

A Devil's Cacophony

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A Devil's Cacophony

by [Qaroll_Fanfiction](#)

Summary

A collection of previews in the form of oneshots for my new Devil May Cry retelling. Contains Bayonetta, DmC and original elements as well as those from other games, stories, comics, and more in a single world. Created prior to the revelation of DMC5 and ignores all new development from that game. Demo 10: Dante and Nero's identities come out during the meeting with the Lowell family.

Is temporarily "complete". Will be revised and then continued...

Notes

The chapters in this fanfiction don't have a continuous timeline. One chapter takes place at 'x' time, another at 'b' time...but they're all connected in that they take place in the same common timeline. These chapters are all non-linear, in other words, and are previews of an entire DMC project I am working on that you can call TD'sC.

The underlying theme of the series is a cacophony of events pertaining to a single devil...

There will be conversation/explanations in what will be called *LOADING...* chapters. More info in the first *LOADING...* chapter.

Once Upon a Devil in Time...

Chapter Summary

Dante gives into fate and tells his story.

A red-clad man rested lazily in the only chair within the empty foyer, an open magazine covering his face, his hands resting under his head and his legs propped up on the desk before him. The enormous house was completely empty, or nearly so, and not a single call had come through with the password during the entire day. Though bored, this gave him time to spend on reminiscing, something he normally stayed away from. This time his mind went to the savory things he had within his extensive memory banks, for a change...

From under the magazine, his lips spread into a small smile as he recalled good memories...

"Daddy."

Slowly, his smile melted away as he was brought back to the present, eyes blinking open to meet with a nude model. "...Mn?" he grunted, eyes closing again. He was so relaxed and deeply into his memories, he hadn't even noticed someone entered the room.

"Daddy, I'm bored."

He sighed, murmuring, "...Bored...? How can you be bored..."

"I wanna hear a story."

A white eyebrow rose. "...A story."

"Yeah."

"You're bored, and you want to hear a story?" he repeated, just to make it clear.

"Yeah."

"...Sounds boring," he sighed, lowering the magazine to see his younger daughter standing beside him, hands behind her back, "but if you want to hear a story, I'll bet your uncle has a million he could tell you."

The girl frowned, sitting on the desk, lifting up the picture placed atop it, taking in the details of the woman it displayed. "Uncle and cousins aren't here," she said, then glanced suspiciously at him. "I thought you could sense them?"

Cracking a sheepish smile, he lowered his legs from the desk, opening a drawer to place the magazine inside.

Observing as he did, she narrowed her eyes. "Didn't Mom say if she caught you with one of those, she'd freeze time and kill you?"

He quickly placed a finger to his lips, glancing around conspiratorially. "Shush," he hissed, looking at the ceiling, and then back to his daughter.

Rolling her eyes and shaking her head, the girl placed the picture on the desk space to the far left, out of the way. "Why do you even keep those nasty things around?" she asked, glancing at him with what almost looked like a glare.

"They're not mine," he lied, putting on a serious face.

Eyes slanting, she crossed her arms. "Oh, *yeah*? Who do they belong to, then?" she pressed.

He expertly froze every muscle on his face to prevent himself from cracking into a grin. "The only adult man here without a mate."

A look of disbelief with a hint of contemplation crossed her features. "...*Uncle*?"

He nodded, expression still serious as he said, "Shocked me, too."

"...Well," she murmured, glancing away in thought, "you two are twins..."

"Hey, I'm affronted by that."

"...except Uncle himself told me he wouldn't be caught dead with one of those things!" she countered with a scoff, pointing accusingly at him. "You *suck* at lying, Daddy! I'm telling Mommy when sh—"

"You wanna hear a story?" he quickly asked, leaning forward with a look of pleading in his eyes.

Arms crossing again, she sat up straight. "I'll only stay mum if you tell me the best story you know," she said. Somehow, she was always able to blackmail him...and he let her.

Sighing in defeat, he said, "There's only one story I know, and it's not for kids—"

"I'll tell Mo—!"

His hand clamped over her mouth. "—*but* I don't see why I can't edit as I go along," he finished, placing a finger to his lips once more in subdued warning.

As he removed his hand, she stuck out her tongue, earning a pat on her cheek as her father sat back in his chair. She then quickly made herself comfortable, lifting her legs up and crossing them on the desk, eyes sparkling in anticipation, the magazine forgotten.

Leaning back, he glanced to the ceiling, realizing he would be telling the story of both the savory and extensively *unsavory* events that had crossed his mind just minutes ago. Now that he thought about it, his young daughter was the literal umpteenth person to ask him to tell this story and the last person in the entire household to do so, albeit unintentionally...

Though he was quiet, the young blonde remained surprisingly patient, waiting in silence for him to begin. As if remembering something, she suddenly blurted, "And you have to start with 'once upon a time'!"

He frowned, looking back down at her. "...It doesn't— okay," he easily relented upon her crossed arms and glower.

All smiles once more, she placed her hands in her lap and leaned forward as he finally began:

"Once upon a time, there was a fallen angel who rebelled against his kith and kin for the sake of humankind. He reasoned, unlike his brethren, that humans were no threat to the creatures of Hell, and refused to take part in their annihilation. He fought against his own lord, the Demon King Mundus, said to be the second most powerful devil in known existence, and held him and his armies back from destroying the surface world of earth. Afterwards, he sealed..."

He suddenly stopped, sensing another person approach the room, and turned to see a little boy enter from around the staircase.

"Hiya, Uncle. What're ya doin', Cousin?" the boy asked, electric blue eyes wide and curious. He was around four years old, sporting stark-white hair, like his granduncle.

As she turned to him, the girl said excitedly said, "Daddy's telling a story, Jules! It's got devils and demons and fallen angels in it!"

Slanted eyes slightly rolled at her latter sentence, not bothering to remind that devils and fallen angels were one in the same, but the older man softly smiled as the boy cheered before attempting to scamper atop the desk as well. He then placed his feet back on the desk, leaning back in the chair, and watched.

"I wanna hear, I wanna hear!" the boy cried, then ran around to the other side of the desk, as there was no space for him on the side where his first cousin sat and the booted feet were. Once on the other side, he jumped onto the table beside the picture, sitting down immediately while facing his granduncle with big, pleading eyes.

Red-clad shoulders shrugged. "Sure, kiddo. But don't go running to your dad if you get scared."

Jules frowned, puffing out his chest. "I'm not gonna get scared!" he said determinedly.

"...Where'd you come from, anyway...? I thought your dad wasn't home."

"You think a bunch of words are enough to scare him, Dante?"

Also from the direction of the kitchen came another, older silver-haired and blue-eyed man. As he wore a sleeveless shirt, his right arm's visible, glowing blue veins pulsed gently in contentment. Scoffing as his uncle frowned at his sudden appearance, he leaned against the banister to the second floor. "Came in from the back," he grinned. "Or is Alzheimer's finally settling in, old man?"

Making a mock smile of appreciation, Dante crossed his arms. More of his family had entered from the back entrance as well. "...Well," he murmured to himself, "it's like everyone got off work, or something..."

"Dad! Unca D's tellin' us a story about demons...an' devils, like us!" the boy blurted, bouncing on his knees as he focused on his father.

"I think Daddy's in the prologue," the girl added, "so you came just at the right time, Nero!"

Raising an eyebrow, Nero glanced at his uncle, who looked back at him, then strolled over to the couch and sat down, resting his arms behind the headrest. "Then I've got to hear this, myself," he said. "Been dying to hear *this* story for damn near eight years, and you tell it to the kids?"

"Yep."

"Whatever. Is this going to be long?"

"*Very* long," the older man sighed.

"Then I'll order some pizza, make it a big deal..."

That proposal brightened the mood around the desk. Both children cheered as the part-devil stood from the couch and approached the bar, where a desk phone was placed atop the counter. Sighing in defeat for the second time, Dante closed his eyes, but cracked a small smile. With the others arriving, it was almost as if karma itself wasn't going to allow him to let this story slide any longer. The thought of telling his story no longer appealed to him...yet, he *wanted* to tell it...

The chatter of his nephew on the phone quickly prevented him from wondering too deeply into his thoughts. "*No* olives, kid," he called, keeping his eyes closed.

Eyes rolled, a blue-veined hand waving dismissively. "You're not the only one eating piz— No, no, I said *three* party-sized pizzas," Nero said into the phone. He then briefly lowered the phone, looking back. "...Or should it be four? Or five?" he asked aloud.

"...Why should it be more than three...?" Instead of an answer, Dante's eyes opened as another presence approached the room from the kitchen. "...Right. Full house. Never mind; get six."

"Thought so."

The white-haired woman entering the room gave a defeated sigh upon hearing this and focused on him, coming to his side. "Hi, Dad," she said softly, wrapping her arms around his shoulders and placing a kiss on his cheek.

He smiled widely at her embrace, slightly returning it before she moved away.

"Sis!" the girl brightly exclaimed. "Just in time! It's a pizza story time!" she said, raising fisted hands into the air in delight.

"What type of story?" the woman asked, looking up from her father to her sister.

"*My* story," Dante replied, deciding to not bat around the bush now that the one person who *needed* to hear the story had arrived.

Large blue eyes impossibly widened in awe. "Whoa! Cool, Unca D!" the boy exclaimed, then jumped down from the desk and sped around the staircase towards the kitchen.

This stumped his granduncle, but he didn't dwell on it too deeply, figuring the boy was getting something to settle comfortably for the long tale. The reaction of his older daughter was more pressing, anyhow.

Identical blue eyes met as she looked at him, watching him carefully. "...Everything?" she then asked quietly, breaking her gaze from him to the floor.

"Everything. Was going to edit it for the kids' sake, but...you're here, now," he replied evenly, surprising himself with his composure. He then looked to Nero, who was just getting off the phone, and glanced at his younger daughter. "Of course, I can't start yet."

Scoffing, Nero moved to the couch. "What're you waiting for?" asked, placing his arms over the backside.

The girl said, "Jules." However...

"The pizza," said her father simultaneously, grinning.

"Daddy!"

As she began to throw futile punches into her laughing father's arm, her older sister shook her head and moved to the couch, sitting beside her cousin. "Couldn't you order Chinese?" she asked.

Both silver-haired men in the room made faces of disgust. "No! Hell no!" Dante exclaimed, the blocking of his daughter's punches devolving to her trying to best him. "Perish the thought! You are Sparda's descendent and must love pizza and only pizza as take-out!"

"Great-grandpa liked pizza?" Jules asked as he came back in the room, holding his mother's hand. Apparently, he went to get her.

"Pizza hadn't been invented yet, dear," his mother responded gently, walking with him over to the couches. "Oh, no, Hallen, you don't have to move..." she began as the silver-haired woman stood.

But the silver locks swayed in refusal. "I'm fine with it, and anyway, *Nero* would want to be near you," she snickered, earning a glare from her cousin while moving to the opposite

couch. But everyone knew it was true, so he said nothing.

And rightfully so; he took his wife's hand as she slowly sat beside him, cradling her swollen stomach with her other hand. Jules then bounced into his father's lap, who adjusted him comfortably.

The room was quickly filling, and there were only three others missing to make it complete. Dante's hand he had raised wasn't being hit anymore. "...Patty, you're not even trying," he said lazily to his younger daughter, who had switched from punching him to fiddling with his coat.

"Why are you wearing this inside?" she asked with a pout.

Smiling to himself, he slightly leaned forward and shrugged out of the heavy leather, handing it to her. "Treat it well," he reminded as she eagerly took it with two hands and slipped off the desk.

"I will!" she cheered while putting it on, causing most of the lower half to inevitably drag behind her. She then took off towards the kitchen, shouting, "I'm getting my sword!"

Jules jumped out of his father's lap, running after her. "No fair!" he cried.

He ran right by an older blonde woman coming down the stairs, who dodged out of the way before she could collide with his small body. Looking back at him as she walked to the side of the desk, she crossed her arms and commented, "Full house?"

Slightly scrunching his mouth, Dante gave a nod, humming in agreement.

"Lively, isn't it?"

"Very."

She focused her attention on him, tilting her body to see his self-satisfied, half-lidded expression. "Enjoying yourself?" she asked with a smile.

"Every moment." He placed his hands behind his head, resting comfortably as conversation began around him. No matter how long it took for the last two members of his family to enter the room, he wasn't starting the story until the pizza arrived.

Upon seeing the predictable question on the tip of the woman's tongue, Nero said, "Dante's going to tell his story, but not until the pizza comes."

This caused the woman to chuckle, a sly smile upon her lips. "But I already ordered pizza~" she innocently purred, sitting atop the desk.

Both silver-haired men blinked rapidly at this. The younger of the two then groaned softly as Dante pulled back a fist in silent triumph. "Lifesaver, Trish. Lifesaver."

"Lifesaver?" Nero balked as his wife giggled beside him and his cousin laughed across from him. "Not for you! In fact, I can't recall you eating *anything* but the older boxes of pizza that

were *already* in the—"

The sound of children making a clamor broke him out of his tirade, and he broke his gaze from his ingenuously blinking uncle to the direction of the kitchen. A moment later, his son and younger cousin ran back inside the room, both brandishing swords longer than their bodies and wearing oversized coats. In stark contrast to his cousin, the boy's coat was blue.

Upon seeing this, Dante gave a double-take. "...What the...?"

His unfinished question was answered as blue swords made of energy shot out at the children, who were arguing over how unfair it was that one of them was so much older. Without a prompt or warning, the children broke apart and began to block the swords coming rapidly at them from all sides. Their movement was breakneck fast, and even Patty, otherwise full human, was able to keep up with the inhuman pace of her younger cousin. As the blue energy hit the children's blades, they shattered. Leaning back, impressed, as were the other three adults in the room, Dante saw his older brother enter the room out of the corner of his eye.

"Well done, you two," the elder half-devil praised, his signature katana in his hand and moving to stand beside the desk. He let off his attack, leaving the two cousins brandishing large smiles. They had never fended off the powerful energies before.

Patty turned to her father. "Daddy!" she said, panting hard, but otherwise fine.

As did the boy to his father. "Did you—"

"—see that?"

"Yeah!"

The boy's mother was clapping, smiling in praise. "Good job, Jules," she said, easily diverting his attention to her.

As his daughter bounced on the balls of her feet, Dante nodded in approval. "I know just the reward, too," he said with a grin, only earning him a swift knock to the back of his head from his brother's sheathed sword. "Hey!"

"This is the *last* time we are having pizza in this house," the older twin said sternly, giving a sideways glare towards his brother. There was no shred of compromise in his expression.

"Agreed, at least for some time."

Hallen jumped in surprise at the dark-clad, bespectacled woman suddenly sitting next to her, then heaved a heavy sigh, muttering to herself.

The woman took a lollipop out of her mouth, giving a small, apologetic smile. "Still jumpy, I see."

"Mommy!" Patty exclaimed, placing her sword on her back before running to her mother.

As his daughter and her mother quickly began a conversation, Dante simply eyed his mate before glancing to his brother. "...C'mon, you have to admit you're only *saying* that, Verge."

"Does it *look* like I'm *just saying that*?"

"...Ah...surprisingly, no, all things considered..."

"*Before* I came to DMC, I had a healthy respect for cheese, sauce and bread. No more."

Hallen again broke into laughter. "I *have* to agree," she added, "and while you're at it, revoke his sundaes."

Her father gaped, looking to her in mock, if not actual, horror. "My own flesh and blood!" he exclaimed.

"From the mouths of *babes*," his brother hissed at him, moving to sit in the chair on the other side of the desk beside him. "*Do* you consume anything other than dairy, bread and strawberries?"

"And alcohol," Nero added in, the traitor, taking *great* humor in this affair.

Almost shuddering, his father shook his head in disgust. "And *alcohol*."

The red-clad man rested his arms on the table, feeling betrayed. "You know why I like them so much," he said with a frown.

As if a magic word was said, every other eye turned to the eldest son of Sparda. "You know his story?" his son asked in disbelief.

"Is it good?" Patty asked eagerly. She just wanted a good story, nothing more.

"Do you like blueberries, then, Vergil?" the bespectacled woman slyly asked between her lollipop.

Said man briefly closed his eyes, head turning in mid-shake. "...*What*?"

Trish chuckled at the thought. "I only know why Dante likes the sundaes."

Looking over his brother's head, Dante nodded. "He does, by the way, Cerez."

"No, I do not."

"He's lying. And can a man just like strawberries?"

"Or blueberries," his twin muttered.

"See!"

"Yes, the story is good, Patty," her uncle said to her, ignoring his brother completely. "But truthfully, if it is going to be told in its entirety, you and Julius will hear elements that he might not understand and that will inevitably disturb you."

There was a sudden eerie silence after he spoke, as no one was expecting to hear that. Lowering his eyes, Dante murmured, "Nice going, Verge..."

Scoffing softly, the older twin simply rested his sword against the desk. "It had to be said." He then focused his attention to the other occupants in the room, lifting one leg over the other. "This is truly not a story for children, but if you think they can manage..."

His daughter-in-law was the first to speak, brows furrowing in concern. "What elements are in it?" she asked. Her son, sitting on the floor, looked between them with interest.

The answer came from Dante, who had rested his legs back up on the desk. "Everything. Every *little* thing you can possibly imagine kids shouldn't hear, Kyrie," he said softly, continuing to murmur.

Various expressions of shock and concern passed over the faces of the adults in the room.

Her smile having long dropped from her face, Patty's expression was instead replaced with unease and sudden remorse for bringing up the story at all. She moved away from her mother and towards her father, head lowering. "...Daddy—"

"It's fine, Patty," he said calmly, looking up to give her a small smile of reassurance. "I want to tell it, really."

His gaze then drifted to his older daughter, who had gone quiet and her expression turned stern once the discussion took a sudden apprehensive turn.

Nearly half of the room suddenly jumped at the sound of a knock at the door, and Nero took the chance to leave the room's stiff atmosphere and answer the door. He opened the door and went out to greet the delivery boy, wordless as he took the money from out of his pocket and handed them to the shaking teen. He only murmured to keep the change before easily carrying the twelve party-sized boxes with one hand back into the room after shutting the door with his free hand.

He couldn't help but admit it; just as much as he suddenly wanted the story over as soon as possible, he greatly desired to hear it.

Trish had already brought the pizza cutter and two rolls of paper towels, placing them on the coffee table between the couches. He then took two boxes and placed them on the desk before his father, who unhappily moved them over to Dante's side. Naturally, the top box was immediately opened.

The arrival of the pizza helped to slightly ease the tense atmosphere, the smell of the pies filling the air and causing many a stomach to rumble in hunger. As everyone became comfortable and the first boxes of pizza were opened, Dante took a moment to gather his thoughts.

He hated to admit it, but he actually felt better with Vergil there. Naturally, this hadn't gone unnoticed by his twin, who had crossed his arms after pushing the box over. Their sideways gazes met, and though they were still unable to communicate telepathically, in that moment,

they instinctively understood what the other was likely thinking: Vergil let Dante know it was *his* decision to let the story be known at all, and Dante let his brother know he was thankful for the silent support.

He then focused his attention to his expansive audience, leaning back in the chair. "I'll start from the beginning, then," he said, reaching for a slice of pizza, "but...at a different angle." He took a bite of the slice, taking a moment to savor the greasy, sweet cheesy goodness before continuing. "...This story is about the events resulting from the actions of a single devil. Of how the ensuing chaos and tragic events surrounding his legacy, specifically his younger son...became a devil's cacophony..."

-:AD'sC:-

Once upon a time and over two thousand years ago, the Fallen King and self-disposed ruler of Inferno, Lucifer, disappeared. In the wake of his disappearance, a powerful devil named Mundus took his throne with the intentions to convert humankind's world into another Hell, a literal Hell on earth. There were not many from the otherworlds who dared to interfere with Mundus' objective for the sake of their own kin, and humankind's annihilation appeared imminent.

However, from amongst the spheres of Hell came Sparda, a fallen angel who condemned the destruction and corruption of the human race. He, unlike his brethren, had come to find humans as mere innocents, young and with much promise for untapped potential, and only a threat to the Infernal Kin if they were threatened. He single-handedly fought against Mundus and his legion, resulting in the sealing of the path to the demonic realms with the assistance of the blood of a human woman. Yet, as he, too, was a devil, a great wealth of Sparda's powers were also sealed away.

For hundreds of years, Sparda lived amongst humankind. Throughout the ages, he remained as Sparda, the Dark Knight who saved humanity, on the tongues of humans. However, one day he withdrew from the public eye, disappearing in time, and the story of Sparda became a legend...

Sparda continued to live with a mortal guise, only known as a devil in the flesh by few who lived in the human world. Nearly three-hundred fifty years ago, he came upon the female Infernal Hunter Evangelina Alighieri, whose allusive charm, wit and encompassing beauty blossomed Sparda's partially opened heart, and stirred within him the emotion of love. After some time as acquaintances, Sparda courted Eva, and successfully won her affection and trust. He revealed himself to her and conveyed his sincere intentions, that he indeed loved her. Eva, a woman who followed her instincts, perceived no ill purposes in his words or approach, and believed him. They were wed, and shortly after, Eva conceived their twin sons.

It was a contented time...a new time. A time of revolution and invention, and a time for rebirth.

...But for the denizens of Hell, there is no such long-lived happiness...

Revenge was vowed upon both Sparda and humankind through his sons and the planet itself, creating yet another cacophony throughout the realms as the contest to destroy Sparda's

legacy begins.

LOADING...Ugly, Sick and Weak

Chapter Summary

An alternate universe take on what happens after Dante finishes the story...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"...The end."

Various sounds of awe, disappointment and more softly arose from his audience as they finally moved from their mostly statue-esque positions. Dante's storytelling inadvertently became a weekend-long event, with a good portion of the audience staying for the two nights of the three days, whereas the rest left and returned the next day. Some new faces had even joined: Morrison, Lady, and, surprisingly, Jeanne, Enzo and even Hallen. They hadn't known of Dante telling his story; when they had individually arrived, he just decided to give into fate and invite them to listen as well. After all, it wasn't as if they weren't family in each of their own rights...some more than others...

Murmurs of thanks and other such things reached his ears as he sat there, awaiting some sort of reaction. But nothing...quite happened the way he had expected...

Quite shortly after he finished speaking, the aforementioned, sans Hallen, were immediately brought up to speed on what they missed by...young Julius, of all people...along with his father with his mother listening in. Lady and Trish wordlessly began to assist Patty with cleaning up the pizza boxes, discarded paper towels, and soda and alcohol bottles, talking quietly amongst each other as they did. Vergil was the only one missing, knowing the story, and was on a mission that came in the day before. In many ways, and to his personal, quiet disappointment and/or embarrassment, Dante *so* wished his silent, nigh-unflappable brother was there...

Trish looked over to him, handing her share of the mess to Patty, who took it without complaint or comment. "...What a story, Dante," the demoness said to him, standing from the second couch and slowly approaching the desk. "Hard to believe some parts of it really happened..."

Cracking his neck, the half-devil simply gave her a brief glance. "Mm hm..."

She watched him as he stretched in the chair, quite frankly ignoring her. It took a second for her to realize he was...uncomfortable. He had, after all, told of some extremely unsavory things his younger self had done...but that part of the story was told yesterday (and was also where the alcohol bottles came from). Or was it just the fact that she hinted to those events in her sentence...?

She considered him, seeing him differently, yes, but not in the way one would probably think. He was her first and oldest friend, like a younger brother to her, and for the first time in many years, he seemed even more like a younger sibling in her eyes...

Smiling softly, she walked by the desk after Patty and Lady in the kitchen, but not before chancing it and ruffling his hair. As she moved away, she saw him looking at her in bewilderment, looking confused and...just the way he appeared when she first considered him as a younger brother.

Her smile grew, confusing him further. "I'll be in the back if you need me, Dante," she said casually before disappearing around the staircase.

Dante blinked after her, running his fingers through his hair. She hadn't done that in...decades. And...she acted as if nothing had happened...

He glanced about the room, full of bodies and chatter, and realized, in fact, most of everyone there seemed quite neutral. Enzo was helping Nero and Julius tell Morrison and Jeanne the parts they missed, and Cereza was further informing Kyrie of the Crows, Umbra Witches, and Lumen Sages...whereas Hallen...

His eyes met with his older daughter's, blue to identical blue. She was the only one who was alone. Somehow, she ended up on the other side of the room, standing near the door to the bathroom, and simply stared at him, her arms crossed. She seemed so tired...so worn...conflicted...confused. He wished, in that moment, that he could just stroll over to her and give her the hug she so very well deserved and needed, but...

There was no unrelenting emotion in any part of her being, so he spared himself the guilt trip and broke eye contact, lowering his gaze and looking forward. Would he ever be able to make amends with her...?

"Dante."

He grunted in response to his nephew, not looking up.

"What are you going to call the story?" Nero asked, walking to the desk. Behind him, Julius was still chatting away at the story with Enzo to wide-eyed and deeply engrossed Morrison and Jeanne. They seemed to be at the part where he was broken out of the asylum by Azvorel...and had a ways to go...

"Already gave it a name," he responded, sighing heavily. He was mentally burnt out from worrying over nothing...It was still surprising that he had worried over, and was still anxious over, what everyone's reaction would be to his story...

Nero had taken notice of his uncle's sudden tense body language once he reached the end of the story. Not having any plans to just brush off what he had heard, he sighed before saying, "...I don't see you any differently, Uncle."

The use of his nephew's affectionate childhood name, as always, brought Dante's attention to the forefront, and their gazes met as he looked up.

"...If anything, my respect for you went up a few notches," Nero continued, glancing away as he rubbed his nose.

A small smile slowly broke out on the older man's face. "...Flattery'll get you nowhere, kid," he taunted. "And I can't believe you still do that nose-rubbing thing when you're embarrassed. It's so cute."

Though he glared back, Nero smiled. "...Shut up," he murmured, and then shook his head in realization at, now that he knew, how alike their relationship was to his uncle's younger self and Azvorel. Chuckling to himself, he turned back and walked towards the door, where Kyrie was now only lightly conversing with Cereza. "Anyways, old man, I should get going back to Fortuna. I'll bet everyone thinks we died or something..."

"Nero," Kyrie gently berated.

Smiling, he lowered to plant a kiss on her cheek before looking to his son. "C'mon, Julius. Let the fat man tell the rest of the story."

Enzo only gave him a look, but then glanced at Julius, who was frowning. "Hey, don't look at me, kid."

Though he grumbled, the boy stood from the couch and ran to Dante, glomming him. "Bye, Unca Dante," he said, face-first in his shirt. "Thank you for telling us your story."

Lowering his feet from the desk, Dante returned the embrace, ruffling the wild white hair. "...It wasn't too much for you?" he asked, truly interested in what the sponge-like mind had collected from the previous day. Though there was no need to explain everything in graphic detail, be it he told it as a story instead of personal experience, added with the fact that the more intense moments of the story were saved for when the children were asleep...Julius and Patty were remarkably clever. Patty, in fact, probably knew *exactly* what had happened during the moments in the story before she was sent to bed each night...

The four-year-old moved back to look his granduncle in the eye, expression innocent, but stern in a way. "It's okay, Uncle. You're a good person, even back then, really," he said. At the dubious face flashed at him, he nodded vigorously, brows furrowing. "You were *forced* to be bad, Uncle, an' you were really little! But *you* were a nice boy!" He gave his granduncle another, desperate hug. "Don't hate yourself, Unca D, please."

Expression softening, Dante broke into a smile, and lifted his small grandnephew into his arms to give an enveloping embrace. "...Thank you, Julius. I'll try to remember that," he murmured, and then slightly moved him away to part his bangs and plant a kiss upon his forehead. "See you, little man. Take care of your mom, since your dad does such a bad job."

"OH..."

"Nero, we have to go," Kyrie reminded with a smile, holding Nero's glowing arm as he began to take steps back into the room.

Patty, hiding around the corner, took that opportunity to give her older cousin and his wife a hug, laughing. The boy, too, snickered, squirming in his granduncle's grasp before he was let go, and gave Cereza a brief hug before glomming Patty. He then whispered something into her hear, causing them both to giggle almost conspiratorially. One of Dante and Nero's eyes both twitched at the thought of what they could quite literally *be* conspiring, but their smiles remained on their faces, to Kyrie and Cereza's amusement. Julius then raced back to his father, who he immediately jumped on.

Repositioning his son so he was carrying him on his back, Nero continued glaring into the room as Kyrie gave goodbyes. "I'll get you for that next time, old man!" he promised, shaking a fist.

Snorting, Dante waved the young family off. "Love you guys!"

"Yeah, yeah. Say bye to Dad for me!" Nero called as they opened the doors. Turning around, he took Kyrie's hand and proceeded down the stairs, the doors closing behind them.

Smiling fondly, Dante sighed in contentment. He never thought Nero would get married so young...especially since he was still a punk...

He briefly glanced at Hallen, who was still in the same position as before, though not glaring at him, and sighed quietly to himself.

His attention then focused on Morrison and Enzo, who began to walk towards the door. "Leaving, too?"

"Yeah, good ol' Morrison here's gonna give me a ride back since *someone* still owes me for wreckin' my car," Enzo coughed.

Cereza, lounging on the couch, gave a glance, but was too satisfied with her lollipop to give much attention. Her sister shook her head with a scoff, standing beside the couch at her side.

Behind Enzo, Morrison chuckled, putting on his hat from the coat tree. "He's going to finish telling me the parts I missed. But it was good to see you again, Dante," he said.

Giving a two-fingered wave, Dante nodded. "Come by whenever. Especially you, Enzo. Feelin' kind of...ah...forgotten since you moved to the east," he hinted not-so conspicuously.

"What, so I can kick your ass again at poker?" Throwing down his hands as they both broke into laughter, Enzo looked back to Morrison, who slowly nodded in agreement, before looking at Dante again, who was no longer laughing. "...What?"

"Come over next time and we'll see whose ass is kicked."

Adjusting his coat, Enzo grinned. "Oh, ho ho! Sounds like a challenge! Well, I look forward to lining my pockets...AGAIN!" Once more, he belted out into laughter, and then waved off as Morrison opened the doors. "Yeah, I've got to come by again, don't I? We go back, Dante! Far back! Take care, old buddy!"

Chuckling, Dante shook his head at the loud man's antics as he headed out the door. "You, too, Enzo."

After the door closed, that left him in the room with...four women; five counting Trish in the back of the house. He had completely forgotten about Lady, who had entered the room when Nero's family left, sitting on the end of the couch, and was watching him behind thick sunglasses.

And now that he realized she was looking at him, he hated how he suddenly felt self-conscious. "...What?"

"You're lacking your usual vigor," she said with casual observance.

Closing his eyes, he rested his hands behind his head, placing his feet on the desk. "I'm surprised you're here," he murmured, ignoring her remark. "You even let Vergil take the only mission that's come since you've been here..."

Sighing, she stood and slowly walked over. "Dante...of all things, I never thought you to be the type to care of what others think of you," she said softly, almost gently, an unusual tone for her.

Blinking, he took notice this was the second woman who was being *very* nice to him and the third person who had said anything about the story. He briefly glanced at her before letting his eyes wonder away. "...Of all things? Of all, including what you know of me now?" he asked quietly.

"That's not a Dante I'm familiar with," she countered smoothly, though carefully. "You're not that person anymore, nothing even remotely like that person. I've known you for a while, now, Dante, and I see no reason to treat you any differently just because of your...abhorrent past."

...And now he just felt awkward. Lady? Being *this* nice to him? "...You're beginning to freak me out, Lady."

She slapped his feet off the table, causing him to grin and look up at her. "You owe me a *lot* of money for this," she reminded, turning on her heels and towards the door.

Throwing up his hands, he laughed. "Wha...? How? What did *I* do to cause you to lose money? No one told you to stay; blame Vergil! Or something! Why me?...Lady?"

She opened the front door, giving him a look. "See you, Dante~" she called, and then slipped out.

Resting his arms on the desk, he scoffed. "Never look a gift horse in the mouth," he murmured with a smile to himself.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Jeanne take Patty out of the room, moving back around to the kitchen. The silver-haired Witch gave him a particular glance out of the corner of her eye before disappearing...He then glanced over at his older daughter, who was now near the

jukebox in the right corner of the room, poking at it. Now that he thought about it, she seemed to be waiting for everyone to leave...

A skintight, dark midnight suit suddenly moved before his vision. He focused, realizing he was looking at her navel... "...Cerez..." he whistled lowly.

Lithe fingers slid into his hair, caressing his scalp, and he emitted a low groan. Her fingers felt *fantastic* in his hair...which slowly slipped away all too soon. He grumbled lowly, and she made a playful hum, then turned around, showing off the curves of her generous backside. His eyes narrowed, and he slowly reached over to trail his fingertips along her hips.

"Oh, dear. I forgot all about you, young one," she said to Hallen. "If you want to speak with him, you may as well do it now..." she trailed off, slowly gyrating against his fingers, "...before the adults have a *talk*."

His devil side, which for days now had been as silent as death, sprung to rapt attention at her promise for mating. He growled gutturally, but softly, eliciting a pleased sound from his mate.

He sensed Hallen's sudden hesitance, probably to approach Cereza; her fear, likely because she, too, sensed his more demonic side awaken; and...her disgust. The latter was enough to shake him out of his lust-induced lapse and he softly sighed, briefly closing his eyes.

"...If you want to talk, I'm open for conversation," he said, leaning back in his chair. Cereza moved out of his view, allowing him to see his daughter facing them, eyes narrowed and body as tense as a whipped dog. "What is it you want to talk about?"

Her eyes narrowed impossibly greater, then she glanced from Cereza to him. Before he could open his mouth, the witch placed her hand on her hip, scoffing. "As if I'm going to let you be alone with him. You've already tried, and nearly succeeded, in killing him once," she said, a steady fierceness in her voice that had him wanting her even more...

She then turned to him, leaning over the desk to reach and caress his coarse jawline. However, he focused on her eyes, which, like Vergil's, expressed her distrust in the young part-devil. Having been through this scenario once before, he didn't brush off her concern. Instead, he leaned forward to capture her lips in a rather chaste kiss, at least in comparison to their normal ones. She granted him entry into her mouth, where their tongues danced only once, causing him to groan softly at the taste of her *strawberry* lollipop, before she broke away. She then slipped her pop back into her mouth and gallivanted over to the bar, hips swaying...

Licking his lips, he forced his eyes away from her and back to his daughter, who...hadn't moved an inch or made any other expression. Interestingly, she was his equivalent of Nero; she was more like Vergil, whereas Nero was more like *him*...

He massaged his temples. "...Hallen. Talk."

"*Don't* say my name," she hissed, taking a step forward.

"But it got you to talk," he countered tiredly, so used to this by now.

She went quiet, pursing her lips and frowning deeply. Her eyes lowered. "...You were worse than I thought, when you were younger," she murmured. "...You really *were* a devil..."

Closing his eyes, he placed a hand on the desk and clenched his teeth, but said nothing. If she was going to go this route before getting whatever it was off her chest...

"...I'll admit, you've changed much since then...haven't you..." Trailing off, she glanced at her unclaimed sword resting on the wall behind him, along with Rebellion and Sparda. Her eyes then snapped to his, and she snarled, "But I don't believe that *other* side of you is dead. How can I, when I've gone for all these decades looking *for* that side of you?"

"So, what are you trying to say? You'll stick around until that side resurfaces?" he demanded, tired of trying, and failing, to make her believe him.

Her face lit up, something he hadn't seen since...

"You admit it's still there!" she exclaimed, taking another step forward as she pointed at him.

His hand atop the table tightened into a fist as he stood, growling, "*No*. That side of me is *gone*. What the hell do I have to do to make you *believe* me? To free me of this guilt I've carried with me for *two centuries*?"

An almost maniacal look came into her eyes. "That's easy!" she laughed, holding out her hands to her sides. "You're free when *I'm* free! If you go away, you'll rid us both of this unbearable pain!"

That look. It haunted him, ate at his core. He had no idea what it looked like, but instinctively knew that was the same look that he must have worn when he was young, during that time he was a true devil. It was the look of one who was disturbed, *destroyed* inside. It should *not* be on the face of his daughter as well, not after what that face had meant for him.

"Hallen," he said as he came around the table, beginning to approach her with an outstretched hand, but she backed away, "Hallen, please. I don't want you to have to keep going on like this. You shouldn't have to."

She only shook her head, continuing to back away with a look of distrust, disgust, spite clouding her face.

"Here you have *family*," he continued, trying to reason, *pleading* to reason, with something within her, "cousins, an uncle, a..." —he swallowed, briefly closing his eyes—" a *sister*...a father, if you let him try to be one to you. Please...give me a chance." Instead of continuing to approach her, he kept his hand outstretched, reaching for her with his palm up.

For just a moment, she looked as if she was going to cry. Her expression turned...almost frightened, and she quickly dashed to the door.

"Wait, Hallen!" he called, moving faster to make it to the exit before her. This took her by surprise, and then she threw herself at him.

He had a split second to see the weapon aiming for his chest, and suddenly he was on the floor in front of his desk, Cereza hovering over him. He looked to the door just in time to see Hallen dash out of it, and just like that, she was gone.

"...Hallen..." he murmured, suddenly feeling lethargic. He glanced to his chest to see a weapon literally attempting to dig into his heart, but Cereza kept it still with her magic. It was a clearly demonic weapon, one he had only seen a few times. It looked almost like a spearhead; if it went in much deeper, it would show its true form and eat its way into him.

He grunted softly as it was taken from out of him, and then burned to cinders by a spell Cereza quickly chanted. Placing his hand over his heart, he closed his eyes.

"...Thanks...Cerez..."

Her ungloved hand caressed his cheek. "Don't thank me yet, you fool. Something is wrong..."

"Yeah...my old wound...it stings..." he gasped, clenching his chest as the pain quickly grew.

"...Is it even possible she had the matching artifact to that demonic one?" Cereza asked as she removed his hand and unbuckled the belts across his chest.

"...How...did she get...these..." His head suddenly went limp as he lost conscious.

Swearing harshly, she unzipped his shirt and opened it, revealing a steadily growing black mark in the center of the faded, reddish ring over his chest. Quickly, she summoned a tome into her hands and flipped it open. *Belel Curse, Belel Curse...remove!* She skimmed over the words, and then swore yet again.

"Where the hell is Vergil when you need him...?"

The tome disappeared, and she dug into Dante's pockets for his cell phone. Just her luck, it rang just as she found it. It was Vergil, likely calling because he sensed something wrong with his brother. She flipped it open.

"Get your arse over here, *now!* That little bitch attacked him again and he has the second half of the curse upon him. He needs your blood!" she ordered, and then promptly hung up to do what she could to tend to a rapidly paling Dante.

Vergil swore. He swore as if the words were a prayer as he drove back to his brother's house. It wasn't surprising that she would at least attack him once...but *twice*? After all he had done, after holding no ill will towards her, going so far as to trusting her to stay in his own *home*?

He uttered another curse, this one an actual hex, but caught himself before finishing. He knew why Dante did what he did, and understood it to its entirety. That guilt, that guilt so deep it was enough for him to be suicidal at the worst of times...He would do *anything* to try to make amends, even if it meant putting himself in harm's way...again.

Unlike his younger twin, Vergil had also hoped that hearing the story of his brother's life would ease the young part-devil's hatred...

For the umpteenth time since speaking to, or more so hearing from, Cereza, he swore.

Fortunately, he was not far from the city during the time he called, and so it took less than thirty minutes for him to arrive. He just had the mind to turn the car off before jumping out to the double doors, barging in and expecting the worst.

Dante was unconscious, lying on the couch with his shirt removed to show his torso was completely black, along with his arms to his elbows. His lips were turning black as well as the curse traveled up his neck.

"Good, you're here," Trish breathed, standing over the younger twin apprehensively.

Cereza was looking over the tome on the floor beside the couch, fretting over something.

"What's wrong?" Vergil asked her, cutting his bared wrist with a claw. "If it's just blood he needs, this will be over in moments, yes?"

"Curses are never that simple," she muttered, reading and rereading passages. "Can this curse really be so easy...?"

"If it were other demons or humans, consider the possibility of them being able to find a blood relation in less than an hour," Trish said in an attempt to placate the witch. "We are fortunate Vergil was near...or here at all..."

Vocalizing his agreement, Vergil stood beside the bed, near Trish. This was the second time seeing his brother near death since he returned from Hell. And all by the same woman...

"You can administer the blood through his mouth," Cereza said, pushing up her glasses as she stood. "He has to swallow it, however, and it will take some time to enter his system.

"Why blood?" Trish murmured.

"Something about strength of a bloodline..."

As Vergil knelt, he placed his bleeding wrist to his brother's slightly parted mouth. If there was anything conscious within him, it would be his demonic instinct.

And in moments, after a few muscle twitches and the flaring of nostrils at the smell of blood, Vergil grunted in discomfort as a mouthful of sharp teeth bit into his wrist. A tongue flicked against his slowly healing wound, and then Dante began to suck from it.

Trish glanced to Cereza. "Strength of a bloodline...?" she repeated softly.

The witch slowly nodded. "It is just what you're thinking, yet not. A strong bloodline would mean the curse may lift easier, but it is also the strength of the individuals involved. If the one cursed does not have a strong bond with the relative giving their blood, the curse may not lift," she explained just as softly.

Both women glanced between the twins.

Vergil softly scoffed at their worry. "We are the twin Sons of Sparda, who have recently rekindled our close bond. You doubt the curse will lift?" he asked rhetorically, almost daring them to say otherwise by his tone of voice.

"...Well, when you put it like that..."

The words died in her throat as Dante suddenly went still. His lockjaw-grip on his brother's wrist slackened, and he ceased to drink. The curse, now at his jawline, ceased its infectious movement, but did not ebb.

Not moving his eyes from his brother's still form, Vergil demanded, "...Cereza, what's happening?"

"Wait."

Three sets of eyes watched the prone form intently, breaths bated in anxiousness. Then Dante briefly grimaced, exhaling deeply as if he were unable to breathe beforehand, and slightly moved as if in slumber while his expression evened.

His caretakers, too, exhaled in relief. With their advanced eyesight, they could see the curse slowly, almost painfully so, receding and dispersing. Vergil stood, his expression grave, and then turned around to walk towards the door. The tome disappeared from Cereza's hands, then she lifted Dante's legs to sit on the couch and replaced his legs on her lap.

"Where are you going, Vergil?" Trish asked, keeping her position near the younger twin's head.

"To bring back my psychotic niece," the older Son of Sparda proclaimed, grasping Yamato in his hand. "This time, I will not let her get away with attempted murder."

It pained her to say it, but it had to be said: "Don't hurt her," she murmured, glancing to and placing her hand on Dante's forehead.

Stopping, Vergil glanced back to her, and then to his unconscious brother. Dante really *wouldn't* want him to hurt her, despite what she did...Briefly closing his eyes, Vergil pushed the doors open. "No promises."

The moment he realized he was asleep was the same moment he heard a distant calling. Slowly, he forced himself to consciousness, and the voice became louder, familiar. It was a feminine voice...and near.

"Wake up, sleepyhead...I know you're coming to..."

His brows furrowed. "...Cere...za...?" he mumbled, disoriented. His head felt unusually heavy, and it was difficult to speak.

"Who else~?"

He groaned softly, fighting to open his eyes, which felt heavier than his head. A cool hand brushed against his forehead, and he softly moaned, attempting to lift his head to press into that comfortingly cool palm. "...Cerez..."

"The curse was lifted, but it's still affecting you, I see," she observed sternly, pressing her hand completely against his warm skin, causing him to sigh. "How do you feel?"

He didn't answer, slowly shaking his head instead. The sound of movement reached his ears, and a body lay beside him.

"Rest, love," she whispered into his ear, her voice taking on the rare tone she ever used, the one of a caring and gentle lover.

A small smile spread on his lips, which were then rewarded by a chaste kiss. He only had the chance to slightly part his mouth as the lips pulled away before sleep overcame him again.

-:AD'sC:-

The second time he awoke, he blinked up to the dark ceiling of his room. It was night. The lights were off, his door closed, though the light from beyond could be seen from between the door's cracks. Exhaling deeply, he slowly sat upright, testing his body. Nothing seemed off, his body felt normal, and he looked over his bare chest to see he wasn't sporting any new scars. His eyes lingered on the ring around his heart, however...

Tearing his gaze away, he looked over the body asleep on the bed beside him, smiling. He then moved over, lowering his head to skim his nose and mouth over the bare skin, taking in the scent of his mate. She was completely nude, her hair splayed beneath her as she slept on her side.

"...Cereza..." he murmured, "you stayed with me all this time...?" If she had, it meant she was truly worrying about him. Realizing this, he raised his head and frowned to himself.

This *was* the second time he had nearly died in less than a month. Even he could see how it would appear as if he was *trying* to get himself killed by his estranged daughter, taking such careless risks as he had. But...he was merely desperate. Maybe too much so...

Sighing, he moved away, turning to lower his feet to the floor from his side of the bed. He sensed Trish in the house, as well as Vergil...and...

His eyes widened. Hallen was in the house.

He nearly lost all thought, jumping to his feet, but then stopped and *forced* himself to sit back down. Shutting his eyes, he placed his hands over his face. What was going to happen *this* time? Should he treat her like an enemy? Should he try another futile attempt to reason with her...? It wasn't that he didn't acknowledge her shattered mental condition, but he had no intentions to treat her like a psychopath, and not just because she was his daughter...

...He very well remembered what it was like to be treated that way...

"Dante?"

He grunted noncommittally in response, not moving from his position.

Slender fingers combed into his hair, a body pressing against his backside and an arm around his chest. "...Vergil brought her in a few hours ago," she murmured to him. "Neither were in the best of moods...I'm surprised the commotion didn't wake you."

Lowering his hands, he wearily asked, "He didn't hurt her, did he?"

"...He tried not to, but it was difficult. It...upset her that you were still alive..."

"...At least he tried," he muttered, mentally exhausted. He leaned against his mate, slanting his eyes open. "...I really don't feel like facing her right now..."

"What do you feel like doing...?" The arm around his chest lowered, skillful fingers brushing over his nipples teasingly.

He moaned softly. "...You promised to *talk* with me," he then growled, glancing back at her with slightly red eyes.

Vergil glanced up the stairs as he entered the basement, sensing the rise of his brother's demonic instinct. He then closed his eyes, continuing in.

The basement was a marvelous place, he had to admit, arguably his favorite place in the entire house. This was where his brother's remarkable and admirable collection of Devil Arms was stored, along with other demonic artifacts and miscellaneous collections. Unlike the storage room, the basement was surprisingly well organized and completely clean, giving Vergil the thought that there was hope for his younger sibling yet.

He walked by shelves of Devil Arms and more mounted on the wall, where some of them greeted him.

"Hello, Master Vergil," said Agni.

"Yes, hello, Master Vergil," Rudra chorused. "The young devil has...strangely stopped her incessant screeching."

Vergil hummed at this, and then continued on to the furthest room within the basement Dante kept as a room for interrogation, or...other such unsavory things...

His daughter was one of them.

The moment he entered the room, he side-stepped to miss a spat of saliva.

"He's fucking that witch, isn't he?" she hissed, lips curled over her teeth in a snarl. She sat in the corner of the room, bound by a spell he fashioned himself. "Have you realized the majority of the women he killed were *quiet, meek* and *harmless*? Almost as if he took some sick, twisted pleasure in ruining the chastity of those who aren't *loose* like that *bitch*."

Vergil ignored her, but had to admit he was surprised she could sense anything of her father at all. From what he was aware, she would have to be close to him to even have a chance to do such a thing...

"It is not a surprise that he doesn't want to see you," he commented, aware she would speak if he so goaded her. "Despite his attempt at affection, you have tried to kill him twice, now."

Her face twisted in disgust. "Affection," she spat, as if the word were a curse. "He's stupid, that's what he is, letting his enemy get so close to him and keeping his guard down."

Closing his eyes again, he sat on the only piece of furniture in the empty room, a chair at the furthest wall from her. "While I do not agree with his methods, yes, that is his form of affection, girl. He doesn't see you as an enemy. You've no idea how deeply he desires to make amends with you."

"It doesn't matter."

"Do you even understand that were you *not* his daughter you would be dead by now?"

"...What do you mean?"

"There is no possible way, during normal circumstances, that Dante would be as careless as he has been since you arrived," he explained calmly. "He is so blind by his want to right his wrongs, he's regressing to a mental status that hasn't surfaced since after losing your grandmother and me."

Her brows furrowed at this, and she made no attempt to comment.

"...Remember, Dante once lost himself to revenge and self-loathing, far greater than you have," he murmured, eyes slightly slanting open to stare at the floor as he began to reminisce. The emotions of his younger brother he felt during their meld overcame him, and for a moment, he nearly swayed in the chair. "...He doesn't want you to end up that way as well. You know his story. You know *why*. Yet how can that still change nothing of your loathing him?"

Her eyes flashed red. "HE RUINED MY LIFE!" she screamed, fighting against her bonds.

"And you're still alive!" he countered, meeting her furious gaze with his own. "*This* is the time to start over with the father you've never had, who hadn't even known of your existence for nigh a hundred years, with the *family* you never *knew* you had. Now you are aware what he would have done had he known of you. Would that have made a difference as to how you came to be?"

She opened her mouth to speak, but could find no comeback to the question. "...I...don't know," she said miserably, sitting back and lowering her head.

Observing her carefully, he quietly asked, "Do you want a parent?"

She shut her eyes, looking away.

"...Do not once think he doesn't mourn the loss of your twin. Do not once think he isn't haunted by what he did to your mother...I've had to watch him relive that night, and many others, in his nightmares, reducing that haughty, self-assured idiot brother of mine to a screaming, tearful mess..."

She opened her eyes as he approached her, but didn't move as she listened to him.

In one last attempt to reason with his estranged niece, Vergil stood before her, and then kneeled so they were at eye level. For a moment, he took in her features...Her eyes, of course, were rebellious and full of passion, like her father's, even though he shared the same eyes. He could see some of his mother in her femininity, and her nose was angular and narrow, a feature all Sparda's descendants seemed to share as much as their eye and hair color...

...She *was* family, whether he admitted it or not.

Briefly closing his eyes, he removed the spell, causing her to focus on him with wide eyes as she could suddenly move. He held her gaze. "Both you and my brother are hurting," he said softly, "but neither of you need to suffer alone."

Chapter End Notes

"LOADING..." chapters, such as this, are meant to give an impression that one is playing a video game. These chapters will consist of story content with long end-chapter commentary and explanations. Unfortunately, this is a demo/teaser/what have you. This entire chapter is messed up...

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Let me explain this chapter before you review and grill me alive. This chapter was written...eight months ago, perhaps. At the time, I was nowhere near where I am now in TD'sC's development and thusly...there are some evident differences to what TD'sC will eventually be. First and foremost...yes, this originally did take place after the first chapter, but things ended up changing and the first chapter became what it is.

Second, Dante and Vergil's power. When I made this chapter, the twins weren't very powerful...at least not the extent that it should be, even in canon. Dante defeated the "Satan" of his world, for fuck's sake. Now compare that to that pathetic curse I made in

this chapter and his power has been greatly reduced. Pathetically so. While I think in canon the best bet of what Dante's (and Vergil's) greatest weakness is would be a parasite...this is something completely different from that. The story behind the curse he has in this chapter is that Hallen first cursed him during one of the previous times she fought him, and then the second part of the curse was put upon him. Curses, now that I think about it, might work against Dante as well, but not pathetic ones like this...

Regardless, it isn't important. At all.

Third, Hallen's behavior. Though it was evident in the first chapter that she was...eh...cautious...or something of that nature, she seems to love her father, and even gives him a hug and kiss. She really does, eventually, but this second chapter was written before I decided to make Dante telling his story happen after she comes to accept him as her father. Again, this is just a standalone oneshot; not important in the slightest.

Lastly, you're probably wondering, as a whole, why the hell Cereza and Jeanne are in this. And Enzo, perhaps. Let me start this by beginning that I knew and always believed Enzo to be a canon DMC character. It wasn't until I finally got the damned original "true" DMC series timeline correct that I realized Enzo isn't...quite canon. But his appearance in Bayonetta, which—for all reasons and evidence hints to—likely takes place in the Devil May Cry universe, solidified my decision to keep him as a friend of Dante's.

In TD'sC, the events of Bayonetta become somewhat parallel to some events relating to the original DMC universe. All important and/or obvious shout outs/references to DMC from Bayonetta will have a justified reason for their connection in TD'sC, i.e. why Luca's father's name is Antonio Redgrave and Dante once took up the alias Tony Redgrave. In other words, during the time Cereza goes to Vigrid and the battle between her and Balder occurs, Dante is around as well, distantly aware of what is going on, but doesn't (and can't) interfere.

As for the new Bayonetta 2 events...I plan to heavily modify the Bayonetta and DMC storylines, so it doesn't matter...too much.

But yes, I paired Dante with Cereza...and they will have children. I don't care how it cannot work, should not work, or how complicated such a relationship would be. It's happening.

As for Cereza's abilities, I'll bat around the bush and say in TD'sC, the Umbra Witches are their own wonderfully unique sect of witch as well as the "stereotypical" witch found in common tales, at least to a certain degree that I'm not quite sure I feel 100% assured to explain right now...But let's just say I added some old witchy clichés to the Bayonetta universe.

I think that's it.

If you like the idea of the interludes/LOADING...and other such chapters, please vote on my FF.net [profile poll](#):

1. Yes, they are entertaining and/or informative

2. No, they are long and/or ruin the pace of the story
3. Yes; no comment
4. No; no comment

To the Innocence Inside

Chapter Summary

Dante and Vergil rekindle their bond.

Chapter Notes

...There was no intention for "bromance" or incestuous insinuations, I swear (not that in any other case I would be against such a thing, it's just not meant to be in this fic). Rather, I was actually inspired to do this interaction between Vergil and Dante from seeing interactions between my older and younger brother, in the old days...

Sigh The good old days...

The moment he caught a glimpse of the blue-clad figure on the couch, arms crossed and eyes closed with his ōkatana resting against his chest, he somehow knew exactly what his older brother was inevitably waiting for.

...*Hell* no.

Ignoring his presence, Dante continued down the stairs and then walked around the banister to the side of his desk and into the chair, letting his feet rest heavily atop the wooden surface. His twin didn't as much as twitch from the sound. Naturally.

Swiping his beer from where he left it, he leaned back in his seat and drank, eyes closing in what was an obvious attempt to ignore his brother's presence. "Attempt", of course, being the operative word...

"You are ignoring me, Dante."

Frowning, irritated he wasn't even allowed a few *minutes* of peace, Dante remained silent, but cracked an eye open. Vergil still hadn't moved.

"Don't delay the inevitable."

He shut his eye, letting the bottle hit the desk with unnecessary force. "No."

A sigh. "...I assure you, I'm not looking forward to this, either."

"Good. Drop it." He hated how uneasy he sounded with his repressed anxiety beginning to creep up within him, but couldn't care enough. The issue at hand overruled everything.

He heard movement as his twin asked, "You would deny this, despite how healing would be for us both?"

At this, he hesitated, having only thought of the negative aspects to melding, none of the good.

When they were young, they inadvertently had psychological melds all the time, and only really became aware of the experience when their father told them how important it was for them to continue doing it. Being demonic twins, they could share their thoughts, feelings and even their experiences with a simple touch or telepathy. Of course, as children, they didn't notice it was something only they could do, even when they noticed it was impossible to accomplish with their mother or father. Indeed, it seemed healing for their souls; Dante vividly recalled how fractured he felt when he was alone after their mother was killed and he ran at his brother's order...Being unable to sense and connect with his twin, his other half, was...

He slowly opened his eyes and glanced at his brother, who stared back, patient and...dare he assume he caught worry in those identical blue orbs? Sighing, knowing that if such was so he was already losing this battle, he muttered, "...I don't want to share anything..."

His twin slightly nodded in understanding, briefly closing his eyes with a sigh of his own. "There is...much I've done that I'm not...proud of, either, Dante. But I believe this is the most effective method to dispel this evident tension between us." He gave a pointed glance, eyes slightly narrowing. "...And I think I can speak for us both when I say you would rather do this than *speak* of our experiences."

Strange as the idea may have sounded to someone else...Vergil was spot on. Dante loathed the simple thought of speaking about what had happened to him during his childhood and pubescent life. No, there was too much that was too difficult to say that imagery and feeling would bring to focus and make clear. It was a connection only those who once shared a single organismic body could convey.

After a moment more of hesitance, Dante swore to himself before standing out of the chair. He downed his beer, then approached the opposite side of the couch and sat, but he didn't face his twin, whose eyes he could feel watching him closely.

His mouth felt dry, despite the lingering taste of the alcohol, and he found himself hesitating once again. Fortunately, his brother understood; he waited patiently, moving Yamato to rest against the couch's side.

"Promise me," he suddenly blurted, only noticing the words had left his mouth after the fact.

"Pardon?" Vergil raised a brow, turning to him.

Swallowing his sudden apprehension, which returned regardless, Dante continued to look down, hands tightly clenched in his lap. The mere thought of what he was going to bring up

from the repressed and vivid memories in his mind was enough to render him timid, fearful. "...Promise me," he repeated quietly, "that...you won't judge me...after."

Vergil observed his younger brother's tense and defensive—no, *frightened* demeanor. This was a completely different and disheartening side to his brother he had an inkling he was going to see more of, whether it disturbed him or not. Just what had happened to him...? "Myself, as well," he softly intoned, causing his brother to glance to him. He kept a leveled expression, but sincerity broke through.

Wasting not a second more, he offered his hand, as if awaiting a handshake. He watched the familiarity flash on Dante's face with a private smile; they always held hands as children...Other emotions then crept into Dante's expression: worry, hesitance, absolute refusal, willingness, relief, and even slight joy. For a moment, Vergil considered Dante's likely refusal once more...

Instead, Dante finally reached out and began to offer his hand as well, then faltered briefly before placing his hand on his brother's arm, grasping it. Vergil followed his gesture, and both of their eyes closed.

-:AD'sC:-

Dante experienced his memories anew, and Vergil saw and felt them in succession; perhaps his younger brother's desire to be done with them aided this process. As such, they bombarded his psyche, one horrifying experience after another, atop another, layered over another, and were too much for him to handle.

"Enough!" he exclaimed, breaking away from Dante's grasp. Eyes snapping open, he met the sight of his younger brother shaking, something he hadn't noticed during the time his senses were stuck in the experience, and there was a visible sheen of sweat upon his skin.

Eyes hazed with fear and horror briefly met Vergil's own, and then they tore away. Dante's unsteady rise to his feet broke Vergil out of his shocked and horrified stupor, and he was quick to rectify his actions. He grabbed his brother's wrist, causing him to flinch, and in that next second, he was standing, his hand moved to rest on the trembling shoulder.

"I need to see the rest," he said, trying and failing to keep the demand out of his voice, but a fierce desperation had grasped at him.

Eyes widening, Dante slowly looked his brother in the eye. In those identical orbs, there wasn't a hint of scorn, disgust or anything antagonistic, only fear, concern, mortification...and empathy.

However, the electric blue was faintly rimmed with a telltale red of rage. At *them*.

His body gave out and he collapsed back onto the couch, slumped and suddenly so exhausted. He avoided his brother's gaze, hating the feel of the eyes scrutinizing him with his experiences so fresh in his psyche. "...Why?" he whispered.

Gently, Vergil placed his hand back on his brother's shoulder as he sat back down, this time directly beside him. "I need to know how you *survived*," he responded with vehemence on his emphasis on "survived". He couldn't believe the otherwise neutral, sociable and playful man he had become familiar with was once...that. His own *brother* had experienced...*that*. "...I *need* to know what happened."

Dante glanced at him again, eyes half-lidded with anguish, but he was evidently surprised...and thankful.

When their eyes met, Vergil allowed the rage to gradually seep into his expression. "...And did you kill them?" he questioned, barely suppressing his growl.

Head turning to face him, Dante's expression rapidly darkened, and he merely stared his brother in the eye, wordlessly answering the question.

Yes.

Hell yes, he had.

He slaughtered them all.

-:AD'sC:-

Afterwards, Dante sat comfortably on his side of the couch, sipping on a new bottle of beer while Vergil slowly drank a glass of wine. The twins sat in comfortable silence, mentally reviewing the information settling in their minds.

Dante could still feel the sting on his back from his brother's pain, the unnatural heat ingraining the demonic symbol into his very body. He shuddered, shifting slightly with the desire to remove the cloth from his back, expose the raw skin to the cooler air...but it was in his mind. Mostly. It hadn't physically happened to him...but it may as well have. It would be some time before the images and experiences from his brother's time serving Mundus fully settled.

Likewise, Vergil attempted to cool his tongue with the saliva in his mouth, coating it, as even that warm liquid was colder than the stinging, searing heat upon the muscle lingering from his brother's own marking. If it weren't such a repulsive, degrading and simply traumatizing reminder of their pasts, he imagined Dante would be joking about how ironic it was that they, identical twins, were branded with near exact symbols from...

...Regardless, for the time being, Dante was thankful the harrowing trip down memory lane was over. But Vergil...

The elder twin was unhappy and dissatisfied. There was something nagging at him, something pressing and important. His younger brother's experiences had brought forth a plethora of feelings and thoughts he believed he was unable to give mind to since the day he was forced into Mundus' service...

For the first time in many decades, he felt a bit more...human.

He glanced over to his twin, swallowing his pride. There was no room for that, not now. "Dante."

"Yeah, bro?" Dante took a swig from his drink before looking over. The expression of remorse and...*shame*?...upon his brother's face took him for a loop, and he was about to comment before freezing in realization. He wasn't going to like this...

Vergil briefly closed his eyes, but it wasn't from the knowledge of what he was doing or what he was going to say. Instead, it was with the knowledge that what he was going to say and do should have happened decades ago.

"I'm sorry."

The bottle in Dante's hand nearly slipped out of his grasp in his shock, his eyes going wide. "Sorry" ...? He couldn't remember the last time he heard those words, *that* word, from his brother...

His gaze slightly lowering, a telltale sign of his unease, Vergil continued, "I...haven't been the older brother I promised mother I would be."

If Dante thought the surprises were over for the night, he suddenly realized he hadn't seen *a thing*. He remained quiet, staring at his brother in stunned silence and anticipation, slowly letting his bottle rest on the table in front of them.

A thoughtful, introspective expression steadily formed on Vergil's face. "...You remember that day, Dante. We were growing apart, even then, but were still rather close. I wouldn't promise you, a half-devil, yet I had promised our fragile, human mother." He smiled wryly, gaze lowering further, and shook his head in deep sorrow and self-deprecation.

For decades, he explained, he hadn't so much as searched for his younger twin, unlike what had been done for him since before Dante was enslaved. All of those decades Dante suffered in unspeakable ways...and he had only scourged the planet looking for power, both knowingly and unknowingly working for Mundus' whims, killing thousands of innocents to do it, manipulating scores of people. He so easily gave himself over to evil...and for what, in the end?

He was so blinded by that fear, brought to light when their mother was killed, that foolish desire; even after learning Dante was alive, his motives didn't change. And when they met, both while Dante took the alias Tony and when atop the Temen-Ni-Gru, he had *known* something was wrong, and yet, he brushed it off. Perhaps due to their severed link or his own corruption, he hadn't so much as an inkling just how *deeply* scarred and unstable his own twin was. Worse yet, he hadn't even made an attempt to find a reason—any reason—why, or even showed curiosity, despite sensing something amiss.

During this entire confession, Dante remained silent. Quite frankly, he didn't know how to react to...all of this. This wasn't something he would have imagined coming from his brother's mouth. He could sense the sincerity, not just through their budding link, but in his voice and through his mannerisms. The tightly shut eyes, the shaking of his head when a particular memory ate at him, the shame upon his face and in his voice...

It was...

"Nothing to be sorry about, Verge," he interrupted, sensing his twin would have listed every wrong he'd ever committed in his life if he didn't do so. He kept his expression neutral, apathetic, staring forward at nothing in particular. "And if there *was* something to apologize for, I forgave you the moment I sensed you, saw you, in the ruins. That you were alive."

At this, Vergil raised his head, brows furrowing. Much as an annoyingly demonic part of him found it demeaning to be confessing his weaknesses and mistakes, his mind instead focused on how *foolish* Dante was being...for the umpteenth time.

Calmly, nonchalant yet overshadowed by evident sorrow, Dante continued, "The moment Mom was killed...It...That set the stage and course for our very different lives. Nothing could have been done about it..." He shrugged, a gesture made to seem indifferent. Unaffected. "So, there's nothing to get emotional about, Verge. We're alive, hell, we're spiking 300 years. I've recovered" —he pointedly ignored Vergil's expression of disbelief out of the corner of his eye — "and you're no longer a power-mongering devil. Everything worked out."

He intended to end the conversation right there. In his mind, there was nothing else more *to* say. But instead, Vergil shook his head, eyes briefly closed. He then motioned Dante closer with his fingers. In Dante's eyes, he didn't look too happy. But the younger twin decided to humor his brother, making a face as he moved a whole seat over and awaited the inevitable hit to the back of—

His breath suddenly hitched, body and mind frozen in absolute astonishment.

Vergil...

His brother...was...hugging him.

It was a warm hug; naturally, of course, as a creature of the underworld (even half ones), they gave off more body heat than a human. But this was that warm and the *other* warm: ardent; Vergil *meant* this hug. He felt...like Vergil's little brother, again. All at once, he was pointedly reminded how he had often felt smaller in comparison to his brother despite being identical twins, just because of his own mental imagery that Vergil was older. Against his will, he began to tremble, scarcely daring to breathe, as if it would or could ruin the moment.

"I never forgot your words," Vergil murmured, placing his hand behind Dante's head, "on the Temen-Ni-Gru, how many years ago, now...? Just as I knew there was something bothering you...there was something about the way you said that. It never left me, brother."

-:AD'sC:-

The curtain of white hair kept most of the expression hidden, but Vergil was sure his younger twin wasn't smiling, despite the mocking, scornful tone of his voice.

Dante parted his hands out at his sides, as if awaiting an embrace, and asked, "How 'bout a kiss from your little brother...?" He remained in that pose for a moment or two, watching his older brother's brows furrow, before letting his hands fall to his sides. It figured. Vergil wasn't

the same anymore. You would think his experience with "Gilver" was enough of an indication that their bond was lost. Fine, then... "Or how about...a kiss from this?" In a second, he drew his beloved guns from their holsters on his back and aimed them forward at their sole target, a bitter snarl curling his lips over his teeth.

-:AD'sC:-

"Only now, Dante, do I realize what you were trying to say...and I am sorry for neglecting you and being so foolish." Vergil glanced at his younger twin, sensing he was still in shock.

It was so clear, now, painfully so. Dante had wanted comfort. Such a simple thing...In many ways, Dante was still a child during that time, especially mentally. He wanted comfort, to *be* comforted by family, his brother, by someone who wouldn't do what was done to him. The hug was so many...*many* decades late...

But never forgotten.

His trembling worsening, Dante dug his nails into the couch, fighting to prevent himself from losing his composure. But all of this...all of that...his brother's sincerity, so tangible to him he could feel it against his skin, the comforting warmth...

It brought back the bruised and broken child from out of the depths within himself.

The child could cry.

The mental barriers, so diligently erected, collapsed, one atop the other. The tears flowed freely, gratefully, for the first time in many decades. He immediately embraced his older brother, clutching onto him as if he were an anchor to the world. The child within him cried, each fallen tear in turn healing the shell that once was.

His body had nearly gone limp from sudden, forceful exhaustion. So, overwhelmed he was from the impact and relief that Vergil was alive, exhausted from the injuries he sustained on his last job, and countless more...he didn't have the mind to be self-conscious that he, a grown man, had begun to weep openly in his brother's arms.

Slightly shifting, Vergil planted a soft kiss upon his brother's forehead. This action caused the sobs to lessen, and then cease within only a few short minutes. Their link was complete, allowing him to sense there was another part of his brother currently in control of his subconsciousness: the child his brother once was that never had the chance to *be*.

Dante then moved, curling against his brother's side, nearly climbing onto his lap. He hid his face against Vergil's chest, continuing to cling to him the way a child would if afraid, eyes closed tightly. Knowing this was all necessary, and more than willing to comfort his younger, broken brother, Vergil held him close, resting one hand atop his head and his other arm wrapped protectively around his body.

They stayed that way, in perfect silence, for nearly over an hour. Vergil's eyes had also closed, and his fingers combed through Dante's hair, an extra comforting gesture reminiscent of the affection they were shown as children. Finally, Vergil sensed the child within his

brother slowly, peacefully, fade away, lulled to slumber before joining his collective being, at long last.

A low, sleepy and contented exhale emitted from his twin, and his eyes opened as he gently broke away. It was Dante again, whole, complete. He sat beside him, upright, his eyes clear and focused despite having cried so hard. A touch of uneasiness was in his expression, but one glance to his brother's face and it dissolved to a large, thankful smile.

"Vergil...I sure as *hell* am glad to have you back," he chuckled, the undeniable sound of sincerity in his voice.

Vergil smiled back, placing a hand on his sibling's shoulder, and gave a reassuring squeeze. "Likewise," he acknowledged. "And thank you, Dante, for reminding me what it means to be human."

It took over a hundred years, but at long last, the Sons of Sparda were truly brothers once more.

LOADING...Of the Same Blood

Chapter Summary

Nero discovers his origins, courtesy of a certain elder half-Devil.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Truth be told, Nero didn't like woodlands. Or forests. Or jungles; anything with an overabundance of green, really. Not because he hated the color or hated greenery—far from that; Kyrie had a garden he frequented and maintained with her. No, what bothered him about them was that there was always something there he couldn't see—hell, he could be staring it in the eye and be none the wiser. Additionally, ugly creatures always lived in such verdant places, usually poisonous, slimy...egg-laying...

Unfortunately for him, a portion of Fortuna and its neighboring islands were thick with vegetation. And he so happened to be after a pack of demons smack in the middle of a forest. He managed to injure a few of the skinny-ass bastards and was currently following a trail of their rancid blood.

He crouched near shrubbery with black substance shining on its leaves. Growling, he glanced around while standing up. This pack was long past pissing him off, always just a bit ahead of him, even at his inhuman speed. Having to stop and pick up their trail every few minutes or so sure as hell didn't help. One good thing, though, was that they were doing their damned hardest to stay away from him. That was their reaction even when he saw them for the first time.

Hours ago, in Fortuna, these emaciated, creepy-as-hell and red-eyed demons appeared out of nowhere and *began* to attack the townsfolk. *Began* to, because the second he arrived with Red Queen at the ready, they dropped their would-be meals and took off. He followed them ever since and they led him off Fortuna onto a neighboring island considerably closer to the mainland. Adding more nuances to the situation was that he was completely unfamiliar with said island.

He narrowed his eyes at something in the distance eastwards. Scowling, he went into a smooth run, once again on the demons' trail.

-:AD'sC:-

A certain red-clad, white haired Infernal Hunter looked into the forest from atop a nearby mountain. He could see the demon pack as clearly as one looking through a telescope with his enhanced eyesight. Further behind them, by a mile or so, was Nero. The teen was running fast, jumping over whatever was in his way or low enough to jump over and bounding off

trees to move even faster. However...he was pausing too often, causing him to fall behind whenever the pack changed direction. If it weren't for that, well...

When he wanted to, the elder hunter could be devious as hell. Most matters related to Nero tended to bring out that side of him, but he had a good excuse—two, in fact. He hadn't seen the teen in a while, for one...

He sighed and continued watching as the young hunter finally caught up with the pack. A small smile of approval cracked through his formerly stern expression as the teen combined some impressive acrobatic feats with gunplay and his Devil Bringer.

...Well. Someone was working on their fighting style...

Regardless, the teen was nearing the mountain, along with the demons. Time to make a timely appearance...

-:AD'sC:-

Nero had no choice but to follow the demons even when they approached the stretch of water between the island and the mainland. To his amazement, they didn't slow down in the slightest, picking up speed upon hitting the seaside. No way...They were going to jump?

Indeed, the ones further ahead appeared to fly into the sky with the power of their jump and by the looks of it, they were going to make it. He huffed and increased his own speed, reaching out with his Devil Bringer to grab a skinny, pale pink leg of one demon in mid-jump. Pulling it, he threw it to the ground, breaking it half while using that momentum to pull himself into the air. He grabbed the second one and threw it to join its fallen brethren, shooting it with a quick-draw before grabbing the next.

Bodies of the demons began to disintegrate within the air or upon touching the water in his wake as he traveled through the air while simultaneously obliterating the pack.

A handful made it to the other side and they immediately reacted before he could grab at one of them, spewing green...stuff...at him. Midair, he reached out and pulled himself to a rock, not wanting that putrid filth on him...AGAIN. It stung like a bitch and was probably poisonous.

He looked up just in time to see the tall, deformed bodies turn to Swiss cheese from heavy gunfire. He raised himself up, familiar with these particular gunshots. In seconds, all that was left of the demons was dark ashes blowing away in the sand.

"Fucking—*finally*," he groaned, unsurprised to spot the older hunter in a tree further inland. Damn uncanny timing, that Dante..."Been trying to kill those hellions for damn near five hours..."

Resting lazily against the tree trunk and sitting upon a branch, Dante grinned at the teen. "Sounds like they were giving you some trouble, kid," he easily rebuked, as if teasing the teen was second nature.

As expected, this response earned Dante a glare. Nero then scoffed, kicking sand at the ashes. "Their mannerisms were completely opposite from normal demons, Dante," he explained, holstering Blue Rose on his leg. "They were trying to keep away from me, defensive. Hell, they were the ones that appeared out of nowhere, definitely about to make the people of Fortuna their lunch."

Having slipped to the ground from the branch while Nero spoke, Dante approached with folded arms and feigning interest; no good telling the kid he had planned the *whole* thing just to see him again. "Lunch? It's nearly suppertime, now, kid. And maybe you spooked 'em," he said nonchalantly with a hint of concern.

Nero briefly closed his eyes with a deep, annoyed inhale. Some time had passed since he last spoke to the older, flippant hunter, about seven months or so. That time, they met up by coincidence when Nero was hunting and Dante took up a job to exterminate the same demons he was after. They split the payoff 50-50; Dante's idea...

Since the incident in Fortuna, the teen came to realize something about the older man he was too distracted to realize beforehand...

He idly rubbed his demonic arm, muttering, "Why would demons spook at the sight of me..."

This didn't go unnoticed by the older hunter. "Who knows, maybe word of your feats reached Inferno..." A slight crease formed between Dante's brows at this realization. That could be entirely true and was none too comforting, either way. He beckoned at Nero's demonic arm. "How's everything in Fortuna?"

Just like that, Dante went from joking to a serious demeanor, catching the teen's full attention. He slightly glanced up at the fixed expression before looking away, shaking his head. "No real problems. Things are kinda rigid, like everyone's ready to run at the slightest twitch that doesn't look right."

Dante frowned. Fortuna was bound to have changed after all of that, but *really*...He slightly shifted with the beginnings of displeasure.

"...Everyone except Kyrie, that is," Nero added with a small, fond smile, rubbing his nose with his human fingers. "Honestly, it's not bad. It's natural for them to be wary after what happened, but at the same time...I think they're trying to accept it. Now that you mention it, most of the older folks are taking it easiest. I get the feeling they know something..."

He caught the twitch at the corner of Dante's mouth and turned a suspicious eye on him. Doubtless, *he* probably knew something as well. That brought him back to those thoughts.

Before he could say anything more, the elder waved a hand as he turned and sauntered off. "Well, if the old fart knew something, why not them?" he called back, cryptic and evasive.

"Wait, Dante!" Nero clenched his mouth shut the second after blurting out.

Dante stopped and slightly glanced back at him, waiting.

Waiting...

"...I have to talk to you about some things..." For a second, Nero looked concerned as adrenaline pumped through his veins at the possible answers to all his questions. There was just so much he didn't know..."There's been something nagging at me since that time in Fortuna, when you gave me the Yamato. Going over things you said to me throughout our brief interactions leading up to then, and even things you said afterwards—including just now—I've come to realize something."

Dante looked forward. Once again, he underestimated the kid...He didn't miss how the teen's tone turned slightly accusatory as he went on...not that he could blame him...Thankfully, Nero couldn't see the pain that clouded the man's expression.

"I know we don't know each other too well, but...I feel as if I can tell you this..." Nero looked away, feeling awkward, yet simultaneously felt as if he was down the right track. "I've been trying to figure out just who and what the hell I am for as long as I can remember. If you know anything...*anything*..." He took a hesitant step forward, hands tightening to fists, and his tone abruptly changed to match his insistence.

The rest went unsaid. From the teen's undoubtedly earnest, anxious tone, there was much more he wanted to say and ask. Even that much was easy to figure out...

Broad shoulders had tensed. Dante *did* know something. Even if he wanted to, no amount of tough-guy acting or personality could keep the apprehension or bated hope out of the teen's entire demeanor, from head to toe, when Dante turned around. Likewise, Dante could keep a straight face, but his eyes betrayed him. He seemed pained, somehow, holding something back.

His lips slightly parted, but he didn't speak immediately. Why did he have to do it this way? What was *he* afraid of, he wondered to himself? "...The answers have been closer than you think, Nero," he softly explained, entirely sedated, yet somber. He reached inside of the left side of his coat and took a large red pendant attached to a silver chain out of a hidden pocket. Slowly, he approached while continuing, "There's a slab of stone you have, right, that's been in your possession since you were young."

"...How do...?"

Shaking his head, Dante handed the pendant to him. "It's a box. This is what you need to open it."

Nero forced his attention to the pendant, as he had been staring at Dante as if the man was reciting words from the Creator. In his shock, he slowly took the pendant, staring at it with awe. It was more of an ornate amulet than a pendant, fitting into his palm easily from its large size, made of a large red gem wrought in silver. For the life of him, it seemed...so...

The rattling of a chain brought his attention back to the older hunter, who was, to his surprise, revealing an exact twin of the amulet from around his neck. He looked up into the man's eyes, more words unspoken.

"...Of course, you know the story..." Dante softly acknowledged, returning the amulet under his shirt and placing a hand to it, making it disappear with a concealing spell before zipping his shirt up. "...The answers are all in there."

Nero held the amulet closer, unable to believe he was given and holding half of *the* Perfect Amulet originally belonging to Sparda. First the Yamato, now...Could it be?

"Go, Nero. I'll wait for you in Capulet City," the older hunter said, once again speaking softly, and bringing the teen out of his thoughts. There was a small smile upon his face.

Not needing to be told twice, Nero slipped the amulet around his neck. He turned around and made a face at the water he would have to swim through to reach—

It happened so fast, his stumble was the only proof that it actually happened. He just felt a hand rest on his shoulder and...How did he...end up at...Port Caerula...??

He looked around, gaping in surprise at a loss for words.

That damned half-Devil...could teleport such a distance...

Of course, said half-Devil was nowhere in sight. After a minute more of reorientation, Nero's head snapped up towards the Castle Town of the island and he took off, towards answers...at last.

-:AD'sC:-

Just a little near an hour later, Nero found himself sitting upon the side of his bed. He held the supposed stone "block" loosely in his hands, the weight of the amulet around his neck stronger than previously, almost as if it desired to connect to the hollow imprint upon the stone.

For as long as he could remember, the stone box was in his possession, but he couldn't remember when he obtained it. Since the first day he arrived in Fortuna, it was a symbol of where he was from. He used it as an ornament, its hollow carving facing forward upon a shelf in his room. To think, all this time...

...And how did Dante know about it?

His grasp tightened, and he tore his aimless stare at nothing to focus on the box. He took a deep breath before taking the amulet from around his neck and placed it within the hollow. His heart began to pound when the amulet fit it like a puzzle piece and a click was heard from within the stone. Tentatively, he took the top of the box and it gave a bit, slightly ajar, before lifting the lid.

Old paper documents greeted his sight, along with a mound of photographs. There were so many, they spilled out of the box, unable to be contained without the heavy weight of the lid. The pictures fell to the floor, but his attention was to a particular letterhead of a document visible under the photographs. He gently pulled it from under the pictures and placed the box upon the bed beside him, beginning to read.

"May 15, 20XX.

The Creator smiles upon us, today. The Son of our Savior, Sparda, has graced us with his presence, confiding in us the most amazing discovery of our time: a grandchild of Sparda!"

Exhaling breath he hadn't recalled holding, Nero briefly closed his eyes. Already, emotion was swiftly catching up to him. He couldn't believe what he was holding in his hand.

"Dante brought with him a young boy, no more than six years of age, with the striking blue, glacier eyes and ethereal white hair of the Sparda bloodline. The boy was unconscious, under a powerful spell cast by Dante himself. The Son asked us to take the boy, Nero, into the care of our esteemed Order, as this is the ideal sanctuary for Sparda's descendants. Without question, with honor, we agreed to protect the child, even from himself; Dante instructed the boy to be unaware of his heritage until he is of age. We suspect an attempt was made on the boy's life, if not several before this.

Initially the boy wore a pendant around his neck, a large red gem wrought in silver that matched the one around Dante's neck. From this, and approximate estimations of his age, we suspect he was born during the time the devil called Nelo Angelo existed. Undoubtedly, these pendants are actually the halves of the Perfect Amulet that was used to seal the Hellgate from Inferno to our world. We are almost certain Nero is, in fact, the offspring of Sparda's first son, Dante's twin, Vergil."

Emitting a sharp inhale even he was damn sure was a gasp, Nero went still. He quickly scanned the document, flipping through pages. Everything was pointing at him being either of the twins' sons, but largely Vergil's. But he knew for sure, without a doubt, he had to be Vergil's son.

He had the Yamato. Dante entrusted him *with* the Yamato. The blade had belonged to Dante's brother, and *everyone* knew Sparda only had twins. Why, why else would the sword be given to him? So easily, Dante let him keep it, even went to say it had to stay within the family; dammit, why didn't he catch that revelation the first time?! He practically told him to his face they were family!

He finally took up the photos, eyes darting over them until he found the earliest one. The back of the picture had the words, "Nero's first real birthday party," in unfamiliar handwriting. The focus was on a small, white-haired boy at an old coffee table, grinning like only an elated child could. Crouched beside the boy, who was undoubtedly a young Nero, was no other than Dante, impossibly younger in appearance than he was now. Both of them were wearing birthday hats, causing Nero to softly chuckle at how perfectly ridiculous the older hunter looked.

A large, happy smile was upon Dante's face. Nero could easily see the unsaid emotions in that smile alone...Fondness...love...and a sort of bittersweetness. He slightly frowned, wondering what that meant.

Atop the table beside Dante was a toddler, reaching at the cake with wide, velvety blue eyes. Only a strong arm around her waist prevented her from crawling to the cake. She was a curly-haired blonde, pale and wearing a fluffy pink dress and silver tiara. She was strongly familiar

to Nero, as was the older blonde woman placing paper plates, forks and knives atop the table. Even she wore one of those silly birthday hats and a fond smile was upon her face. After staring at her, Nero recognized her as the woman he faintly saw with Dante during the time he was in Sanctus' captivity...

...Such a happy moment...He imagined the picture was taken by a timer...

Nero found himself becoming teary.

Damn the spell upon him. So many moments captured, and yet it he couldn't recall a thing. The boy was him, and yet he felt as if he was looking at someone else's photos from a life he could never know. It hurt, more than he imagined it would.

He looked up, lowering the pictures and the document with a small nod of acknowledgement, ignoring the reserved tears running silently down his face.

Dante was his uncle.

"...Capulet City," he whispered.

Miles away in the city of Capulet, within a shabby building located in an equally shoddy side of the city, Dante looked over the same pictures Nero had while sitting in his chair. Hours had passed since he left Fortuna, and the first thing he did after returning was take a nap. Honestly, it was to shut his mind up than because he was actually tired. On the way to his room, Trish spoke to him, praising him for giving the amulet to Nero, at last.

...At last...

After a thirty-minute powernap, he fished out the photos of Nero's childhood before returning to his desk downstairs. How was the teen taking the revelation, he wondered, and was he going to travel to the city to find more answers...or to confront? He could only hope for a mix of both...

...and anyway, he was likely going to have to help guide Nero to the building...The city could be a mess of a maze...

As if on cue, the phone rang. He lowered the pictures and banged his leg on the desk to flip the phone off its receiver. Catching it, he lifted it to his ear. "What's the password?"

-:AD'sC:-

Nero navigated through even more rubble, cursing loudly as he spotted another demon out of the corner of his eye. "Think you'd learn better after the first dozen?!" he shouted at it.

But the demon came anyway, and he rolled forward to miss its scythe.

This wasn't a good first experience for a tourist in this damned city!

All he did upon reaching the city, right off the docks, was ask where a white-haired man named Dante could be found. He was told by an older man to check specific places: Restaurant Fredi, Apotheke Bar, Bullseye Bar, Love Planet, or his house in the abandoned district on the outskirts of the city. Unfortunately, the man had no idea what the house looked like or exactly where it was.

Ever determined, Nero just decided to go to the hardest location first.

Brilliant idea.

Long story short, he got lost.

On his way to said seedy, abandoned part of the city, he came upon a group of demons feasting upon an unfortunate vagrant's body, by the looks of it. Naturally, disgusted and angered by this, Nero went to take care of them.

Unfortunately for him, their boss wasn't too happy about that.

The scythe-wielding creature came out of nowhere, nearly slicing him in half, but leaving him with a deep gash. Despite being injured, he could still run. He also didn't have much of a choice; a woman who lived in the area (*what?*) witnessed it all and called for help.

So, he had to lead the demons away.

Except that no matter the number of demons he killed, more and more *kept spawning*.

He breathed heavily as he took a breather against an abandoned building. The demons were catching up fast...They weren't like the demons that were in Fortuna...These were stronger...and judging from his wound, deadlier. Regional demons. Perfect.

Behind him, the sound of gunfire erupted, melding with the screams of the demons, before all went silent much too quickly.

...He knew those gunshots...

"...Dante..." he breathed, looking back to see the claymore-wielding hunter himself quickly approaching.

The first words that greeted him? "Shit, Nero, I didn't take the power difference between the demons into consideration," said the older man, a look of concern upon his face. "Could smell your blood a mile away..."

Nero made a face, pushing aside his coat and looking down at his bleeding wound. It cut into his abdomen. It was fortunate he could run at all. "...Yeah...Thanks a lot...old...." He fell to his knees, keeling forward.

With one long stride, Dante caught him. Observing what little of the teen's face that was visible, Nero's eyes were closed. Frowning a bit, Dante easily lifted the teen into his arms, deciding not to carry him over his shoulder this time around...The last time he did that, he was literally stabbed in the back, he fondly recalled.

With a sigh, the hunter walked towards his home. Nero was a long way off...Any further and he would've reached the ruins of the Temen-ni-gru...

Ah, well...

-:AD'sC:-

Blackness met Nero's sight upon reaching consciousness. He didn't panic, knowing his eyes were still closed. With a soft groan, he opened them and took in his surroundings...only for his eyes to widen at where he was.

The sound of some sort of activity, like knocking, met his ears to his left. Looking over, he saw Dante, doing something with a long stick as he leaned over a large table.

"Welcome back." The older man wasn't looking at him, all his attention on...whatever it was on the table.

But Nero didn't miss the meaning behind the words. Slowly, he sat upright, but didn't feel any pain. He wasn't wearing his coat and his jacket was torn. He lifted it. His skin was perfectly healed, not so much as a scratch. Lowering his hands, he glanced around the expansive room.

...Everything was as it looked in the photographs...or at least the ones that showed certain parts of it: Dante's desk, the coffee table, the bar, the staircase, and the hall, or so it looked, around the banister. The place was unkempt, but just looked lived-in. Nero doubted Dante had time to clean much, anyway.

The silence between him and Dante was...surprisingly companionable. The older hunter seemed completely at ease and, for good reason, Nero wasn't uncomfortable, either. He moved so his feet touched the floor, looking down as he gathered his thoughts.

"...Dante..." he began, his words soft, "I need to hear it from your mouth."

Dante stopped his activity, but not before using the stick to knock a black, numbered ball into a socket within the table.

"...Are you really my uncle?"

Looking over at him, Dante gave a small but genuine smile while lowering the stick. "Yes. Your father is my older brother, Vergil." He watched the smaller form lean forward, fingers knitting and hiding the equal blue eyes from sight. There was a soft, choked exhale, but the teen wasn't crying.

Nero felt Dante...his uncle approach. He lowered his hands a bit, slightly turning his head as the man sat on the other side of the couch. Again, the atmosphere hadn't changed, to his great relief.

"Want me to lift the spell?"

He completely looked at his uncle, meeting a warm smile that he'd never imagine directed at him. "...Do you even have to ask?" he softly chuckled, lowering his gaze. "It's not like I'm

going to go unconscious or some..." He trailed off and glanced at his uncle, who looked slightly amused.

"Yeah, actually." Dante scrutinized his nephew, humming in thought. "...It would be *best* for you to be unconscious. Not unless you actually want to be knocked off your feet and have thousands of thoughts, sights, smells, and experiences hit you all at once. Could overwhelm you, part-Devil or not."

Nero could only blink at this, and then sighed, hands rising before flopping down in defeat. "Fine, whatever. Anything to get rid of this damned feeling in my chest..." he muttered, leaning over to rest against the right armrest.

A small smirk of sorts spread on Dante's lips and he reached over to place his hand gently upon Nero's forehead. A slight twitch was the only reaction the teen made before going still, eyes closing and relaxing while entering an enchanted slumber.

-:AD'sC:-

When Nero awoke for the second time, it was abruptly, eyes wide and shooting upright in the couch. This time, the house was completely quiet, and he knew this for sure, extending the reaches of his senses.

"...Damnit," he muttered, standing from the couch. Dante and Trish likely went on a job or two.

...It was freeing, having his memories back. Just four years of memories, and he felt as if an entire lifetime had returned to him. Along with his memories of the past eleven years, everything in his mind seemed to meld and complete.

...Eleven *years*...

There was so much he wanted to ask about, but he would wait. He could wait for a while longer.

He then looked around, chuckling at the mess. Some things never changed.

-:AD'sC:-

Many hours had passed before the doors to the office opened. In walked Dante, dripping with blood and other liquids of questionable origins, followed by a tall blonde woman looking less than half as tarnished as he did. Without so much as a sound between them, Dante grabbed a hose beside the doorway and then left the office again. The long stretch of black followed him and the woman turned on the nozzle at the wall. The sound of water running was soon heard from outside as Dante rinsed off.

Before walking upstairs, the woman smiled at the long form of the part-Devil sleeping on the couch. Her smile widened upon seeing the amulet around his neck. "You really did give it to him, at last," she said, knowing she would be heard even above the water.

Dante scoffed, affronted. "You didn't believe me? Really, Trish? About this?"

"*This* is exactly why I had my doubts. You're unpredictable when talking about this matter, Dante," Trish replied, looking the teen over a bit more. Though she got a look at him more than once during her time as a member of the Order, he was doing his damned hardest to avoid her. But now she could really see how much he had grown from that little boy who would hide behind her leg. With a fond smile, she reached down to gently brush her fingers through his hair. He only sighed, as if accustomed to her touch.

Dante entered, catching her moving away, and softly chuckled as he closed the door. The office was...clean. He really had to do something about his kids taking such twisted pleasure in cleaning the house. "Think I should bring him to his old room?"

Trish didn't answer, simply shaking her head in amusement before walking upstairs.

Watching her, Dante neared the downstairs bathroom, and then glanced over at his nephew before walking inside, placing Rebellion, Ebony and Ivory on a low table near the door.

-:AD'sC:-

This time, the familiar sound of a bottle opening awoke Nero from slumber.

A very lethargic and bored half-Devil was just about to enjoy a nice, cold beer when the full force of a seventeen-year-old part-Devil collided with him.

Jolted violently out of his stupor, Dante just barely managed to prevent his beer from spilling, holding it, and stabilized himself from falling over with one hand upon the desk, blinking rapidly down at white hair.

"Goddamnit, old man," Nero swore between his teeth, punching his uncle's side. "You made me do this..." His voice was thick with a poor attempt to restrain his emotions.

"Huh." Dante grinned cheekily, placing his free hand on his nephew's back in a one-armed embrace. "*I* had to *make* you give me a hug. Don't I feel special."

Nero pulled away, but kept a hand on the broad shoulder. "Was never the hugging type, remember?" he scoffed. "Be glad you got one at all. Greedy," he said as he swiped away the beer.

"Hey, wait!" Dante sat forward, pointing a finger at the teen wisely moving away from him. "When you were a kid, you *loved* hugs. You're still a kid, so I'm too young for you to stop giving me hugs, dammit."

"You can be so sappy, Dante..."

"And you're too young to be drinking!"

"After all I've been through, can you really apply that to me?" the teen retorted, giving a whiff of the bottle, only to make a face. "You shouldn't be drinking this shit, either. You're gettin' too old."

"Kid, one new thing you're gonna learn is to never keep my alcohol from me. Give it."

Another scoff. "Make me."

Dante rolled his eyes with a patient sigh.

Suddenly, the bottle was pulled from out of Nero's grasp. "What the...?" He watched as it returned to Dante's waiting hand.

As the teen gaped at him, the elder hunter shook his head, taking a swig from the bottle. "You are 200 years too young to try me, Nero."

A blink, and then, nodding his head in acknowledgement, the teen sighed in faux pity while resting his hands on his hips. "Mm mm, he thinks he's *young*..."

"Punk ass—!"

Upstairs, Trish smiled widely at the noise. This brought her back to the most outrageous and childish arguments the two would get into—and Nero was three years old at the time! No doubt Dante was trying to make up for all those years...

"Fuck, Dante! I give! Uncle!!"

...As she said.

Resting her hand in her palm, she sighed fondly. She loved those two knuckleheads, she really did...They were her family.

Smile lessening, her gaze moved a picture of a little girl atop a table beside her bed.

Just one more member, and then her family would no longer be incomplete...

Chapter End Notes

Commence the second LOADING... session. I will talk about Demo 3 as well as this...rather rushed chapter.

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To the Innocence Inside is one of my favorite demos, primarily because we would, and will, never see such a thing in the original DMC universe; Vergil being a caring older brother...specifically to that extent, seems...highly unlikely and/or rather out of character. But my interpretation of Vergil is versatile enough for the moniker of "Older Brother When the Time is Right". That time was such a time.

Now, think realistically, here. Though you probably have only a guess at what happened to them, Vergil and Dante went through Hell, Dante literally and figuratively, whereas Vergil, for all intents and purposes, went through it literally. More than once, at that. They were eight years old when their innocence was lost, and while once was enough for Vergil to break and become a shell for some time, Dante's rebellious nature resulted in his punishments' intensities to increase numerous times. It beyond broke him until he wasn't just a shell of himself...he became less than a shell of his former self. His innocence hid within him, forever a child from what he never had and what he lost, and he simply moved on, forced too soon to grow up yet with the mentality of a child without...well, the child.

Then at last, the child within him was comforted by family, by his older brother, who he loved so dearly and lost so many times. A...reconnection occurred, if you will. He could cry. The child within him, who was afraid but broken, too afraid to cry, could cry before passing on.

Do you understand what I'm trying to emphasize here or are you completely lost...?

Ah, well...

Vergil, on the other hand...He was faced with the true understanding that they are human. If they were completely devil, they wouldn't have reacted the way they had to the atrocities done to them. They will still react a certain way to their memories, experiences and the simple knowledge of it happening to anyone else.

...And, honestly, Vergil isn't a bad brother. He was simply scarred, deluded and corrupt. But with the latter two elements gone, he's still Dante's older brother, and loves him dearly, despite everything.

This chapter is largely rushed, however, and will be extended for D:AD'sC. A few things are made known and hinted to, here...

One is that, yes, Dante raised Nero and a certain little girl for four years. Nero was two when Dante found him and was raised in Fortuna after something horrible happened when he was six years old. The letter he read was created by the leader of the Order before Sanctus. Sanctus was a wretch, he wouldn't have done that and Dante would have known it. Speaking of which, as also hinted in previous chapters, Dante (and Vergil) are much older than they appear, well over 200 years.

Trish is considered Nero's aunt, but I didn't have enough time to fit something in for them to properly reunite. D:AD'sC will have that.

I would have tried to add more to this chapter...but things happened.

Thank you for reading~

Broken (Devils Have Hearts)

Chapter Summary

Patty's biological family finds her through their envoy.

The sounds of life surrounded him, even without the aid of his adept hearing. A blend of children playing, chatter, laughter, childish squeals of joy, birds chirping and a plethora of other noise floated through his ears, but were largely ignored. Save the aural surveillance sweeps every now and then, the one life Dante largely focused on was his daughter and all the sounds she made.

Despite how rarely he actually used his extensive senses in public, he kept a keen ear on her heartbeat and the changes in her breathing; these were the first to change if she was in any sort of danger. He listened to the sound of her footsteps pattering in grass and on concrete, using it to determine how near or far away she was and what direction she was in. Her breathing would slightly change if she were to speak to someone, and he also kept mind of the breathing around her, ever aware of any who approached.

Needless to say, despite his outward appearance—lazing on his back, eyes closed and an arm over his eyes—he was, in every subtle way, a highly observant parent.

It was a beautiful spring day, a cool breeze in the air with the warmth of the shining sun to keep the temperature comfortable. Trish was the one to suggest Dante took a break for the day and spend time with Patty. Neither father nor daughter disagreed to the idea and had already spent the entire day doing things together.

In the wee hours of the day, they went fishing, because despite Patty's typical preferences, she was willing to try new things. She actually did enjoy fishing and even caught a good-sized fish, even if she disliked the smells afterwards. They then had an early brunch at Fredi's, had ice cream, and went to Patty's favorite mall. They spent hours there, having fun when they shouldn't have, like the mischief makers they both could be. They did some brief shopping—or at least, Patty did with her father's help—before ending up at the park for Patty to try out her new kite.

For the first fifteen minutes, Dante taught her how to use the gliding contraption with the inexperience of someone who had never actually used a kite before, himself. But he grasped the concept easier and was able to hold his place as teacher easy enough before letting her fly it on her own. His dear daughter nearly crashed her pink, smiling butterfly into a wyvern, some weird shapes, a triangle, and another, larger butterfly in her eager distractions to show him how well she could do on her own. Crisis narrowly avoided.

Now he rested, sure she could keep an eye on her kite herself, and she was comfortable with that, simply glad he was near. With most of his focus on keeping his senses alert, he gave idle thought to what they could do afterwards...

"That's the girl I was talking about..."

His brow slightly creased upon hearing this, and another portion of his hearing listened in on this conversation.

"The little loli? Cute little thing."

His entire form tensed and his eyes snapped open with red rimming his irises. This wasn't just some idle compliment. By the suggestive tones and the word "loli", it was *obvious*.

No...*NO*. Some perverted fuckers were NOT talking about *his* daughter.

Slowly, he removed his arm from his face and sat up, head turning into the direction of the two masculine voices without bothering to hide the murderous glare upon his face.

Two grown men, one perhaps in his 30s and the other in his 40s, were on the concrete some distance from where Patty or even most other children were playing on the grass. They appeared to be joggers...Nice cover. They were, without a doubt, looking in Patty's direction, every now and then looking around so they didn't seem to stare.

Yeah. Right.

Against his better judgment, Dante peered into their minds, only to find himself on his feet and stalking towards them before he was even aware of it. It'd be a snowy day in EVERY of the 9 Hells before these *human monsters* touched ANOTHER child.

Break them! his devilside hissed within him. *Rip them! Choke them with their lifeblood! Maim them! Cut them, feed them their own flesh...!*

Oh, how he promised himself he would destroy the men until they begged for the Malebolgia's Realm. And then he'd kill them *AGAIN*...

But he heard an even more distressing thought that warranted his attention instead.

He heard another man, further from the immediate area, *mention his daughter's name*. This froze him in place, though his glare on the two pedophiles didn't lessen in the slightest. He was close enough, and obvious enough, for them to take immediate notice of him, and he cast a deathly glare at them when they did.

Blanching, they swiftly and stiffly ran away. But not before he got a whiff of their scents. He would deal with *his prey* later...

He steadily returned to where he rested under a nearby tree. Patty, her kite upon the grass, looked at him with a wondering, nervous expression. No doubt she noticed and felt his rage, be it he neared her while walking into the men's direction. He shook his head and gave a dismissive smile; he'd tell her later. As if. She gave a determined frown expressing he *would*

tell her, in her childish way, before returning her attention to her kite. His smile widened. Briefly.

...Now about this other guy...

Expression darkening again, he gazed at the man...who was approaching. Approaching *Patty*. The man was young, wearing a suit and tie...but looked too casual to be a businessman. Long brown hair was pulled in a ponytail and his eyes were hidden behind sunglasses.

The man's thoughts...were...troubling: *"It can't be her, she should be a teenager by now...But the similarities are...undeniable!"*

...There was also a telltale, lingering scent about the man that made Dante's eyes narrow.

Instead of jumping to a parental conclusion, human or otherwise—though he was damned close to doing so—he watched as the man stopped at a safe distance from Patty.

"Miss?"

The girl stopped in her tracks, backed a bit, and then looked at the stranger, but didn't speak.

"Is your name Pa..." The man took notice of the girl's defensiveness in her expression and posture. "...Ah...yes. My apologies. Is your mother, father or guardian near?" he properly asked.

Expression slightly easing, Patty moved a few more steps back until she shortly bumped into someone's legs. Unalarmed, she moved slightly to her father's side to grasp his leg and hide behind it.

Naturally, Dante had moved the second the man spoke again.

Upon taking a good look at just what sort of person Patty clung to, to be expected, the man's expression dropped in surprise. He nearly blanched at the leveled, yet somehow wickedly dangerous glint in the slanted, electric blue orbs.

"What business do you have with my daughter?" Dante asked coolly, his even voice at odds with his expression.

Swallowing, the young man cleared his throat before nearly stuttering, "My-ah, my name is Simon Earl." He began to make a motion to offer a handshake, only to wisely think better of it. "...Yes...ah...I've traveled throughout the country at the request of Gwendolyn Lowell, the matriarch of the esteemed Lowell family."

A white brow rose at the familiar name.

"Mrs. Lowell lost her daughter, Nina, who, 15 years ago, was pregnant with a girl to be named Patty, short for Patiel Lowell," Simon continued, glancing curiously at the girl behind Dante.

Patty felt her father slightly tense as her own eyes widened at this revelation. This had some similarities to the story told to her. She looked up at her father, catching a glimpse of his almost troubled expression before it transitioned into thoughtfulness.

"Someone still held onto the hope you were alive, Patty," he said, smiling down at her. However, the smile didn't quite meet his eyes. To Simon, he asked, "So what were you to do if you found her?"

Despite the drop of the tense atmosphere, Simon still looked uneasy. Lowering his sunglasses, revealing hazel brown eyes, he admitted, "...To be honest, despite the coincidences...Patty Lowell should be around sixteen years old, today. Th-there's no pos—"

"She would be," Dante interrupted, his voice unusually gentle as he brushed his fingers through Patty's hair. "...It is a...long story." A gross understatement.

Simon could only digest this information by a bit, looking from Dante to the small blonde still hiding behind red-clad legs. After a few seconds, he seemed to come to a decision and he reached into his suit to take out two envelopes from an inside pocket. Wordless still, he handed both to Dante, who took them just as silently.

Observing all of this, Patty had no idea what to make of the situation, but she did *not* like it. She watched as her father examined the envelopes, one letter sized and the other smaller. Both were closed with a wax seal of an emblazoned 'L' with a gem motif surrounded by what almost looked like barbed wire...thorns. Dante estimated, by the weight and smell of the contents within the smaller envelope, that it contained photographs. Out of the corner of his eye, he caught Patty staring up at both and at him with childish wonder in her large, blue eyes.

Cracking a small smile, Dante shifted to take her hand and lead her to a park table, motioning the still speechless Simon over as well. The hunter sat beside his daughter while handing her the small envelope, causing her to awe over the seal. He opened the letter-sized envelope as Simon sat across from him.

The letter within contained the same emblem as the seal at the letterhead, which Dante supposed was the Lowell family crest. Cursive handwriting greeted him as he began to read.

"To whom it may concern,

"Thank you for raising my dear granddaughter, Patty, esteemed member of the Lowell family. 15 years ago, my daughter, Nina, was attacked and killed by a band of demons that were after my family, as we are a long line of efficient Infernal Hunters. At the same time, Patty, my little angel, was a newborn. Though I knew hope was slim, I believed in my heart that she may have survived, be it her body wasn't found with her mother's.

You have my most sincere gratitude and blessing for taking Patty in as your own. I invite you and your family to my estate; my envoy Simon Earl will escort you.

Please tell Patty her grandmother, her uncles and cousins eagerly await her visit, and yours.

Sincerely,

Gwendolyn Lowell"

Dante lowered the letter, glancing at his daughter, who was inspecting a collection of photographs splayed out on the table. The Lowells. He was familiar with their name and legacy, but nothing else. Considering how long they had existed, he supposed they were as proficient as claimed...Perhaps Lady knew more...

He also knew *money* when he encountered it. The fragrance permeating the letters, the envelopes, the seal, the letterhead, the proper language, and the inflection he heard in his mind while reading the letter...Old legacy usually meant old money; Dante would know. And if he was unlucky enough, that also meant they were aristocratic, which could easily mean old-fashioned, which could include a plethora of other unsavory things.

...And luck tended to avoid him as if he were the plague.

He sighed to himself, and then leaned a bit to look at the picture that Patty was staring at.

It was of a young blonde woman sitting in a chair, the backdrop a lovely blue, laced wallpaper, and she smiled warmly. The similarities between the woman and Patty were...too obvious.

"Is this my mother?" the girl asked Simon, showing it to him. Both men could tell she knew the answer, but wanted clarification.

Simon nodded after giving the photo a mere glimpse. "Ah, yes. Miss Nina. She was an amazing woman; cordial, intelligent, witty, and proficient at her craft," he sighed sadly with a touch of wistfulness. He then caught himself, clearing his throat. "All will be explained once you visit the Lowell estate, Mr...?"

The hunter had already guessed what Simon was reacting to. "Just Dante, and I already know Patty is an alchemist. Figures one of her parents would be one, too," he drawled, amused by the younger man's instantaneous expression of shock. And something else...

"H...how?" Simon stuttered. "No one unrelated to the family is supposed to know that!" he nearly exclaimed.

"He's my father," Patty countered with a frown, lowering the picture. There was a passion in her voice and an unsaid challenge to denounce Dante's place in her life was clear in her expression.

Hugging her to his side, Dante softly chuckled and gave Simon a shrug. "Helps that I'm a Hunter, myself."

Initially, Simon sputtered some incomprehensible words, or tried to, at Patty's statement. After what her father said, he gave a pause before calming down. "...Good. Very good. Hopefully that will ease things a bit..." He suddenly looked at a watch on his arm. "Will you

be leaving soon? There are procedures that must be addressed as soon as possible before I return to the estate."

Dante's expression slowly faded. This...didn't sound comforting. "...Such as...?"

"Oh, the living condition of Patty's home environment, if she is doing well in school...Simple necessities like that," explained Simon with an expectant smile.

Something, in the metaphorical sense, twisted inside of Dante, and whether he wanted to or not, he couldn't help but to wince at these words.

-:AD'sC:-

The trip back home was a silent one, the red convertible leading the black car towards the slums. Of course, Dante didn't specifically mention where they lived, simply telling Simon to follow them. Was he ashamed of where he lived? Not a day in hell; it was a perfect place for him to live, away from people, out of sight, out of mind. Was he ashamed *Patty* had to live there with him...?

...His traitorous mind stayed mum on that...

Granted, the knowledge that she was from such a prestigious background in itself didn't mean anything; so was he, after all. But...Patty's family...could possibly *do* something he sure as hell wouldn't stand for because they were such...

He gripped the steering wheel even tighter, eyes looking at and watching the road, but his mind a million miles away. There was also...the possibility, one he didn't want, that...

...Maybe...it would be, could be better...

His daughter was just as silent as he was, undoubtedly picking up on his own emotions, ever tuned she was to him. During the first few minutes of the drive, he asked her if there was anything she wanted to talk about or if anything was bothering her. But all she said was that she was in deep thought, so he let her be.

...He hated this...

Soon, they had passed Bullseye Bar and he sighed heavily as they entered empty streets and traveled past blocks of abandoned, broken buildings. Only then did Patty finally speak.

"...Daddy...?"

"Yes, Tea?" he quietly asked.

She looked at her hands, then glanced up at the side mirror to the car behind them. "...I don't think Simon is a human," she admitted.

Nodding, he replied, "He's not. He's a demon, a lesser one, and I wouldn't be surprised if the Lowells had such weak, harmless demons in their presence." He sighed, turning onto Slum Avenue. "...They are likely servants."

"...Oh..." she muttered, lowering her gaze again. She didn't like that idea at all. "...Am I going to have to live with them...?"

At her dejected, soft tone, he reached over and placed his hand upon her head. He combed through her hair, but didn't reply. He didn't know *how* to reply.

She could see the warring emotions upon his face and unbuckled her seatbelt to move into his lap, hugging him. He simply didn't feel like scolding her and held her as they pulled up in front of the office.

...Home, sweet home.

The black car slowly came up behind them. Honestly, Simon didn't know what to think when they drove into the slums. At first, after some thought, he considered they were going into another city on the other side of the slums. But then the convertible pulled up and stopped in front of a large building with steps leading to double doors. It in itself didn't look...bad...but...

Looking around at the abandoned building, the bleakness and darkness of it all, it was no "neighborhood" to raise a child in. And then there was this...feeling...in the air. It didn't feel right, let alone *safe*.

He blinked as Dante exited the convertible, holding Patty against his chest with one arm. She clung to him, her arms around his neck, her face hidden from the envoy's sight. Brows furrowing, he turned his car off and stepped out, watching the so-called hunter walk up the steps and push a door open.

He was quick to follow, tentatively opening the same door to peer in.

A smell reached his nose, an earthly one...but he had no idea what it was. A large black trash (garbage?) bin beside the door was overflowing with papers, rubbish and...a lot of black bags...*Full* black bags...Beside it was a small recycling bin, just as full with...soda cans? Beer cans?? More paper and the usual things to expect in a recycling bin...

The room was...enormous. With wide eyes, he stepped further inside, taking note of all the various demonic skulls and other body parts and artifacts in various spots on the walls. There was also the wall of weapons underneath a staircase behind a large brown desk and chair; several guns, including ones that seems of Hell itself, strange artifacts, and three large, long swords, one of which looked rather demonic...

...Fine, so he *was* an Infernal Hunter...

A coatless Dante sat on the long couch, arms folded, and watched the young man take in the sights. Patty was in the upstairs bathroom. If Dante was being honest with himself, no bullshit whatsoever, he'd agree the house had looked much worse in the past. At the moment, though, he decided he wasn't going to care. Drama over. He'd go with the flow, as he normally did.

"So, Simon," he said to the envoy, standing to walk to the refrigerator beside the bar, "any idea if the Lowells planned to get Patty into devil hunting?"

Frowning a bit, closing the door to the outside, Simon responded, "Well, no. The women of the Lowell family usually take up less...physical—"

"Right." Popping the top of a bottle of beer, Dante closed the refrigerator and turned to the other. "I hope they have a choice in the matter," he said before drinking.

Openly staring at him, Simon couldn't believe what he was seeing. Now that he looked at it, the entire space had bottles hidden around...An...alcoholic??

Reading his mind, literally, said drinker raised his bottle. "Want some?"

Stiffly, Simon shook his head.

Shrugging, Dante walked over to his desk and sat in his chair, legs thumping heavily atop the flat surface just as small footsteps were heard upstairs. Simon looked to the staircase to see Patty at the top floor, pausing to peer down at him. She gave the man a rather annoyed look, then leaned over the rail and spoke.

...Or at least...that's what Simon *guessed* that...noise was coming out of her mouth.

Whatever it was, it was harsh-sounding, discomfoting and made his head spin, and even Dante stopped from his drinking with a rising brow. Yet he looked rather humored. And proud?

After the...sound...words...left Patty's mouth, to Simon's greater shock, the same thing came out of her *father's*, though it was far more guttural and inhuman. He said less than what she said, and Simon watched as the girl made a displeased face. With a huff, she walked down the stairs and ignored him to walk around the other side of the banister and down a hall.

What the hell just happened?

"She's bilingual," Dante responded to the unsaid thoughts. "...Well, at the moment, actually, she knows about five languages," he said between a sip of his beer.

"That was a *language*?!" Simon balked, only to receive a calm, careless nod. "What the...What language? Of what country??"

"A dialect from the demon world."

"WHAT?!" Simon slammed his hands down on the desk, shouting, "Why in the name of the CREATOR would you do such a thing?! Such filth should never be taught to a child, let alone come out of her mouth!"

Still perfectly nonchalant, though his devilside was the *extreme* opposite on the inside, Dante wasn't even looking at the envoy as he smoothly answered, "She has an advantage over the vast majority of Infernal Hunters worldwide by being able to understand what demons say."

The brown eyes only widened with unadulterated shock as Simon realized what was being insinuated.

Patty could hunt demons.

Focusing on him, Dante jabbed a thumb at the weapons. "The one with a pink gem is hers," he said, referring to the swords, "and the two with wings on them are also hers." He pointed at the guns.

Looking at them, Simon took a step back. "Oh...what have you done...?" he groaned, covering his eyes with one hand. He suddenly startled, however, upon seeing a deadly gleam in the eyes that glared at him before his vision was hidden.

"What I *did* was teach my daughter how to defend herself," Dante growled, trying with a great lot of his power to keep his devil under control when all it wanted to do was rip the *lesser being* before him apart for thinking *he* knew what was better for *his own*. Slowly, he lowered his drink and stood up, placing his hands on the desk to stare the man in the eye. "I don't know how it's done in the Lowell norms, but Patty knows spells as well as how to use a gun and wield a sword. Is that a problem, *demon*?"

Immediately lowering his hand, the envoy looked upon the now standing man with a bit of a cower in his posture.

Briefly closing his eyes, Dante figured the younger man was born in the human realm if he didn't know exactly what was standing before him. That, and he was assuming the Lowells didn't bother too much with matters outside their...district, he guessed. It wasn't uncommon for hunters of Infernal Kin to have their own territories. Hell, he had one...But at the same time, something was off about all of this.

How did Simon *not* know just who and *what* he was dealing with...?

-:AD'sC:-

Several hours later, Patty had just gone to sleep. Her father had tucked her in, and was now sitting upon the couch.

The lights in the office were off—all light, save the ones coming from Dante's eyes...

Red orbs directed towards the doors as they opened. In walked the only person who could possibly handle Dante's worst moods.

"...What happened, Dante?" the woman asked, heels slowly clicking upon the floor, breaking the second silence within the room. She wasn't truly expecting an answer, and only received a soft, weary sigh as a response. Wordlessly, the demoness sat beside him and pulled him into a hug.

Dante didn't react, but he didn't pull away, either. Rather, he liked these silent moments with Trish when he could lower his guards and get out his deepest emotions locked within him. Or at least, as many as he dared...

After the little spat, Simon was allowed to have a silent look into Patty's room before leaving, wordless sans asking for Dante's number. It didn't give Dante a good feeling inside, and Patty

had worried as well. But for what...neither really knew. It was just...a feeling. The familiar nervousness that arose when confronted with human trifles began to grow within Dante from then on.

All they were left with from the events of the day were the two envelopes. Together, father and daughter went through the photographs, familiarizing themselves with some of the Lowell family. It had been a silent activity, but it felt better than worrying over something unknown. Afterwards, Dante ordered takeout and he spoke to Patty about what she would like to do.

Yes, of course, she wanted to meet her biological family, but she didn't want to stay with them. Even when she was told she didn't really know that yet, she was adamant about it until she was nearly in tears. So, they didn't talk about it after that. An hour or so later, she went to bed.

Which left her father alone with the darker half of his being.

Therefore, it was no surprise that the strong smell of alcohol and blood were in the air and clinging to Dante's body. The alcohol because, over the past sixteen years in which Trish knew him, the man's alcoholic tendencies never disappeared. They simply hid, returning at predictable moments or for predictable reasons. With his otherwise flawless self-control, he could even trick himself into thinking he wasn't a heavy drinker.

The blood because, the moment Patty was good and asleep, he hunted down the pedophiles from earlier. Add his wretched mindset in the mix and...he did not hold back. Didn't want to.

Once he was finally calm enough, his eyes no longer hellfire red, he gave Trish the envelopes before leaving to his room. But not before returning the hug.

She watched after him as he walked up the stairs, his paces strong enough to show he hadn't drunk enough to become intoxicated, at least to the point that it was obvious...

Once the man she considered her younger brother had disappeared up the stairs and into his room, she went through the envelopes.

Then it all became clear.

LOADING... Nonsense Blood Relations

Chapter Summary

Semi-continuation of Demo 5; Dante's family is invited to the Lowell estate.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"To Dante Alighieri,

I do hope you and your family are well. To show my deepest gratitude for raising my granddaughter, I cordially invite your family to visit the Lowell estate on the 3rd of May. Please feel free to bring as little or as many members of your family as you wish.

Simon Earl, whom you have previously met, shall arrive at your home at 8:00AM to ensure your secure passage to Isle Veni. Do not worry about payment; a jet plane will be ready for you at the Kingson Airport by 9:30AM.

Please consider overnight stay; you will be graciously accommodated.

With good will and wishes,

Sincerely,

Gwendolyn Lowell"

The simple words from the letter reappeared in the forefront of Dante's mind. As he and the four members of his family were driven to the large Lowell estate, he pondered over how soon this moment arrived. Just months before, he wished and hoped the weeks would drag before it came to this, the day his family would actually arrive on Isle Veni. And then, it seemed, in the next moment, he awoke that morning to prepare for the six-hour flight.

And there they were. At last.

Isle Veni and the Lowell estate.

When the letter came in the mail several months ago, it was easy to decide right then and there which family members would come along for the trip. Kyrie, Julius and infant Lucius stayed behind in Fortuna along with Jeanne, and Vergil was busy for much of the day, otherwise he would have come. The older twin said something about "meeting up with them later", but Dante tried not to think of the literal translation behind that.

That meant Dante, Cereza, Trish, Hallen, Nero, and, of course, Patty rode in the limousine along with Simon, nearing the estate. It was a party far smaller than what Simon had expected, based upon his surprised demeanor upon counting heads. He had even asked if there was more family they could "pick up" before leaving. Upon furthermore learning the five were not planning on spending the night at the estate, he became slightly despondent, solemnly murmuring how Gwendolyn had been looking forward to it.

But there was good, precise reason why they all silently agreed not to stay overnight...

The limo came to a stop, bringing Dante out of his thoughts, and he raised his head to glance across to the opposite window where Nero sat between Trish and Hallen. They, too, looked upon the wrought-iron gate that stretched around what could be acres of land, though what they saw from their view was half a mile's worth of manicured, green grass between the gate and a large manor.

However, this was merely a checkpoint, as the chauffeur spoke to two posted guards that had emerged from a security booth. This wasn't what had the passengers' attention. If the Lowells were any sort of self-respecting family of Infernal Hunters, they would have their entire estate warded.

And they did.

The magical energy was clear in the four Infernal Kin and Cereza's vision, and they mentally estimated its calibre. It was what a human would consider a high-powered ward, powerful enough to prevent upper B-Class Infernal Kin from entering, which was a feat in itself. Most had no idea of the existence of any Ground classification higher than B. The Lowells were no pushovers...

...but that meant nothing if Dante's entire family's class was equivalent to being no lower than A-Class. Even Lucius, a newborn, could have made it through.

Already, things were going just as Dante anticipated...

He gave out a soft sigh, shaking his head and looking out his window as the limo was given clearance, the gate opening for them to pass through. There were all too many ways this visit could go south.

When they finally pulled up to the circular front yard driveway, his once passive anxiety was returning. The doors on both sides of the limo were opened by a footman—unsurprisingly, another weak demon like Simon—and they exited, gazing upon the enormous manor.

To be expected of a family so old, the structure was from an older time, with an expansive size that likely housed several dozen rooms, and made from stone. To the gazes of those of Infernal Ground, however, a barrier was visible around the manor. Wards and barriers. The Lowells were *not* pushovers. Simon led them to the front door, where another weak demon posted as a doorman opened it as they neared.

...It was strange to sense so many demons about. And if they were anything like Simon, which wasn't too far-fetched at this point, they would have no idea just what it was that

entered the estate...

They entered, and were greeted by the sight of the manor's expansive foyer. Staircases further in led to the upper floor, along with a balcony between them, a grand chandelier modernized with electric fixtures hung above, and the number of halls within the foyer alone hinted at several rooms or passageways to other parts of the manor. The Lowell family crest hung from a banner above the front balcony, and the permanent decor seemed to mirror the motif of thorns from the crest as well.

Patty looked around in awe, eyes wide and emitting soft sounds of appreciation. Slipping his hands in his pockets, Dante watched her with a smile upon his lips. Beside him, Cereza mirrored his expression, slipping her arm around his. He glanced at her, his smile widening. Nearest to Patty, Hallen seemed mildly impressed, nodding in appreciation and moving along with her young cousin.

On the other hand, Nero wasn't very impressed, at least with the manor. He was, however, interested in the crest. Standing in the center of the foyer with his arms crossed, he looked up at the banner, head tilted and brows furrowed.

"Incredible, isn't it?"

Up at the balcony, a middle-aged man neared the right staircase, looking down at them with a kind smile. Also near the staircase were two other men, and the three appeared to be related. As the guests' eyes focused on them, they walked down the stairs.

Patty moved to her mother's side, her expression unreadable.

Eyes focused upon her when she moved, and each of them widened in surprise and shock. There was maybe even some sort of dawning horror in the men's expressions. But, to their credit, their faces steadily eased by the time their feet touched the foyer floor.

Simon stepped forward to stand in the space between Dante and the men. "Allow me to introduce the Lowell brothers, Tristan, the eldest and the heir to the Lowell family—" he beckoned to the first of them with wearing glasses and dressed most formally—"Jean, the second eldest and head of the Lowell's own Infernal Hunters"—he beckoned to the brother with a mean scar running from his hairline, over his left, blind eye, to under his shirt collar—"and Ulrich, the youngest and proprietor of external affairs." The younger brother seemed rather normal, sans a languid expression and lopsided smile.

Dante nodded at each and shook their hands as they were introduced. "Dante Alighieri. Nice to meet you," he said, casual and cordial.

Cereza only nodded at them, and they at her. "Cereza Baulder. Pleasure to make your acquaintance."

"Likewise," said Tristan, the only of the brothers not eyeing Patty. He kept his gaze on Dante and Cereza, though his eyes expressed that he had many questions to ask. "You must excuse me, as I'm a man of insistence, so let's get the pleasantries over and done with," he said, though he kept the cool, kind smile upon his face.

A white brow slightly rose, and Cereza's smile grew. "Oh, that's not a problem. We like things that way," she admitted, amusing the younger Lowell brothers.

Dante then turned to the rest of his family, beckoning to each. "My sister, Trish, my eldest daughter Hallen and my nephew, Nero." He then looked down at his younger daughter and placed a hand on her head before saying, "And Patty, my youngest."

Finally, Tristan looked down at Patty, who continued to cling to her mother's side. He smiled pleasantly at her, and crouched to meet her gaze. "Pleasure to meet you, Patty. You look just like Nina," he said, his smile turning fond.

She nodded in agreement, but said nothing.

Not minding, Tristan stood and moved aside to beckon at a room off the foyer. "Let us talk in here," he said.

Simon willingly stayed behind, giving only a small bow, as the small group moved into the room, though to call it a parlor wasn't exactly right. There was a long dining-styled table complete with chairs on the other side of the deceptively large room, opposite to the living room-styled area surrounding a fireplace further inside. Tristan made himself comfortable, sitting on the bergère to the left side of the fireplace, and beckoned to Dante to sit opposite to him in the other at the right of the fireplace.

Dante obliged, nodding in admiration of the fancy upholstery, and wasn't surprised when Patty sat in his lap. In fact, he expected it. He adjusted her so she was sitting slightly sideways and slung his arm around her.

There was plenty of room for Trish, Nero, Hallen, Jean, and Ulrich, as there were two couches as well as a loveseat, both heavily embellished like the bergères. Trish and Nero, naturally, took the couch, whereas Hallen, entirely unaccustomed to human rituals, wandered about the room, quiet, yet unobtrusive. Cereza didn't even bother to sit, standing behind Dante and leaning on his chair, casual, yet she had a sly smile on her face.

"Nice place you have," Nero commented, looking around the room to direct the attention from them. It was almost like being in a castle. "...How old is this place?"

"Fancy architecture?" Tristan asked, his brows arched.

Nero made a face. "Sort of. I've been to a lot of places kind of like this," he admitted.

Tristan nodded in appreciation. "Nice to hear nowadays from someone your age. The entire estate is around two hundred years old. Our ancestors weren't originally from the island, but came here to fortify a location untainted by demonic influence..." he explained, brows slightly furrowed.

Pursing his lips, Nero could only nod in response.

"...Or so the story goes," Ulrich finished, eyes slanted with humor at something.

Beside him, Jean kept his eyes on the white-haired woman wondering around, his one-eyed gaze impassive but keen.

Unexpectedly, a swarthy young butler, or so he appeared, entered the room with a large tray with teacups and a teapot. He, too, was a demon. He placed the tray upon the coffee table between the couches and seats, but was not acknowledged in the slightest by the brothers. Naturally, the Alighieris did, out of common courtesy. He was then waved away by Ulrich, just after he bowed, and then left the room without making so much as a sound. Jean's gaze lingered on the doorway.

"Don't mind the servants," Ulrich said, pouring himself a cup. "They're all descendants of demons sworn by magic to serve the family."

Tristan gave his youngest brother an exasperated glance. "...They *are* demons, with diluted blood modified to keep them harmless," he corrected.

Ulrich nodded and shrugged. "One and the same."

"Please, help yourself," Tristan offered, beckoning to the tea before helping himself to a cup.

The tea was rosemary, to no surprise, which was a natural demon repellent. Every basic Infernal Hunter knew this. Hallen scrunched her face upon smelling it, and merely hummed, ignoring the offer. She was then beckoned over by Nero to sit between him and their aunt, and she heaved a soft sigh before walking over.

"Thank you," Dante said, and Patty moved first, slipping off his lap to get some, "though I admit I'm not much of a tea drinker. Rosemary, eh?"

A sly smile spread on Jean's face, though he was the only of his brothers who didn't pour himself a cup. His gaze then went to Cereza as she moved from behind her mate's chair to pour herself a cup.

"Naturally," Ulrich hummed. He then took a flask out of his breast pocket and poured a touch of ale into it. "This always helps." Wordlessly, he handed the flask to Jean, who took it without prompt to pour himself half a cup of it. He then handed it back to Ulrich, who pocketed it away.

Nero made a face at this, confused but also amused. That really happened with these rich folks? Hallen seemed to share his expression, as did Trish and Dante, to a lesser yet more amused degree. Patty and Cereza didn't care, and neither did Tristan, by the way he ignored them both with deliberately closed eyes.

As cups were poured, with Nero and Trish doing so as well, another servant entered the room, bringing with him two portfolios in his hands. He wordlessly handed them to Tristan with a slight bow, and they were taken without acknowledgement. This time, the servant didn't have to be waved off, moving back before leaving on his own.

It was slightly unnerving, this lack of basic acknowledgement, and even Patty noticed it, by the way she slightly frowned after the demon. She then moved to sit on Cereza's lap, this

time, who had moved to sit on the other end of the couch beside Trish.

"Now, then," Tristan lowered his cup atop the table, placing the portfolios in his lap, "let's get right into it."

Jean shifted, but hid his face behind his cup as he took a single drink. At the same time, Ulrich also lowered his cup.

Dante slightly tilted his head to the side, a touch confused. "...Will Mrs. Lowell be joining us?" he asked earnestly.

"...Unfortunately, no," Tristan sighed. "Mother isn't feeling well."

Patty pouted, causing her uncles to make small, fond smiles.

"I am most curious about you all. The Alighieris. I haven't heard that name in years," Tristan said, going through the first portfolio. "The old Alighieri family known for its Infernal Hunters was nearly extinguished over 200 years ago. Today they are normal, ordinary people, from what we understand, without a speck of knowledge of even the true existence of Infernal Kin. Would you happen to be related to them?" he asked, looking at Dante in particular.

Dante's expression brightened upon hearing this. He almost felt like laughing. It was true, he did have family that survived on his mother's side—his aunt's family, in fact—and they were ordinary people. To be reminded of their existence and that they were still using the Alighieri last name was...uplifting, somehow. Hallen's expression would have mirrored his, but she hid it.

"Yes, distantly. There are two Alighieri branches, the ones you mentioned, and my family," he acknowledged. "I suppose you can say they *are* the normal ones, whereas we're crazy about killing Infernals, on this side." And that much was actually true.

All three brothers nodded in understanding. "Good, good. I had no idea," said Tristan, a brow raised as he looked through the documents. A bit of the old Alighieri coat of arms was visible between some of the paper, which caused Dante to nearly freeze in place in surprise.

It had been so long since he saw even a glimpse of his family's symbol...

Ulrich shook his head, nearly rolling his eyes. "You'll have to excuse my older brother, here," he said frankly. "He's treating this like an interrogation. I like to think otherwise."

Tristan glanced at his brother, amused at the truth, but said nothing in retaliation.

"Yeah," Nero softly chuckled, glad someone addressed that fact. "I was getting worried there. There's no truth serum in this, is there?" he asked, looking at his cup in mock suspicion.

"I was wondering the same," Trish said, with more or less the same reaction.

Patty giggled from her mother's lap. "It's like watching a movie," she said. "You're just waiting for something to happen, almost."

Her voice seemed to be all that was needed to finally break the tense, wary atmosphere. All at once, Tristan and his younger brother laughed, whereas Jean gave her a wide smile.

"So, you do talk, Patty!" Tristan said, placing a hand upon his chest. "I was genuinely concerned, for a moment!"

"Creator! You even sound like Nina at that age!" Ulrich laughed, nudging his brother beside him, who nodded in agreement.

All the attention on her caused the girl to blush, and she lowered her head to stare at her cup in her lap.

"Aw. She's precious," Ulrich said, addressing Cereza.

"And very, very shy," her mother elaborated, causing Patty to make a sound of annoyance. The woman chuckled, patting her head. "That is, until she gets comfortable."

"Mommyyy..." she whined, pouting further.

Hallen made a face, rolling her eyes. "What would you know, I speak too," she dryly cheered.

Nearly everyone laughed this time. Hallen grinned, then softly chuckled to herself, shaking her head.

Humans.

Ulrich then asked, "Well, then, Patty. What would you like to get more comfortable?"

She slightly glanced up at him. "Can I walk around?" she asked.

"Absolutely! That's a wonderful idea, eh, brothers?" he glanced at his older siblings.

Jean made a soft sound, but it was heard. It was a mix between annoyance and resignation.

Smirking, his younger brother nudged him again. "And don't worry about this one. He's a rather nice fellow, much like Patty, here: shy as heck until you get to know him—or get some good drink inside him."

"Then he won't shut up," Tristan added, closing the portfolio.

Jean merely glanced away, but made no visible protest from his brothers' jibes.

Patty, for the first time, focused on her quiet uncle. Nearly everyone noticed, but didn't say anything.

Likewise, neither did the scarred man, himself.

"Well then." Ulrich snapped his fingers, looking towards the door. "Aileen," he called.

Seconds after, a young-looking, brown-haired woman wearing a maid's outfit appeared in the doorway. She bowed.

"Show these good people the gardens. I'll bet they'd like to meet the rest of the family," he said to her.

"With pleasure," she said softly, her voice low, but pleasant. She then moved aside in the doorway, beckoning to the foyer with an outstretched hand.

Patty looked nervous. "Mommy, will you come with me?" she asked, looking up at Cereza.

"Of course, dear," she said, moving her adoptive daughter off her lap as she stood. "Trish, Hallen? Are you girls coming?" she asked them.

Hallen nodded, not hesitating to stand. "Yes."

On the other hand, Trish laced her fingers together, leaning back in the couch. "No, I'm good."

Cereza shared a glance with Dante, who gave her a look of thanks. She winked at him before taking Patty's offered hand and walking towards the maid. "Now, Aileen, is it...?" she began.

The woman startled in surprise, blinking rapidly. She began to lead the way. "Y-yes, Miss..." she acknowledged. She didn't sound scared, just...surprised.

Unabashed, Cereza began a casual conversation, her voice drifting as she left with her two adoptive daughters.

Ulrich looked after the witch, and then glanced at Dante. "...Your wife?"

Nero made a face, whereas the man in question didn't bother to hide his smirk, resting his arms on his chair's armrests. "More or less."

All three brothers' eyebrows rose at that remark, with Ulrich looking particularly interested. Trish gave her brother a look, one that he retorted to with an innocent expression and hand gestures that gave the impression he didn't know what *else* to say.

Tristan, however, had the second portfolio open in his lap, this time. Upon noticing, a silence overcame them, as did a return of the tense atmosphere, but far more poignant than the one earlier.

But Nero didn't bother to stay silent, this time. "So," he sighed, sliding an arm over the back of the couch, "let me guess. The real talk starts now."

Ulrich looked between them and his elder brother. "I suppose so." He sat forward in his seat. "Why is Patty a child? She should be at least my eldest's age, now; sixteen, at least. Simon told us you said it was a 'long story'," he said, straight to the point.

Dante clenched his jaw. Instead, Trish was the one to answer. "She was afflicted by a sickness given to her by a demon that came after us," she explained, her voice quiet and calm. It was a delicate subject for her adoptive brother. "She would have died, had Dante not had the UCorp put her into a cryostasis."

"Just three years ago, we found a cure. UCorp personally administered it to her in cryo, and it cured her. Then, she was revived," Nero chipped in, vividly remembering when his young cousin came out of that condition. His head was lowered, but glanced at his uncle to observe the man's pained expression.

Seeing this, it was evident the brothers were unwilling to be as harsh about it as they likely intended to be. Tristan was the first to speak. "...I cannot...fathom what that was like," he said, softly and with remorse. "Thank you for taking good care of her with such dedication. I understand cryonics is...unholily expensive..."

"Remarkable," Ulrich agreed, nodding at Dante with a thankful expression. "I can't imagine..."

Jean said nothing, and wasn't even looking at them. His gaze was elsewhere, brows furrowed at some thought.

"How old was she," Tristan asked, "when it happened?"

Dante's voice was hard as he answered, "Four."

The brothers made sounds of sadness and anger. "Tell me you killed this damned thing?" Ulrich asked.

Meeting the younger man's gaze, Dante scowled. "Hell yes."

"Good..."

"The risks that come with being Infernal Hunters..." Tristan sighed somberly, turning a page in the opened portfolio. He then shook his head, focusing.

This caught Dante's attention, but decided to keep it to himself. Perhaps a child in the family was lost to demons, as well...?

-:AD'sC:-

After the dreary talk about Patty, Tristan offered they took a walk, as well. And so, the six hunters walked outside, allowing Dante, Trish and Nero to observe the gardens at a distance. They saw Patty, Cereza and Hallen interacting with two women and several children, some older than Patty, some younger. Also in the garden, further off, was a hunched, older-looking man trimming hedges and topiaries; the gardener, no doubt.

Even without being told, the three guests figured the women were two of the Lowell brothers' wives, with the children belonging to them. Trish smiled upon seeing very young children as well. Patty seemed alright, her hands behind her back and her head slightly lowered in a guarded manner, but she was speaking to the other children.

The six walked further out from the manor, with Ulrich leading and speaking with Nero as they walked further ahead. Tristan spoke with Dante, and Trish walked beside him, though she kept an eye for Jean at the rear.

"So, tell me about yourself, Dante," Tristan said, his hands behind his back and his paces casual. He looked upon the older hunter. "You're quite an enigma, to me. I can't quite get a feel of you. Normally I can...though not as well as Jean, I suppose," he admitted, beckoning to his brother behind them.

Glancing back, Dante saw the middle Lowell brother wasn't even paying attention to them. *He* was the real enigma, here, because Dante already knew there was something he was hiding from everyone. He could smell it.

Focusing ahead, he softly chuckled, "Well, I'm not from here. I was born in Italy, where my mother's family came from, and was raised in Romania. For the longest time, I lived in the slums of Colorado, but now I live in the slums of Capulet."

"Those Old York slums, eh?" This didn't sound like a surprise.

Recalling Simon's reaction to where he lived, Dante sighed to himself. *Nothing to be ashamed of.* "It's a good location for a Hunter. No one gets hurt if someone comes after us, anymore," he said, trying to ease whatever thoughts that may enter younger man's mind. "And it's a good city, otherwise."

The man hummed. He then glanced at Trish. "You, too?"

She shook her head with a small smile. "We were raised separately. I was adopted into the family," she explained. "I've lived with Dante since Colorado."

"So, you two are travelers, then?"

"Used to be."

To Dante, Tristan asked, "You speak Italian?"

"Yes, and various dialects, other Romance languages, Latin..."

They came to what looked like an outdoor training area. The ground was flat, devoid of grass, surrounded by a low fence, and a medium-sized, one-story house was nearby. Nero and Ulrich neared it, still talking. Even where they were, they could see the gardens and their families within.

Tristan rested his arms on the fence. "Demon languages, as well?"

...Ah, yes. That.

Dante heaved a sigh, crossing his arms, whereas Trish briefly placed a hand on his shoulder before looking to the gardens. "Yes..." He watched Jean slink around to his far right side, as Tristan was at his close left. "My father taught them to me. He was a Hunter, as well, as was my mother," he explained. If this was how it was going to come out...at least they were outside.

"And you taught them to Patty." It wasn't a question.

Another sigh escaped the half-devil. "Absolutely. Just as I told Simon, this gives her an advantage over other Hunters. Over Infernals, themselves. She can understand them."

"The last thing a child needs is to hear the words of demons." Tristan didn't turn to him, but his hands tensed. "I was honestly taken aback by that more than almost anything else Simon told me about you," he said.

"*Almost* anything else?" Trish repeated, looking back at him.

"Yes. It's the strangest thing. You seem so normal," Tristan sighed. "You all seem normal. But something's off..."

The younger man went silent, and then he moved away from the fence towards the gardens, his hands behind his back. Casual and calm. The siblings stood there, wondering if they should follow or not, and then raspy, deep chuckles brought their attention to Jean.

"I guess the gig is up," the man said, nonchalantly approaching them. His voice was very low and gravelly, as if his vocal cords had been injured, and no doubt it would be difficult to hear him depending on the noise about. But the outside was quiet and peaceful, allowing Dante and Trish to hear him even without the aid of their advanced hearing.

No wonder he barely spoke.

Turning to him, Dante glanced after Tristan before focusing on the middle brother. "I'm not sure how I should respond to that," he admitted. This wasn't going the way he thought it would.

Jean cracked a crooked smile. Looking at him face to face, the siblings truly took in his appearance.

He was a tall man at around six feet, maybe just under, and wasn't as muscular nor as broad as Dante was. Like Dante, he donned heavy leather, though it was black and not as embellished, though it did have a hood and buckles. His hair was a lighter shade of blond than Tristan's but darker than Ulrich's, was just past his neck in length and combed over on one side, allowing his scar and blind eye to be plainly visible. He wasn't ashamed of it, apparently. The scar itself was jagged and painful-looking, even though it wasn't a keloid, and indeed ran down over his blind eye to down his neck, under his shirt.

No doubt an Infernal gave that to him.

"Then...don't," he said, and he stopped approaching once he was just barely within arm's reach. "In any case, I know what you are. At least, somewhat."

Leaning his head back, Dante rose a brow. He was caught entirely off-guard, here.

"What do you think we are, then?" Trish asked, placing a hand on her hip.

"An Infernal. Full-blooded, at least, you are." Jean looked Dante over, nodding. "...You're both powerful, but you in particular are very powerful one. Vastly out of the league of anything my family has probably faced in centuries. That much I can tell."

"Well, you're not wrong," the part-devil admitted, looking away. "But we're not an enemy, either, just because of it."

Once more, gravelly chuckles escaped the younger man. "Never said you were." He waved a hand to catch his attention, only continuing to speak once the electric gaze was once more on him. "And...the only such sort of powerful Infernal that could be here...and look like you...would be a descendant of the legendary Sparda," he continued.

Trish and Dante exchanged glances, and Trish gave a small shrug of approval.

"...You've either done more research than people bother to do, are an Infernal Kin historian, or you have contacts," said Dante.

"I have...a *contact*," Jean admitted, giving a little sly smirk that said so much by saying so little.

Slowly, Dante mirrored the expression. "...You've mated with a demon, haven't you?" His sister nodded beside him.

The younger hunter looked hurt, but in a sardonic manner, and clasped his hands over his heart. "Ah, you've figured me out," he said with a smile. "Let me guess. You can smell it."

Dante was smiling as well. "Yeah, more or less."

Trish added, "More than less."

"No way to get rid of that, huh?"

"Absolutely not, unless you abstain for several months, *maybe*."

Jean chuckled again, shaking his head. He then beckoned Dante to follow him, moving away from the younger men sparring within the fence. "Let's walk."

"Go without me, Dante." Trish turned to watch Nero and Ulrich. "I think you'll be fine."

Dante scoffed, giving her a nudge. "I *am* fine, sis," he said, "you don't have to worry about me all the time."

She daintily shrugged, but smiled. "It's what I do."

The two men then moved even further away, towards guest house at the left of the manor. Jean's pace was slow and meaningful, his head lowered as he gathered his thoughts. Dante let him think, as he was within his own mind.

This really wasn't what he expected to find or have happen at *all*. It was a pleasant change from the normal guns blazing and shouts and screaming. And from Patty's own biological family, at that.

"My family doesn't know."

Dante's thoughts halted and died. "...Oh."

"Mm hm..." Jean trailed his fingers over his lips, and then his fingers wondered to his scar. "...My mate gave me this, you know..."

This actually caused Dante to halt in his steps. He all too easily imagined what the wound looked like when it was fresh, and even how it may have happened. He cringed, and then caught up to the younger man. "Do I even want to know?" he asked.

A soft, gruff and yet amused scoff. "If you want to."

"...I guess I do, then."

"Celes—well," Jean sighed with a smile, looking up to the sky, "she goes by Celes now, but when I met her, she was Celezar."

Dante nodded in understanding. Full blooded Infernal Kin didn't have distinct genders, and barely even distinct sexes, sometimes, by nature. They were shape-shifters, as his father was. It just wasn't often that he heard of Infernals who switched their sexes in human form.

"Celezar had been by my side for many years...None of us knew he was a Devil-Hallow hybrid."

White brows shot upright in shock. Well, that explained a lot.

Jean made a wide smile at some thought, and then he shook his head. "Long story short, we found out, went after him, he ran...and I nearly had him. I, a human, could catch up with such a being. He wasn't even trying. I think even now that he was confused. He didn't *want* to run, had no reason to. But he did." He shrugged. "He attacked me out of 'self-defense', the bastard...Self-defense, my ass."

Seeing the smile upon the man's face after hearing that even caused Dante to smile. He was coming to like this guy.

"Naturally, he was horrified by what he did. He stayed with me and healed me enough for me to survive—'cause I assure you, this wound should have killed me outright—and then left. He was so confused. As was I, in more ways than one. One of those...'unsaid things between us'. When I saw him again, he begged me to forgive him. And I did."

Dante watched as he went into a breast pocket within his coat. He took out a picture that was fairly recent and handed it to him.

"My family," he said, his head still lowered, but smiling fondly.

The picture showed an average-height, full-figured woman hugging three children with a loving smile upon her face, her eyes closed. The oldest boy looked about Patty's age, and the youngest were twin girls that were undoubtedly toddlers. The middle child was maybe a preschooler and was climbing up the woman's back. Each of the children were smiling, with the twins reaching for the camera with wide green eyes shared by their siblings.

Beaming, Dante clapped a hand on the man's shoulder. "They're beautiful. Happy and healthy, yes?" he asked.

"Thank the Creator." The picture was given back to Jean, and took it into his hands, gazing at it. His smile widened. "...There's a sickness in my family, Dante," he suddenly said, his smile fading.

As did Dante's. "...What do you mean...?"

"Us Lowells. We..." As if realizing what he was doing, Jean hid the picture back in his pocket. He then glanced at his fellow Hunter. "We're not the people we should be. We lost our way, somewhere in history, and came to forget that our ancestors fought alongside many Infernal Kin as friends and comrades. I want that, for us, again, but we're too comfortable in our current ways of thinking that all Infernals need to be wiped off the planet," he murmured, his voice only clearly audible thanks to Dante's enhanced hearing.

"...What would you want to do?" asked the part-devil. He gestured to himself. "'Cause I'm more than willing to help out, somehow. I would love for my family and your family to be friends. Hell, that's what I'm here for."

"...That's my problem. I don't know..." Jean looked away. "...But. Nonetheless, it's good to know you, Son of Sparda," he said with a smile, returning his gaze to the Devil Prince and even giving a small bow.

Dante scoffed, righting him. "C'mon, man, none of that," he groaned. "My brother's bad enough with that whole bit."

"Vergil is alive, too?!"

"Ah...yeah." He scratched at his stubble. "...Well. For now, let's just start with breaking the news of my family to your brothers, eh?" he said, giving the man a slight pat on the back.

Jean looked at him and then at his hand. "...Buddy-buddy already, eh?"

"C'mon! We're practically family, already!" Dante beamed, arms outstretched.

"...Very well. We start slow." Jean offered his hand with a crooked smile that seemed to be his signature.

Grinning back, Dante clasped the hand with one of his own in a tight embrace that was reciprocated. "We start slow."

Chapter End Notes

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This was fun to make. I apologize if it is full of errors and such! I'm in a hurry; I gotta go to work tomorrow and it is almost 3 in the morning!! I'm FUCKED.

I will say, though, that Jean is my favorite DMC OC right now. I can see him fitting well in the DMC universe. I have a good wealth of his backstory entirely fleshed out, and from now on, he will be making more appearances in this collection of oneshots; his family, too.

This Lowell family idea is going to go a looong way.

Hallen, if you don't remember, is Dante's biological daughter from...um...his *unsavory* adolescent days. She wasn't raised by humans and tried to kill Dante (and in an AU, tried several times more and never came to love him, aka Demo 2).

Tell me if you enjoyed this fun chapter! Or if not. I'll be sad, but I'll be glad you told me~

Lust in Darkness

Chapter Summary

A taste of the negative side of Dante and Cereza's first meeting.

Rodin knew everything. That, as it so often seemed, or he could figure out whatever it was you were trying to hide before anyone else, despite to all but live behind the bar counter of the Gates of Hell. Some could say he knew too much, but given his age and what he was, that wasn't a surprise to anyone or anything.

So, when one of his most important customers, the Umbra Witch known as Bayonetta, entered the bar wearing a most peculiar, slightly confused expression, he knew exactly who it was that brought that look to her face. Fate was against them all, it seemed.

The female Infernal Hunter Evangelina Alighieri's side of her family, small as it was, was not unfamiliar to him. Long before he met Cereza sixteen years ago, Dante Alighieri, Eva's son, was a regular at the bar. Through his long-standing and deeply rooted connections to the Underworld, Rodin even knew exactly—scenario by painful scenario in explicit detail—what happened to Dante during his child-to-adolescent years. He even knew what likewise happened to Vergil at that same time. It went without saying that Rodin didn't need to be told to keep what he knew of the young cambæons' unsavory histories to himself, silently swearing not to tell a soul—or those without.

As the years went on, he occasionally made references to another powerful Hunter—one of Laguna and Infernals alike—that frequented the Gates, and likewise spoke of Dante to Cereza. While the younger hunter was naturally intrigued, Rodin was against their meeting, for both their sakes, but especially for Dante's. Was not, however, against all that could happen afterwards if they *did*.

Readying a drink for one of his VIPs, he shook his head in resignation. "So, give it to me straight," he said to her as she sat upon a stool before him, "how'd you meet?"

She took the drink as it was handed to her, but not before giving him a look. "Do you really want to hear the long-winded tale? I'm sure you already know, somehow, in your dark ways," she replied.

"You're one to talk of the Dark," he retorted. He then moved back a bit, resting his hands on the edge of the counter. "It was gonna happen eventually, especially with Jubilee out of the picture for a while. Elevates get antsy when powerful Infernals clash, especially in this Chaos realm, and who wouldn't?"

"And you didn't even bother to warn me ahead of time," she said, fingering the stem of her glass.

"Except I did." He leveled a hidden, red-eyed gaze at her. "Several times. Not my problem if you and that knucklehead find it funny not to use your sixth senses 24/7 and be 'surprised' every now and then."

She made a sound akin to a scoff as she took a sip of her drink, but said nothing in response to that or to retaliate. She then sighed, resting her head in a palm before looking away.

"...I think...for the first time in a long time...I may have messed up," she softly admitted.

Imagining what was going on with the younger hunter now, Rodin slowly shook his head. "...You have absolutely *no idea*."

-:AD'sC:-

Trish knew everything about Dante. Even if Vergil had lived, she would still be the most knowledgeable person of him in all the planes of existence. And she was grateful for such a privilege, to know such an incredible person so intimately. Considering she looked like his mother, perhaps it was only natural for him to be so open with her...so it wasn't much of a surprise.

So, when Dante burst through the doors to *Devil May Cry* with red eyes, trying to hide an erection and yet sheet white for all that was left of his sanity, she knew exactly what happened—or at least the gist of it. It didn't matter so much who the person was, but *what* the person was: a witch.

This was going to happen, eventually...

Once enslaved for over 50 years of his life, Dante was forced to mate with witches and other women of magical bloodlines, be they victims themselves or willing participants. To present day, Dante would lose his mind with tainted lust and fear when he encountered such women. Patty was a child, and he recognized her as nothing more than his daughter, and both he and Trish were resolutely sure that would never change. Lady, while of a powerful magical bloodline, did not actively practice, keeping the magic in only her blood.

Only an active, female magic user—and a powerful one—could cause Dante to have such a reaction. It was too much for his Devilside to resist.

He slumped against the wall nearest to the doors, eyes shut and claws digging into the wall as he tried with all his weakening might to prevent himself from succumbing to the tainted desire that wasn't his own. He wasn't even remotely aware of Trish slowly approaching him, too deeply lost within his mind and memories. His breath was hot, indicated by the shimmer in the air whenever he exhaled from his open mouth to take deep, shaky breaths. His eyes suddenly clenched tighter, a snarl escaping him from the discomfort of his arousal, as if that could force it away.

It wasn't safe to comfort him, just yet, even as Trish so deeply wanted to. His snarls were breaking into terrified whimpers, try as he might to hold them back, and tears were forming in the corners of his eyes. She opened her mouth to speak, but held back.

A violent, frightened growl suddenly ripped from his mouth as he opened his eyes to stare at the ceiling. All at once, he then sobbed, slumping down, and held his head while swaying side to side in agony. Only then did she approach, coming to his side on the floor.

"Dante," she said gently, causing him to gasp and look up at her, his red, skin-cracking, demonic eyes confused and frightened. But he recognized her immediately, and unsurprisingly, winced away with his head lowered, ashamed. His shaking body huddled together, as if trying to hide from her.

"...Trish, I..." he began, his voice low and strained. He shut his eyes again, digging his claws into his head. "I *can't*, I..."

"Yes, you can. Come back to the now, Dante...I'm here," she soothed, gently placing her fingers upon the back of his left hand. "You survived. It's all in the past."

Between his arms hiding his face, Trish saw one of his eyes slightly open. When it did, a tear ran down from it. He then closed his eye again, but reached for and took her hand.

A good sign. She held onto it, not moving to embrace him until he was ready. Now that she could see half of his face, the faint outlines of his runes underneath his skin were clearly visible. She used her thumb to stroke his clawed hand, and slowly, through their contact, felt his trembles easing.

"...This...this is all *them*," he suddenly whispered, his upper lip curling in a low snarl. "...They ruined me..."

She did not respond, as he wasn't looking for one, and quietly listened to his murmured strings of swears and curses at his reaction and what caused it. But she knew he was broken, somewhere, inside.

Several quiet minutes passed before his claws slowly retracted, becoming fingernails as his hands returned to normal. His quaking reduced to small shudders, and he stared at the floor with slanted eyes that were still red, but not hellfire, and the cracks in his skin around his eyes were gone. His runes faded, and his breathing evened.

He lowered his right hand from his head, moving slowly from the wall to scoot closer to her, and she welcomed him into her arms to hold him close.

Dante was a man of many secrets and tremendous power, with skeleton graveyards in his closets and over two centuries of experience. He faced down figurative gods and lived to tell the tale, with only a grin and laugh to come from the aftermath.

But at the heart of many things, specifically as an Infernal, he was still very young.

Trish closed her eyes, a comforting, strong arm around the man she called her younger brother, despite the decades he held over her.

-:AD'sC:-

Rodin wanted to roll his eyes at the whole situation's existence. Instead, he wordlessly mixed another drink while observing Cereza stare aimlessly in deep, contemplative thought. "How's about I put it this way," he began, breaking her from her ruminating. "You danced with the Devil by the pale moonlight. Whether you like it or not, you two are going to have history together from now on."

She kept her gaze on him, but slowly, as the words settled, slid a hand to her forehead. "So, by some freak coincidence, which makes no sense to me even with what *I* know of Infernals, I began some form of courtship with him?" she sighed. In the midst of everything, at the time, she didn't think too much of the sensual nature in which they fought together against the Laguna and Infernal Kin...

Indeed, they did dance. He was such a perfect partner, in that regard, and even better at how he so seamlessly followed *her* lead, yet seemed to be the one in control. They may as well have had foreplay right there, from the way they willingly allowed one another to touch and be touched.

...What the hell...?

"Is it really so easy to initiate such a thing or am I missing a vital piece of this mess? We were supposed to be flirting!"

This time, red eyes were visible as Rodin lowered his head at her. Like he believed that. "Face it, Bayonetta, you're interested in him, too. Your old soul's been searching for someone like him subconsciously, and you know it. He's right up your alley, your perfectly imperfect match." The elder devil then cocked a grin, sliding another small martini before her. "As for the vital piece, that's an understatement; there's a whole saga's worth of history behind why this is even happening. But it's not my place to say a word of it," he informed, the grin wiped from his face.

This piqued her interest, but she didn't comment, deciding she would find out on her own. Just as she took up her glass, she was reminded of an unfortunate truth.

"This has now become *your* problem," he chuckled, truly curious as to how it would all play out, now. "Just keep your wits about you, because you've already started out with a fucked-up dice."

"Then I'll simply roll a better play," she quipped, giving him a calm smile before taking another drink from her glass.

-:AD'sC:-

After Cereza's visit, Rodin naturally anticipated a visit from one of his other valuable customers. It was only to be expected, considering he was the one to tell of the witch to the

younger hunter, since Enzo liked to act as if she barely existed to anyone else. It was safer for him, that way. In any other world, the same would be said for him about the Son of Sparda, but history between the two was stronger...

So, it was no surprise when a one-of-a-kind, red-clad Infernal Hunter came sauntering into the bar from a portal somewhere near Capulet.

It happened so fast, Rodin may have missed it, but he was who he was, so he didn't. The half-devil's eyes and senses swept through the bar before he even took two steps inside. The only other patrons were other Hunters and other inhumans of the Grounds, but none of them was a certain Umbra Witch.

Not even breaking a stride, he approached the bar with a wave. "Long time no see, Rodin," he drawled, causing the elder to smirk.

"If a 'long time' means not in a month, I ought to start crashin' in, reintroduce myself to those smartass kids of yours," Rodin retorted, already in the process of selecting a drink for his young friend.

Brandishing a cheeky grin, Dante leaned against the counter and reminded, "Only one's a smartass. Come to think of it, that's not such a bad idea, you coming over...How about Christmas?"

"Sounds good. I just hope at least one of you all can cook."

"No problems, there." He watched his drink as it was poured into a stein. "...I'm in a bad situation, Rodin," he said softly, earnestly.

Though the one who knew him best was Trish, Dante found a unique companionship and understanding from the older devil. More often than not, he was reminded of Azvorel, the elder devil that shortly helped raise him, and his knowledge and understanding of Infernal heritage and the demonic Underground gave him counsel during hard times such as these.

Barely visible eyes narrowed, appraising the younger man. Dante was nonchalant, calm and externally his usual self, but...The stein's contents were downed in a single drink. Not normal in the slightest, not from him.

Rodin wordlessly refilled the drink without prompt. "Your blood's been singing for her, huh?"

"...Yeah. Damn uncanny how you can tell that."

"Call it a...specialty of mine." Rodin then leaned back from the counter, analyzing the situation in his mind. "There're only two ways this is gonna end."

Electric blue eyes stared at the red orbs hidden behind dark shades, attentive.

"Either I'm eventually gonna be called 'Uncle Rodin'—he grimaced at the thought—"or I'm gonna have to kiss one of my two best customers goodbye." Keeping Dante's gaze, he slowly leaned forward. "...I'm not *that* fond of kids...and my lips ain't going nowhere near either of you."

There was a strange sort of silence that ensured after that, with Dante's eyes narrowing while Rodin moved back. Even the gramophone went eerily silent, causing the other patrons to look at them and halt their conversations as the two Infernals stared at one another.

Finally, Dante took up his stein and had a swig. "...Uncle Rodin, huh..." he said softly, his words bringing life back into the bar. "Well, I doubt that. I've...never had luck with women."

Despite the somber tone of voice, Rodin smirked. "Funny, considering you're surrounded by them."

With a smile, Dante conceded to that, lifting his mug.

"In the case of Bayonetta—what I'm wearing doubles as my mourning clothes," Rodin reminded. Once more, he allowed his eyes to be seen as he leveled a look at the cambæon. "Watch yourself, kid."

LOADING... Deep Within and Licking Skin

Chapter Summary

The news of oncoming parenthood to Dante, for the first time.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Heat shimmered off every surface of the city on the hot, sweltering day. There was a heat warning throughout Capulet and neighboring areas. In response to this, fire departments released water from the hydrants of some neighborhoods to cool the people off, which was greatly welcomed and enjoyed. But business went on as usual, the ice cream trucks and ice cream parlors particularly important on such a day.

The slums, of course, were worse off. For the very few people living there, there were no ice cream trucks or fire hydrants—in fact, there was barely any water running through the slums as it was. One exception was the *Devil May Cry*, though most of its inhabitants were spared the torture from the heat through natural tolerance...

Sitting far back within his usual chair at his desk, Dante rested in the usual pose: a magazine over his eyes, arms resting under his head and booted feet atop the desk near the phone, legs crossed. He was dressed very casually, wearing a sleeveless, zip-up black top and baggy black cargo pants with red accents. Though the office was empty and silent, there was a pleasant hum of activity from elsewhere in the house.

He could hear Patty talking with Hallen on the doorstep, but didn't listen in, enjoying the drone of their voices. His daughters. A smile pulled at his lips underneath the magazine, but it was small and shortly faded. Patty aside, Hallen was fortunate to be alive. Fortunate all the more that she found her family, a place where she could finally call home.

He exhaled through his nose, glad that chapter of his life—and hers—was finally over.

Trish had taken the only mission given to them for the day, but that wasn't saying much. It was still early in the day, just nearing the afternoon, which meant the day was going to get hotter. There was still a chance for a few more missions to come through...

...Unless they were pathetic and non-threatening to the general public. Then he was going to ignore them.

It was incredible, the sorts of calls he would get, sometimes. Most outstanding were the calls from worried parents that their child was being influenced by demonic activity, or a possessed object, had joined a demonic cult, or the really common one, that someone they

knew or their child was in a relationship with an Infernal. Really, was that so bad...? It was a family issue, nothing for him to involve himself with.

That wasn't to say, of course, that perhaps such calls were genuine and the supposed Infernal was truly a threat. He investigated enough when he felt it was necessary. Usually, however, those calls were *not* of things deemed "necessary". His instincts had yet to fail him, in that regard; they could call him a poseur and irresponsible ass that all they wanted...

There was a sudden shift in the atmosphere as he sensed someone nearing the shop. A wide smile grew on his face, but he didn't move.

Just as he was glad to have children, despite his younger days, he was impressed he even *had* a mate, let alone who they were. Or *what* they were. He briefly recalled the day he met his mate, but forced that dark, amazing day out of his thoughts. Instead, he focused on the possibilities of where their lives together could end up, just as the door opened.

...Well, there was always *that* possibility...but...

Heels clicked on the floorboards as the person approached, but he didn't pay any mind.

When he and his mate first spoke of *that* possibility, their conversation wasn't as pleasant as he had hoped. She didn't want it, wasn't ready for it, whereas he had experience, even if only four years of it. He liked what he experienced, however, so he ended up compromising that if *that* happened, he would take on the responsibility alone. He didn't mind. He had a good network of help, if need be.

It wouldn't be overwhelming as it had been before, he promised himself.

The footsteps were near the desk, at his left side. The magazine was slowly lifted from his face, but he didn't so much as twitch. He could smell her, smelling of herbs, of course, and a subtle, aromatic perfume that mixed perfectly with her natural scent. Even in her passive state, he could *smell* and sense her magic throughout her being. Such a thing would normally send him into a mindless state...

...He grew out of it.

She was close, very close...tempting him with her scent. He was just about to open his eyes when her lips skimmed over his, causing him to slightly part his own in response. Shortly, she lowered to kiss him, which brought him to life, his arms lowering from under his head to envelop her lithe body while his feet lowered to the floor.

The chair skidded back against the wall from gravity and momentum, and she held his head with her hands while lowering to straddle him. He softly groaned, taken entirely off-guard by her sudden passion, and slanted his eyes open to take in her appearance.

She wore her hair in a smaller beehive hairdo, this time, with strands of hair falling from the end of it, and her hair was what also made up her outfit, today. That was unusual for her when not slaying; perhaps she returned from Purgatorio? Her outfit was entirely black, a corset-like top that propped up her bust nicely, and the dress-like bottom was see-through,

showing she was wearing shorts underneath. Her compact rested between her bosom, connected to her top.

She parted from the kiss, but kept her lips over his, causing him to groan again.

"Cereza, you can't do that to me..." he bemoaned, yet smiled at her, running his hands up and down her sides.

"Well, maybe I missed you a bit," she admitted, moving from his mouth to lean back, and placed her hands on the back of the chair. "...A bit."

He smiled appreciatively. "If that's you missing me 'a bit'..." He trailed off, noticing something different about her. But he couldn't put his finger on it.

She noticed his scrutiny and smiled. "How convenient the young ones are outside," she said idly, slipping off his lap to saunter around the desk.

He watched after her, adjusting himself in his chair. "Hmm..." he hummed, eyeing her with interest. As if he didn't know what she was thinking. It was practically radiating from her...How unusual...Not that he minded, no, not at all.

Absolutely not.

She softly chuckled at him, and he took his time to stand from the chair, more than aware red was rimming the edges of his irises. "How is Hallen, these days?" she asked abruptly, taking him off-guard yet again.

Blinking, the red went away in his eyes. "...She's fine, I guess. Still quiet, still cautious, but Patty's helping her open up. More than I can help with, honestly..." he responded casually, paces slow as he moved around the desk to near her.

Letting him, she nodded, looking to the doors. "...She's a strong one." A grey eye looked up at him. "...Like her father."

He hummed, taking her by her sides and pulling her against him. "This is a very bad distraction," he murmured, skimming his nose over hers with a smile.

"It's not meant to be a distraction," she said, sounding affronted, but her smile said otherwise.

His smile widened, and then he embraced her, resting his head against hers while closing his eyes. "...I did miss you," he admitted softly.

While she didn't say anything in response, she watched him with an almost saddened expression.

This wasn't supposed to be happening.

Long-distance, they agreed. Because of the mess they ended up in, they decided they would remain at their respective homes in their respective countries, and only meet up when urges

desired it so. Rather, that was his reason. Her reasons were different from the start. Curiosity. Mutual enjoyment. Companionship. Nothing more than that.

But how much time had passed since then...? Two years? Patty was seven, so maybe three years? In that time, she came to be a part of their little unusual family, visiting more than what was necessary, and was even there when Dante told his story to them—his *family*. He never said anything against her presence, however, and never so much as hinted displeasure at it. In fact, he always seemed...happier, when she was present. Glad to see her interact and mingle with his small family.

Likewise, no one else said anything about her being there, and the dear child Patty even called her "mother". But no one batted an eye, merely interacting with her as if she had always been there, belonged there. Not that they would have known the details of her being Dante's mate...

The one thing they did not do, however, was do what she did to them. They never invited themselves to her current home city, save the few times Patty desired to in the earlier days, and not a single one of them popped up out of the blue to visit. Perhaps they thought themselves intruding on her personal life, and she wondered what she would think if they did do that, one day...

Perhaps it was meant to happen, this growing desire for *more*. Jeanne once said something about it...

-:AD'sC:-

"Sister, Infernals and Umbra Witches have mated together since ancient times to create immensely powerful offspring. Our Madama are such examples of offspring, and you see how powerful they are for yourself. Yes, Cereza...They are family. It may be that we, too, could find suitable Infernal partners...and continue the clan that way." A look was thrown her way. "...But only if you want to. A normal human partner is just as fine, but I think finding a suitable human man for us is just as difficult as finding a decent Infernal at all."

She scoffed, waving a hand dismissively. "Enough talk about mating, Jeanne. I'm not interested in that, and hope never to be," she said, and then gave her sister a sly smile. "...Though there are exceptions."

Jeanne almost rolled her eyes, moving to lie on her side upon the settee. "Naturally. Even I admit to such trysts. But it's not the same as mating," she tried to explain.

"Ah, won't hear it," her younger clan sister said, waving her hand again and looking away. "What are you getting at, anyway?"

"What I'm trying to say is, Cereza...that when it happens—"

"If it happens."

"It will happen. Accept it."

"And how do you know?" She glanced back at Jeanne.

Grey gazes met. "I know you." A sly smile spread on red lips.

-:AD'sC:-

She tilted up to kiss him again, causing his eyes to open. Grey looked into electric blue, and within the grey was mischief. Likewise, her tongue flicked teasingly against his, urging his devilside to awaken again. He broke the kiss to speak, but she only pulled him by his hands, gently, but urgently.

He let her pull him upstairs, and had just the thought to sense where his daughters were. They were further away from the house, now, likely because Hallen knew something would happen the moment the witch met them outside...

They didn't even make it into the bedroom, slamming against the hallway wall entwined in passionate kiss, Cereza's outfit partially uncovering her body and Dante's lower half nearly completely exposed. He broke the kiss to softly moan when she grasped at his erect length, and he gave a few thrusts into her hand before pressing her against the wall, holding her up against it and spreading her legs to stand between them.

She placed her hands on his shoulders, letting out a fluttering moan when he entered her. Her wetness caused him to chuckle darkly, and she was rewarded with a lick to a revealed nipple, to which she softly moaned in response. His eyes were glowing deeply, his breath warm as he neared transformation. She was then held against him in a near embrace as he began to thrust. Gasping, she held him as close as she could, eyes slanted from lust and desire. Her hair unwound around her, draping over her shoulders and trailing on the floor, revealing her body completely.

A blackening hand with the faintest of claws raked over her body, from her cheek to her breast, and his pace began to quicken by a bit. As always, he was trying to be gentle. But she didn't want that. Wrapping her legs around his waist, she brought him closer and deeper inside, gasping, "*Harder*, Dante, I'm not a fragile little waif—"

He silenced her with a hot kiss, causing her to gasp again, this time from the heat in her mouth, and responded by biting his tongue. He softly growled in response, but he seemed to like it, pulling away and licking his lips with slanted red eyes. He then took her by her hips and pulled her from off the wall, moving them into the bedroom, at last.

He kicked off his pants before lowering her to the bed, and she reached up to quickly relieve him of his shirt before pulling him down with her.

-:AD'sC:-

Hallen glanced back at the house. It wasn't her business, of course, what her father did and who he did what with. But memories of the early days of her meeting with him wouldn't fade so easily.

She then looked down at her younger, adoptive sister, who held her hand as they strolled through the slums towards the city to get some ice cream. To her, it was incredible how quickly she went from being alone and angry to being in the presence of family, happy and content. All because of her acceptance to change.

Her lips spread into a small smile as she wondered what else was going to change, now.

-:AD'sC:-

Demonic and magical energy thrummed through the house. It was a low thrum, but present, and it cast simultaneous markings of protection and warning as the home of an Infernal of the highest order.

Within the room, the combined energies were strongest as the bodies merged, taking a form that hadn't existed for hundreds of years. It was as powerful, overwhelming and intoxicating as it was warm, passionate and loving.

Human nails raked over a demonic carapace, grasping and digging in far easier than what was humanly capable. The shadow of a winged devil cast upon the wall, a long, spiked tail swaying and twitching in synch with the sounds of pleasurable gasps and moans. Long black hair splayed out over a nude body and the creaking, rocking bed, curling and moving intermittently from the aura of Infernal and dark power.

Black, vaguely human, clawed hands quivered in the attempt not to put holes into the mattress, instead opting to grasp at the sheets, shredding them in the process. Entirely human hands then lowered from the carapace-covered arms to grasp at the bed, her body jolting simultaneously with the devil's thrusts.

The heat within her was draining, but so wonderful, and she shivered despite it, clenching down harder. She was rewarded with hot breath over her ear, causing her to clench again, and then her eyes rolled closed when an equally hot tongue slithered at just the entrance to ear. A moan escaped past her lips, pleased and enticed.

He enjoyed the way her body moved beneath him, the way her hands would occasionally grasp at his arms. It satiated a dark presence within him, but he was not the one in control. He groaned, thrusting faster and harder, and the way her body moved...It drove him insane with pleasure and want.

He wished to be deeper inside of her, the only other way he could be. He could feel it, when he reached her womb, her deepest recesses, and he shuddered for the umpteenth time. Yet nothing happened, despite his want, his power, his desire.

She opened her eyes, licking her lips before emitting a soft, gasping titter of amusement. That was rewarded with a low growl and her body rocked harder, causing her to gasp again, but it was not displeasing. He was so eager to finish, but she was having so much fun.

Finally, he felt the hold of her power over him ebb, and the gradual release made it all the more pleasurable. A fanged grin formed when she moaned loudly from the increased heat within her, yet, of course, she squeezed harder, wanting more, more!

With a stifled snarl, the warmth flooded her, rubbing the warmth building within her in all the right ways. Lips parted, she gave a shuddering moan, locking from the climax before pulsing powerfully. Their bodies shuddered in synch, and the energies within the room enveloped the house.

-:AD'sC:-

He was drained. It was so draining, but so pleasurable to mate with her. He wanted more...so much more...as always, but he had to stop. She had already drained him of much of his vitality; he was well and ready to sleep for several hours as it was. With a satisfied exhale, he gently pulled out before licking her, showing how much he enjoyed their mating. She hummed at the stimulation, swaying her behind, and he gave a small grin before moving away to flex his wings.

She looked back at him, flipping her hair out of her eyes, contemplating. His devil form was a rare sight to see, and she was becoming fond of it...for more than just *that* reason. From her perspective, he only transformed when they mated, and even that wasn't every time. Eyeing his two sets of wings, she wondered if he considered something he may have thought was "under control"...

He tilted his head to the side, watching her watch him. The expression upon her face was just asking for a conversation, and he was more than willing to oblige. "...What is it?" he asked, the guttural, echoic sound of his voice never ceasing to give her pleasurable chills.

She turned onto her side, slightly sitting up, and tilted her head as well. "...I've been thinking of something entirely serious," she said, yet she smiled.

He looked curious, and if he had an eyebrow he'd be cocking it up. "Should I be concerned?" he asked, moving to sit alongside her.

She was looking up at him, now, examining his carapace and fleshy, more humanoid face. "Perhaps. Perhaps not. But I think you can handle the news," she admitted, continuing to smile.

Making a face, his lips quirking, he nodded a bit, eyes dimming as he let his fatigue show.

"...What if I said there is a chance I could become pregnant?" she asked, watching his expression carefully.

Burning red eyes blinked, and then his gaze turned from her as the words sunk in. "...I'd say that wouldn't be a surprise," he responded just as carefully. "Even if you had mated in the past, you said you never mated with a devil before. Infernal Kin and Umbra Witches have mated since olden times...to produce powerful offspring..."

She nodded, moving her hand to rest atop his clawed one. "And if I told you I was pregnant?"

He looked back at her, nostrils flaring. "...I don't smell anything..." he said, an edge in his voice that was unfamiliar to her.

Treading even more carefully now, she gently explained, "There hasn't been enough time for there to be much hormonal change."

He moved, leaning towards her and his expression unreadable. "...Are you pregnant?" he asked softly, almost whispering.

Tilting her head up, she looked him in the eye. "Yes."

He slowly leaned back, at first keeping their gaze, and then steadily looked over her body, as if in shock. But then his gaze rested on her abdomen, where he slowly and carefully placed his clawed hand over. He remained silent, which unnerved her.

"...Dante?" she gently called, tentatively reaching up to place her hand on his more humanoid cheek.

With his free hand, he took hers, exhaling deeply and his eyes closing as he leaned into her touch. In a short burst of energy, he released his devil form, allowing her to see his expression more clearly. He was smiling. "...I think I'm ready to be a father..." he said softly.

She moved off her side and sat beside him, keeping her hand on his cheek and in his grasp. "You've been a father," she reminded, "to Patty, and to Hallen, as well. And you're a wonderful father; don't ever doubt it."

His smile increased when she mentioned his daughters. He then focused on her, his expression changing. "...You changed your mind?" he asked.

She recalled a similar conversation, one idle and not entirely serious, in which she told him that if they ever had children together, he would raise them alone. While she was sure he could, she indeed had second thoughts about that idea. "I'm...not entirely certain how to go about that," she admitted, softly sighing. "Either I'd have to move here or you would have to move, or..."

He lowered their hands, smiling warmly. "We'll worry about the little details along the way. I think we can handle it, being mature adults and all," he said with a soft laugh.

She smiled at him. "...I'm ready to be a mother," she said softly, more as acknowledgement to herself than to him.

He seemed to understand her mentality, slightly tilting his head with slanted eyes, but the smile remained, and a low rumble began to build in his chest. He seemed even more lethargic than before, ready to keel over. She took his head into her arms and leaned back, taking him down with her, and captured his lips in a kiss as he rested against her.

Chapter End Notes

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I imagine many of you have questions. Many, many questions. Perhaps disgruntled questions. Perhaps confused. I'll try to see if I can address them all without knowing what you're asking.

For Demo 7. Why are they called cambæons? It is a bastardization + playdoh'd mix of the term "cambion", the child, essentially, of a demon and a human. Cambæons are the children of *devils* and humans. I'll come up with a better term, perhaps, if I can make up one.

Why the *hell*, with Dante? Yeah, well, if you haven't realized yet, I done f'ed up Dante (and Vergil) in my version of their histories. He's traumatized, for crying out loud. He's still human. It **will** scar him. Terribly. And some of those people he was raped by/raped in turn led, down the way, to Hallen being born. Maybe I'll get into her story, too...

Trish, why? Because I wholeheartedly, one-hundred percent support the idea that Dante and Trish are **siblings**. I can't see them together in the canon. I mean. That's just weird, Dante. Also, brother and sister for the win!

Dance with...? Yes, I made a reference to Batman (1989). Did you ever dance with the devil by the pale moonlight?

Lastly, I hope I did Rodin well. I hear his voice so perfectly in my head, it's scary.

For Demo 8, this one....

Firstly, y'see...originally, chronologically this takes place after the story with Patty's family and, obviously, after the meeting of Hallen. It's been some time, actually, since Hallen's story. Dante and Cereza have been going at it for a while, by this time. It's just...about that time. Thing IS, this kind of retcons what I just said, because that would mean Vergil was around during the time Dante meets Cereza, and that's actually not what I have in mind at all.

These are demos. They're not meant to be taken so seriously.

Secondly, yes, I made it that the Madamas are half-Infernal, half-Umbra Witch. I just think it fits so *bleeding* well. I mean, the demons in DMC (and in Bayonetta, actually) are pretty...not human, so how to explain the reaaaally human-looking Madamas? Make 'em half-human, essentially. But, uh, as you can see, they're still awfully, frighteningly powerful, so let's say they're half-devil, like Dante. Yeah. That works. Just another race of devils.

Third, I know the idea of Cereza wanting children may be hard to picture, but seriously, she is primo mother material (look at the first game!) and I just really need to get this idea out of my head. It WILL live on.

Also, kudos to anyone who knows the inspiration for the title of this demo.

I think that's all I can think up, so...buh-bye~

~~I apologize for my horrendous, unrealistic sex scene. If it helps, know I cringe reading it, too. ORZ~~

Devil's Relation

Chapter Summary

Distant familial ties are found at an amusement park.

Amusement parks. They were supposed to be fun places, a place to try deliciously unhealthy food, try rigged, impossibly difficult games, best them, and nearly lose your kids at, apparently. Dante was all for amusement parks, even ones that took place at night. But the almost losing his kids part was a scare he could have done without. Especially at night.

Carrying his youngest child, he sighed heavily as he walked through the park. There were scores of people all over the place, with children dragging their guardians along and the smells of food wafting through the air. Sounds of shrieks, ride mechanics, and more simply permeated the entire locale, and nearly every sound was audible to his inhuman hearing, despite how he tuned most of it out.

The child in his arms made a whimper, large, electric-blue eyes closing while her head rested against his. "Patty...Hallen," she sniffed, arms tightening around his neck.

He rubbed his head against hers, his lips spreading into a small smile. "I know, Shy, but I had to go after you when you ran away," he gently reminded.

His daughter sniffed again, her head rising as she looked around. "But...shiny," she urged, lips pouting and giving a little tremble.

A soft exhale escaped him. This all started when she saw "something shiny" and ran off into its direction, nearly disappearing into a sea of people. He almost lost his mind on the spot and went after her. Her little legs dodged and weaved through people until he caught up without nearly trampling over someone in his haste. But that meant they lost Hallen and Patty in the park, somewhere.

"Well, Shy, I don't know what you saw, but please don't ever do that, again, okay?" he said sternly, bringing her attention to him. His gaze lessened upon seeing her teary eyes, but she understood.

Her head bobbed as she nodded, tussling some of her white locks into her face. "Okay, Daddy. I'm sowwy," she said, bumping her head against his.

All the severity melted from his demeanor. It was impossible for him to remain angry at her when she did that, "speaking her age," as her mother put it. She knew darn well what she was doing, and Dante let her do it every time, willingly wrapped around her little finger with duct tape for extra measure.

He kissed her little nose, and she in turn giggled before kissing his angular one, causing him to softly chuckle. "Now," he said, turning back to look into the crowds, "let's find your sisters."

It wasn't going to be hard to find them, despite the amount of people. He could sense they were still in the park and roughly where they were; it was all a matter of possibly retracing his steps in their direction or maneuvering his way back to them. They would be found in no time.

As he walked, he didn't miss how his daughter kept looking around, her head snapping this way and that. She was still looking for "the shiny". It did cause him to wonder what she saw. The glint of an eye? There were other Inhumans in the park, some of which they passed, but they acknowledged him with a respectful nod and were with their families, as well. They were no threat.

Perhaps she saw a Vital Star, or a White Orb, somewhere? She didn't seem too keen on the idea, simply calling it "the shiny". More likely than not, it meant she had no idea what it was, and her curiosity was rubbing onto him. If only he could pry the *color* of the item from her...

"It's shiny!" she said.

Smiling, he nodded, which then devolved into him shaking his head with a soft laugh. That wasn't very helpful.

Soon, they were nearing Hallen and Patty. Dante caught sight of the long white hair belonging to his eldest daughter near a concession stand of some sort and began to near what he could make out to be his older daughters eating as they waited.

Just as Patty waved upon seeing him, several pats on his back followed an excited gasp. "There, Daddy! Daddy! The shiny!" said his youngest, pointing at something behind him and leaning forward.

He glanced back, and then beckoned Patty and Hallen over. As they approached, he turned around. "Show me, Shy," he said.

From what he could see, there were many "shiny" objects that stood out in his vision. Earrings, rings, other jewelry and items...The little finger pointed in the direction of someone who had some of those things on her person. "The shiny" turned out to be more than one "shiny".

The woman was maybe in her early 20s, with short blond hair in a pixie-cut and a small boy by her side. The majority of the shiny objects were on her messenger bags: enamel pins, by what he could see. That would explain it; at only two years old, his youngest daughter had never seen enamel pins, before.

"Those are pins, Shiloh. They're decorations you wear on things. Is that what you mean?" he asked, unfocusing his gaze to look at her.

Rapidly, her head bobbed up and down, though her brows furrowed. With a little huff, she urged, "Daddy, *the shiny!*" Her legs began moving impatiently against his chest. A particular pin must have caught her eye.

"What's up, Dad?" Hallen asked, following her father and baby sister's gazes as she and Patty approached.

Noticing Shiloh was antsy, Patty reached up and grabbed her little sister's attention with a churro. "Are you hungry, Shy?" she asked.

Gasping, Shiloh nodded before taking it into her hand. "Thank you," she said happily, beginning to munch on it. To her sisters, she then said, "I found the Shiny and Daddy can't see it."

Blinking at her, Dante's lips quirked a bit. Yes, he wasn't trying hard enough, so he gently passed Shiloh to Hallen before focusing his gaze back on the woman several feet away.

Small and stature and curvy, the woman wasn't anyone familiar to him. The child at her side looked to be her son or possible relative, with dark blond hair and currently sucking on one of those absurdly large lollipops. They stood in line for food, the same churros that Patty and Hallen were eating, at ease and happy.

Dante then focused back on her bag. There were only a few, simple pins he recognized: an ice-cream cone, a starfish, a CD, a violin...There were so many.

"Do you see it, Daddy?" Shiloh asked him eagerly.

He hummed, "What does it look like?"

She put a hand to her temple, curling all her fingers but her index. "Horns!"

He sighed, ignoring the other pins to look. "Why didn't you say so befo—" His breath suddenly caught in his throat, all but choking on air when he saw it.

"What?" Hallen demanded, her arm darting out to bring Patty to her side, ready to react. Likewise, upon seeing such a reaction from her father, Patty startled, watching him closely.

Their father look a step forward, his jaw dropping while a kaleidoscope of emotions flittered upon his face. Happiness. Surprise. Anger. Confusion. It was impossible to gauge what he was feeling.

Hallen frowned, beginning to worry. "Dad!" she called urgently, snapping him out of his trancelike state.

Wordlessly, he took another step forward. "Stay here," he said, his voice low and almost monotone with indiscernible emotion. He then moved forward into the woman's direction, walking just under a casual pace.

The sound of his heartbeat drowned out half of the noise in the park. His flamboyant, flippant, devil-may-care words escaped him. How was he supposed to restrain himself after

what he saw? But he *had* to remain calm. There had to be an explanation, some good reason. But...could there be one?

Why was a human carrying a pin of *his* family crest?

Not the old Alighieri crest belonging to the entire family, but the new one created *specifically* for *his* family branch after his parents married.

The *Inhuman* Alighieri family crest.

It had been centuries since he saw it, but he remembered it clearly. All he needed was the old Alighieri crest in his mind from the time he saw it in the possession of the Lowells to recall its form. It was a marvelous, pointed shield-like shape with a bat-like motif, an inscribed 'A' at its center below the family crest: two long, curved horns that protruded over the shield with two red gems for eyes between them, and a long, oval-shaped black gem amid those. Below was a banner in demonic text, and now that he looked upon it, he could see the shine of magical energy that thrummed upon it.

It was the real thing. An *old* thing.

HIS.

How in the Nine Spheres of Hell did a *human* get their hands on such an artifact?!

Abruptly, he stopped, shutting his eyes. Before continuing, he had to calm himself. Taking a breath, he exhaled deeply, letting the tension *ease* before opening his eyes and continuing forward. Rationalizing a way to begin speaking to the woman, he put on his game face, managing a languid smile despite his warring emotions.

Before he could manage anything, however, the pitter-patter of footsteps caught his ears, and he turned around just in time to see Shiloh run past him and up to the woman, poking at her bag.

"Shiloh!" he called harshly, yet while doing so realized this *was* a better way to start conversation.

Both the woman and the boy looked at the girl, blinking, just as she said, "Excuse me, Miss, but why do you have that *pen*?" she asked, pointing at the family crest.

"Pen?" the woman repeated, confusion clouding her face. She then looked at what Shiloh was pointing to, adjusting her bag. "Oh, *pin*! This pin?" she asked, and her expression suddenly changed.

Dante was right behind Shiloh in a moment, and he scooped his daughter up into his arms. "Sorry about that," he said, not exactly sure he was telling the truth. Now that he was near the woman, he felt the soft tremble of energy coming from the pin, and wondered how he never noticed it before.

"...It's okay," the woman assured, her expression softening from the sudden defensive one it had been a second before. She slightly moved the boy, who was staring at Shiloh, ahead of

her.

"But, Daddy, it's ours, isn't it?" Shiloh asked aloud, frowning at the woman.

"Well..." Dante resisted the urge to bark questions, then smiled at the woman and said, "If you don't mind me asking, where *did* you get that pin from? I'm...intimately familiar with it."

A blond brow rose as the woman looked him over, moving a bit in the line. "It's mine," she said easily, her eyes slanting with what he could still see was defensiveness.

"So, you're familiar with the Alighieri family?" he asked, brows furrowing with the beginnings of a frown.

Surprise overcame her face, but she tried to hide it. Very poorly. She fumbled with her bag, turning it away from him. "I *am* part of the Alighieri family. And you?" she asked hastily.

The world seemed to halt as the realization dawned on him. He almost took a step back, causing it to look as if he staggered, and his eyes widened, his mouth hanging open. But no words came out.

"You're related to us?" Shiloh asked curiously. "We're Alighieris, too."

Looking between father and daughter, confusion overcame the woman's face. "...Must be...another Alighieri. It's not that uncommon a name..." she muttered, and the boy looked up at her with a frown of his own.

"But that's *ours*," Shiloh insisted, pointing back at the bag.

Just as the woman was about to open her mouth to speak, Dante shook his head and quickly said, "Sorry, I think we got off on the wrong foot." He held out his free hand, exhaling his words. "I'm Dante. Dante Alighieri. Evangelina Alighieri is my...ancestor," he managed.

This piqued the woman's interest, but only for a moment before her expression turned defensive again. She once more pushed the boy in front of her as the line moved a bit, eyeing Dante's outstretched hand. "I know of Evangelina," she said coolly. "She was the older sister of my ancestor, Isabelle Alighieri."

Dante's heart jumped to his throat in awe and pleasant surprise. But he didn't just stand there with his hand out; he lowered it, moving to hold Shiloh more comfortably. He smiled widely. "Well, then, I suppose this is a bit of a family reunion," he said with cordial charm.

"I don't think so," said the woman. "How do I know you're telling the truth?"

His smile faltered by a bit. There were plenty of ways he could prove it...but one would have to know of Inhumans. As far as he was aware of, his aunt Isabelle's descendants were completely human. Normal. So painfully normal.

Glancing away momentarily, he considered his options. Telling the truth was not one of them. "I can't. Not so easily, anyway," he admitted. "Regardless, I know we're related, if distantly. So, let me ask you a question." He looked towards the bag. "How did you obtain that pin?"

"I found it," said the boy. He looked and sounded around six years old. "I thought it was cool."

"Jacopo!" she hissed. She then looked at Dante. "Really, this isn't the right time to talk about this," she began.

But Dante wasn't giving up so easily. Not when he finally found more of his biological family. "I completely understand. But this is important to me. Whether you believe me or not, that *is* my family's crest. I even know what the words on the banner say and mean," he explained.

She blinked, making a motion as if about to look at the crest, but caught herself. "You...Really?" she asked, her guard lowering by a bit. She looked at her bag. "...I always thought...that was just rubbish."

One of his eyes twitched, but Dante remained calm. "...No. It's a language. A very real, very meaningful language. You fancy languages?" he asked, trying to appeal to her.

She shrugged a bit. "Passively," she admitted.

"Then, if nothing else, we can talk about that, alright? For starters?"

She considered, looking from him to her bag. "...Alright." She held out her hand. "Noemi. Noemi Alighieri."

LOADING... Spawn of a Devil

Chapter Summary

The initial take, starting from the middle, of how the secret of Dante and Nero's bloodline is revealed.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Forgive me if I am too direct but..." Hugh focused on Dante. "Your family name is...Alighieri, correct?" he asked, leaning forward.

Knowing where this was going both Dante and Nero seemed to brace themselves by, in their ways, relaxing against the backs of the chairs. These were the moments of truth.

"Yes," Dante replied.

Looking over the papers, Hugh took a moment to gather his thoughts. A glimpse of the Alighieri coat of arms was visible between some of the paper. He then continued, "When Simon told us your given name, since you are also an Infernal Hunter, only one family came to mind. The old Alighieri family known for its Infernal Hunters was nearly extinguished over 200 years ago. Today they are normal, ordinary people, from what we understand, without a speck of knowledge of even the true existence of Infernal Kin." Once again, scrutiny, however slight, was visible upon his features.

Nodding, Dante gave a wry smile. He almost felt like laughing. While it was true, he did have family that survived on his mother's side—his aunt's family, in fact—and they were ordinary people, to be reminded of their existence and that they were still using the Alighieri last name was...uplifting, somehow.

"It is as you say," he acknowledged, still relaxed in the chair. "However, my brother and I are the exception. My mother, Evangelina, was an Alighieri by birth, and both she and my father raised my brother and me to be Infernal Hunters before they died."

Hugh's expression remained unchanged as Dante spoke.

"...We were kept away from society, at least largely, as we were sought after and hunted, ourselves; we are from a powerful bloodline," Dante continued, his tone casual.

This piqued Hugh's interest. "Powerful bloodline?" he repeated.

"My father's," the half-Devil continued. "Interestingly, he took on the Alighieri name, so I only know him by it. But I know he was a legend."

Doubt briefly crossed Hugh's expression. "I feel as if you are baiting me, Dante," he said sternly. "And I do not appreciate it."

Nero glanced between the two older men, and then at the other men in the room. Particularly at the one staring at his right arm upon the table.

"I'm sorry, that wasn't the intention," Dante earnestly apologized, "but...I guess I had hoped to make it easy enough to guess."

"Except," Nero added in conversation, picking up on the casual cues, "no one thinks about him anymore; not humans, anyway. Gotta remember, Granddad has passed into legend, myth. Most humans don't even think he ever lived, outside of Fortuna."

The use of the word "humans" in Nero's sentences caused more than one of said humans in the room to freeze in place, eyes going wide with alarm as something clicked.

"...Well, I'm sorry if my place in time is all messed up," Dante grinned, pointedly looking away from Hugh.

As was Nero from the other men near him. "Hey, I wasn't the one who insinuated 297 years was old," he scoffed.

The resounding gunshots were, somehow, expected.

-:AD'sC:-

On the veranda several rooms away, the loud, powerful gunshots caused all heads present to turn towards the sound in alarm. Almost immediately after, Trish and Cereza passed knowing glances before following the lead of the other hunters present in gathering their weapons and going on alert for what could have caused the disturbance.

Patty, too, was aware. "Daddy!" she cried, racing strategically between legs to dodge her way towards the front of the mansion.

"Patty!" Gwendolyn called before she went after her. Both Cereza and Trish along with a handful of hunters followed behind her.

-:AD'sC:-

"Creator help us," Ulrich murmured as he stood, lowering his smoking gun in horror from the sight before him.

Admittedly, Nero probably wouldn't be growling if the bullets lodged into his forehead weren't hurting him as much as they did. "The wards?" he asked aloud to Dante, though more to himself. Normally, even Holy Water didn't hurt as much.

"Yeah." A tired sigh emitted from his uncle, whose head rose from the force of being knocked back from the bullet rounds in his own forehead. "...Y'know...I really hate it when people do that," he muttered, letting the bullets fall into his lap.

Several footsteps were swiftly approaching the room. Dante didn't have much time. Between the angry and terrified murmurs of "He's a demon!" and so forth and similar, he bellowed, "We are not your enemy, alright?! I want to make peace, here!"

"They fucking shot us, Dante! I doubt they'll listen," Nero growled, practically throwing the bullets from his head to the floor.

"Cool it, kid!" Dante hissed, holding his nephew's arm back to prevent him from standing. All the other men were standing, now, and the last thing they needed to do was cause them to feel any more intimidated and frightened than they already were.

Fortunately, Nero did listen, and he didn't even take his arm back. Furthermore, he bit his tongue.

"Patty was raised by demons?" Hugh looked to be in a near-panic, his mind racing and beside himself with horror.

"I knew there was something off about that boy's tattoo," the onlooking man hissed, pointing with his gun at Nero's arm.

"A flaw in its human form?"

"They got past the wards!!"

"How did you get past the wards, demons?" Ulrich growled at them.

Nero simply scoffed, whereas Dante answered, "Wards weren't strong enough. Not for us."

The doors burst open, followed by more trigger-happy hunters with very large guns in hand. "Ulrich! Hugh! Tristan! Are you all alright?!" Jean asked, visible eye darting about the room, only for his and several other expressions to turn to ones of confusion upon seeing...nothing, really. Except guns pointing at two silver-haired men.

"They're demons," Ulrich explained, or seemed to, for that was all that was needed before more guns were trained upon Nero and Dante.

Hands raised, Dante said, "Please let me explain—"

Nero snarled when this only resulted in another bullet in Dante's head, but again, Dante held him back.

"I will do the talking, infernal spawn," Hugh spat, training his guns upon both hybrids. "If you did anything to my daughter—"

Naturally, this got Dante's attention, and his head rose again to glare deathly at the man. Nero could see darkness had crept into his uncle's expression, which was natural upon the insinuation that he did anything to his kin. "I did nothing to Patty. What I told you was true about her condition, but she is healthy, now. Nothing I've told you is a lie," Dante explained.

Of course, this went in one ear and out the other as Hugh narrowed his eyes before turning to Ulrich. "Get Patty seen by the doctor. Have him run every test," he ordered.

Nero immediately stood, but not to lash out. It was to hold his uncle back, this time.

"If anyone puts a single hostile finger on Patty—" Dante growled, red rimming the edges of his irises — "I will kill them."

Completely ignoring the men and their clamor, Nero focused on his uncle with a keen, patient gaze. It was showing again, if one looked close enough. If one knew him enough.

Several months ago, Dante told them all —his immediate family— about what happened to him as a child and adolescent. About the permanent, deeply embedded scars those events left on his psyche and being. About how Trish was the first being after over fifty years who gave Dante hope of normalcy and sanity after what had happened to him. Both Nero and Patty were the other two. His lifesavers, he called them. Now, Trish and Nero, of course, could overwhelmingly handle themselves.

But Patty...

Patty, his fragile, small...very human daughter?

The insanity Dante so often referenced during that narration of his adolescence showed in his eyes when Patty's well-being was at stake. It seemed so obvious, now. The devil that dwelled within him melded with that insanity, creating a warped visage of something...dark...lurking within Dante. He never spoke about killing humans. But there was no shred of concern, of remorse, of restraint from the promise he swore to whatever touched his little girl.

Dante wasn't there.

It was times like these that Nero realized how incredibly fragile his uncle was, on the inside. How insecure and afraid he was. Maybe of himself...of others, even...

He forced his way into the dark matter of his uncle's mind. "Uncle, please...Listen. Calm down..."

Wide electric blue and red eyes darting to him, Dante at first seemed confused, by a bit. He then clenched his jaw and took a deep breath before giving a small nod.

Nero let him go, but kept a comforting hand on his shoulder before turning to the men.

"Is that a threat, demon?" Hugh demanded, gaze dark and hard as he bore into them.

"It's a warning," Nero confirmed, turning to look at them. "We don't want to start a fight, but don't bring Patty into this. In any case, you're outpowered, easily."

Dante rested his hands on the table, slightly leaning forward while standing in place. He took a moment to calm himself before speaking again. "...If your wards...and your weapons are anything to go by, even by a glance...you are easily outpowered. We are of Infernal Kin...but beyond the average Infernal Hunter calibre."

"Nonsense," Graham scoffed, "we've taken out high demons, demon lords, even. The only reason why you're even alive is because we might need you if you've done anything to—"

"I said," Nero lowly growled, "leave. Patty. OUT of this. Are you guys fucking insane?"

"Listen, boy—"

He waved a hand at Tristan. "No, you fucking 'listen'! You asshats aren't the only ones who have done research on a family. Whether you like it or not, you aren't ready for a high-scale superpower—let alone two!—from Infernal Ground even with all your spells and wards you have to offer in this century!"

Jean waved his gun between them. "You mean to tell me you two are devils?! Impossible! What would devils want around here?! There's nothing to gain, not even from Aeron's Tear!"

Indignant, Nero all but screamed, "That's fucking because we don't want anything to do with you fucking Lowells! The only reason why we're here is because Patty wanted to meet you and so we came to meet you!" Running his fingers through his hair, he not-so-calmly explained, "This is purely a meeting out of peace but you cocky, bigoted IDIOTS are picking a fight with a DEVIL PRINCE because you're too damn high-horsed to understand you keep threatening he did something to or threaten TO harm his ADOPTED DAUGHTER!"

Gradually, towards the end of his tirade, the eyes of the hunters in the room did widen in even greater horror, their faces blanching significantly.

Seeing this, Nero calmed a bit more. "Now that's in your fucking thick skulls and digested, can we please talk about more pressing matters? Such as, by the way, Patty is not going to be examined by some old fuck 'cause she's healthy as can be, and no, she will not be staying with you all unless she decides. Not you, nor Dante, can change that, because we've already spoken about it. As a family."

A small smile formed on Dante's lips through all of this. He seemed to be quelled and...thoroughly entertained. With a healthy dose of thankfulness, of course.

"Daddy!"

For a fraction of a moment, everyone present froze. Nero glanced at Dante; Dante's eyes were focused on the door with wide eyes; Hugh, Ulrich, Tristan, and Jean glanced at the door; the other hunters looked concerned and rightfully worried.

And then all at once, everyone moved.

Dante, of course, with the upper hand in speed, slipped past the men before they even noticed he moved to rush into the foyer and swept his daughter up into his arms. Holding her protectively and close to his chest, he briefly closed his eyes, hoping to all of creation she decided to stay with him.

"Patty!"

Gwendolyn, along with Cereza, Trish and a handful of other armed hunters, ran into the foyer from the second floor. Nero came to Dante's side while behind them, Hugh and the men came out as well, though they went towards those approaching from upstairs.

Without prompt, Trish and Cereza jumped from where they were to land alongside Dante and Nero, much to the upstairs party's surprise and confusion.

"What...?" Gwendolyn began, alarm upon her face as Ulrich approached. "Where? Who fired their weapons? At what? What's going on? Where are the demons??"

"Here," said Nero, arms crossed and much more reserved than before. "Dante and I were shot at."

Before his mother could voice her concern, her eldest son placed his hands on her shoulders, his stance protective, as he said, "They're demo...no..." Tristan looked back at them, eyes dark with a mix of concern, anger and fear. "...They're...devils, mother."

As Gwendolyn and several others gasped with horror, Patty looked boldly at her blood relatives from Dante's protective hold, surrounded by the loving, inhuman family that raised her.

Chapter End Notes

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So. It's been a while. I apologize for not updating, but there's a lot going on in my life right now. I'm having technical problems, I'm at school, my MDD is kicking my ass, I've been focusing on my novels...

Excuses, excuses. I know...

First thing's first. Devil May Cry 5. After a decade and one year, it is finally...FINALLY...here.

And there's a lot about it I don't like.

And so...I shall ignore it in my DMC fanfiction canon. It doesn't exist. It never will. Everything up to DMC4 is as far as I'm going. If I do any more DMC fanfiction, please keep this in mind.

And secondly...this botched chapter. I just wanted to upload SOMETHING, so I managed to dig up an old version of the chapter Nonsense Blood Relations and posted it. Obviously. I hope it is *somewhat* enjoyable despite being so...**so** fucking old.

Speaking of something being old, eventually I want to re-upload these chapters of AD'sC with my 2019 literary upgrades instead of leaving this...horrendously old 2009 shit...up for all the public to see. I'll redo the tags, too. I don't know *when* I'll do it...but I *will* be doing it eventually. And, **hopefully**, by then I will have a brand-spanking-new chapter to go with it.

Therefore, for now, this fanfic will be *listed* as "Complete". Once I upload the next chapter, it will be back in business, baby!

In the meantime, please accept my humblest of apologies for being unable to keep up with my stories, overall. Life happens, everyone. Gotta deal with it now, you know...?

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!