

Bloodline 471

Chapter 471 I do have a motive

Kyle leaped into a narrow pit a short distance from the mountaintop, where his eyes caught sight of the familiar leafless buds sprouting all around him. The herbs, with their earthy hues, blended seamlessly into the surroundings.

He dusted off his clothes, then stooped down to pluck and gather the herbs in his hands. But as he got busy in his task to gather 1,000 Vitalis as soon as possible because the sky had started to turn even darker, behind him, the man dressed in white also entered the pit.

Azazeal's feet hovered in the air before landing on the ground without a sound. His eyes absorbed the scene in front of him. A pit full of rare herbs that grew only because of spiritual energy. He couldn't help but stare at Kyle's back.

'So that's why you dropped into the pit? I was wondering why... when you could have easily avoided it, given that nature favors you as if you are its child.'

Kyle's back tensed, and he snapped his head back, only to witness a pair of glowing eyes staring at him in the dimly lit space. But he didn't get startled, probably because, for some reason, the eyes had become a lot more normal... or maybe he had seen them just too many times already? He wasn't sure as he clicked his tongue.

"What are you staring at me for? Don't you want to gather the herbs? It's getting dark, and carrying a thousand up the mountain would require many trips because we lack storage space. Ugh, and I even dropped my bag somewhere because of you."

Azazeal moved his eyes to focus on a distant herb with a richer hue compared to the others.

"Why should I? I never asked him for help. It was always you."

Kyle blinked, now that he thought about it, Aze never once asked for help from Hubert. He simply observed from afar.

"So, why are you even here?"

He fixed his gaze at the man who opened his mouth to speak up while gazing in another direction.

"Do I need a reason? It's my choice to go wherever I please."

Kyle took a deep breath to calm his throbbing head. He set the herbs in his hands down and stood up, then walked toward the man who paused in his tracks and stared back at him due to his sudden movement. Kyle let out a long sigh and, after wiping his hands on his sweater to clean them, he extended his right hand toward the man across from him with a faint smile.

"It's Kyle... Kyle Ohan. I want to leave this land as soon as possible. I don't know who you are and why you are following me, but I believe you also want to leave this land. Therefore, let's not get in each other's way and do our best to leave this place."

He paused for a moment when he noticed a flicker of surprise flashing through Aze's eyes.

"Aze, right? It would be better if we don't become enemies. I can't sense it, but I have a feeling that you're not weak. So, standing on opposite sides wouldn't benefit either of us, because I am sure I won't back down even if you are stronger than me."

Azazeal stared at the hand stretched out toward him before glancing at the face of the human who gazed at him with a faint but genuine smile. He couldn't help but think... how naive?

'You have no clue who I am and that I'm already standing on the dark side... In fact, I'm the one who created that side.'

The corners of his eyes lifted as he extended his hand to shake the outstretched hand.

"Kyle, I have to admit once again, you surprised me. Now I get it..."

The human across from him furrowed his brows slightly when he didn't finish his sentence.

'...why we became friends in the first place. It's because of your actions... I can't and would never be able to predict them.'

It was already late at night when Kyle finished stacking 1,000 Vitalis herbs near Hubert's house, where the old man had gone to sleep. Kyle's eyes shone slightly in the darkness as he glanced at the starless, moonless sky. Different from the dark sky, the dim light coming from the countless gray flowers scattered on the mountain illuminated his surroundings enough for him to see everything around him.

He slumped down on the ground and closed his eyes. However, only after a minute, he opened his eyes to glance at the man with purple eyes standing at a distance, staring at the empty sky.

Kyle sat up and let out a sigh.

"Just sit down, will you? The ground won't harm your pristine white clothes."

Instinctively, he stared at himself and couldn't help but grimace at just how dirty he was. But he didn't have spare clothes to change into since he lost the bag Hazel had prepared for him.

'I'll search for it first thing in the morning when it's a little brighter.'

Kyle followed Aze's gaze and looked at the sky filled with nothing but dark clouds.

"Hey, you have been doing nothing. So, what's your plan? If you don't want Hubert's help, why are you even here? You must have a motive, right?"

He didn't really expect the man to answer because he had noticed that Aze didn't like to answer if the man deemed it unnecessary.

"Whatever..."

Kyle shut his eyes once more and lay down. He was still wary of Aze, but he had started to be less bothered by the man's presence. Besides, without Bia's voice that always echoed in his head, he realized he didn't enjoy quietness.

So, he wanted to speak a bit more, even though he usually stayed quiet. But he was surprised when the man actually replied.

"I do have a motive..."

Kyle let out a silent scoff.

He so badly wanted to say that If you want to speak, complete your sentence at least! But he didn't because he knew he would not get an answer.

Chapter 472 Don't ever call me that

Hubert woke up in the morning and gazed at the large bundle of herbs stacked in front of his house. He heard the noise last night, but he never imagined the human would actually gather 1,000 of them in just a single night.

He let out a sigh as he gazed at the only person in front of him, sitting leisurely on the chair he used yesterday.

"So, where is Kyle? He's the one who gathered the herbs, right?"

Azazeal stared at him and, after a nod, he pointed his finger towards the path leading down the mountain without uttering a single word. The old man pulled out another chair from the house and sat down opposite him with a grave expression.

"Let's set Kyle aside for now. Just tell me, who are you? Why are you in this land?"

He released his spiritual energy to exert pressure on the man, but a shiver ran down his spine when Azazeal lifted his eyes to gaze at him with a pair of obsidian eyes.

"Don't meddle in affairs that are not your concern. I will leave once I am done here. It's better for your entire race if you ignore my presence."

Hubert's eyes trembled and he slammed the table between them, ready to make Aze regret his words. However, he stopped and regained his composure when he saw Kyle approaching, this time dressed in a clean set of clothes and carrying a large bag on his back.

Kyle sensed the air was heavy for some reason, but he didn't say anything and immediately went up to the old man. Now that he had gathered 1,000 Vitalis, Hubert should keep his word and help him.

Hubert gazed at Kyle with a serious expression, and after a long minute, he released a sigh of resignation.

"I am a dragon, and we always honor our promises. Therefore, from now on, you, Kyle, will be under my guidance until you attain the transcendent rank physique. Still, remember that you must not complain or cry, as reaching that level is no easy feat."

Kyle stared back at him with a determined expression and raised his voice slightly to show his resolve.

"I won't!"

Hubert was startled, and his heart nearly jumped out of his chest when all of a sudden Kyle bowed before him and called him second master before stating that he would be under his care until he achieved a transcendent rank physique.

The old man quickly held Kyle's shoulders and made him stand properly while trying his best to calm his heart.

"What? I never said I would be your master! I will help you, but do not ever call me that. It just gave me chills for some reason!"

Kyle blinked as if he didn't understand what the old man was saying.

Hubert's eyebrow twitched. Only then did he notice that Kyle had called him second master... what did that mean? The old man wanted to confirm his suspicions, but at that very moment, he noticed Aze, whose eyes' crinkled up to show his amusement. His expression turned rigid when Aze murmured under his breath, loud enough for him and Kyle to hear.

"He does know how to seal a deal."

Hubert slumped down in the chair and gazed at Kyle with a wry smile. He had a hunch that he would regret the decision he made today. But for now, he has to ensure these two humans leave this land as soon as possible to soothe his increasingly agitated heart. He sighed and accepted Kyle's gesture before he stroked his beard with a distant expression.

"Just go... your first task is to capture a wild goat. Go-!"

However, before he could even finish his sentence, Kyle spoke up with a serious expression.

"But I am not good at cooking."

Hubert's head throbbed, and he wanted to tug at his white beard, but he stayed composed as he gazed at Kyle.

"Did I ask you to cook? I told you to go and capture a wild goat. They are quick and have sharp horns. It will provide you with valuable experience."

Kyle nodded and turned to descend the mountain once again. Hubert watched his fading figure before turning to look at Aze to settle the old score, only to find the chair before him empty. The man had vanished once more.

"Just what have I gotten myself into..."

The old man rubbed his forehead and started to make a schedule for Kyle. He planned to train the human day and night so Kyle could achieve a transcendent rank physique in the shortest time possible. But he then remembered that he didn't know the type of weapon Kyle used in combat.

"Or did he fight with fists? He wasn't even wearing a storage ring... did he lose his belongings somehow? Well, he was badly injured when the old couple found him, so he probably escaped with just his life... but the question is who harmed him?"

"I still have to know a lot about him. I am not sure about the other one, but Kyle would probably tell me about it. I hope he hadn't forgotten about it completely."

He closed his eyes to rest, but only after an hour, he was jolted awake when Kyle arrived with many wild goats chasing behind him. The old man couldn't believe what he was witnessing... the silver-haired human's agility state was unexpectedly high for some reason. Hubert quickly secured his chairs and table before the goats, as tall as him, could destroy them with their horns.

But he cried out and ran to stop the goats when a few of them got dangerously close to his humble house. He, for the first time in his life, lost his composure as he glared at Kyle with a dark expression.

"I told you to capture one, not to bring a horde here to destroy everything!"

Kyle gritted his teeth and slightly bent his body to kick off one of the goats that nearly threw him off his feet.

"Damn, it's not my fault! That bastard Aze picked up a strange plant the goats were trying to reach! But instead of following him, the goats started chasing me!"

After Hubert finally chased all the wild goats away, Kyle was spotted sitting on his heels with his hands raised high in the air. He nearly lunged to punch the man dressed in white who arrived on the mountain and casually strolled to sit down on a chair in the distance if not for the heavy weight placed on his shoulders.

Chapter 473 What about you?

It was a peaceful morning, much like any other, and Kyle was climbing one of the tallest mountains in the No Mana land.

He clutched onto one of the many gray-hued plants cascading down from the mountain's peak as he made his way towards the summit.

However, the more he climbed upward, the intense the pressure on his body became, as if numerous giant rocks were pressing on his shoulders, making it hard to maintain his balance.

Kyle was always grateful that his body was colder than usual due to his bloodline, making it rare for him to sweat.

But he couldn't help but furrow his brows because right now, his entire body was soaked in sweat.

Not to mention, the uncomfortable sensation of sweat beads trickling down his face and seeping into his shirt.

The same light blue shirt he wore over the dark trousers he was too exhausted to change in the morning, thinking he would finally get a day of rest because Hubert had to go check on the village after the old man received news that many manaless beasts were suddenly appearing in the forest surrounding the village.

But just who could have guessed that before the old man left, he would gesture towards a distant mountain and ask Kyle to ascend to the peak and meditate there for an entire day because the gravitational pull on the mountain grew stronger as one climbed higher, putting more pressure on the climber's body the further they ascended.

Kyle winced as he lost his footing while trying to maintain his balance by placing his foot into a narrow space.

Immediately, his body slid down dangerously, but fortunately, before he could plummet further, he quickly grabbed onto a jutting rock with a curse.

"Damn... I'm only halfway, and I already feel crushed. How the hell am I gonna make it to the top and spend a whole day there when the pressure might double or even triple from what I'm feeling now..."

It has been three months since he began training under Hubert. He has been through a lot, like chasing wild goats to match their agility until his whole body screamed with exhaustion and dragging massive boulders up the mountain, only to watch as the old man then threw them down in front of his very eyes and told him to drag them back up again.

Let's not forget the time when the old man threw him into a narrow, deep underground tunnel where he couldn't even see the end and asked him to climb out without anything to hold onto.

It was the toughest challenge Kyle had ever faced because the sand was wet, causing him to slide down repeatedly. He even got hungry in the middle because the air lacks mana... but he somehow succeeded in climbing out after two days and three nights of struggle.

"Ah... Hubert told me he wants to see me use a weapon and watch me fight."

"I'm sure it's going to be even harder because the old man enjoys hitting me on the head whenever he pleases just because I am not good at cooking. But... it's good I remember to write down my sword art in the notebook on time so even if I forgot it, I could recall just by reading the text."

Kyle let out a sigh. He gazed at the clear sky and reached for another spot to climb when suddenly his eyes spotted a familiar figure, and a vein immediately throbbed on his forehead.

It was Aze, dressed in a neat set of dark clothes, strolling casually towards Kyle from below, with a face that appeared completely unfazed by the pressure. The same pressure that made Kyle sweat buckets of water.

Aze would always disappear without a sound the moment Kyle turned around only to show up for a few hours after weeks, and Kyle was sure the man came back just to see him suffer!

Also, even though Aze never did anything wrong, the man somehow just increased the hardships Kyle had to go through just by his presence alone. It was as if Kyle's luck took a U-turn whenever this man appeared before him.

'He just had to show up again. I feel like I might drop down the mountain if I even engage in conversation with him.'

'So, let's just ignore him.'

Kyle took a deep breath and continued his journey without paying much attention to the presence that drew closer to him with each passing second. His caution around Aze had diminished significantly compared to when they first met, perhaps because the man never attempted to harm him... but it was strange because Aze never made an effort to help him either. The man would simply observe silently from the sidelines with a face devoid of any emotion.

In that moment, a familiar voice echoed in Kyle's ears, and he lifted his head to look at the pair of purple eyes staring down at him with emptiness.

"How have you been?"

Kyle wasn't even startled this time because he had become used to this and simply changed his path.

Azazeal watched the silver-haired human who altered his path by leaping in another direction without acknowledging his presence.

"Hmm?"

He blinked and followed suit quietly as Kyle climbed the mountain. He watched as Kyle lost his footing and barely clung to a rock to maintain his balance.

A curse slipped from the silver-haired human's lips as he tried to climb up, but his hands were too clammy with sweat, so he couldn't properly grab onto something.

Immediately, a thought emerged in Azazeal's mind as he watched Kyle.

'Oh, he's going to drop down.'

Then, he stared down to see just how far the silver-haired human would drop if he lost his balance now.

Kyle's eyes accidentally caught sight of the man in the distance counting who knows what on his finger while staring down toward the base of the mountain.

'This bastard... Don't tell me he thinks I am going to drop down!? Just like always, he's going to watch! Ugh, sometimes I hope his presence wasn't so frustrating.'

He groaned and with all his strength punched the layer of earth in front of him to dig a space to hold onto before stabilizing his footing.

Kyle wiped his forehead and let out an exhausted sigh. He saw Aze staring at him with a flicker of surprise and let out a scoff.

"What, feeling bad because I didn't lose my balance?"

Kyle's eyes saw red when the man actually replied to his words.

"What a pity."

He gritted his teeth and used his anger to climb the mountain even faster because the last time he tried to fight Aze, he couldn't even land a single hit on the man who just stared at him quietly throughout the whole exchange.

'I wish I could punch him just once.'

It was already late in the afternoon when Kyle reached the mountain top, but he couldn't stand due to the overwhelming pressure. Therefore, he crawled to sit in the middle of the uneven land in front of him to endure the pressure for a day so he could go back to hunt a monster and eat something before Hubert returned and assigned him another task.

He crossed his legs, but then a sudden thought appeared in his head. Immediately, he spread out his scent perception skill in the surrounding area and noticed that the area the skill could cover had decreased compared to before.

"Is it because of the pressure?"

Kyle was surprised because the more he tried to spread the skill under pressure, the harder it became for him to maintain it. Moreover, it was very faint, almost nonexistent, but he could sense his skill was getting stronger.... He also tried to spread out his fear skill, but this time nothing happened.

"I think it's because the fear skill impacts the opponent's mind more than the space around me..."

He sighed and observed as Aze also sat down at a distance from him. The man stared into the space opposite him as if searching for something. Kyle placed his palm beneath his chin and followed his gaze but saw nothing because the space opposite them had nothing except some clouds. He blinked when Aze started speaking on his own.

"It's amazing how time passes without a pause, just like a breeze."

Kyle rubbed his eyes and collapsed backward onto the ground with a heavy sigh, allowing the pressure to descend on his body.

"It is... I didn't even notice, and three months have passed. I don't know how many people I have forgotten and how many I will forget as I try my best to leave this place. But I always wonder how they are doing..."

He glanced at Aze from the corners of his eyes, and despite the possibility of not getting an answer, he began asking questions.

"What about you? You are strong... and I have a feeling you can leave this land whenever you want."

"So why are you here? I wonder... Are you searching for treasures hidden in this mana-deprived land? Whatever it may be, is there no one out there waiting for you?"

Chapter 474 An old tale I

Kyle closed his eyes after not receiving any response from the man. He had anticipated this, but after a long pause, a familiar voice finally reached his ears, and for the first time, he sensed the voice waver slightly.

"No, there is none."

Azazeal's eyes crinkled a bit as he thought about the words that slipped from his lips. Right, there's no one waiting for him. It's been like that for as long as he can remember.

Kyle opened his eyes and let out a sigh. It wasn't that he hadn't thought about this possibility, but now, what should he say because he wasn't good at comforting.

'I shouldn't have asked that question...'

But apparently, the man opposite him wasn't done at all.

"Do you want to hear an old tale?"

Kyle blinked and pushed himself up into a sitting position with a groan. The wind on top of the mountain wasn't brisk due to the pressure, but his hair was a mess as it had started to grow longer once again.

He gazed at Aze, who looked unfazed even though they were both sitting under the same pressure.

"An old tale? It's rare for you to share something out of nowhere... but I suppose I have to sit here for a whole day, so it's better than being bored in silence."

Azazeal counted on his fingers and calculated that there were three different paths Kyle could take when he would descend the mountain... each path leading to the worst possible outcome. The most unfavorable of them all was the one he desired for the human to choose, as it was finally time for him to capture the celestial spirit. He lowered his fingers and shifted his position to directly face Kyle instead of gazing into the air.

"Kyle, have you ever heard the word Celestial?"

Kyle stilled in his spot as he stared into the man's purple eyes. His mind screeched to a halt, and the next words that slipped out from his mouth were immediate.

"No, I haven't... never."

He caught a glimpse of his own expression in Aze's eyes, which stayed unchanged, and regained his composure. Only to realize in the next second that he had made a mistake!

As a pseudo-divine rank individual, he should be knowledgeable about the Celestial rank!

'Fuck! It's because of my bloodline! I got nervous for a second! I hope he doesn't question me further...'

Azazeal noticed with amusement how Kyle's body stiffened for a second, but the human's expression remained unchanged as he lied through his teeth.

"I see."

His lips twitched slightly, almost threatening to curl upward when he observed Kyle secretly sighing with relief after hearing his words.

Kyle brushed his thoughts away and changed the topic immediately. He should not get so nervous just by hearing the word Celestial because his bloodline knows how to stay hidden if it is threatened.

"So, you were going to tell me an old tale? Or did you change your mind?"

Azazeal stared at Kyle for a while. Then he opened his mouth, and his voice resonated with a deep, melancholic tone, as if he were recalling a forgotten past, lost to the passage of time.

It was just an ordinary story that had a somewhat nice ending, but the more Kyle heard, the more he moved backward a little away from Aze. His expression showed he was shocked to the core because the whole darn story revolved around the word Celestial!

He stared at Aze with a complex expression. Just a while ago, if someone asked Kyle for his opinion about the man, only one word would have slipped out of his mouth. Mysterious.

At first, he thought Aze might be one of the shadow generals who had appeared in this land to uncover a hidden treasure or maybe to conquer or completely destroy it.

But he quickly dismissed those thoughts because there was no visible dark flower on the man's body, and Kyle couldn't detect any unpleasant scent emanating from him. Not to mention, Aze had never harmed anyone. The man simply followed Kyle around for some unknown reason.

Kyle winced when his usually strong skin grazed over simply because of a small rock beneath him. Immediately, his gaze fell upon the drop of blood trailing toward the ground, followed by the few faint blue particles that emerge out from his skin to heal his broken skin—the same particles that had been holed up inside his mind space since he arrived on this land.

A shiver ran down his spine because in that very moment he noticed Aze's eyes fixed on the faint blue particles. His bloodline had never revealed itself in front of others before, so why now!?

Kyle's eyes quivered slightly as a sudden realization dawned on him.

"Is it because you have something similar in your body...?"

Azazeal's lips curved into a faint smirk as he stared into Kyle's eyes.

"No, it is because I concealed my presence the moment I started the tale. Right now, we occupy the same physical space but exist in different dimensions."

Kyle tightened his fists and, despite the pressure on his body, he swiftly scrambled to run in the opposite direction without glancing back. Something was definitely wrong because he saw it... he saw how Aze's eyes turned completely obsidian with nothing but darkness within them as the man stared at him. The moment Kyle stared into those eyes, a single thought emerged in his head. He would die if he stayed in this place any longer.

His bloodline was completely calm probably because it can't sense the man's presence right now, but his instincts told him to run away as far as possible. Kyle started to descend the mountain.

Aze was far stronger than his expectations... The man could easily slip into another dimension while right in front of his eyes all this time. And let's not forget the tale Aze shared with him. If the one who survived in that story turns out to be the man himself...

Then Aze was definitely not a shadow general. No, the man could be even more dangerous than the shadow generals. After all, the only person who survived in the end of the story lost everything, his whole race, yet chose to forgive the world that stripped him of all he held dear.

'Damn it! Damn it! Just someone please give me a beating... why the heck do I have to go and poke my nose in every crappy situation. But I am a hundred percent sure that bastard only told me the first half of the story.'

'No way I'm going to believe there's someone so saintly in this universe who could forgive those who killed their loved ones right before their eyes!'

Kyle wasn't sure if Aze was truly the last survivor in the story or if the man just shared his own past in the form of a tale to convey that he is a good person... and Kyle had no desire to find out either.

But as he stepped on a narrow space to descend the mountain quickly, the ground beneath him collapsed with a soft noise. Instantly, a startled expression crossed his face before his body fell downward into the narrow opening due to gravitational pull.

Chapter 475 An old tale II

The blessed race — Azazeal remember that's what everyone called them.

It was a race that naturally held supreme authority throughout the universe because all of its members possessed something celestial within their bodies from birth.

The people of that race bore a human appearance but possessed a pair of unique eyes that set them apart from humans. No matter the eye color, there would always be two slits in the center of their pupils.

Moreover, within that race, almost everyone had the potential to achieve the celestial rank because of their natural gift and exceptional talent.

However, due to this distinctiveness, the population of the race was always small, typically not exceeding a hundred members.

And even if the numbers somehow exceeded a hundred, the elder individuals would leave the universe as soon as they attained the celestial rank to avoid disrupting the balance of power.

Azazeal blinked as the obsidian in his pupils began to shift away, unveiling the two purple slits within. Instantly, a mocking gleam flashed through his eyes.

"The most powerful race, huh?"

He thought about the tale he shared with Kyle just moments ago. It revolved around the same blessed race that was ordinary yet so powerful at the same time.

The survivor in that story was one of the youngest members of that very race. A young kid, barely nine years old, whose mother hid him inside a separate space to protect him from the people who came to slay their entire race. The very race they themselves called blessed?

How laughable.

The nine-year-old kid held the celestial bones in his body, a blessing from nature, just like his entire race who carried a celestial element within them from the beginning of their lives.

After all, they were the last, yet distant descendants of the pure celestial race that had become extinct after the last of them transcended mortality and left the universe to fight among themselves because the mortals were too weak to even witness their powers.

However, just like how precious gems captivate admirers, their blessing stirred jealousy and envy among all the other races in the universe. This was the reason why the kid's mother, despite knowing she would die once she used the last of her strength, created a separate space to save her one and only child.

Azazeal gazed at the sky as purple and obsidian particles emanated from his skin, coalescing to create a beautiful purple flower with numerous petals nestled between his collarbones.

The flower petals radiated a faint yet brilliant light, but they were completely tainted by the red and dark spots within.

"Her tear-streaked face... I'm glad I can't recall it anymore."

His ears buzzed with distant cries, and the scene before him blurred to show a familiar kid with striking obsidian eyes, each holding two purple slits within them. The eyes were fixed on the tragic event unfolding just a little distance away from them.

The kid sealed his lips and ceased all movements to ensure that the fragile curtains of the separate space created around him stayed intact as he watched everything being drenched in crimson.

Not to mention, those who did it loudly declared before his very eyes that they were purging the universe of wicked individuals... as the blessed race had veered off the right path after washing their bodies in dark energy just like the demon race.

However, he witnessed it all... when they slyly chuckled amongst themselves, whispering about how they would divide the otherworldly blessing within the bodies of the people they killed. The kid was certain of their actions as they carried the bodies away right before his eyes. It was the first time he saw so many races together, and the most beautiful among them were the golden dragons and the winged people who soared across the pitch-black sky after the entire land where the blessed race lived was shattered into pieces to ensure they hadn't missed anyone alive.

Yet, he remained silent even as the air around him grew suffocating... just as his mother had instructed him to do... Aze, you must stay quiet. Do not make a sound. The sky darkened even further, turning a deep red, almost as if mourning the blessed beings who perished beneath it.

He didn't know how many days or weeks had passed when the curtains around him finally began to break, and he collapsed on the ground, gazing at the remnants of what was once his home.

The kid wandered among the ruins, looking at the clear sky, hungry, with clothes that had become soiled with sweat from his time in that confined space. Only a few words managed to escape his parched throat that had turned so dry that it was difficult to even speak.

"Is it... finally over?"

After gazing at the broken land one final time, he started walking with a blank mind, filled only with the cries and sights he had witnessed while hiding inside the separate space, just like a useless person.

He walked and walked until his legs gave out because he wanted to go to a faraway place where the air wasn't filled with the suffocating stench of blood. But then he noticed a teleportation array drawn in the middle of the ruins, undoubtedly by the people who killed his race.

Having started learning at a young age, he managed to activate the array with hands that were trembling, even though his body contained not even a speck of mana as he had not yet awakened his talent.

His empty stomach twisted with pain as he used the array, only to drop to his knees the moment he arrived in a different place. But when he raised his head, he saw a bustling area that was completely different from the nightmare he had just left behind.

The remaining brightness in his eyes started to fade, and the two slits in his pupils vanished into the obsidian color when a few people gathered around him with concerned expressions to ask about his identity and why a child was present there, or if he was okay.

He willingly lifted his head so they all could identify him after seeing his eyes and end his life, just like all the others.

But at that exact moment, when he locked eyes with the person closest to him... he realized that his blessing was different from all the others, and it knew how to hide itself when threatened.

Chapter 476 An old tale III

Azazeal couldn't hide his amusement when he recalled Kyle's shocked expression as the human started to move away from him after hearing his next words.

"The kid who survived never shed a single tear, even after witnessing all that."

"He had a strong soul, didn't he?"

Despite many people extending their hands towards the kid, no one actually took him in or offered him a meal. He found out later that they were only concerned because he was hindering their business by sitting above the teleportation array.

The kid's eyes contained nothing but hatred as he glanced at the people around him, but they laughed at his audacity. He quickly left the area, even though he struggled to walk because he understood that, given his condition, he wouldn't last another week without eating soon.

But before he could even swallow the food offered to him by a homeless person as he sat inside a dark alley, he overheard a story that was strangely familiar from the people conversing in the restaurant a short distance away.

They were discussing how, even though all the races are always fighting each other for resources, many of them joined hands and carefully planned before hunting the entire blessed race just to obtain a share of the celestial element the race possessed. The ones who didn't participate in that hunt also just watched from the sidelines quietly without interfering because even though they didn't desire the race's blessing, they wanted the strongest race to disappear so they could obtain the title.

The blessed race was strong, but what could they do with their small population when countless people attacked them together? But despite knowing the truth, when someone nearby asked them about the details, the people changed their words while laughing it off and stating that it's good the powerhouses of each race took actions on time and defeated the evil before it was too late.

The kid felt it right away... those words crushed something deep inside him, and the emotions bottled up inside him completely spiraled out of control as he erupted into uncontrollable laughter in the midst of that suffocating place that threatened to engulf him entirely.

It might have been his final bit of hope that kept him going as he devoured the small and dirty bun handed to him. Days slipped away as he staggered from one alley to the next, battling for food like stray dogs just to survive. He even resorted to stealing, only to end up getting beaten up numerous times in the process.

It was incredibly hard for him as he felt the weight of each blow and the sting of each defeat as he fought to cling to life in the harsh streets. However, the hatred and disgust he had for the people around him just increased with each passing day. So much so that he couldn't even bear the sight of a living person.

But who would have guessed that he himself would forgive the world when all of a sudden two annoying people would enter his empty life without his permission, only to change it completely.

Their presence showed him that not everyone in the universe was bad, not everyone was so repulsive. It was just a coincidence, right... that he needed to awaken his talent on the very same day when they both just happened to go to that very place to supervise the process because of their master.

The place that was always open for the poor people so they could awaken their talent without paying, and if any of them had an exceptional talent, someone influential would take them under their wing, and their lives would change.

Hence, it was unexpected when two elegantly dressed individuals arrived just to observe the process and take part in it. He would never forget the moment when one of them held out a shimmering crystal orb towards him and asked him to place his hand on it with a beautiful smile.

The smile that was annoying but not at the same time. However, the smile stiffened when the crystal ball erupted with a brilliant light to showcase his talent that was higher than all the people present. Or maybe even higher than the whole planet.

Azazeal suddenly closed his eyes and released a heavy breath.

"It's hard for me to remember anyone from the past as it's been too long, but why is it that I can't forget the faces of those who extended their hands toward me, only to deceive me the moment I turned away?"

"That is why I still want to end their lives just once with my own hands, even if they are dead. If not, I would have already destroyed this entire universe without a thought and would not have felt a thing even if it crumbled right in front of me."

Now, even the bitterness from the past has become so faint for him that he can barely feel it. But he knew he can't act on that urge. Not right now.

Azazeal rubbed his thumb and gazed into the air for a while, as if waiting for the perfect moment.

"If this universe crumbled. Instead of breaking the barrier that's stopping me from leaving, I will be buried under that same barrier. Huh..."

He chuckled and shook his head. That was the only reason that kept him afloat. The story of the nine-year-old boy reached its conclusion when he transformed into a handsome adult with boundless talent.

Only after a year, he found himself surrounded by two individuals who always stood by his side, and together, they all started their journey to become the strongest.

Maybe that's why the sole survivor of the story forgave the entire universe for taking everything he cherished and making his life miserable. Or perhaps he forgave them because it was too bothersome, and the two people beside him weren't bad, even though he had forgotten how to smile a long time ago.

But regardless of the circumstances, he never shed a tear throughout his entire life, not even one out of joy.

Chapter 477 Found you

A loud voice rumbled inside the mountain, and the air quivered slightly. Azazeal slowly turned his gaze toward the narrow opening Kyle slipped into.

"Did the spirit show up? So soon?"

He stood up, and the space around him rippled and stretched out with many dark particles before he stepped out from the separate space he created to make his presence known once again.

The flower between his collarbones evaporated into the particles. However, as he recall Kyle's last expression, he paused for a split second. He thought Kyle's presence was just something he would notice in passing, but in the past three months, the human was nothing but amusing... Similar to someone he remembers.

The moment that thought flashed in his head, a strange possibility flickered through his eyes that maybe Kyle was the descendant of one of them.

But as soon as the thought appeared, he dismissed it because he had killed all their descendants himself.

"No, not them, but he is similar to me except for his eyes... right?"

"I wonder why he was born with the celestial essence naturally when a human body can't even endure that much pressure. His body should have crumbled after being born with the essence."

His feet left the ground, and he floated, only to enter the same opening Kyle slipped into a while ago.

Azazeal thought Kyle wouldn't notice his change, but strangely, in the middle of the story, everything went awry.

"I wanted to tell him more. At least the true ending, so he would know what happened to that person who forgave the world and started leading a normal life..."

However, what could he possibly do when Kyle had a bad habit of catching on to things quickly. The human's intuition, for some reason, was quite sharp.

Azazeal rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

He concealed his presence completely mainly because, among the three paths Kyle could potentially take, he wanted the human to follow the path where he would encounter the celestial spirit.

And for that to happen, Kyle's bloodline, which had been concealing itself within his body, needed to reveal its presence.

But who could have guessed that after his presence vanished, the celestial spirit would show itself on its own probably because it was attracted to the essence within Kyle's body.

"His bloodline was calm because it hadn't detected any threat from the spirit yet, but I immediately sensed what it wanted to do. That's why my eyes briefly changed, but he had to injure his hand in that exact moment just to look at me, huh?"

"As usual... the path he took this time is also completely different from the ones I anticipated. It's even more dangerous than the previous three."

Azazeal's body traveled through the narrow tunnel leading underground, but his floating figure paused in mid-air when he arrived in a wide hollow space, enveloped in profound stillness. His eyes witnessed the dazzling light in front of him that shimmered brightly, illuminating everything in its surroundings.

"Found you..."

He whispered slowly with a snicker as he watched the celestial spirit's ethereal form that radiated a gentle, otherworldly glow.

Its presence was a manifestation of pure spiritual energy, with shimmering iridescent wings on its formless figure.

However, the spirit was struggling to escape the layer of darkness enveloping it from all directions. Its voice sounded more melodic as it emitted a faint shriek that reverberated through the hollow space.

"Glad I was ready."

Azazeal moved his finger, causing the darkness to constrict around the spirit, fully shrouding its ethereal form.

At the same time, below on the uneven surface, Kyle stood frozen in his spot as he watched the majestic and ethereal form in front of him. He snapped out of his daze when his bloodline stirred in his body, urging him to get away from the light.

The same light that bathed the surroundings in a warm, golden hue, casting intricate patterns and shadows on the walls.

The air seemed to hum with a soothing energy that calmed Kyle's heart, and it was as if he was being controlled because even though his bloodline was getting restless and he could notice the layer of darkness that was trying to swallow the light, he took a small hesitant step forward toward the formless entity that was made of light.

In that very moment, a familiar yet extremely cold voice sounded above him that sent chills down his spine.

"Don't you dare. It's mine."

Kyle snapped his head up and only then did he notice the pair of obsidian eyes staring down at him. Aze was floating in mid-air, his body enveloped by the same darkness that trapped the ethereal light. Moreover, the man's eyes... they held a clear warning that if Kyle took even a single step forward, he would die.

Kyle halted in his tracks and stared at the formless entity that gave him a profound sense of peace, as if all his worries and fears were momentarily lifted. But it was struggling to break free from the darkness, and after Kyle paused in his actions, the spirit let out a sharp noise as if frustrated.

The space around the spirit responded to its struggle, and numerous glistening plants sprouted from the ground.

The energy from the plants was absorbed by the spirit, causing the land beneath Kyle's feet to start trembling. In that moment, he heard Aze speak up again with an unbothered voice.

"This place is going to collapse."

"?"

Kyle's eyes widened as he took a step back. He frantically looked around to find a path he could use to leave the area. In the end, the only place that could lead him outside was the place he originally dropped from. He immediately ran toward the narrow tunnel he fell from.

The tunnels walls were slippery, but he was grateful that Hubert had made him climb something similar and deeper before. He easily dug his fingers into the sand to climb up, allowing him to exit the hollow space.

His mind was a mess because too many things were happening at the same time. Not to mention that strange light... it looked so dazzling that he had the urge to absorb it inside him.

'No! I don't even know what that thing is! Not to mention, did it just control my mind...? Don't tell me it wanted to swallow me just like the energy from the plants!? Fuck!'

Chapter 478 Just seven more to go

Azazeal's eyes traveled toward the tunnel Kyle's figure disappeared into, and he let out a hum as he gazed back at the spirit whose form shrank inside the layer of darkness.

"How sly aren't we?

"You wanted to secretly consume a part of the essence present within his body and gave him a bit of spiritual energy in return? Can you even compare yourself with that cold, threatening thing inside his body?"

His gaze sharpened when the spirit ceased its struggle and stilled, as if it grasped the mistake it would have committed had he dared to touch the essence.

"Oh, you realized it on your own? The fact that even though he is weak and you can easily control him right now... you would have lost a lot if you had tried to touch that thing within his body."

"I have to admit that you indeed managed to perfectly conceal your presence from his essence and even made sure his essence would show itself on its own after sensing the vast spiritual energy inside the mountain."

"But it's a pity that you forgot to consider the fact that even though his body is weak, the essence in his body is purer than the one you possess."

Azazeal clenched his fist, and the spirit emitted a loud noise before the hollow space began to crumble, with dust and debris falling to fill it completely.

However, the floating man stayed completely unfazed and observed as the spirit shrank in size inside the darkness until it transformed into a dark ball and obediently landed on his palm.

"Just seven more to go, and I can finally shatter the barrier preventing me from reaching them once again."

In the next moment, the ball exploded into limitless energy that flowed into his body, only to transform into darkness... But he heard it clearly as another crack appeared in the barrier he was so eager to shatter.

Azazeal's form vanished from the space just a split second before it crumbled entirely, causing the entire mountain to resonate with a deafening rumble.

Instantly, the shape of the mountain underwent a drastic transformation as numerous large rocks cascaded from all directions towards the ground.

In the next second, he appeared beneath the sky that had started to turn dark compared to before when he and Kyle sat together atop the mountain. His eyes traveled downward only to pause at the silver-haired human who was busy descending the mountain.

"His speed has increased."

Kyle leaped in a different direction to dodge a massive rock hurtling down from above. He then seized a long, cascading gray plant and covered a significant distance within seconds by letting his body fall while keeping his hand around the plant.

Azazeal followed his every movement before he vanished and his feet landed at the base of the mountain where Kyle would arrive after a while. In that very moment, low growls and many rustle shook all the trees surrounding the mountain.

"The worst case... did these monsters gather due to the spiritual energy the spirit let out in the air."

He watched as countless pairs of glowing eyes blinked behind the trees, and many creatures without a defined shape, with a color similar to molten steel, emerged from the trees to encircle the mountain from all directions.

Their bodies were constantly shifting and flowing, like liquid metal in motion, and Azazeal could sense many more were approaching in the same direction.

But even though the manaless beasts spotted him, they didn't dare to approach him, almost as if they were intimidated by his mere presence.

"They have keen instincts. It seems they can instinctively discern what poses a threat and what benefits them."

He remarked and looked up at Kyle, who was descending the mountain and nearing the very area teeming with beasts, each possessing strength no lower than a pseudo-divine rank.

"I already knew he chose the worst path, even worse than the three I predicted. But will he survive? I can't seem to predict if he will... Should I watch? It's not like I have something urgent to do."

As Azazeal stood in that place, he remembered how just a while ago, he warned Kyle not to approach the spirit.

It wasn't because he thought Kyle might absorb the spirit because he knew the human's body was still too weak to handle even a fraction of the spirit's boundless energy. Besides, Kyle had not even grasped spiritual energy yet. He stopped Kyle because he sensed that the essence in the human's body was becoming restless after encountering the spirit, who was eager to exchange a part of itself with Kyle for a part of his essence.

"It seems his bloodline cares more about itself than its host... Or maybe it simply can't bear to part with Kyle, even though it hasn't fully merged with his body yet."

"It was really a surprise when I sensed a threat from his body — not directed towards me but at the spirit."

Azazeal closed his eyes but he stepped back to give Kyle enough space to pass when he sensed his presence. Kyle's feet screeched to a halt not because he also saw Azazel but because of the countless manaless beasts in front of him.

Kyle's eyes dilated as he let out a dry, strained laugh while staring at the beasts closing in on him from all directions.

"Tell me this... is a joke!?"

He sprinted towards the mountain to ascend once more, his heart pounding in his chest. Overwhelmed by panic, he didn't even care about Aze's presence and why the beasts didn't move towards the man.

Kyle's breathing was ragged, his clothes completely drenched in sweat because he had been struggling against the mountain's gravitational pull all this while. Moreover, due to rolling rocks, he

had to exert more pressure on his body as he knew he would suffer a lot if he was just a little bit careless.

But no one could fathom the depth of his anger when he caught an amused glint in Aze's eyes, the same eyes that had once again regained their usual purple color as they observed his struggle.

Chapter 479 Just what the hell are you?

Kyle clenched his fists so tightly that his knuckles turned white. He realized his pace had slowed because his body was tired.

In that very moment, several manaless beasts stamped their bodies on the ground before launching themselves towards Kyle, aiming to crush him under their weight.

He quickly leaped in a different direction, causing his body to tumble down towards the mountain's base once more.

A sharp gasp escaped his mouth as he crossed his arms to protect his head before, with a sudden burst of strength, he kicked a nearby rock to jump in mid-air, only to land on the ground in the midst of the beasts again.

This time, his way was blocked, with numerous beasts stationed on the path leading to the mountain's top.

Kyle let out an angry laugh, a vein throbbing on his forehead as he stared at the many monsters surrounding him.

The tips of his hair glistened with sweat and he knew there was no way he could defeat so many of them together without mana... not to mention he doesn't even have a weapon.

He had battled a few manaless beasts before, but Hubert had warned him to stay away from them because they have a taste for flesh and devour anything with life. Also, due to their undefined body shapes, it was extremely challenging to kill them, as their only vulnerable spot was their heart, always concealed within their flowing bodies.

But instead of attacking the monster nearest to him who leaped toward him, Kyle tilted his body and clenched his fist before dashing toward Aze to punch him.

"You bastard, just what the hell are you!?!?"

He shouted with a loud voice as he watched Aze blink, as if the man was surprised because of his actions.

Kyle's eyes trembled as his fist phased through the man's body, who tilted his head to stare at him before Kyle sensed that his speed had slowed down. No... he realized with dread that it wasn't his speed that had slowed, but the man opposite him had become so fast that he wasn't able to see what happened next.

He only felt a sharp pain on his forehead that felt strangely similar to a quick flick, before his body was hurled backward and collided with numerous beasts, who were also pushed back into the distance solely from the sheer force.

Kyle let out a sharp scream as one of the beasts opened its massive jaw and bit down on his leg. His mind was spinning due to the pain that stemmed from his forehead as he desperately struggled to

crawl away from the monsters, whose numbers increased with each passing second to crowd around his body.

Amidst the chaos, and his vision that was getting blurry due to the pain engulfing his entire body, he noticed Aze standing in the distance, watching the scene with a face that held no emotion whatsoever.

Not even pity... it almost felt like the man's presence was just a mere illusion. Or else how could someone be so cruel to watch such a sight and not even flinch?

Kyle's chest tightened... right now, he hated it so much that he was starting to like Aze's presence around him. The man would always disappear but he would also come back for a few hours. That's why Kyle believed even though Aze was mysterious, still they had gotten just a little closer.

"I thought.. we were friends...?"

The words just slipped out instinctively from his mouth as he pushed his hand inside one of the monster's bodies to crush its heart, only to be restrained once again by the many others as they pressed their weight on him. In the end, only a single thought remained in his head that he needed to stay alive.

He sensed the cold sensation that tried to alleviate his pain or maybe heal the piling injuries on his body, but it wasn't helping as he screamed when more and more monsters bit down on his body.

Azazeal watched the scene and he caught Kyle's faint words, which nearly vanished into the air in a fleeting moment.

"Friends? Of course, we are from the moment I reached out my hand to you, even though I despise the very presence of life. But must I intervene simply because we are friends... especially when I already know that we would clash in the future because even though we are similar in many aspects, our goals are vastly different."

"Wouldn't it be wiser to get rid of you to prevent any more trouble?"

He narrowed his eyes because Kyle's survival was getting harder with each passing second. If this continues, he knew the human wouldn't survive.

"Well, he won't die because his bloodline can save his soul even if he lost his body. But it would take too much time for it to restructure a new body for its host... So, I wonder how it's going to save you."

That's the reason why he couldn't finish Kyle himself. Not until the human had full command over the essence inside his body, or else it would always forcefully interfere to save itself.

All of a sudden, Azazeal tilted his head slightly to gaze into the distance when he sensed someone familiar watching the scene just like him.

"Oh...? It seems that even though I wasn't able to predict this future, he already foresaw that this was going to happen. But why is it that even though you knew about it, you weren't able to change it?"

Azazeal shifted his gaze away from the faint figure of the familiar silver-haired human who stood frozen in his spot, with horror evident on his face as he watched his own self screaming, and

observed the land that had lost its color due to numerous manaless beasts crowding the place, getting drenched in blood.

The silver-haired human jolted when he noticed Azazeal's back, who watched the scene just like him but didn't help the person who desperately needed it.

Azazeal opened his mouth and uttered a few words that traveled through the curtain of time, resonating inside the ears of the person who had just appeared to see the future that had yet to unfold.

"Are you looking my future friend?"

Chapter 480 Should I give it back or not?

Azazeal wanted to say more, but before he could, he sensed the faint figure behind him vanish into thin air. He glanced back to stare at the empty space, only then did he sense that another person was approaching this place.

"Oh... now I see how you will make it through."

He locked eyes with the blue pupils of the old man who had just appeared on the scene. In an instant, Hubert's eyes chilled as he surveyed the multitude of monsters and the blood that stained the land crimson.

Hubert moved so quickly that his figure blurred as he effortlessly dodged every monster obstructing his way. In that very second, he released his spiritual energy to send the monsters crowding the blood soaked land in various directions. His breath hitched in his throat as he took in Kyle's condition... the human's entire body bore brutal wounds, and the old man could even make out a few bones exposed where the flesh had been devoured by the monsters.

"No... how could this happen!?"

He screamed and channeled his spiritual energy to envelop Kyle's body entirely.

"I just told you to go and meditate under the pressure! So why didn't you flee when you encountered the monsters!?"

Hubert's eyes widened when his spiritual energy was repelled by the human's body. But before he could utter another word, he noticed patches of shimmering ice forming on Kyle's skin... and no one could describe his shock when he saw how the ice began to heal the human's wounds before his eyes at a speed comparable to a supreme-level treasure. No! Maybe nothing could match that speed as new flesh started to emerge on Kyle's exposed bones, who had passed out after enduring intense pain.

He calmed his heart and lifted Kyle's body before swiftly moving him away from the area as he observed more and more monsters crowding the space.

"What in the world is happening!? I went to check the village because of the monsters' unusual behavior, but why are so many gathering in this place!?"

Hubert's eyes caught sight of Aze as he passed by the man's side, and he noticed with a sharp intake of breath that not a single monster dared to approach Aze.

'He is stronger than me!'

He felt angry and wanted to grab the man's collar to question what he was doing just watching while Kyle was going through such a tragedy, but he knew that getting Kyle to a safe place was the most important thing right now.

Kyle needed treatment, even though the strange ice had begun to heal the human's body, it couldn't heal the emotional scars that this incident would leave on the human's heart!

Azazeal watched as the old man left from the corners of his eyes before he moved towards the blood-covered land.

The monsters surrounding him quickly backed away to make way for him. He took one step, then another, before pausing beside an ordinary notebook soaked in blood. The book cover was damaged, and the pages were scattered on the ground. The writing on them had almost become unreadable.

Azazeal looked down, and in that very moment, the scattered pages began to float, and the blood on them started to drift away. The notebook then started to revert back to its original state, completely free of any blood. Finally, it gently landed on Azazeal's palm.

He opened it in his hand and read the content but didn't understand much because everything was written in riddles. However, while flipping through the pages, his eyes caught a few words written in a corner with a glaring circle around them to show their importance. Azazeal raised an eyebrow at the human audacity as he ran his thumb over the circled text.

(The five shadow generals, you need to kill them, including the man named Azazeal, even if you forget everything.)

Azazeal slammed the notebook shut in his hand as he stared in the distance where Hubert had disappeared.

"Should I give it back or not?"

He had spent a lot of time on this land. But the journey had been fruitful because he had finally obtained another celestial spirit after spending many years in seclusion due to the lack of any leads guiding him towards the last of them.

Out of nowhere, a thought popped into his head, and he rubbed his chin, pondering it before he began walking towards the same place where Hubert had disappeared.

"I suppose using him a bit more isn't such a bad idea. After all, isn't helping each other what friends are for, right?"

His figure disappeared as he advanced another step before he reappeared outside the house of the old couple who had cared for Kyle previously. The scene was chaotic, with Hazel urgently instructing her husband to fetch water and a few other items that Hubert had requested upon his arrival with Kyle's bloodied body. The old man refused to tell the couple what had occurred and just began treating Kyle.

Azazeal landed before Hazel, who freaked out and let out a sharp gasp after seeing his figure descend from the sky.

The old woman's eyes were wide with shock as she pointed her finger at the familiar man, wanting to know how the heck he could float when the air lacked mana and divine energy! But Azazeal ignored her, and before she could stop him, his figure blurred and he entered the house.

After a few seconds, he paused in the doorway of the room where Kyle was present because Hubert noticed him. The old man glared at him with seething eyes, and started shouting.

"Leave immediately! I don't care how powerful you are, but if you dare to take a single step into this room, I will fight you to the end! I am completely certain that you played a part in Kyle's current condition!"

Azazeal gazed at the man before his eyes shifted towards the human lying on the bed in the center of the room.

He could sense that Kyle was beginning to regain consciousness, likely due to the old man placing damp cloths on his forehead, where a deep scar was visible.

Hubert grabbed a nearby chair. He was ready to throw it at Aze and get into a fight with the man to make him leave the No Mana Land when he also noticed a slight movement in Kyle's body and swiftly turned his gaze back to the silver-haired man.

Kyle's head was pounding as he slowly fluttered his eyes open, tinged with red, to stare at a ceiling that looked too blurry. The icy layer that he could vividly feel all around his body made him conscious of the fact that his bloodline was healing his injuries at a speed that he had never noticed before.

However, he never imagined that the first person he would see after barely opening his eyes would be the exact man who just moments ago watched him being eaten by monsters but did nothing at all.