

Hell Forged

Chapter 1 : Another Man's Trash is Another's Damnation

Kaleth gripped the edges of the sink as he gasped for breath, desperately trying to hold down the bile that threatened to come up.

Did...did he just kill a man? He just wanted to punish him, get some revenge, he never wanted to...

Kaleth wretched into the sink, the contents black as ink.

This can't be happening. He must have died and gone to hell. It was the only explanation. He never survived that night with the clergy. This was his personal hell for being such a weak, inferior, worthless...

"You are far from worthless, and even further from hell," the words came from his mouth, but they weren't his. They had an air of confidence and power. They couldn't be his words when spoken with such conviction.

Kaleth looked up at his reflection. In the mirror was his face, only a shadowy aura surrounded it. The shadow wasn't there in reality, but the mirror showed what was true. Red eyes hovered over his blue ones making an unnatural purple where they overlapped. He still looked like himself otherwise though. A scrawny and lanky drake, black scales with crisscrossing orange markings, white under belly, dull gray horns, and a mop of blond hair.

"We are one Kaleth..."

“Shut Up!” Kaleth smashed his head against the mirror, the glass splintering. He felt no pain. He was promised that much, but it didn’t mean he was bulletproof. Blood, or more accurately, black ichor, trickled down his face as he ground his teeth together.

“This isn’t real, this can’t be real.” He repeated, each time the words became less believable as his voice cracked. “Please...this can’t...it can’t be real...”

His passenger was silent, obeying him for once and shutting up. If only to torture him by withholding answers. He could feel his muzzle smile involuntarily as that darkness inside him grinned. Kaleth grit his teeth until the smile fell off his face. It didn’t happen. It couldn’t have happened.

Just then Kaleth felt a squirming in his gut. His hand went down to feel the writhing of that unwilling presence he had stolen. It writhed in agony inside of him, begging to be released from the inky darkness of his blackened soul.

“Stop it, I don’t want this.”

Silence.

“Speak to me!” Kaleth demanded.

“I thought you told me to shut up?” his own voice mocked him.

“Stop it, he’s suffering. He’s becoming undone.”

“Isn’t that what you wanted? For him to suffer as you did?”

“No!”

“Yes,” His voice spoke his dark truth. “You wanted him to feel the same fear of the abyss as you when he slipped that blade between your ribs. The fear of the end.”

“That’s different. I didn’t know if there was an afterlife. We’re taking his away.”

“You’re sparing him from hell,” his voice gave him that as consolation. “People like him are given far worse where I come from.”

“But he was just doing what he thought was right.”

“But he was wrong,” his possessor countered.

“Still...”

“I couldn’t stop what comes next even if I wanted to.” The voice chuckled.

Kaleth looked back up into the mirror. The shattered glass fracturing his image into an array of his shadowy self and mortal body.

“Demons like you lie all the time,” Kaleth huffed.

“I promised I would never lie to you,” the demon took on a cocky grin. Kaleth knew it to be the truth, but he couldn’t accept it.

“This will damn me,” Kaleth muttered.

“You were damned before,” his demon reasoned.

“I still could have had a chance at paradise,” Kaleth felt tears rolling down his face, the only human thing about him right now as they streaked paths through the black corrupted blood.

“I guess you’re going to have to make your paradise *here* on earth,” the demon shrugged his shoulders.

“This place was never made for me. It’s just one painful reminder after the other that I’m not enough. I will never be enough...”

“Then why do you care if this world burns?”

“Because it’s not mine to burn!” Kaleth punched the mirror, the remainder of the glass falling away and exposing the dark back of the glass. Just like him. Underneath it all he was rotten. Useless. Only good at supporting others and never in the leading role.

How did he get here?

Kaleth sat at the bus station just outside the post office. He had emptied his post office box and was now tossing the junk mail into the trash bin, flicking each worthless slip of paper out and into the garbage. You’d think by now they would have a recycling bin just outside the post office with how much junk came through, but no. Just an old dirty garbage bin filled with half empty coffee cups caked in grime next to a bus stop bench.

Kaleth was finally down to two letters, one he dreaded and the other he clawed at for hope. The first was an eviction notice. He was behind in rent and had lost his job. He used to work at the ministry of magic’s mail room, but those success stories of working your way up through the mail room don’t exist anymore. He couldn’t get experience, and they sure as hell didn’t pay well enough for him to get a degree. So, in the end, he mixed up two very important letters and was thrown out on his ass. He had marks against him from previous offences. Convicted of robbery and petty theft. It was just so he could eat, but that didn’t matter on a job application.

The dragon tossed the eviction notice in the trash. He didn’t have shit there anyway. No, he wanted to be a government sanctioned wizard. It was his dream since he was a hatchling. All his cousins

and family had some innate magic to them, being dragons and all. If he could get into this program, he wouldn't need to worry about finding a place to live. He would be in boarding school and honing his powers. Given, he hadn't shown any aptitude for magic, not so much as a puff of smoke or spark, but people had been let in on potential alone. If you were a dragon, it was pretty much a guaranteed thing.

Kaleth tore open the letter and unfolded it. He didn't read much behind the giant red stamp that read "Denied" across it. He had undergone testing at a facility to check his compatibility, they even detected dormant potential, but this letter basically said that potential wasn't something they had the capacity to draw out. Even his *potential* was too much of a burden to deal with.

He balled up the letter and threw it in the trash along with his last hope. This world wasn't made for him. Maybe he could get a couple good night's sleep in his shitty apartment before he was kicked out. The buss was late picking him up, but it didn't matter. He had nowhere to be, and no one was waiting for him anywhere. He was alone.

Completely alone.

Kaleth sat down and leaned his head against the window. The cool glass a stinging reminder of reality while his mind and heart fought for who would feel the most guilt. Then his hand brushed against something. He pulled it up, more out of knee jerk reaction than actually intending to. It was a crumpled up pamphlet wedged between the seat and the hull of the buss. With a brush of his thumb he unfolded just enough to read the bit at the bottom.

Need Salvation? Call 555-...

Kaleth let the paper fall to the bench beside him. It wasn't anything.

Or was it?

He pulled out the pamphlet again and unfolded it. It was about a convent that took in weary souls and helped them get back up on their feet. It even had rites for admission into the priesthood. All that was required was an aptitude for magic.

The convent was only a few more stops down from where he was going. His land lord was probably going to change the locks in the morning. What did he have to lose?

Quite a bit actually, all things considered. He still had his health, no particular debt that mattered, and a long life ahead of him. This drake had quite a few beats left in his heart. A heartbeat that would eventually be cut short, but that's not what's important at this moment. The important thing is that slip of paper that someone scrunched up and left on the bus, that little sin of littering was the trigger for this world altering event. No one ever thinks their actions will have drastic consequences, but it's these small things that allow demons to play. Had the reader actually taken to heart what that pamphlet stated, maybe this all could have been avoided, but here we are. The dragon's stop came and went, and he was still on the bus.

He was headed to the end of his life, a bus to hell that would drop him off at its gates.

"So you're interested in the priesthood?" The man before him asked. He was a bulldog, large and imposing and dressed in a black suit-like vestments, bible held under his arm. Kaleth had come to the convent, an old school that had been converted into a place of worship, an old gymnasium a chapel and classrooms chambers for its followers.

"I...um, something like that. I really have nowhere else to go." Kaleth confessed.

“In times of struggle, when you think all your doors are closed, God gives us a window.” The priest put his hand on the dragon’s head, patting it gently. It was the warmest thing Kaleth had felt in a long time.

“Uh, Father...”

“Tobias,” the bulldog answered.

“Father Tobias,” Kaleth corrected himself. “What does it take to be part of your convent?”

“You were always part of our father’s flock, and you will be safe here. There is a home for all who seek it.”

“I...I get that. Not to be rude, but what do I really have to do?” Kaleth was particular about deals and their details. Had he been brought up properly, he may have known why, but it was written off as anxiety. He also wasn’t the most religious person. He didn’t even know if there was an afterlife, let alone a merciful god.

“I understand. You don’t get something for nothing,” Father Tobias answered. “You’ll be tasked with cleaning and meal prep. Those are the chores we have available right now. I’ll also do some basic magic dowsing to find where your talents and innate magic’s will be best suited in the clergy. Exorcisms and blessings can’t be done unless you have some magical aptitude and attunement to light and holy properties. Come with me.” The bulldog said it like a command, but it was more like a warm welcome to the drake.

Father Tobias had a good reputation amongst the clergy, but he was kind of an upstart. He used to be a soldier overseas, but settled down with the church afterwards. Some say he had five confirmed kills and that he lights a candle for them every day at mass. He was also someone the world chewed up and spat out, and now all he looked forward to was building a career in the clergy doing good.

The two went down a long hallway lined with lockers. Places for the visitors and people going through religious rites could store their things. Some of the lockers had padlocks, but nothing seemed worth stealing here. Not that Kaleth thought of that kind of thing...often.

They reached an open office where various other rooms were connected to. Probably where the school's secretary would have been, but now was converted into a neat parlor for the bulldog's office and personal quarters. Father Tobias pulled out his bible and flipped over a few pages, the text filled with scribbles and notes, highlighted sections, and tags attached to the pages.

"Take a seat, son," Tobias instructed, and Kaleth did so. The bulldog took out a metal plate, a candle, and a sewing needle.

"Have you ever done a blood test before?" Tobias asked. Of course this wasn't a blood test to identify blood type, but rather to pinpoint magic attunement.

"I did, but they just drew some of my blood and took it to be tested in a lab. I never really got to see the results."

"Then you know I'm not doing this for no reason," Tobias snapped his fingers above the candle, the wick lighting up. He then ran the needle through the flame to sanitize it. "I just need you to prick your finger with this and put a drop of blood on the plate. It's been blessed and should identify your attunement."

"S-Sure..." Kaleth had heard of blessed magic. The idea kind of creeped him out. You basically become a vessel for holy magic and then objects you touch become enchanted, or blessed as the clergy called it. He didn't like the idea of handing his body over to other forces, even if they were good.

Kaleth pricked his finger easy enough and squeezed out a drop of blood over the disk. The first one missed and hit the table and Kaleth promptly apologized. Father Tobias just smiled warmly and

encouraged him to continue. The drake then put his finger just above the disk and let the blood fall onto it.

Kaleth was so used to disappointment at this point that he hardly expected anything to happen. At first, it didn't. The blood rested there as a ruby droplet, stagnant and unmoving as the priest handed Kaleth a band-aid for his finger. As soon as he put the bandage on though, a gentle hum could be heard. It was like a wine glass singing as the plate vibrated.

"Well, we should get a reading soon," Father Tobias leaned closer and blew out the candle, splattering some wax and filling the room with the scent of smoke.

"Does it always do this?"

"Only if the blood holds magic. We'll have a better idea in just..." Tobias never finished that thought as the plate started to rattle. The gentle hum was started to rise in pitch, going from a singing hum to the screech of a kettle. That plate screamed as the blood droplet boiled on its surface like acid. Then, the plate snapped in half, going silent.

"By God in heaven..." Tobias gasped.

"Is...is that bad?" Kaleth asked.

"You're a..." Tobias paused and cleared his throat, picking up the halves of the plate. The only thing remaining of the blood there was a scorched mark. "Don't you worry about it, boy." Tobias answered.

"I...I'm sorry about the plate."

“D-Don’t be,” Tobias forced a smile on his face. He wasn’t mad, this was a look of someone who was hiding something. He was afraid. If Kaleth wasn’t so self-absorbed in his apology, he might have picked up on that. “It’s just a plate.”

“Okay, can you fix it?”

“Oh, no. The blessing on it was scorched away by...” Tobias shook his head. “Sister Margret?” He shouted. A young gray cat walked into the office.

“Yes Father?” She said with a beaming smile.

“Show Kaleth here to a room. He’ll be staying the night with us until we can figure things out.”

“Really Father!” Kaleth smiled. “I can really stay?”

“Of course my boy.” Tobias answered. “You can stay here as long as needed. Forget about the plate. I’ll have to do something else to read you later tonight.”

With a litany of thank-you’s and gracious flattery, Kaleth was brushed out the door. As soon as Tobias was alone, he grabbed the phone and dialed out.

“We have one...of course he doesn’t know. He’s some nobody from the streets. No one will miss him...of course...of course...and I’ll get the credit? I did the work of reaching out to the community...that’s right! See you tonight.”

Tobias smiled as he hung up the phone. If this all worked out, he would be moving up in the clergy.

And all it would cost was the life of one stupid dragon, or more accurately...

...a kinling.

“So, all I got to do is lay on this table?” Kaleth questioned Tobias.

“Yes,” Tobias answered. “You just need to stay still while I perform the rites, and it should reveal your attunement,” *and other things*, the bulldog kept that last part to himself. “Now go on. Get up on the table and lay back.”

“Let’s get this going, we have other important things to attend to,” the rat in the corner said. He was a tall, tired looking man. He wore the same clothes as Tobias, only he had a necklace with a golden crest hanging around his neck.

“Brother Mathias, please,” Tobias chided his colleague. “These things are delicate matters, and Kaleth doesn’t need to be pressured.”

“If you say so,” Father Mathias rolled his eyes, one a milky white while the other an icy blue. “I don’t see anything special about him. Nothing particularly...well...ya know.”

“Don’t pay him any mind,” Father Tobias reassured Kaleth. “He’s simply here to observe and assist if things get out of hand.”

“Out of hand?” Kaleth was starting to get a sense of unease around these two. Given, Father Mathias was much less inviting than Father Tobias, but even the bulldog was giving him sidewise glances like he didn’t quite trust the drake. Like Kaleth would do anything that would jeopardize the only home he now had. That’s why, when Tobias reassured him it was for everyone’s protection in case his magic was unstable, he believed the bulldog.

“You remember when the plate split?” Tobias continued. “We need to have someone here in case your magic can’t be controlled.”

“Oh...yeah. I guess that make sense.” Kaleth muttered.

“Tick-Tock,” Mathias said in his shadowy corner. Instead of responding, Tobias simply helped Kaleth up onto the table. A white cloth had been put over it, the soft linen was nice against Kaleth’s scales, yet held the faintest smell of bleach. They had set up everything in one of the classroom chambers so as to have some privacy.

“So what do I do now?” Kaleth looked over at Father Tobias as he opened that worn bible to a page marked with a few sticky tabs.

“Just be still and look forward towards the heavens.”

Kaleth was confused about this kind of dowsing rite, but what other choice did he have? He laid there as Father Tobias started reading something in Latin. Latin always sounded dull to the drake. It felt weirdly rhythmic and yet out of tempo all at the same time. The cadences were off and was just a stringed jumble of nonsense. That was, until he started to understand it. It’s not like he knew what the words were, but rather, that the words Tobias was reading were dangerous.

That couldn’t be though, right? It must be his imagination. He didn’t know Latin, and he certainly hadn’t ever touched a bible, let alone read from it. It was when those feelings became actual words that alarm bells rang in his ears.

“...take this vessel, I bind you to flesh and bone. Demon lord and hellish fire of desire, take on this body so that you will become mortal...”

“What the fuck,” Kaleth attempted to bolt up, but he was held fast. His body was somehow bound to that table, glowing runes of white light that melded between holy golds and sky blues shone through that table cloth.

“No, no, little kinling,” Mathias clicked his tongue as held up a glowing finger that mirrored that holy light. “Don’t move.” He then turned his words towards Tobias. “The seal on his magic is cracking. Hurry before more leaks out.” Tobias didn’t answer, but rather picked up the pace of his nervous chanting.

“...Take on this bone, partake of this blood, and embody this creature of demonic origin...”

“What are you doing! Stop!” Kaleth was panicking, fighting against his invisible restraints.

“Father Tobias, please stop! What are you doing?”

The cloth beneath Kaleth scorched and burned, the holy and demonic energies combatting one another in response to Kaleth’s distress. Beneath the fabric was an altar held up by an angel who stood atop a mountain of dead snakes. The etching on it glowed with holy energy. If you had Mathias’ blind eye, you could see the hands of energy pushing down on the drake.

“...consume his soul as offering and damn yourself in this vessel of man. This lamb a sacrifice and final meal...”

Tobias held a blade. It wasn’t anything special. A simple kitchen knife with a wooden handle. The holy light gleamed against the steel. Kaleth didn’t care where the blade came from, the sight of that blade was like looking down the barrel of a firing squad. He knew what that was. It was a ritual blade, and he was the lamb on the altar.

Kaleth screamed, shrill and fearful. He struggled against his attacker’s magic, but he didn’t know how. So he panicked. A sudden burning ignited inside of Kaleth, like a damn breaking and lava pouring forth. He screamed and flames shot out of his mouth, his dragon ancestry mixing with his demonic powers. The orange, crisscrossing marks on his back glowed like parchment that held flames behind it. His mouth was forced shut, flames forcing their way through his nostrils.

“Hurry up Tobias!” Mathias shouted at his colleague.

“Return to the dark nothing that you were born!” Tobias snarled and plunged the knife down into Kaleth’s chest.

An impossibly cold shard sliced between Kaleth’s ribs. Was he just stabbed? Instantly all the lights faded and Kaleth lay there on the altar.

“Father...” Kaleth never finished his sentence as he coughed up a wad of blood and fell back.

“You fucking idiot!” Mathias snarled through his buck teeth. “You fucked up the rite!” He threw his bible down on the ground and spat in the other direction.

“I-I did everything you told me to!” Tobias shot back. “I performed the rite by the book. The demon should have taken on the vessel...”

“Well, he didn’t.” Mathias quickly regained his composure. “At least we have one less hell mage to worry about.”

As the two argued and discussed what to do with the body, Kaleth was...cold. His entire body felt numb. He even fucked up being a sacrifice...he was worthless. He would die having accomplished nothing, even his death wasn’t worth the effort the two clergy men put into it.

I’m...sorry..., was all he could think.

Don’t be, another voice echoed through his head. *You’ll do just fine.*

Get up...

Kaleth gasped, his lungs filling with air. Putrid air at that. He coughed as week old coffee grounds and rotting chicken bones got in his muzzle. The bitter taste of rot filled his mouth and the disgusting feel of wet, cold, jelly covered him from head to toe as torn plastic trash bags weighed him down.

Revolting...

Kaleth bolted up, the trash parting as he fought the urge to wretch. He was wet, he was cold, he was steeped in trash runoff, and he was naked. Anything he may have called his was gone. He may have thought to search the dumpster for some rags or his missing ID, but he couldn't stand to be in the dumpster for another second. He leaped out of the trash and onto the pavement.

He was behind a butcher shop, thought Kaleth thought he was in hell. He didn't want to think about where he was or what covered him. He just wanted it off.

We can do that...

"Who said that?" Kaleth must have looked mad having jumped out of a dumpster covered in a week's worth of animal byproduct and shouting such nonsense, but thankfully there was no one around. Thankfully, for more than one reason.

Kaleth's body moved of its own volition. He gave a surprise scream before he took in a breath and the muscles in his back tensed. The orange markings on his back shot flames out. He was forced to stand there while his body scorched the remains off him, the other trash steaming off his scales and crackling off like water flicked onto a hot stove. His body was quickly cleansed of the odor that had cloaked him. The smell of sulfur and brimstone was a trade up, but it left him with more questions than answers.

"What the fuck..." he muttered. "I'm going crazy."

“Far from it, Kaleth,” he spoke, but the words weren’t his. He didn’t say that. He was about to go screaming through the streets in his birthday suit, but thankfully his dark passenger came prepared.

“Stop,” he ordered, his body going rigid. “Stay calm. While you were hovering between life and death, I managed to slip on into your body. Luckily that two-bit priest jumped the gun and stabbed you before I was bound to you, or we both would be rotting in that dumpster.”

“You’re a demon,” Kaleb whispered. “I’m...I’m possessed by a demon?”

“You’re bound to a demon,” his voice stayed the same, but it was far more confident when the demon spoke. “It’s very similar, but I can’t force you to do anything you don’t want to.”

“You’re forcing me to stay still right now.”

“What you desire more than running wild, are answers,” the demon murred. “You desire a lot of things.”

“Get out of my head,” Kaleth demanded.

“The one thing I can’t do. Only the one who bound us can unbind us. That is, if they even know how.”

“F-Father Tobias...” Kaleth put a hand on his chest. Instantly he felt the scar where the blade had plunged into him. Where Tobias had *stabbed* him.

“Ah, anger. That’s something I can work with,” the demon rumbled.

“Stop, I don’t want to hear it.”

“Yes you do,” the demon called his lie. “You want to get revenge on that priest who was using you, and to unbind us.”

“There must be some other explanation as to why...”

“He stabbed us?” the demon finished Kaleth’s thought. “He did it because the clergy promote demon slayers. The bigger the demon, the bigger the payout. They were using you to get ahead, just like everyone else in your life.”

“A payout...” Kaleth felt his own words snarl between his lips. He had questions, especially if this demon was poking around in his head while he was out.

“Ah...you want him to suffer...like you did?”

“No...I...”

“You want to be a good little drake. A kind soul, so innocent to how beaten and bruised you are.” The demon mocked him before he chuckled. “I can help you fight back. I promise it’ll be painless.”

“I know better than to make deals with demons,” Kaleth spat.

“This isn’t a deal. It would be my pleasure. That cowardly clergyman was going to kill me too, you know. This one would be on the house. I promise I can’t lie to you with this binding.”

Anger bloomed in Kaleth’s chest. That man...he trusted that damned bulldog! He trusted he would help, and in exchange he stabbed him and left his body to rot in a dumpster.

“Yes,” the demon spoke through Kaleth. “You know what you want. You’ve seen a fraction of what we can do. You may not have fully awakened as a kinling, but we can make do.”

Kaleth thought for a moment. Was he really going to just forgive and forget someone who tried to kill him.

No...

“Will you make him suffer just like I did?”

“I can compound it tenfold,” the demon spoke.

Kaleth started moving. The demon didn't need an answer. The deepest desire in the dragon's scarred heart was the suffering of the man who betrayed him.

Tobias...you will suffer...

Father Tobias didn't get much sleep that night. He woke with a sudden need to pray. For other people, that simply meant he was guilty, but when you are delusional and desperate you find ways of coping that don't harm your ego.

Tobias knelt in the gymnasium before an altar lined with rows of candles. Most of the candles were fresh and unlit, but currently six shown with a young, flickering flame. One more than his usual five.

Tobias was in his pajamas, a wife-beater and fleece pajama pants. The pajama bottoms were baggy and worn, but his wife-beater clung to his chest. Despite his age, he was still very fit. He never lost the training of his army days and kept with his physical routine, though he wasn't as trim as he used to be. A healthy layer of fat hid the definition in those muscles, making them smooth and bulky. His priest clothes typically hid the bulging strength, but Father Tobias didn't need to intimidate people with his bulk. The fear of being damned worked just fine to get people to join his flock.

Right now though, it was his soul being cowed to its knees by fear of damnation. He white knuckled his fingers together in prayer, asking for Kaleth's salvation, but mainly begging for forgiveness

against the stain he had painted on his soul. He had killed an innocent, even if he was a kinling. He messed up and Kaleth died for nothing and was discarded like trash.

“...by the power of heaven and the glory is yours, now and forever. My lord, carry him into the afterlife with all the grace your angels can carry. Let his soul find peace from this world that never allowed him any, and deliver my soul from evil...”

“Amen.”

Tobias' eyes shot open. He knew that voice. It was Kaleth's! Was he giving him forgiveness from the beyond...

“Such a sweet sentiment,” Kaleth said, stepping into view, the candles' light illuminating him. “Your mind is feeble, easily read. A man of war took up the cloth, traded one drill sergeant for another. How cliché.”

“Damn you specter!” Tobias pulled the cross from around his neck, the golden piece no larger than a quarter, but a cross none the less. “Be gone! You will not haunt me in my father's house.”

“Your prayers mean nothing to a god who won't listen.”

Tobias got to his feet and held out the cross to defend himself.

“My God has not abandoned me. I am blessed by the clergy and the grace of the holy mother.”

“Your god is willing to dispatch the infected members of his flock,” Kaleth walked forward, body naked, and scar on his chest. Kaleth took a deep breath and sighed, “and you're rife with corruption.”

“You're not Kaleth, who are you?”

“You may call me, Bereft,” The demon finally uttered a name.

“Foul Demon, what did you do to Kaleth!”

“I-Im here...” Kaleth said.

“Calm down boy,” Bereft spoke. “The grownups are talking.”

“What did you do with Kaleth you demon!”

“Me?” Bereft put a hand over the scar on his head as though he were wounded. “It’s not what I did to the boy. It’s what *you* did.”

“I was only doing my duty! The boy was a kinling, a hell mage in the making! A perfect cage for the likes of you!”

“Lying to yourself? Here? In the presence of your heavenly father?”

“It’s the truth!” Tobias barked back, his feet planting on the ground into a defensive stance.

“A lie of omission if there ever was one,” Bereft huffed. “You only wanted to use Kaleth as a stepping stone to bigger and better things. You were going to summon a demon and bind him to Kaleth, then kill us both.”

“It’s the only way to do it,” Tobias growled.

“It’s the only way *you* know how to do it,” Bereft smiled. “It’s the most cowardly and archaic method. If you were stronger, you could have summoned me and slayed me with the cross you carry. But no, your ambition and pride got in the way. You were so ready to throw this convent behind that you stabbed too soon. Now you’re stained with Kaleth’s blood, and I have him here with me.”

“I’ll free him of you,” Tobias snarled and started to mutter holy prayers. Bereft simply smiled. Nothing happened. Tobias’ eyes went wide and he attempted again.

“Go ahead. Whatever holy energy you had, you spent it earlier, and you haven’t truly repented, so the sin has you cut off from heaven. You’re a mortal, always were, always will be. Weak and spineless, hiding behind figurehead after figurehead. Even the consecration of the convent has been broken because of the blood you spilled on its soil.”

Bereft lifted a wing and waived it over the alter. A gust of wind blew out the candle and caused them to topple. The room was instantly shrouded in darkness. Tobias wasn’t a fool and went for the door, his foot paws padding against the ground as he tried to escape...

...and failed

Bereft tackled the bulldog from behind and immediately put him in a head lock. Bereft wrapped his arms up through the bulldogs under arms and pinned his head down as he wrapped his legs around his waist. Tobias wasn’t an idiot though. He used his strong back and slammed Bereft against the wall. A few of Kaleth’s ribs broke and his skull was rattled, but just as Bereft promised, there would be no pain. Bereft simply laughed.

“It’s going to take a lot more than brow beating me to let go. I’ve got you now, soldier boy.”

Bereft opened his maw and inhaled. Tobias felt fear burn through his body, like someone was pulling his skin off, but instead of pain, it prickled through his body as fear. Bereft chuckled darkly as he licked the bulldog’s neck, his tongue hellishly hot. Bereft inhaled again, breathing in that fear and musk. Tobias was forced to feel fear as something more integral to him than his heart or mind was being drawn from him.

His soul.

Golden light trickled out of Tobias mouth, despite his clenched jaw. A few glittering embers came out of his wedged shut eyes. All of it spiraled into an invisible funnel going into Bereft’s maw. Like

a vial tick, he continued to suck, Tobias' soul tearing away in small little pieces as fear gripped him in full panic. Pain of the soul was fear and despair, and Bereft was going to make Tobias suffer as long as possible.

Wait...I just wanted him to suffer...I didn't...

This is exactly what you want kid, Bereft's voice came out in Kaleth's mind. If you didn't, I wouldn't be able to do it.

But I...oh fuck...

Kaleth got his first taste of a soul. It was so decadent. It was light, fluffy, yet full and meaty. It was like rolling in freshly laundered blankets on a rainy afternoon. It was like drinking honey wine in the summer while someone tirelessly sucked your dick. Aches and pains he didn't know he had melted away. Childhood traumas that caused his ankle to heal wrong snapped back into place and reformed effortlessly.

And still Bereft sucked.

Tobias kept his mouth shut, his own soul filling his mouth with the flavor of dread while it slipped through his clenched teeth. Real tears and bits of his soul trickled through the corners of his eyes. Bereft kept tugging and tugging, more and more of Tobias' resolve melting as he lost control of his limbs. His legs gave out and he fell to the floor, his arms went limp as the pressure in his muzzle grew. He couldn't hold out much longer.

And Bereft knew it.

Bereft forced Tobias on his back, the bulldog's powerful body no longer a threat as he straddled him. Now that he could get a good angle, it was over. Bereft gripped the bulldog by the throat and

sucked. Tobias screamed, his soul shredding to pieces as his maw opened. Golden light poured from his muzzle and into Bereft as he gulped down the life energy of that pathetic priest.

The demon and his handler feasted.

Loud, slurping gulps filled the air as Bereft drank down that soul. Drool dripped from his fangs as the bulldog's energy and potential filled the drake's veins with warmth. They feasted and drank, the flavor so sinful it caused them to cum, Bereft's four inch pecker squirting its pathetic load over the bulldog's chest. Tobias' cries got weaker and weaker until he was simply laying there as golden essence poured out of his eyes and mouth, each gulp causing him to tense as if he were sucker punched; each gulp having a weaker and weaker reaction as the bulldog's life was rapidly stolen from him.

The truth of what Tobias was doing came flooding into Kaleth's mind. He made this convent to sweep the surrounding area of poor souls who might have kin-blood. He was just using this as a front to find kinlings so he could use them to slay demons. And he wasn't the only one either. Plenty of convents participated in this practice, though not openly shared amongst the clergy, it was clearly a front to find and slay demons. Humans desperately trying to be warriors for god while still not having earned their wings.

Kaleth felt rage. He wanted Tobias to suffer. Kaleth snarled around the glowing energy in his maw and gulped down farther. He sucked harder than Bereft ever did, large wads of energy ripping from the bulldog as Kaleth's throat struggled to handle it. The flavor like a syrupy orgasm rolling down his muzzle, tears running down his face as he drank deep.

That's right Kaleth, make him suffer. Bereft egged him on. How many other kinlings and hell mages did he kill in his pursuit of power? How many people had he tricked and lied to? How many other people did he betray?

Kaleth felt the soul ebb a bit, but not because he was done, but because he was strangling Tobias as he drank, another layer of pain and suffering that made Kaleth's dick hard again, the energy of Tobias' soul was a humming energy right in his prostate. It felt good to make Tobias suffer, to make him feel pain, to make him hurt! A large ball of energy forced its way through the murderous grip Kaleth had on that throat. A massive wad of energy cracked the jaw of Tobias as he rolled out of his muzzle and then down Kaleth's gullet.

It was bliss, pure power energy. Like he was swallowing a sun or nuke and feeling its strength burn deep inside him. Kaleth's cum splattered and stained the priest's shirt as he went back to drink more.

But it was over.

Kaleth came to from his frenzy and realized Tobias was an empty husk, his eyes dark empty sockets and his mouth a lifeless hole.

"Bereft! What did you do?"

"I didn't do anything kid," The demon chuckled through his voice, a demonic grin taking over his face. "You're the one who killed him. I just showed you how."

"No...no I didn't...I just wanted him to suffer..."

"And he is. Can't you feel him writhing inside of you?"

"I-I think I'm going to be sick...oh god.."

"God had nothing to do with it kid," Bereft was holding back a deep dark laugh.

Kaleth shuddered, bile threatening to come up. He let go of Tobias' neck and ran, ran to the nearest bathroom as quickly as he could.

That's how we got here, Kaleth panting over a sink full of demon ichor and a shattered mirror.

"Tell me how to separate us," Kaleth felt Tobias' soul writhing in his stomach like a panicked eel.

"Now!"

"You killed the one man who could have told us how." Bereft chuckled. "I could have forced him to do it, but you were having so much fun."

"Put his soul back then, make him fix me."

"His soul is shredded to pieces. His consciousness is the only thing left and that's what's burning in your gullet right now. Nothing can be done about it...unless..."

"What? Tell me!"

"If you finish dissolving his mind, you'll be able to know everything he knew. His soul and life energy are still inside you being assimilated. Once you have his knowledge, you might be able to undo what he did to us yourself."

"What would that do to him?"

"Do you really care? The man was going to condemn your soul to hell in exchange for my death. I don't even know why he was praying for you..."

"What will it do!"

“Damn it, no need to shout. I’m *literally* right here,” Bereft sighed. “He will become nothing. His very energy will be consumed, soul eradicated, unmade into void. Gone. Poof!”

Kaleth fought the need to vomit again.

“But,” Bereft continued. “If we consume him completely, you’ll have every bit of skill and knowledge he did and might be able to undo it yourself.”

“How do I do that?”

“It’s already happening,” Bereft smiled darkly and ran a hand over their chest. Veins pumped pure power into him, his nonexistent muscles swelling into view. A soft four pack formed on that stomach while his pecs bled into existence. He was flat by all regards, but he was well on his way to becoming more. His arms plumped up, a vein running down each to show his soft leanness. His legs plumped up and ass rounded out a bit. Kaleth’s foot claws slid across the tile a little as they expanded.

Bereft gripped their dick and stroked it. Kaleth was so shocked at the sensation pumping through him that he was frozen. Bereft stroked their dick, sliding up and down with the pre that oozed from their cock head. A cock head that was getting thicker, longer, pulsing bigger by the second.

“Fuuuuuck yes,” Bereft groaned as his new vessel feasted on that energy. Tobias’ consciousness was forced down further into his body, digesting it, unbecoming it. That writhing soul was withering as it was pulled in every direction, but not before Bereft had his fun with it. He forced Tobias deep into his taint, that writhing consciousness rolling around like a tongue on his inner pleasure button.

That’s right you fucking shit stain. Your last few moments of existence before I rape over your chances of paradise will be used to lick my fucking asshole! Bereft kept these thoughts to himself, but Kaleth could feel them, the cruelty in Bereft’s intentions. He was making Tobias suffer.

And he liked it.

Tears rolled down his muzzle, a mixture of guilt in his eyes while a demonic grin played at his muzzle.

"I'm sorry..." Kaleth muttered, but Bereft ignored the whimpering pleas.

That consciousness was melting. The eel size going down to a softball, then a gumball, then a pea. With a satisfying clench of his asshole, that consciousness broke and Bereft blasted his load onto the tile. Thick streams of cum shot from that five inch dick and smacked loudly on the floor.

Kaleth on the other hand was fed a horrible truth. Tobias never learned how to break apart a kinling from a demon. Why would he need to know that if he was going to kill them both?

"You knew...didn't you."

"I had a feeling, but I wasn't sure." Bereft huffed. "But I needed something else."

"What could you possibly need?"

Like a jaguar lunging forward and snapping the neck of its prey, Bereft snagged a particular memory from Tobias.

Mathias' location and contact info.

"Our revenge is far from over Kaleth. We're just getting started."