

The sun dipped toward the horizon as I stood by a fresh mound of dirt. Sweat dripped down my forehead, mixing with the dirt on my face as my hands clenched the shovel tightly. The heat of my fever burned within me; even so, I didn't stop. I slaughtered our horses, wrecked the carriage, and nearly killed Usofra after losing control again. After the disaster, I caused, the least I can do is bury the horses that brought us here. As I shoveled the last bit of earth onto the makeshift grave, I couldn't help but try to think of ways to remedy this situation because if I don't find a solution, I may end up killing someone next time, or perhaps I may not be able to return from that state.

"Damn it," I muttered under my breath, wiping sweat from my brow.

As I stared at the grave, my mind drifted to our next stop. According to Namy, we will reach [Oidao] in two days. From what I know, [Oidao] is the second largest city after [Riledo], located near the demon's border, so it's likely to be bustling with adventurers and soldiers. If I were to lose control inside of the city, it would cause a major issue. Even so, we are forced to stop there to get provisions for the road.

"Dox, come on!" Sunshine's high-pitched voice pulled me out of my thoughts. Her tiny form flew next to my face, "Namy and Usofra have already finished preparing the rabbits they caught during the day. You need to eat something if you must walk the next few days. Of course, I will go in the medallion since I don't plan to fly all that distance."

"Alright," I sighed, giving the makeshift grave one last glance before turning my gaze to Sunshine, "Let's go!"

As I followed Sunshine toward the bonfire, my mind began to recount the past three months spent with Namy and Usofra. Though they are demons, I'm now sure that their intentions regarding rescuing Zaine are genuine. They had shown time and time again that they were willing to do whatever it took to continue this long journey to save Zaine, even if it meant putting themselves at risk or dealing with my unpredictable demonic powers. Despite this, I still couldn't bring myself to trust them fully. After all, now I know that betrayals can come from those least expect it. Something that should be self-explanatory, yet I understood its true meaning until it happened to me.

Still, the company of Namy and Usofra has been quite helpful, even though their methods to help me control my demonic power have been less so. What I find interesting is how different they are despite being sisters.

Namy is easy to get along with. She is talkative, and since Namy traveled to many places while still in the service of the current Demon King, she knows a lot about different routes and shortcuts that have helped us avoid possible complications. This, coupled with the fact that Namy doesn't hesitate to use her sex appeal to manipulate and get us things, has made this journey not as problematic as I anticipated. The biggest difference, compared to her sister

Usofra, is that Namy seems to revel in her role as a succubus, unashamedly enjoying the act of having sex with strangers whenever the opportunity presents itself.

Usofra, on the other hand, is far more reserved. She carries herself with an air of superiority as if she believes that humans and other races are beneath the demons. Despite this, Usofra follows Namy, reluctantly engaging in sexual activities with humans when she needs to regenerate her mana, but not before making it clear that she finds it humiliating to have sex with humans. Leaving that aside her sensory abilities had been invaluable during our journey, allowing us to avoid adventurers and travel without attracting unwanted attention.

As I approached the bonfire, Namy was the only one there, "Are you done with the graves?" She asked with a teasing tone.

I nodded, "Yeah, it took some time, but they're at rest now."

"You know, if you remain that soft, you won't be able to survive inside the demon territory," Namy said with a disapproving expression as she extended her hand, offering me a piece of roast rabbit meat skewered on a stick.

"You think I'm soft?" I responded, grabbing what she offered me.

"What my sister wants to imply is that those acts of kindness will be taken as acts of weakness," Usofra suddenly spoke, arriving with pieces of wood in her hands for the bonfire, "Unlike humans, for Demons, being strong has even more weight than wealth. If you appear weak, Demons will take advantage of you."

"Believe me, it's not that simple..." I replied.

Namy and Usofra don't understand. After all, they can't see the battle raging within me. I don't care about how others persecute my actions now; it's about what those actions mean to me. There is something that I have not told Namy and Usofra, but I have the feeling that this demonic power that I have demonstrated so far is just a sample of what really remains asleep inside me. I can feel how, little by little, this demonic energy is affecting me in more ways than one.

The line between good and evil, once so clear, now blurred into a murky grey. With every passing day, the emotions that had once guided me were fading. Remorse, empathy, compassion—they are starting to be difficult for me to feel. I fear the day when I would look at an innocent life and feel nothing. That thought haunted me more than any enemy I might face. I had seen the depths of what my powers could do, the atrocities I could commit without batting an eye. I'm not even sure if these acts of kindness I'm doing now are honest or just a sham, a thin thread keeping me tethered to my old self.

Before, I felt like I had been blindfolded, and external circumstances were dictating my path. I thought the blindfold had fallen when I discovered the truth that night, but even with the blindfold gone, all I saw was darkness. I'm not sure if searching for Zaine is really my choice or if it's my only option. Either way, I hope that finding Zaine and getting answers from her will help me to truly achieve control of my life and live it in my own way and terms before the darkness within me consumes my humanity.

"Then there wouldn't be so much of a problem," I replied as I sat in front of the bonfire, "You yourself said that the demonic presence that I showed in the fight I had against Oblivion was similar or perhaps even greater than that of a Demon General. That doesn't sound weak to me."

"That's right, but that will only be of help if you manage to control that power," Usofra responded while also sitting in front of the bonfire across from me.

"Is the Demon territory really such a horrible and hostile place?" I asked.

"...You know, I didn't like the way in which you asked that," Namy said, making an irritated face while sitting beside her sister, "Do you think that we demons are savages who live in caves?" She continued, taking a bite of her meal, "For your information, [Xibalba] is far more beautiful and massive than [Riledo]."

"Xibalba?" Sunshine asked, her mouth full and her tiny body completely bathed in the juice of different fruits. "What is that?"

Usofra, across the fire, with a straight posture and a stoic expression, answered, "The demon territory is divided into eight provinces, each quite different from the others. One of them is called [Xibalba]. It could be said that [Xibalba] has the same importance for Demons as [Riledo] for Humans. It is the city where the Demon King's castle is located-our capital."

Namy, in a more eloquent tone, looked at me and added, "Unfortunately, considering the position where you detect Zaine is located, and that we want to evade the battle areas along the border, we will have to take the long road across the mountains in the west. This route will take us deeper into demon territory, evading the demon's armies that will surely be stationed all along the southern border. From there, we'll head east across two of the most hostile provinces, both of which betrayed Zaine and supported the current Demon King from the beginning, aiding him in the coup d'état." Namy looked discouraged, seeming to contemplate the long and complicated road that lay ahead of us. "Therefore, I recommend you avoid appearing too kind once we cross the border."

"If what worries you is that I will not be up to the task in the fights that await us, don't worry. I'll do whatever is necessary to reach Zaine," I responded, finishing the last of my food, "Other than that, I'll do things my own way. If I have to kill someone who is in our way, I will do it. If I want to save someone that needs saving, I will do it too, no matter what you tell me. This evil power can be used for good, too."

"Uh!? W-What did you just say?" Usofra asked, looking in shock for some strange reason, "Damn! Why didn't I realize this sooner? Seriously, what's wrong with me?" Usofra said, scratching her head, showing anger at herself.

"What's wrong? Namy asked, taken by surprise by Usofra's sudden reaction too, "Did you have an epiphany or something?"

"Something like that," Usofra responded and then fixed her gaze on me, "We have been wrong in the way we have tried to help Darx control his demonic power."

"Ah? Explain!" I said, surprised by Usofra's words.

"What you just said, "This evil power can be used for good, too," has made me realize that our approach is incorrect regarding your demon energy," Usofra started explaining, "Do you remember what I mentioned to you months ago when we started trying to get you to maintain control of your power? About the difference between you and demons when it comes to controlling demonic energy."

"I think I remember," I said, still unsure of what Usofra was trying to explain.

"Let me refresh your memory," Usofra said, her eyes narrowing in concentration, "Demon energy and the blessing of the Goddess are similar yet come from opposite sources—one of divine light and the other of darkness. Unlike demons, humans and other races need to receive the blessing from their Goddess to gain strength and skills, transforming into adventurers, beings above regular people. However, since adventurers receive their awakening later in life, it takes them a long time to get fully accustomed to their new powers. On the other hand, for us demons, using demonic energy is as natural as walking or breathing—something we are born knowing how to handle. We demons also awaken a fighting class in a natural way at some point in our lives, but since we are accustomed to using demonic energy, it doesn't take us long to master our new powers."

"Right," I recalled, nodding, "I remember now. So, what does that have to do with my situation?"

"Listen to this," Usofra continued, her voice firm and serious, "Namy and I used to think that you obtained your demonic powers just months ago. However, that doesn't make sense since demonic energy is not something that can be obtained, so your demonic power is not something that Zaine or anyone else gave you. You must have been born with demonic energy. Still, for some reason, that power remained dormant and only appeared at times when your negative thoughts at critical moments somehow released that power. Hence, we thought that you only needed to learn to control your demonic power by controlling your negative thoughts, which perhaps fuels your demonic energy, but I now realize that we were wrong."

"Then what is the issue?" I asked, feeling a mixture of curiosity and frustration.

"Darx, you're right that demonic energy can be used for good even when the source is evil," Usofra began, her expression thoughtful, "The same way there are some adventurers who use their divine powers to do evil deeds. It's not just about the source of power; it's how you choose to use it. Regardless of the source, a demon or an adventurer can use their powers in any way they want," Usofra continued, "But the same doesn't work internally. It's not just your enormous demonic energy alone that makes it difficult for you to control it; it's the combination of using it with its opposite. Your body and mind are struggling to accept and balance two completely opposite forces—your goddess-given skills and your innate demonic energy. That internal struggle is what's causing your instability."

"That makes a lot of sense," Namy added, "The reason we hadn't thought about it before is because there had never been someone who could use both the Goddess's blessing and Demonic energy. Two things that are not compatible. It just meant that your very existence is a contradiction, a living paradox."

I took a moment to digest her words. It's no secret how strange everything is about me. The reason I want to find Zaine is largely because I hope she can answer these questions.

"Then," Sunshine said, her voice full of curiosity, "What should Dox do? How can he get better?"

I frowned, waiting for hUsofra to elaborate. The bonfire crackled in the background, casting flickering shadows across her face, "My theory is that your use of skills granted by the Goddess conflicts with your demonic energy, causing the imbalance within you," Usofra said, her tone somber, "Having that dark energy out of control is what causes your fever, as well as losing control when the demonic energy accumulates too much inside you, making it more difficult to control, so the solution should be self-explanatory."

"...Are you suggesting that I should give up using the goddess's skills?" I asked, my voice barely above a whisper.

"Exactly," Usofra confirmed, her tone firm. "You must choose which power to rely on. If you continue to use both, the imbalance will only grow, and you'll keep losing control. When you lose control, and your subconscious takes over, you can use demonic power without any problem. It appears that when you're not consciously fighting it, your body instinctively knows how to handle the demon energy. So, if you stop using what the Goddess gave you, you should be able to wield demonic power while maintaining full control."

Her words hit me like a ton of bricks. I had always relied on my goddess-given skills to fight, to survive. As I sat there, staring into the flames, I couldn't help but feel a sense of loss. My abilities as an adventurer had been a lifeline, but now, it seemed like I had to abandon that part of myself to find control. To be honest, I don't want to do that. I would lose a lot of my offensive ability. However, I have memories of the fight against Kase, where I used a darkness beam,

which seemed quite devastating. I'm sure that was just demonic energy. I sighed and closed my eyes, taking a deep breath. Could I trust my demonic nature enough to embrace it fully?

"Don't take it so hard, Darx," Usofra spoke, "Don't overthink, Darx," Usofra spoke, "I think it's just a temporary thing. Zaine should be able to help you control both energies, turning you into something that's never been seen before."

"Besides that, if you are in control, Usofra and I will be able to teach you much more about demonic energy," Namy added, "As I already told you, you only know the basics. If you are like any other demon, at some point, you should awaken a class apart from the one you already have with the Goddess. Who knows what will come from that."

"...Alright," I said, my voice steady and resolute, "I'll trust your theory. From now on, I'll rely solely on my demonic energy in combat."

Usofra nodded a hint of relief in her expression.

"We already have our plan for the future, but how will we ensure Dox is okay when we get to [Oidao]?" Sunshine asked, her tiny form hovering close to me, still sticky with fruit juice, "Namy said that Dox still has a lot of unstable demonic energy inside him and could lose control at any moment." She pointed her little finger at me, her concern evident. "Look! He's all red with a lot of fever."

That's true. Although I won't use my adventurer skills from now on, I'm still in a pitiful condition. I could lose control at any moment.

Usofra and Namy turned to look at each other without saying anything. Then Namy turned to look at us, "Sunshine," Usofra spoke, standing up, "There is a way we can make Darx use the excess demonic energy inside him, but it will take time, and it will also be a bit grotesque so why don't you go clean yourself and then go to sleep while we will take care of that."

"It's a ritual with a look of bugs, so I'm sure you don't want to look at that," Namy added while also standing up.

"B-Bugs?" Sunshine repeated, making a disgusted expression, "I don't want to see that!" Sunshine yelled before flying away.

"A ritual?" I asked, confused by what Usofra and Namy suggested, "If there is a ritual, why didn't you two mention it before?"

"Seriously, Darx..." Namy said as she and Usofra slowly walked towards me, "That was just a pretext for Sunshine to leave this place for a while."

"You need to get rid of your excess demonic energy, and we, on the other hand, as succubuses, are low on mana, so we could maybe help each other," Usofra said, standing in front of me while the fire of the bonfire illuminated their backs.

"Until now, you hadn't wanted to, but now it can be beneficial for everyone," Namy said as she unbuttoned Usofra's blouse, revealing her cleavage, "So what do you say? We could transform into whoever you want if that helps."

I don't know if it was because Namy and Usofra were very attractive women or if it was because I hadn't had sex in months. Regardless, the temptation of seeing Namy and Usofra offering themselves to me seductively was making me hard.

This will be a long night.