

I took a look at the battlefield. Between me and the leader, there were several large and thick vines with which Sunshine had held the limbs of many of the disciples. Sunshine, laughing innocently, was making the vines repeatedly whip the disciples against the ground, leaving the once-human to something unrecognizable, reducing them to a grotesque and bloody mass. Behind those vines, I could see that Usofra was fighting against the leader. Using his whip, the leader was trying to hit Usofra, who was flying, dodging the whip that moved as if it had a mind of its own, tracking Usofra's every move. In response, Usofra was contracting with magic of different elements using something she held in her hand. Meanwhile, in the distance on the other side, Namy was taking care of several disciples with her strange fingers that seemed to lethally extend to Namy's desire.

Looking around, I saw several other disciples rushing towards me, wanting to reach me, filled with rage and a desire for my blood. To get to their leader, I have to take care of them first, and I have to do it fast, or I feel like this demonic power will consume me, making me lose control like last time.

I grabbed the sword on the ground, still held by the disciple's hand I just killed, preparing to begin the counterattack. With the sword in hand, I felt a surge of volatile energy coursing through my veins. My vision sharpened, and time seemed to slow down. The electric skill within me propelled me forward at an incredible speed, leaving only traces of electricity as I darted through the battlefield, leaving the astonished disciples unable to react in time.

"Kill him now!" The leader barked as the disciples charged at me.

I reached the first disciple, who tried to use fireballs to take me down, which I easily dodged, severing his arm with a single strike of my sword. He screamed in pain before I silenced him with a swift cut across his throat, blood spraying out like a macabre fountain.

As I moved through the battlefield toward the next target, I noticed that my demonic power grew even more potent with each passing moment. My senses sharpened to an unprecedented degree, granting me an almost preternatural awareness of every movement around me. My body felt light yet strong at the same time. However, I also felt like my humanity was evaporating along with the dark miasma coming out of my body, which was now more intense and darker. I was killing several people, and I wasn't feeling any of the remorse I usually feel. On the contrary, it was as if this demonic power was asking me for more blood and aggression.

One by one, I hunted down my enemies, eliminating them with a combination of magic and brutal force.

"Stay away from me, monster!" A disciple cried out as I approached him. The fear in his eyes only seemed to amplify the darkness within me.

"Too late for that," I snarled, striking him down with an ice shard that impaled his heart.

As I confronted the remaining disciples, cutting them down one by one and dispatching them with ruthless efficiency, I could feel the fear radiating from them, which fueled this dark power even more.

"P-Please... have mercy..." One of the disciples begged, his body shaking with fear as he realized his fate was sealed.

"Mercy?" I spat, my voice full of contempt, "Did you show any mercy to the innocent people you hunted down?"

He said nothing, only staring at me with wide, terrified eyes.

"Exactly," I whispered before ending his life.

Seconds after the last disciple fell lifeless, I had to stay still, trying to reduce this dark power that was slowly getting out of my control. I was already almost entirely covered by this dark demonic energy, feeling my consciousness doze at times. I took a deep breath while sweat dripped down my forehead as I focused all my attention on trying to keep this demonic power from growing.

While I was in this silent internal battle, suddenly Namy descended next to me, "A-Are you okay?" Namy asked, sounding confused and nervous.

When I turned to see Namy, she looked at me, trying to hide her fear. Namy, who was the actual demon, was glancing at me as if I were the actual demon to fear, and somehow, that made me want to cut her with my sword, too.

The bloodlust and rage were almost too much to bear, but I fought against it, refusing to lose myself to this darkness. "Stay focused, Darx," I whispered to myself, gritting my teeth against the overwhelming sensations, "I-I need to end this quickly and regain control."

"What did you say?" Namy asked, looking at me with nervousness and concern.

"N-Nothing," I replied, turning around and heading towards the leader, doing everything possible to remain in control of my own body.

The fight between the leader and Usofra, which seemed to be even, stopped when they saw Namy and me arrive. The leader stood defiantly in front of me. At first, he seemed confident, the corners of his lips curling upwards into a sinister smile.

"You demons are not as inept as I thought..." He taunted, glancing at the bodies of his fallen disciples, "You may have defeated my disciples, but you're no match for me. The goddess is on my side, and with her divine blessing, we fight the evil of this world and the upcoming end!"

"Stop being so dramatic!" Sunshine suddenly spoke, descending next to me.

The leader's expression twisted as if Sunshine's words were a thorn in his side, "This is not about making points," He growled, "This is about justice and order."

"What justice?" I asked, unable to tolerate his hypocrisy, "What justice can you get by lying to me or killing Harold, who only wanted the best for the kingdom?"

"Order, boy," The leader said, his voice dripping with scorn, "You're just a pawn in a grander game you can't even begin to comprehend. What's at stake is more than you, the Queen, or even the demons can understand. We are the only ones that can stop the end of everything, and-"

"Enough!" I yelled as I approached him, my demonic powers surging through my veins, making the leader's bravado facade begin to falter. His eyes widened in terror when he saw the dark energy swirling around me.

"Wh-what are you?" He stammered, taking several steps back while our eyes locked, allowing me to see the terror in his gaze.

My grip on my sword tightened, and I felt a twisted sense of satisfaction watching him cower before me.

Despite the terror etched on his face, the leader attempted to regain his composure, "Die!" The leader yelled, attempting to strike me down with his light whip.

But I was faster. I lunged forward while evading his attack, my blade slicing through the air, aiming for the leader's heart. The leader's eyes widened in shock as my sword found its mark, burying itself deep within his chest. He gasped, choking on his own blood, as his body crumpled to the ground.

I felt a sense of satisfaction after avenging Harold, even if it was just a little bit, but deep down, I knew this was just the beginning. More members from the church will come after me, but I won't back down. They will meet the same fate as him. Eventually, I will uncover the truth and bring those truly responsible for the church to a worse end. They will pay for what they did to Harold and me.

In his last moments, he said his final words that were hard to understand, "Ggh.. Th..e w-world Gn.. Co-... will... GHA... end... if we don't... sto... the... mm... su-"

I yanked my sword free from his lifeless form. For a moment, I thought it was all over, but as he died, my body began to shake violently, the pain from the demonic power becoming overwhelming. I struggled to contain it, feeling myself slipping away as the darkness threatened to consume me completely.

Sunshine fluttered around me, her tiny voice filled with concern, "D-Dox! What's wrong? What is happening to you?"

The earth began to shake, and I could hear the birds flying away from this place.

"S-Shit...!" I said, feeling my conscience begin to doze.

As I fell to my knees, my body wracked with pain; even so, I managed to note for a brief second that Namy and Usofra were standing around me silently on guard, their eyes filled with a mixture of fear and wariness. Like if they were prepared to strike me down if I lost control and became a threat.

Sunshine continued talking to me, but my body was in so much pain, as my mind was being consumed by darkness that I was unable to understand what she was telling me. The battle within raged on, sweat pouring down my face as I gritted my teeth, refusing to succumb to the darkness. Flashes of the worst moments of my life passed in my mind as if on purpose to break my will. I closed my eyes, feeling like I was losing the battle, and when I opened them, somehow, I was once again in the dark place in front of Zaine.

I don't know why I kept being dragged her, but in an instant, the pain disappeared, and I was only left standing still, looking at Zaine's immobile body, wondering if she was still alive or not—wondering if this is how the two of us will meet our end.

But then she moved slightly, "...You're back," Zaine spoke in a weak, sleepy voice.

I opened my eyes, surprised and feeling moved, when I heard her voice again, "I am," I responded with a slight smile.

In that pivotal moment, a steely resolve solidified within me, cutting through the tempest of darkness threatening to engulf my soul. With unwavering determination, I reminded myself that I could not allow this malevolent power to devour me. I felt like I had lost everything after being betrayed by the people I trusted most and not being able to return to the place I considered home now that I'm a fugitive. However, there's still something I have to do. I have to save Zaine and find the answers to who I am.

I closed my eyes again, and when I opened them, I was back. I was still in the same condition with the same excruciating pain, but this time, I was determined not to let myself be absorbed by this darkness. I feel it took me a long time, but little by little, the pain began to subside, and I could feel the demonic power starting to diminish. After what felt like an eternity, I managed to suppress the darkness enough to regain control over my body and mind. I took deep, ragged breaths as I slowly got back onto my feet, my legs still shaky from the ordeal.

"You did it, Dox!" Sunshine sighed with relief, her tiny wings fluttering excitedly, "You worried me for a moment."

Namy and Usofra were also visibly relaxed now as they realized there was no longer any immediate danger.

"Are you alright now?" Sunshine asked, a hint of concern lacing her voice as she approached me cautiously.

"Y-Yeah, I think so," I replied, wiping the sweat from my forehead.

Sunshine fluttered around me, her cheerful demeanor adding a sense of lightness to the tense atmosphere, "You know, Dox," She said playfully, "I've never seen you look so exhausted before. At least, not without good reason."

"Very funny," I replied, forcing a weak smile. Despite my fatigue, I couldn't help but appreciate Sunshine's ability to lighten the mood.

"Hey, your fever seems to be gone," Sunshine observed, "Why is that?"

"Ah?" I asked, surprised to realize that my previous discomfort had indeed subsided, "I... don't know."

Now that I think about it, with the fever I had, I shouldn't have been able to fight, yet, at some point, it disappeared without me realizing it.

"Maybe we can help with that," Namy interjected, stepping into the conversation. Usofra followed suit, their gazes fixed on me.

"Your demonic mana was likely the cause of your fever," Usofra explained, "While you were unconscious in the wagon, I could feel your demonic presence increasing on its own. When you spent the excess demonic mana inside your body using it in battle, it must have relieved your body and thus ended your fever."

"Your demonic presence was what made us easily tracked, most likely," Namy added, "Now, we should be able to escape as long as we stay out of sight."

"However," Usofra added sternly, "If that's the case, then the same thing will happen again if you don't learn to control your demonic power."

Demonic mana? Do I have that? I guess this power feels demonic. Nevertheless, it was clear that harnessing the darkness within me would be crucial for survival.

"It's time for you two to tell me who you are and what you want with me," I said, suspecting the reason why they were helping me.

"Before that, why don't we leave this place? Staying here will complicate things for us," Namy responded.

I guess they are right. I'm a criminal traveling with demons, so staying in the open is indeed a bad idea.

"Alright," I agreed.

With that settled, Namy and Usofra went to loot the church carriages, searching for anything valuable. With them away, I turned to Sunshine, who was next to me, "Sunshine, how are you outside the medallion?" I asked, "The last thing I remember is that you were inside the medallion, and supposedly, only I could get you out."

"I'm not sure," Sunshine responded with a shrug, "When your fight started, and everything went dark, I could no longer see what was happening outside. It didn't seem like you could hear me, nor could I hear anything either. I had no idea what had occurred during all that time, but when the darkness disappeared and I could finally see what was happening outside the medallion, I witnessed we were in the sky. Namy was flying, carrying you in her arms, escaping out of the city. I was able to get out of the medallion on my own. It was as if the seal in the medallion that kept me from going out was too weak."

"I see..." Since I locked Sunshine in the medallion, I wonder if when I fell unconscious, I also ran out of mana, which somehow caused the medallion to stop working, "Well, leaving that aside, how did we end up traveling with two demons?"

"It's a long story," Sunshine responded, "When I came out of the medallion and saw that Namy was carrying you in her arms and you were unconscious, I tried to kill Namy so that she would set you free, but before that, we were attacked by some nasty people who were chasing us. Between Namy and I, we killed those who were following us, and shortly after, Usofra arrived. They told me that if we stayed there, more adventurers would come to kill us, so I decided to play along and steal the wagon to escape," Sunshine then flew up, looking excited really close in front of my face, "But now that you're okay if you want, we can kill them!"

"L-Let's hear first what they have to say," I responded while gently pushing her away from my face, "But if they try to do something to us, don't hesitate to finish them off."

"Ahhh... okay... just said the word, and I'm going to make them pay for calling me a bird," Sunshine exclaimed, disappointed.

Sunshine then fluttered over to the lifeless bodies, her small form hovering above each one as she searched for valuables. It was an odd scene—Sunshine's playful nature while searching the dead bodies and looking excited by looting valuable things from them. Sunshine is quite greedy and likes money, from what I see. It's weird since she is a fairy, and fairies are supposed to live in nature, but it still somehow suited her perfectly.

Finally, once they had collected everything of worth, we left the gruesome scene behind, taking our carriage as far away as possible. As we traveled, the sun dipped below the horizon, casting eerie shadows among the trees. Eventually, we found a secluded spot to spend the night inside the forest, hidden from prying eyes. After everything was set, we sat in front of a bonfire to warm up from the cold night air. Namy, Usofra, Sunshine, who was asleep on my legs, and I gathered around the fire, each lost in our thoughts.

"Now, speak," I said abruptly, breaking the silence, "I want answers. Who are you two, and what are your true intentions?" My voice was filled with suspicion and distrust as I stared at Namy and Usofra.

Namy and Usofra exchanged glances, their expressions mirroring the distrust I felt toward them. After a moment of hesitation, Namy broke the silence.

"Alright," Namy said, her voice taking on a more serious tone, "As you already know, I'm Namy, and I'm succubus."

A succubus? What is that?

"Although I suppose you know me more as Caroline." At that moment, Namy temporarily took Caroline's form before returning to her demon appearance.

I-Incredible. I tried to hide my astonishment, but I was shocked that someone like her existed. Namy can really change her appearance at will. Namy did the same thing that night in my room. Even before that, Namy deceived us all for a long time in the castle by pretending to be Caroline.

"And this is my sister, Usofra, also a succubus," Namy said, pointing at the severe and silent demon woman beside her.

"Why were you in the castle and also in the cave? Were you after me the whole time?" I asked.

"My sister and I, like the other two demons that you and your group killed in the cave, were only following orders. We had the task of hindering any attempt at alliance between humans and other races," Namy responded, "Nothing to do with you. Although I admit that since I first saw you, you intrigued me—a red-eyed adventurer who received a strange awakening. Quite peculiar."

"If that's true, why are you here now? What is your purpose?" I kept asking.

"We already answered one of your questions, and now you answer one of ours," Usofra said, "Are you a demon? Why do you have that kind of power?"

Should I trust them? Namy mentioned Zaine that night when she showed up in my room. I need them to tell me what they know. For now, I will trust them, but if they try something, I am confident that Sunshine and I will be able to finish them off.

"I'm not a demon," I replied, "Or at least I don't think so..."

"You don't know?" Usofra said in disbelief, seeming like she didn't believe me.

"It's the truth. You can believe me or not. I don't care," I continued, "Now answer the question I asked you before. Why are you here, and what do you want from me?"

Namy and Usofra once again turned to see each other as if to confirm if they both agreed to tell me. Soon after, both turn towards me, "We're here because we need your help." Namy spoke.

"My help?" I questioned, raising an eyebrow at the two demons before me, "With what?"

They exchanged wary glances before Namy spoke up, "I already told you that night," She replied, her dark eyes locking onto mine, "Someone we need to find as soon as possible and with whom we believe you have a connection with."

"..Zaine," I muttered, feeling a shiver run down my spine as the name escaped my lips.

"Yes," Usofra confirmed, her voice more reserved than her sister's, "Zaine is the one we're searching for."

"It seems we both want the same," I mutter, then I turn my tone more demanding, "Tell me who Zaine is and how you know her."

Usofra hesitated before responding, her gaze never leaving mine, "Before we answer your question, I want to know what your relationship with Zaine is and why I sometimes sense Zaine's presence coming from you. It's something that doesn't make sense to me."

"What?" I asked, genuinely confused by her statement, "I was hoping you could give me that answer." My eyes narrowed in suspicion.

Namy and Usofra turned to look at each other, looking perplexed.

"What do you mean you don't know?" Usofra asked, sounding irritated, "You must know something!"

"I won't answer any of your questions until you tell me exactly what you're after and who Zaine is," I declare.



My challenge hung heavy in the air, the crackling fire casting flickering shadows on their angry faces. Namy and Usofra exchanged another uneasy glance before Usofra spoke up.

"Very well," She conceded, taking a deep breath, "You really don't seem to know who Zaine is, so we will answer your questions. But you must promise to answer our questions afterward."

"Only if I'm satisfied with your answers," I replied, my voice firm and unyielding.

"Fair enough," Namy agreed, her seductive smile returning as she prepared to reveal the truth.

"Zaine was the former Demon Queen," Usofra began, giving this astonishing revelation.

W-What? Z-Zaine is a demon? More than that... the Demon Queen!?

"Zaine was betrayed and overthrown," Usofra continued, "My sister and I served under her rule, and after she disappeared, we fought for her, thinking that our Demon Queen was still alive, but when everything we lost the fight, and Zaine was believed to be dead, we had no choice but to serve the new Demon King, for our survival," Zaine and Usofra's face turned sad as they gave me such information, "However, everything changed when I saw you in the cave. For some reason, I can't understand. I sense Zaine's presence coming from you, Darx," Usofra continued, her dark eyes narrowing as she tried to make sense of it all, "We don't understand why or how, but it probably means Zaine is still alive and if she is alive we have to save her!"

"Usofra has better sensory abilities than most demons and humans, and more than that, my sister would never mistake the Demon Queen's presence for someone else," Namy added, sounding eager, "Zaine has to be alive!"

"How can that be possible?" I asked, still trying to digest the shocking information I just received.

"Your guess is as good as mine," Usofra replied, shaking her head in confusion.

I could see that they weren't lying, as both of them were struggling to understand the situation just as much as I was. My mind raced, trying to piece together the puzzle of my connection to Zaine. Why was the former Demon Queen somehow linked to me? None of this makes sense.

First, my red eyes connected me with the royal family of a powerful ancient civilization. Then, the goddess Imris herself appeared before me, telling me that I had a destiny to fulfill and asking me not to use this dark power within me. Now, it turns out that the woman who has appeared in my dreams since I was a child and whom I'm trying to find is the demon Queen. What the hell is going on? Who the hell am I? I don't know what or who to believe.

"Zaine... the former Demon Queen?" I muttered, my heart pounding in my chest as I tried to make sense of it all, "Why would I have a connection with her? What does this mean for me?"

My thoughts swirled like a storm inside my head, torn between disbelief and curiosity. What sort of dark secret lay hidden that somehow bound me to the overthrown Queen?

"Darx," Usofra said, her voice more serious than I'd ever heard it before, "We answered your question, so now you have to answer honestly. Can you tell us why we're able to feel Zaine's presence coming from you? Especially when your demon powers get stronger? There must be something you know. Think about it."

I hesitated, unsure of how to respond. The truth was, I didn't know the answer myself. I felt torn between wanting to trust them and fearing what their true intentions might be.

"I... I really don't know," I finally admitted, my voice barely above a whisper, "All I know is that strange things have been happening to me ever since I was a kid. The reason why I wanted to find Zaine was because I thought she would be the one who could give me those answers."

Usofra and Namy exchanged worried glances, their desperation was palpable.

"Darx," Namy pressed firmly, looking desperate, her dark eyes dulling into mine, "Why do you have red eyes from an ancient civilization? Why are you connected to Zaine when no one else is?"

"Like I said, I don't know," I replied defensively, raising my voice, trying to keep my composure under their intense scrutiny, "No matter how many times you ask me the same thing, the answer will be the same. I DON'T KNOW!"

"Then perhaps you can tell us where Zaine is now?" Usofra asked, her voice filled with hope and impatience.

"I... I don't know if I can do that," I admitted, feeling their frustration grow as they realized I wasn't providing the answers they wanted.

"Maybe we were wrong," Namy muttered, her gaze dropping to the ground with disappointment, "Maybe the Demon Queen really isn't alive."

"No," I interrupted, the certainty in my voice surprising even myself, "Zaine is alive. I've spoken to her."

Usofra's and Namy's heads snapped up in shock, their eyes wide with disbelief.

"What do you mean, you've spoken to her?" Usofra demanded.

"Ever since I was a child, I've had these... dreams," I began hesitantly, unsure how much I should reveal, "In these dreams, there's a woman who seems trapped in darkness. She is chained in a place I can't reach. She doesn't remember who she is, but now I know it's Zaine."

I paused, watching as they processed this information. Their expressions shifted from confusion to amazement as they realized the significance of what I had just shared.

"Are you certain, Darx?" Usofra asked cautiously, "Can you really sense Zaine now? Can you tell us where she is?"

I hesitated momentarily, feeling the weight of their hopeful gazes upon me. My connection with Zaine was indeed unlike anything I had ever experienced, but could I pinpoint her location? Since this dark power has grown stronger within me, I feel that my connection with Zaine has also intensified. I closed my eyes and focused on that connection. Doing so usually takes me to the place of darkness where Zaine is, but now I need to feel her outside of that place. To achieve this, I let my demonic power increase. The dark steam began to emerge from my body, accompanied by pain. But at the same time, I started to feel my connection with Zaine become even stronger. It was complicated having to let my demonic power increase even more and, at the same time, prevent this evil power from taking over my body and mind while simultaneously trying to focus on Zaine. However, I finally managed to do it. It was only a moment, but I felt her. I suppressed the demonic power before it got out of my control or caused me even more pain.

At that moment, Sunshine finally woke up disoriented and with drool dripping from her mouth, "A-Ah, what's going on? I-Is it time for breakfast?"

It took me a few minutes to recover. I felt fatigued trying to catch my breath, wiping the sweat from my forehead.

"Well, what happened? Do you know where the Demon Queen is?" Namy asked out loud, unable to hide her intrigue.

"N-North," I finally said, pointing in the direction, "I don't know exactly where, but I can sense her presence in that direction, far, really far from here."

Usofra and Namy exchanged glances, seeming to silently communicate with each other before turning back to face me. Their expressions were now filled with determination and resolve.

"Darx," Usofra began, her voice steady and firm, "You and we have the same goal. We want you to accompany us in our search for the Demon Queen. You're the only one who can guide us to her."

"Moreover," Namy chimed in, "In exchange for your help, we will do whatever you want. We can teach you how to control your immense demonic powers and answer any more questions you may have."

Namy and Usofra looked at me, almost pleading with their gazes.

Given my circumstances, I think it is my only option. I have many questions that need answers, and I personally feel that I must rescue Zaine. I need to know why I feel this strong connection with her. I also need to become stronger to return and exact revenge. The church will pay for what they did to me and Harold. Above all, I will return one day to finish what I failed to do. The next time I see Kase, I will make sure to take revenge for everything he has done to me and then end his life.

"If it's breakfast time or not?" Sunshine spoke in confusion.