my presence from people above (SSS+)-Rank?'

Kyle stroked Bia's feathers and locked eyes with the old man.

"The chameleon told me."

The old man looked at the faint particles floating away from his body.

"Oh, Ris woke up? I thought with his messed up memory, he wouldn't."

Kyle placed his hands on the table, ready to speak, but the old man raised his hand to stop him.

"Kid, you've got potential. I can see it. But I believe Ris already told you that if he or anyone else forcefully tries to remove the artifact from your body, it could be fatal."

"That lizard's memory is a bit jumbled, but if there was another way, he would have mentioned it right away."

Kyle's brow furrowed, and his voice trembled slightly.

"So, there's no other way?"

The old man paused for a moment.

"It's a divine rank artifact, so I don't think there's much you can do except find the person who put it in your body. When you and the other kids entered the realm, I sensed four divine artifacts."

He sucked in a deep breath.

"It's almost unbelievable to think I sensed so many, which is why I had to double-check."

"One of them is with that kid Alec, right?"

He glanced at Haylee, who nodded in agreement. The boar's eyes widened in shock upon hearing the number.

Kyle blinked, his face paling instantly.

"Four? Does that mean the other three people are in danger too?"

The old man smiled.

"Don't worry about the others."

He looked down at Guil, who was attempting to fly once more. The old man flicked his hand, and a beam shot out from his finger, pushing the dark man back into the pit.

"Unlike you, their artifacts were created to guide, not harm. Although, there was this one peculiar artifact I saw with a kid your age. I wonder how he got it. That artifact seemed to make its owner miserable in order to gain more strength."

Kyle listened intently. Suddenly, Bia spoke in his mind.

- 'Alec has something called a system, right? Don't tell me the system is an artifact?'

The old man moved his eyes toward Bia, intrigued.

"So, you already know about it?"

Bia's eyes widened.

- 'OMG! He can hear me!'

The old man chuckled and shook his head, his eyes filled with amusement as he looked at Kyle.

"You know, Alec? I can't predict the future, but I can tell that you possess a powerful bloodline. I don't know its true strength, but it surpasses even that of the divine."

He was certain that if his real body were here, or if any other divine being could probe Kyle's body, they would be tempted to dissect him to see how the kid possessed something so powerful.

"Maybe that's why your fate is entangled with him? I wonder if you also know the other two."

Kyle's expression was gloomy, but he'd be lying if he said he wasn't interested in finding out the names of the other two individuals who possess the divine artifacts. He tentatively let out a sigh.

"Who are they? Maybe I know them."

The old man's eyes crinkled with amusement, but then his expression turned serious.

"Go, don't waste your time, become strong. The more, the better. The artifact in your body is dormant right now because it consumed too much energy. As a mortal, I don't think your soul is strong enough to feed so much energy to the artifact. Maybe it's because of your bloodline? Regardless, I don't think it would wake up soon."

'Except if the owner called it back.

He stood up from the chair and gazed into the distance.

"Haylee would have already told you that the planet is hidden. Let me increase your knowledge. After the secret realm was opened, I sensed a foreign presence outside, somewhere near the planet's core."

"The shield hiding the planet is sustained by the energy from the planet's core, but it's getting weaker. That means the foreign individual is harming the planet's core."

The man gazed at Kyle with a deep expression.

"I don't know if James, Odiak, and my original body are alive, but I can tell you that the planet is still in danger. So, if you're able to stay alive, help Alec."

Chapter 335 Another goal

?Kyle's face was expressionless as he floated away from the old man. He caressed Bia's feathers and let out a faint chuckle.

"In the end, he didn't tell me how to remove this thing from my body? And he subtly implied that I might die."

Haylee flew beside him with a deep expression.

"He asked you to get stronger... maybe you can remove it once you become stronger?"

Kyle eyed the clear sky. He raised his hand, and wisps of blue flames traveled on his palm.

"No, he asked me to get strong so I can help Alec when he's fighting the foreign individual harming the planet's core. He didn't give me a clear answer if I would survive or not."

Haylee decreased his size into a fur ball and landed on his shoulder.

"Why are you speaking as if you've lost hope? There are so many people in this world who may be facing something worse. Instead of being down, how about looking at the positive side? You still have time to find a way to save yourself."

The boar's eyes flashed with countless emotions as he gazed at the kid. He wished he could do something for him, but he knew he couldn't. Not to mention the fact that he was trying to lift the kid's spirit with just empty words when he could also sense from the guardian's words that Kyle's survival would be hard.

Bia, who had been quietly sitting on Kyle's other shoulder, raised her head. For some reason, she wasn't sensing any strong emotion from him. She thought he might feel worse, but he was actually quite calm.

-Hey, with your intense luck, I don't think the artifact can do anything to you. So, don't worry, okay? I'll let you ride me if you want!"

Kyle's lips curled into a smile. However, amidst all this, he noticed something strange about himself.

"This feeling... it's very similar to the one I felt a few years ago. Strangely enough, something inside me is screaming that there's no need to do anything. Just lay low and live your life... But why?"

"Bia, do you know why I wanted to become stronger? The reason isn't a big one. Just like any other person, I wanted to protect my family and friends. However, I got everything too easily. Maybe that's why I don't have a long life."

- 'Kyle!!'

Bia screamed in his head. Clearly angry at his words.

"But you know what? I hate the fact that I'm not dying because of myself, but because of someone else. So..."

He cracked his knuckles.

"I don't think I will find peace until I kill that bastard who placed this artifact in my body."

Haylee closed his eyes and let out a sigh.

"I told you not to lose hope."

Kyle shook his head.

"No, I'm not losing hope. I never will. I know I did in the past. But now that I think about it, I don't even know the reason. Was it because of Sen? Or because my talent was low?"

Haylee couldn't make sense of a lot of things, but just like Bia, he listened to Kyle quietly.

"At first, after finding out about my bloodline, I wanted to unlock it because I was excited. Then, I aimed to reach a rank higher than (SSS+)-Rank because my knowledge increased."

"Now I am adding another goal to my list. I am going to get strong. So strong that the artifact can't harm me. And the person who put it in my body will regret ever doing it."

- 'Sigh, you gave me a panic for a second, but if you are getting strong, I am also gonna put in extra effort! Let's become strong together!'

Bia unfurled her wings and circled him with resolute eyes.

Suddenly, the air around Kyle stirred violently. The boar hurriedly left his shoulder, and Bia retracted in another direction.

Haylee's eyebrow twitched as he watched the cold aura surging around Kyle.

"He just said he is gonna get stronger and he's already breaking through to the next rank?"

The duo watched for a minute until the cold aura around Kyle dispersed in different directions. With a faint smile, Kyle pointed his finger towards a nearby floating island.

"Let's go, we don't have time!"

Haylee sighed but still followed behind him. Bia and Kyle managed to clear two treasure islands in just three days, all with the goal of getting stronger.

Bia felt proud because Kyle didn't take any breaks. He even trained his body reaction speed and sword art.

-Is this how a parent feels when their laziest child starts walking the right path?'

However, both Bia and Haylee were rendered speechless on the fourth day.

While running toward the next treasure island, Kyle spotted a familiar scent. He paused and immediately changed direction.

Bia and Haylee followed behind him, thinking maybe he found a strong treasure nearby. However, when they caught up to Kyle, they saw he was talking to a familiar girl.

Kyle stood above a boulder and gazed down at the pair of amber eyes staring at him. He couldn't help but be surprised because Yue had gotten strong once again.

His eyes traveled behind her, where a fire was lit.

"Ah... I don't want to disturb you, but when I saw you, I remembered you wanted to say something last time?"

Yue blinked and let out a faint smile.

"You found the cure. I just wanted to say, be safe."

"Oh, okay."

She pointed back at the fire.

"I just stopped here after coming out from a treasure island. Do you... want to sit together for a while?"

Bia left Haylee's side and hurriedly shook her tiny head in front of Yue.

-No way! He has a goal to achieve!'

Yet, a dumbfounded expression appeared on her face when Kyle jumped down from the boulder. He didn't say anything and just gave Yue a quick nod.

Bia stared at his back, but then suddenly Kyle gazed back and blinked innocently.

'It's good to work hard, but we need proper rest as well. Also, don't you feel hungry?'

Bia's eyes widened as the meaning behind his words dawned on her, and she immediately agreed.

The trio sat down beside the fire, forgetting that a certain boar had been watching them with a speechless expression.

In the end, when the delicious aroma wafted in the air, Haylee also joined them. Well, no one would reject a good meal.

Chapter 336 No reinforcement

?Outside the secret realm, two years later, at the western border of Kingdom Escalante, Ratric's body floated above the border.

The old man's white hair swirled gently as he observed the bloody battle unfolding on the other side of the tall and sturdy border.

Countless individuals adorned in pale golden armor were locked in a fierce battle with various types of monsters. But it wasn't just them, many people in regular clothes were also fighting.

A faint chuckle echoed in the air as Duke Evan thrust his spear into a green six-eyed snake. He raised his head, breathing heavily, and looked at the man fighting beside him.

"Valenza, I think I won! I killed the ninth (S)-Rank monster!"

Duke Valenza stabbed his axe into the ground, causing a vast area in front of him to shatter into pieces. The monsters cried out, but instead of retreating, they attacked the border with even more ferocity. His forehead was drenched in sweat as he stared back at the man, both amazed and concerned by his audacious actions in such a dangerous situation.

"Hey, seriously, how do you even have the energy to talk after fighting for three days straight? Haaa..."

A sharp cry pierced the air behind the duo, indicating yet another death, but they simply closed their eyes and continued the battle.

Ratric's eyes gleamed with a brilliant light as he gestured toward the countless mages standing in rows above the border.

In an instant, the air crackled and a barrage of spells rained down upon the monsters, creating a massive wave of destruction within seconds. Yet, it seemed like the monsters were never-ending, continuously pouring out from the dense trees opposite the border.

After a minute, the distant trees quivered, and two enormous black leopards leaped out from the forest. Their eyes glowed ominously as they surveyed their surroundings, crushing the ground beneath their mighty paws.

Evan and Valenza's eyes widened. They were exhausted but now two more formidable monsters had emerged from the dark forest. Nevertheless, they brandished their weapons, charged forward, and launched an attack on the leopards before the monsters could approach the border.

Ratric's eyes narrowed as he swiftly vanished from his position and reappeared before the duo.

"Let me handle this."

With a wave of his hand, a massive layer of earth surged from the ground, crashing into the leopards and sending them hurtling backward.

Duke Evan tightened his grip on his weapon, wiping the sweat from his forehead as he looked at the man who had been his rival for as long as he could remember.

"How much longer can you keep going?"

Duke Valenza chuckled.

"Until I can still stand."

Without any further words, the duo resumed their fight. They knew that if they faltered, the countless weak citizens behind the border would be the next target of the relentless monsters.

After defeating the leopards, Ratric hurriedly retrieved a communication crystal from his storage ring. A familiar face appeared in the crystal as George delivered another piece of bad news.

"The northern border is under attack as well. The monsters seem to be endless. Kingdom Whiteland has sent reinforcements, and the academies have dispatched their elders and strong students. But if this continues, I don't think we can hold out for more than a week."

George clenched his teeth.

"When will the reinforcements from the West and Central Continent arrive? When we're already dead?"

Ratric's expression turned grim as he rubbed his temples and shook his head.

"I reached out to the King. Like us, he's also waiting for a response. But neither continent has sent the elite forces they promised before we sent the kids into the ancient realm."

He let out a sigh.

"I thought we had at least six to eight years. Who would have thought the Monster Lords would attack before the estimated time? This is just the initial monster wave. So, I believe we can hold them off for a while."

George nodded, knowing they had no choice but to fight until the end. He had even gathered all the remaining kids from the Royal Academy who were willing to fight for their Kingdom.

"Also..."

"What is it?"

Ratric's brow furrowed as he sensed hesitation in George's voice.

"I just received news from Kingdom Tersia. They have three borders with the dark forest, and with reinforcements from Kingdom Hoekan and Kingdom Loringnad, they were able to control the monster wave easily. But suddenly, the dark mage Ziner attacked one of their borders."

Ratric's eyes narrowed with anger.

"That bastard! Does he have a death wish? Why is he attacking when the East Continent is already in such a dire situation!"

George's expression turned grim as he informed the old man about the destruction of one of Kingdom Tersia's borders. Also, for some unknown reason, the dark mage had reached the (SSS)-Rank.

Ratric took a deep breath, feeling the weight of the situation. They were already dealing with two Monster Lords, and now the dark mage was causing trouble!

He closed the communication crystal with frustration and unleashed his anger on the monsters.

"If only I could leave, I would definitely put that bastard in his place."

....

At the same time, inside a lavish study room, King Cedric let out a frustrated shout at his first son, Casper.

"No news again? It seems like the Central and West Continent have no intention of helping us!"

He grabbed his weapon and armor, prepared to head to the nearest border.

Casper sighed and hurriedly took the weapon from his father's hand.

"I'll go to the border. As the crown prince, it's my duty. The initial wave can be handled by Ratric and the others. You need to focus on reaching the next rank. It'll give us a better chance of survival."

The King massaged his temples and sank into his chair. He had been on the verge of a breakthrough for some time now. The violent mana coursing through his body was a small price to pay for protecting his kingdom.

He gazed at his older son, who had been training under his trusted aide. Only recently had he discovered that Casper had achieved a very strong rank.

"First Carcel, and now you too. Both of you certainly know how to surprise me."

Casper's smile faded as he thought about the place where his brother was.

"Hmm, Father, when is the realm gate opening? Everyone strong in our kingdom is occupied. Who will be there to protect the survivors?"

Cedric let out a tired sigh.

"Elder Han has been held back in the Central Continent due to his disciple, the one with the legendary beast. He had to pay a hefty sum to leave, but because he was reluctant to part with his wealth, King Istalian forced him to guide the realm gate with the other Array masters."

"He recently contacted me and said that he saw some movements in the air. Maybe the gate will open in two or three weeks."

Casper nodded with concerned eyes.

"I just hope Carcel is safe. He would have grown into a remarkable young man."

King Cedric's smile was bittersweet.

"Indeed. Once he returns, I will properly discipline him for always doing as he pleases."

However, deep down, both of them knew that Carcel's chances of returning alive were slim.

Chapter 337 No one made it out alive?

?Elder Han looked up at the bright sky with a gloomy expression. The land surrounding him was desolate, and the air was hot. Beads of sweat dripped down his forehead and soaked his clothes.

A faint growl emanated from his stomach, and he glanced over at the numerous tents scattered around him. In the midst of the tents, the other Array masters were gathered, enjoying their meals and discussing a new Array they had recently discovered.

He let out a sigh and waved his hand dismissively when one of the Array masters offered him to join them.

"Not right now. I'm keeping an eye on the realm gate. Recently, I felt some sort of movements in the air."

The Array master left him alone, but in the distance, he scoffed. None of them had sensed anything from the realm gate, so how could he?

If Elder Han noticed the Array master's displeasure, he didn't say anything. His gaze shifted towards the realm gate. It was heavily guarded by strong soldiers from Kingdom Soltecia, stationed both in front of the gate and around the tents. They kept a close watch on those who stayed behind from the other Continents and Kingdoms, prepared to welcome back any survivors.

With a sigh, he jumped down from the rocky bed where he had been sitting for a few hours.

"The situation back in the Kingdom isn't good. I want to leave, but I know with all the strong individuals busy, I need to stay here."

"I have firsthand knowledge that both the Central Continent and West Continent have been watching from the sidelines. They won't offer assistance until the East Continent weakens. Ultimately, when the Continent is on the brink of collapse, they'll present their demands. Also, something's wrong with King Istalian. The last time I saw him, he was talking to his shadow. But as soon as he noticed me, he quickly changed the subject."

He thought about Kyle, and a solemn expression appeared on his face.

"I hope he and the little phoenix make it out alive. Otherwise, who is going to pay the money? After all, I'm just an old poor man."

As he headed towards the Kingdom Escalante tent, a couple of muscular guards welcomed him with polite expressions.

But just as he was about to step inside and call it a day, the ground beneath him rumbled with a deafening roar.

Elder Han's eyes widened, and he quickly whipped his head around. Everyone in front of the realm gate abandoned their tents and gathered around, their eyes fixed on the gate as it began to tremble. Dark wisps of smoke curled out from the gate, and the air crackled with electricity.

The crowd held their breath in anticipation, knowing that the realm gate was about to open.

However, to their surprise, after a minute, everything fell eerily silent once again.

"Huh, what's going on?!"

Someone shouted from the crowd. And in no time, the air was filled with a chorus of worried voices.

The Array masters panicked, they instantly surveyed the symbols drawn around the gate to check if something was wrong with them.

Elder Han's figure flashed, and he appeared in front of the gate. He roughly pushed back an old man and hurriedly examined the symbols, but his expression hardened when he found nothing amiss.

He massaged his aching temples and stared at the gate.

"What the hell is going on?"

Suddenly, a wave of dread washed over him. Just like him, the faces of the people around the realm gate darkened.

Amidst the chaotic atmosphere, an elderly man from the West Continent spoke up.

"Don't tell me... no one made it out alive?"

His words landed like a lightning bolt, and once again, the air grew silent. But no one dared to believe his words. They knew the realm was dangerous, but how could not a single person have survived?

.....

At the same time, without realizing the panic he had caused outside, Ris couldn't help but let out a silent snarl.

"One, two, three...? I know my memory has problems, but how the hell am I supposed to inject mana into this thing?"

He muttered, tapping the large platform engraved with countless symbols with his tail in frustration. Haylee growled irritably and pushed him back.

"Stop! Just stop! Don't touch anything! The gate will open on its own! Damn it, where is the guardian? This lizard is driving me crazy!"

Ris clicked his tongue and reluctantly stepped back. He glanced at the numerous figures soaring through the sky.

"You're shouting at me as if I stepped on your tail. Let's go. We need to say goodbye to the kiddos. Who knows when we'll see them again."

Haylee snorted but followed him nonetheless. The duo flew across the sky and, after a minute, they spotted the illusionary old man.

The old man gazed at the many individuals floating mid-air, and a smile spread across his face.

Almost everyone who had survived in the realm had reached an impressive rank, not to mention the group of kids he had been keeping an eye on. They had exceeded his expectations.

'Especially the ones with the divine artifacts.'

He chuckled and raised his voice, causing a thunderous announcement to echo throughout the realm.

"Get ready, kids. It's time to leave."

In the distance, Nine looked around at the numerous treasure islands with a reluctant and sad expression. He flew across the sky, deliberately emanating his powerful (S+)-Rank aura.

"I've reached the limits of my talent, otherwise I would have been the strongest to come out of this realm."

A snort sounded behind him. He turned around and raised an eyebrow at Sinon, the winged demi-human floating behind him.

"Haha, don't tell me you want a one-on-one. Remember, you're just a tad weaker than me."

Sinon clicked his tongue and cracked his knuckles with an evil smile.

"We're the same rank, so stop or else you'll regret it."

Nine shut his mouth with a loud click. Soon, more and more familiar faces, along with a few unfamiliar ones, appeared around them.

He frowned when he noticed that a few faces were missing from the crowd.

"Hey, where are Jian, Carcel, Alec, and even Kyle? They're not here."

Sinon's expression turned blank as he let out a sigh.

"Last I remember, the trio went to test their strength against someone named Guil. Jian mentioned they were going to beat him. I don't know who this unlucky person is, but I hope he doesn't suffer too much. As for Kyle, I have no idea."

Nine blinked and after a few seconds, let out a trembling laugh.

"Are you kidding me? They went to beat Guil!?"

Lara and Mia appeared behind him, exchanging glances. Mia tapped his shoulder.

"Yeah, Carcel told me the same thing. Who is this Guil anyway?"

Nine's expression turned pale. He crossed his legs mid-air and waved his hand towards everyone floating around him.

"He's someone who could crush us with just a finger. So, let's hope the trio comes back alive."

Everyone around him started laughing, thinking he was joking. But seeing his serious expression, they fell silent.

Kelvin immediately let out a worried sigh.

"Wait, I'll try contacting Jian."

Yet, no matter how much he tried to send signals, the red-

haired man ignored him. Kelvin stared at the communication device with wide eyes, recalling that the last time he contacted Jian, the latter said he would do the same and ignore him.

"He's getting back at me even though I told him I couldn't share my location because I was stuck in a dangerous place!"

In the end, they all got together and started waiting for the old man to open the exit to the realm.

The old man appeared in front of the crowd, his gaze shifting between the floating people and those standing on the ground. His voice, filled with serenity, echoed in all directions.

"Fear not, all the living outsiders in this realm will be teleported out as soon as the exit opens."

Chapter 338 Now, it's my turn

?The air crackled as a massive wave of fire crashed into a wounded figure kneeling in the distance. Guil coughed up blood, but quickly spread his wings, causing the flames to scatter in every direction.

Alec and Carcel cursed simultaneously, wiping the sweat from their foreheads. The duo hovered in mid-air, their eyes locked on the man who was laughing maliciously before them.

Alec ran his fingers through his hair and let out a frustrated sigh.

"Jian, why are you relying solely on fire skills? We're strong, but the intense heat is becoming overwhelming!"

Jian tilted his head, his shoulder-length hair swaying gently behind his back as he let out an evil chuckle. Just like Alec and Carcel, his clothes were drenched with sweat.

"To be honest, I'm not sure why, but after entering the realm, I only found fire-type skills. Just endure it."

Alec clicked his tongue and raised his hand.

"Now, it's my turn."

Jian and Carcel immediately pulled back, having had their fill. But what happened next sent chills down their spines.

Alec's eyes dilated as he whipped his head around.

"Where is Guil!?"

The trio hurriedly went to the place where the man had been kneeling just moments ago, but he was nowhere to be found. Alec sucked in a deep breath. They had been beating up Guil with so much confidence because the realm guardian had injured him badly!

Also, the Guardian placed a restraint on his body, but no matter what, the man was still a pseudo-divine rank individual!

Jian let out a distressed cry.

"Oh my gosh! What's gonna happen now? The guardian's gonna punish us!"

They gazed at each other and immediately started searching the land. After just a few seconds, the hair on Alec's back stood up, and he jumped forward. Before the others could react, a beam tore through the place he had been floating just moments ago. The ground blasted out, and a huge cloud rose in the sky.

Jian instinctively grabbed Carcel's arm. He wanted to shout, but the golden-haired man closed his mouth and pushed him away.

"Get away."

Immediately, an evil, almost broken voice echoed through the air.

"I w..ill k...ill you all!!"

Guil's whole body was riddled with wounds, but he was still stronger than these ants! He would have already killed them if not for the restraint placed on his body. Regardless, it's okay now because he has finally broken free!

He raised his hand with a twisted smile on his bloodied face, and another beam shot out, heading directly toward Jian.

Jian freaked out and jumped in another direction in mid-air. Alec and Carcel both followed suit.

Guil crackled an evil laugh, but he choked on his saliva due to his sore throat.

"Kek..ke, jum..p... jump.. how long will you jump?"

Countless glowing lights appeared behind him as he used the divine energy present within his body without caring about the potential harm it could cause.

Alec's expression hardened. He unsheathed the glowing sword from his waist and pointed it at Guil.

"You think we're scared..."

But he couldn't finish his sentence because Jian and Carcel started flying away in different directions.

Alec blinked in disbelief. He turned his head towards Guil and understood why the duo ran away.

The glowing lights behind Guil transformed into dangerously powerful beams. Instantly, the beams zoomed in toward Alec.

In a split second, Alec made a decision and rushed behind Jian.

"Wait for me, you jerks-!"

Behind him, the beams crashed into the ground, shattering everything into pieces. Dust clouds filled the air, making their vision blurry.

Jian coughed and waved his hand with an ugly expression.

"What the hell does this guy still have so much strength for!?"

He growled, but the trio didn't stop. It was only when they were far away from the chaos that they gathered and narrowed their eyes at the billowing dust clouds.

Jian placed his hand on Alec's shoulder, his expression grave.

"Hey, Alec, why don't you go and check if he's done for after using such a powerful attack?"

Alec raised an eyebrow and swatted Jian's hand away.

"Why don't you go first? Don't worry, I'll be right behind you."

Carcel shook his head with a faint smile. Suddenly, a massive tremor shook the air around them.

Jian's eyes widened in an instant.

"Don't tell me he still has strength for another attack!?"

Alec's forehead became sweaty as he looked at them.

"Hey, but the voice is coming from behind. Not from Guil's direction."

The trio immediately whipped their heads back, and their souls nearly flew out of their bodies at the sight before them.

In the distance, a familiar figure with silver hair was sprinting towards them. But it wasn't the running figure that scared them, it was the horde of growling monsters chasing after him!

The ground beneath them shook violently as the monsters drew closer and closer. They wanted to fly away, but the countless flying monsters in the sky made it impossible to even consider.

Jian's face turned pale as he let out a barely audible laugh.

"I think I'm imagining things."

"No, you're not!"

Alec screamed from behind and pulled him towards the ground. Flying was not an option, or they would meet their demise. Just like the silver-haired man, they started running across the barren land.

Kyle's eyes gleamed with a glint as he spotted the trio. In a flash, he disappeared from his spot and reappeared beside Jian, scaring the living daylights out of him.

Jian shot him a glare.

"How the heck did you get involved with so many monsters!? Did you steal their kids or something?"

Kyle gave him a sly smile and raised his hand, revealing a beautiful silver sword shining under the sunlight, covered in a white cloth.

"It's been a while since I wanted a sword, but I had to venture into a volcano to find this one. Haylee warned me that the place was filled with monsters, but I didn't think it would be a big deal. Turns out, I was wrong..."

Jian rolled his eyes.

"Just wrong!?"

Alec and Carcel overheard their conversation and exchanged bitter smiles. All this trouble for a sword?

Suddenly, Jian realized that the little birdie, Bia, was missing.

"Where's Bia?"

Kyle let out an 'Oh' and looked back.

"Maybe hiding somewhere far away?"

Jian blinked, then he let out a pleased chuckle.

"Stay strong, bro..."

Before he could finish his sentence, Kyle flashed him another smile and vanished.

"You bastard! Wait! My mana is low, I can't fight so many monsters!"

Alec, Jian, and Carcel sprinted through the area, muttering curses under their breath.

In the distance, Kyle's figure materialized out of thin air, and his eyes narrowed as he caught sight of a familiar injured winged man. The man was kneeling on the ground, with messy hair and bloodied clothes.

Guil raised his head, and his eyes met Kyle's mid-air. Sparks flew in the air, and the winged man bared his teeth at the human. He raised his trembling hand to send another beam at Kyle, but the silver-haired man vanished into thin air.

Guil let out a startled cry but before he could process anything, Kyle appeared behind him.

Kyle raised his finger and quickly drew a symbol in the air before smacking it against Guil's neck. Immediately, Guil's eyes fluttered shut, and his body dropped to the ground with a loud thud.

"Sleep for a while."

Kyle mused and narrowed his eyes at the countless monsters edging closer to him. His eyes glowed with a faint blue light as he whispered under his breath.

"Ice Domain."

Chapter 339 It's time to go back

The air suddenly grew cold, and a translucent dome materialized out of thin air, enveloping everything around Kyle in a chilly embrace. Countless icicles formed in the air, and thick clouds gathered.

Jian's eyes widened as he stepped into the towering dome, but to his surprise, the path in front of him cleared. He took a deep breath, only to cough from the intense cold.

His gaze locked onto the figure of Kyle with an aggrieved expression, and he dashed towards him. After him, Alec and Carcel also entered the dome and hurriedly ran towards Kyle.

The ground beneath them trembled violently, and all eyes turned to Kyle, before staring at the unconscious body of Guil lying behind him.

Alec's eyebrow twitched. They had been locked in a battle with Guil for two days, unable to kill him due to the divine energy present within his body. Yet, Kyle had effortlessly rendered him unconscious.

He so badly wanted to ask how, but controlled the urge, knowing the situation was too dangerous.

Jian held his breath.

"Now what? Do we have to fight? If we give it our all, I think we can take them down."

Kyle raised his head, his eyes narrowing at the approaching monsters.

"No, there are too many of them, and the exit to the realm is about to open. We're running out of time."

He kicked off the ground and started hovering in mid-air. Alec, Carcel, and Jian exchanged glances and quickly followed behind. Under their gaze, the countless icicles floating inside the dome shot out toward the monsters with a speed invisible to the naked eye.

Kyle sucked in a deep breath.

"Hope this works."

He raised his finger and started scribing symbols in the air, shocking the trio beside him. The symbols glowed and instantly trembled. Kyle's finger shook, and he cursed when the symbols dispersed in the air.

He raised his finger again and scribbled the symbols once more, but they vanished again.

"Guys, use your strongest skills to distract the monsters. Just half a minute is enough."

The trio immediately nodded and hurriedly used the remaining mana in their bodies to divert the attention of the monsters. However, they were overwhelmed. Obviously, they were tired after fighting Guil, and now their mana was running low.

After the fourth try, Kyle's eyes lit up. He smiled at the faint glowing circle opposite him, which grew bigger and bigger before transforming into a large round portal.

He let out a shout towards Alec and jumped into the portal.

"Hurry!"

Alec stared back, his eyes widening with disbelief. He sucked in a deep breath and shouted at Jian and Carcel before following behind Kyle.

Jian dodged an earth spike thrown at him by a large turtle and immediately entered the portal. Carcel followed suit.

Alec's head buzzed, and the moment he emerged from the portal, he retched and emptied the contents of his stomach.

Jian and Carcel were in the same condition. The trio glared at the silver-haired man standing opposite them. But they were distracted when a loud rumble sounded behind them.

They immediately whipped their heads around and saw that the place they had left was just opposite the tall mountain where they had appeared.

Three pairs of speechless eyes turned towards Kyle, but he shrugged his shoulders.

"I need a lot of time if I want to create a portal for a very long-distance travel."

Jian slumped down on the ground and let out a tired sigh. Alec chuckled and sat down beside him.

However, they were not able to rest because countless tears formed in the sky, staining the clear sky with cracks.

Carcel hummed softly.

"It seems it's time to leave."

Alec's eyes crinkled into a smile.

"Yes, it's time to go back."

Jian also let out a smile.

Contrary to the serene atmosphere, Kyle's expression was deep as he stared at the cracks. He rubbed his chest with a bitter smile.

'Indeed, it's time to leave, but I am still not strong enough. I hope the artifact stays dormant for a few more years.'

"Guys, I am going to fetch Bia."

Kyle left, but Alec noticed his behavior and knitted his brows. He narrowed his eyes and immediately used the system appraisal skill. His mouth opened wide when the shocking system panel flashed in front of his eyes.

'Name: Kyle Ohan'

'Race: Human'

'Rank: (SSS-)'

'Special: ??'

'???'

-Error!

Trying to find the cause! Loading...

-Error!

No more information provided. To know further information, the host needs to be a whole rank higher than the target.

Alec gazed at his status and let out a faint chuckle. Just recently, he broke through to (SS+)-Rank. It was all possible because, for the past two years, he worked hard day and night, but it seemed someone was working even harder than him.

'Tsk, just when am I going to be a whole rank higher than him?'

He glanced at Jian and Carcel. The duo had also reached (SS)-

Rank recently.

'If we all stay together, maybe we will be able to face all the hardships in the future. But first, I need to find the person damaging the planet's core to buy more time for everyone to grow stronger.'

He let out a sigh. It's good that he received the information from Haylee a year ago. Or else he would have stayed in the dark for a long time.

...

Outside the realm, Elder Han's face grew paler with each passing second. He fiddled with the symbols, but the realm gate remained silent.

'No way!'

He screamed in his head. Unwilling to believe that no one had survived. The Array masters around him were also in a state of panic.

However, just as despair filled the faces of those around him, the realm gate trembled once again, and wisps of smoke emerged.

Elder Han let out a cry of relief and squeezed his eyes shut.

"I'm done for if I receive another panic attack. I can't take it!"

He messaged his temples and slumped to the ground. The Array masters around him hurriedly dragged him away from the realm gate to prevent any further issues.

The sky above the realm gate darkened, and a faint bright light flashed. However, instead of the familiar circular opening, the entire realm gate came crashing down with a loud rumble.

The crowd's mouths dropped open in shock as the earth trembled, causing multiple cracks to form everywhere. In an instant, sparks of dark electric current buzzed out from the realm gate with lightning-fast speed, and a person with brown hair flew out.

The crowd held their breath as they gazed at the first survivor emerging from the realm.

Indeed, he looked incredibly powerful.

Nine's expression turned smug upon hearing the faint shocked exclamations around him, but he quickly composed himself with a solemn expression and flew into the middle of the crowd.

"This deity shall-!"

His sentence was cut short when Sinon's figure crashed into him, causing him to lose his balance. The two of them crashed to the ground with painful groans.

Nine pushed the winged demi-human away from his body and squeezed his eyes shut.

'There! My perfect image just shattered into a million pieces.'

The crowd stared at the two individuals, but in the next second, they gasped as countless bright lights flashed out from the realm gate. Their shock increased because the number of survivors grew with each passing second.

Elder Han was almost brought to tears with relief when he saw many familiar faces following Nine.

Lara and Mia floated mid-air, gazing around at the few old men floating or standing on the ground.

The girls instantly spotted Elder Han and hurriedly made their way towards him.

While the countless people waiting for the survivors rejoiced with happiness, the guards from Kingdom Soltecia stationed around the realm gate panicked at the increasing numbers.

Immediately, a few of them vanished into thin air to inform King Istalian.

Chapter 340 Debt

King Istalian spat out the drink he had been sipping as he stared at the guard kneeling across from him in disbelief.

"What did you say?"

He blinked, once, twice, and then massaged his temples. The shadow lurking in the darkness emerged from behind him and let out an excited snarl.

"Go, go! The kids must have found the divine essence with the help of the map! Hurry!"

Istalian snorted, but after tossing the cup in his hand aside, he vanished from the luxurious hall, heading straight toward the realm gate.

Just like Istalian, the strongest individuals in the West Continent received the news from their people stationed at the realm gate. They immediately left their kingdoms to proudly welcome the youngsters.

Even the Queen of the Sea Continent was shocked to hear that seventy percent of their people had returned alive. She burst into laughter and hastily instructed her strongest warriors to go and welcome the kids, especially her daughter, Seraphine.

Similarly, the various kings in the East Continent rejoiced at the joyful news. Unfortunately, due to the circumstances, they were unable to send any strong individuals. In the end, after extensive discussions among all the kingdoms, King Foraan himself set out to pick up the kids.

Unaware of the chaos they were causing, more and more people emerged from the realm gate with each passing second.

Regius, Lucus, and Sen, the trio, also floated out from the gate. Regius had a smug expression on his face as he waved at the old man from the elven Kingdom.

He landed confidently in front of the old man, ready to boast, but his smile froze when two handsome figures landed in front of him.

Faith and Niamh stared back at Regius with raised eyebrows, challenging him to boast in their presence.

The old man from Kingdom tersia cried out with joy when he saw the three men. He had been receiving death threats from their families, warning that if anything happened to their heirs, they would first kill him and then destroy the realm gate.

He almost dropped to his knees when he saw a beautiful figure floating out from the gate. Yue's amber eyes shone brightly as she looked around and made her way towards the old man.

Niamh, Regius, and Faith immediately tried to sense her rank, but they were dumbfounded when they sensed nothing.

The trio exchanged bitter smiles as they wondered just how much stronger she had become.

After Yue, Sia also appeared, and she let out a proud smirk when she spotted her father standing amidst the crowd.

Elder Han had a smile on his face as he stared at the realm gate. However, after a few minutes, the countless lights coming out from the gate suddenly stopped.

His smile faltered slightly as he wondered where Kyle and Alec were. And to add to his concern, Prince Carcel had yet to come out as well!

But before he could have another panic attack, thinking that the strongest individuals had perished, three familiar figures stepped out from the realm gate.

Jian stretched his body and ruffled his hair with a yawn.

"Man, I'm tired. It's good that we could easily step out, unlike the others who were tossed out."

Alec smiled back at him and then his gaze wandered toward the gorgeous figure standing beside Elder Han. Just as he remembered, Lara's face remained expressionless, but her eyes had softened, and it seemed like she was even conversing with the others.

He tapped Jian on the shoulder.

"I'm leaving. See you later."

Jian stared at him as he vanished into the crowd. With a mischievous glint, Jian raised his arm to place it on Carcel's shoulder, but before he could, Carcel also disappeared into the crowd.

In the end, Jian clicked his tongue and started walking toward Kelvin, who had been glaring at him since he emerged from the realm.

Jian let out a hesitant chuckle as he tried to explain why he couldn't receive Kelvin's signal, but Kelvin ignored him as if he were thin air.

Amidst the bustling atmosphere, King Istalian's figure appeared in the sky. He scanned the crowd and immediately spotted Lucus and the mermaid princess.

The shadow hiding behind him let out a relieved sigh. Now he was sure they had obtained the divine essence! Regardless, he controlled the urge to pounce on them because there were too many people around.

Istalian broke into a polite smile. His loud voice echoed in the air.

"Welcome back. I am happy to see so many survivors."

A few strong guards appeared behind him, carrying golden chests filled with mana stones, gold coins, and all types of luxurious things one could expect in life.

However, before he could announce that the gates of Kingdom Soltecia were open for those who wanted to come, a few more old men and women from the West Continent and Sea Continent appeared behind him.

They scoffed at his actions, clearly mocking him, because how the hell did he think he would be able to snatch their people under their noses?

While the atmosphere was heated, a faint rumble shook the air. Instantly, all eyes turned to the realm gate that had been quiet for a while now.

Alec blinked, glanced at Carcel, and let out a chuckle.

"He sure knows how to become the center of attention."

Lara and Mia shook their heads with smiles. They all knew that now he was strong enough to handle everything, even if he attracted the attention of others.

Under the crowd's eyes, a spark of fire emerged from the realm gate, followed by a huge majestic phoenix that soared through the sky, painting the once-cloudy sky with crimson.

Istalian's eyes dilated when he sensed the phoenix's rank.

'She's already (SS+)-rank..?'

The beautiful phoenix was not alone. Just like Alec, Jian, and Carcel, Kyle stepped out from the realm. However, unlike them, his clothes were spotless.

He wore an emotionless expression as he straightened his shirt and gazed at the phoenix.

"Bia."

Instantly, under the stunned eyes of the crowd, the phoenix gracefully fluttered her wings and dived down toward him. She decreased her size and obediently sat on his shoulder.

- 'Hey, what about the two moths?'

Kyle hummed.

'As I said, there's no need to worry about them. Now that everyone is out, they should quietly live inside the realm.'

Behind him, the realm gate trembled before the light started vanishing. Faint white sparks flew out from the realm gate, and the opening closed just as fast as it crashed down.

Kyle's silver hair swirled gently as he spotted the old man and started walking toward him. Instantly, the people around him parted to give him enough space.

"Master, it's been a while."

Elder Han stared at the handsome man in front of him and broke out into laughter. He wanted to scream, Look, this is my disciple!

Even though he felt proud, he restrained the urge to express it.

In the distance, Istalian's ears perked up when he heard the word 'master'. An evil smirk appeared on his face as he gazed at the people from Kingdom Escalante.

"I think nobody should leave until Elder Han pays his debt, which has increased over the past two years."