

EmberS to InfeRno

By Shiroyuki

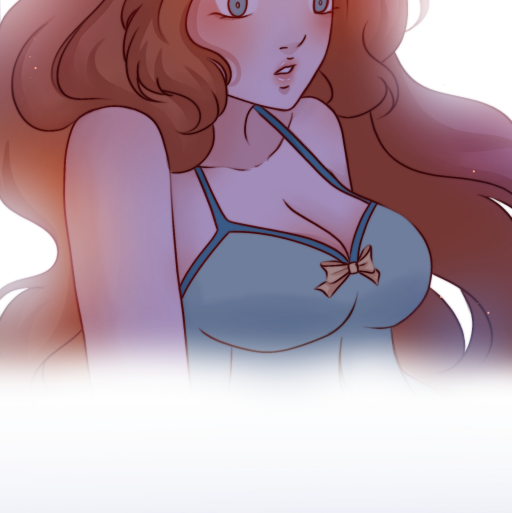
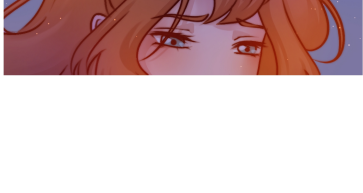
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Bloom.

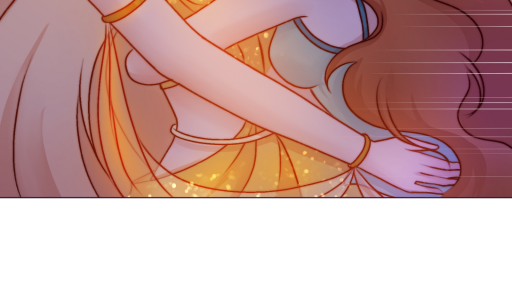




DAPHNE!



WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN AGES!

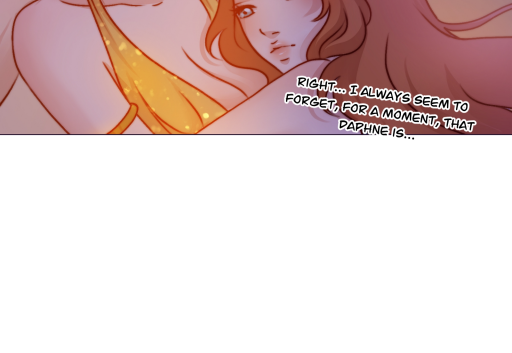


I KNOW, MY LITTLE SPARK. I'M SORRY I'VE BEEN AWAY FOR SO LONG.



REACHING YOU LIKE THIS TAKES A GREAT DEAL OF ENERGY.

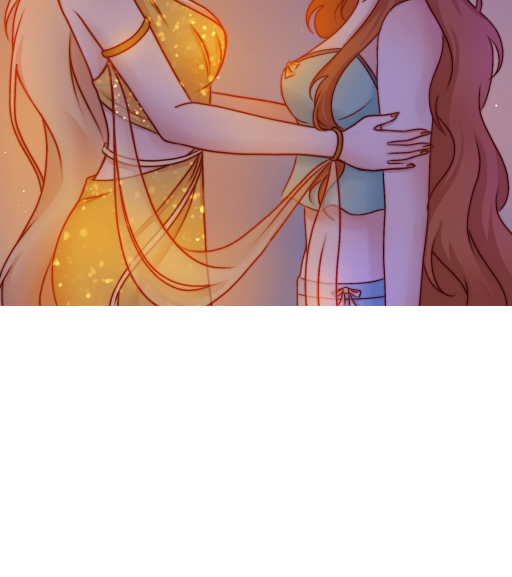
MY POWERS... THEY'RE NOT WHAT THEY USED TO BE.

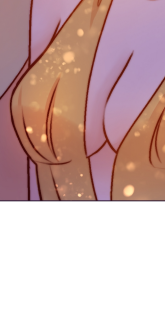
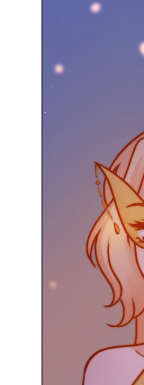
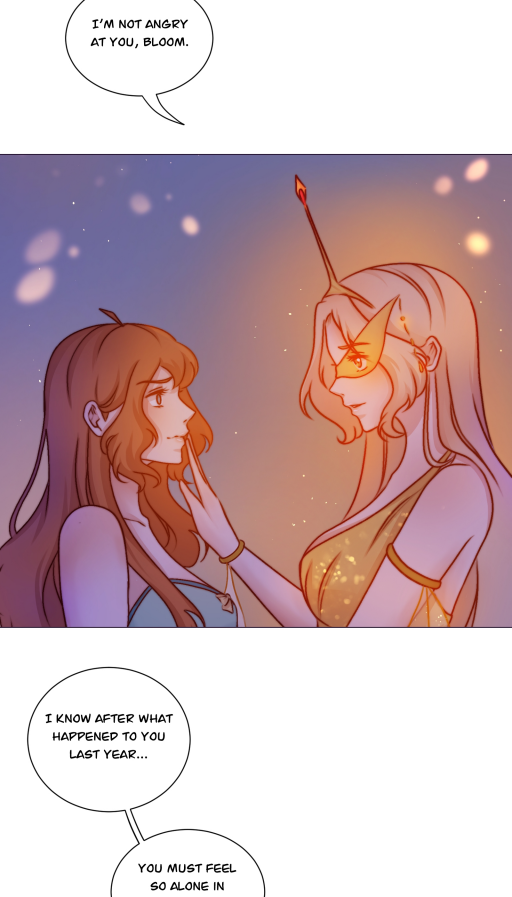
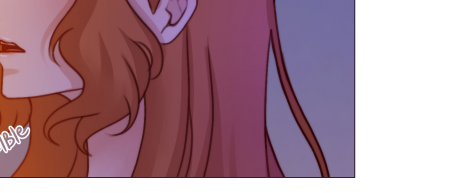
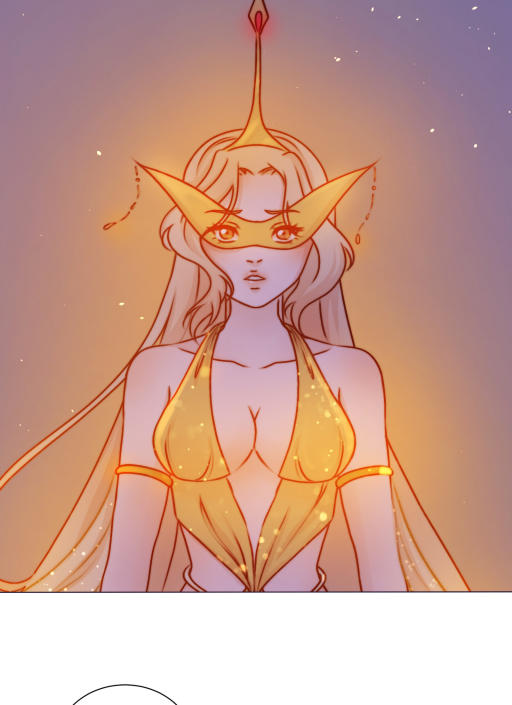
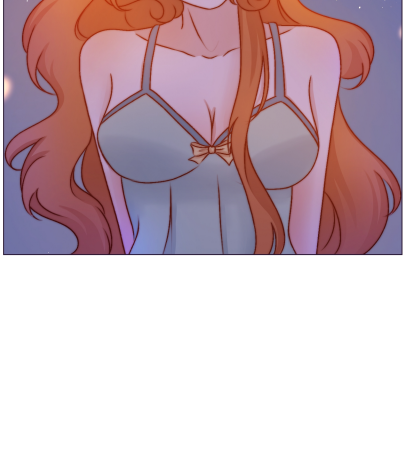
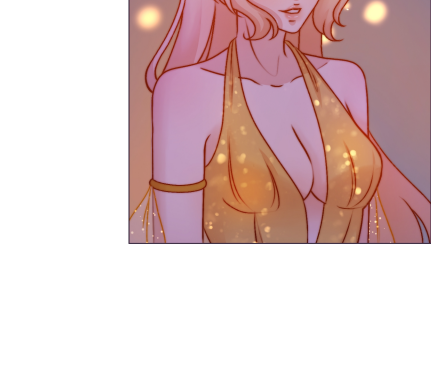
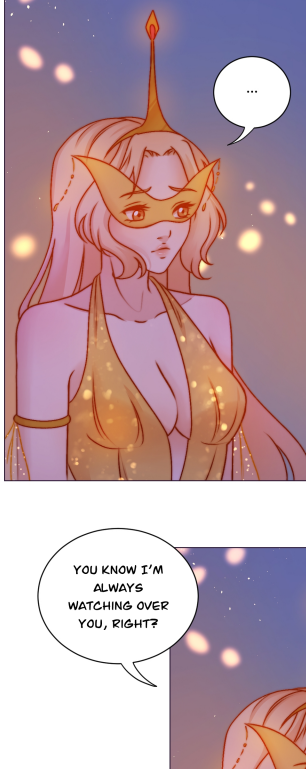


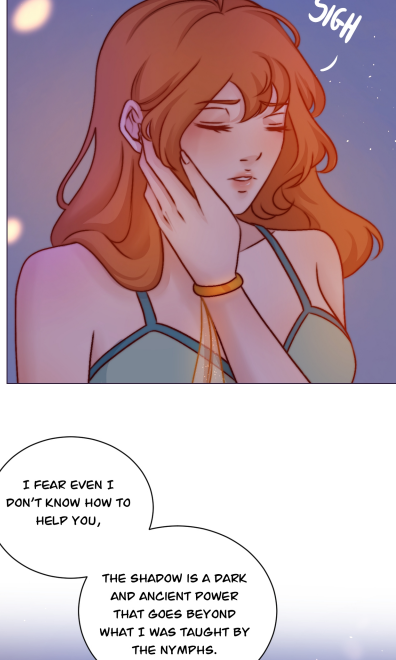
RIGHT... I ALWAYS SEEM TO FORGET, FOR A MOMENT, THAT DAPHNE IS...

BLOOM...

WHILE I'M SO HAPPY TO SEE YOU AGAIN, I'M HERE FOR ANOTHER REASON TONIGHT.

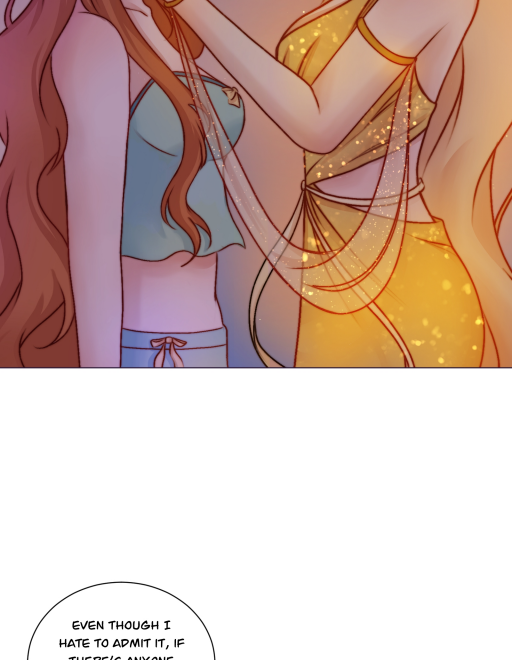




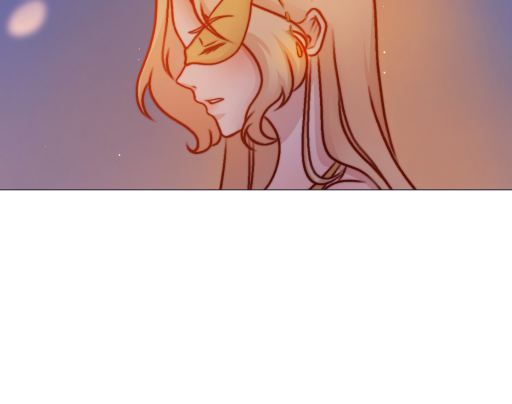


I FEAR EVEN I DON'T KNOW HOW TO HELP YOU,

THE SHADOW IS A DARK AND ANCIENT POWER THAT GOES BEYOND WHAT I WAS TAUGHT BY THE NYMPHS.



EVEN THOUGH I HATE TO ADMIT IT, IF THERE'S ANYONE THAT CAN HELP YOU IT'S HIM.

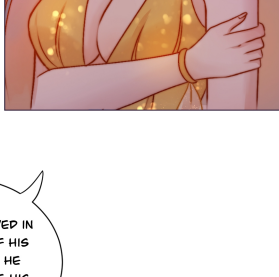


CAN I TRUST HIM, DAPHNE?



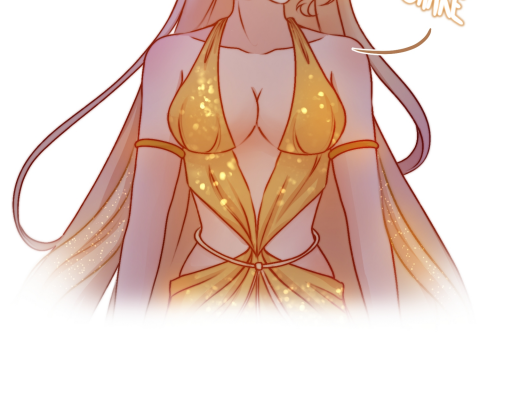
I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW.

VALTOR HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN ENIGMA, I COULD NEVER GUESS WHAT WAS GOING THROUGH HIS MIND.

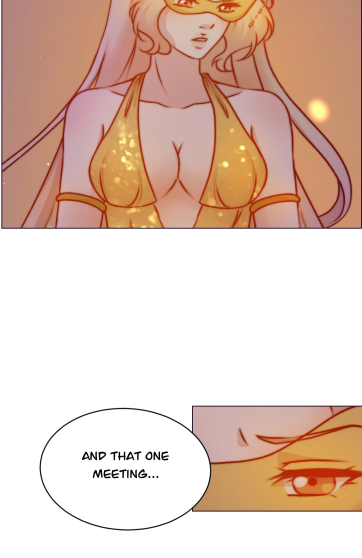


HE ALWAYS SERVED IN THE INTEREST OF HIS MOTHERS, BUT HE SEEMED TO HAVE HIS OWN AGENDA AS WELL.

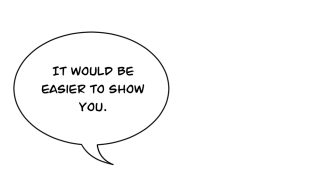
WAIT... YOU KNEW VALTOR?



I WOULDN'T SAY I KNEW HIM, BUT I MET HIM ONCE.

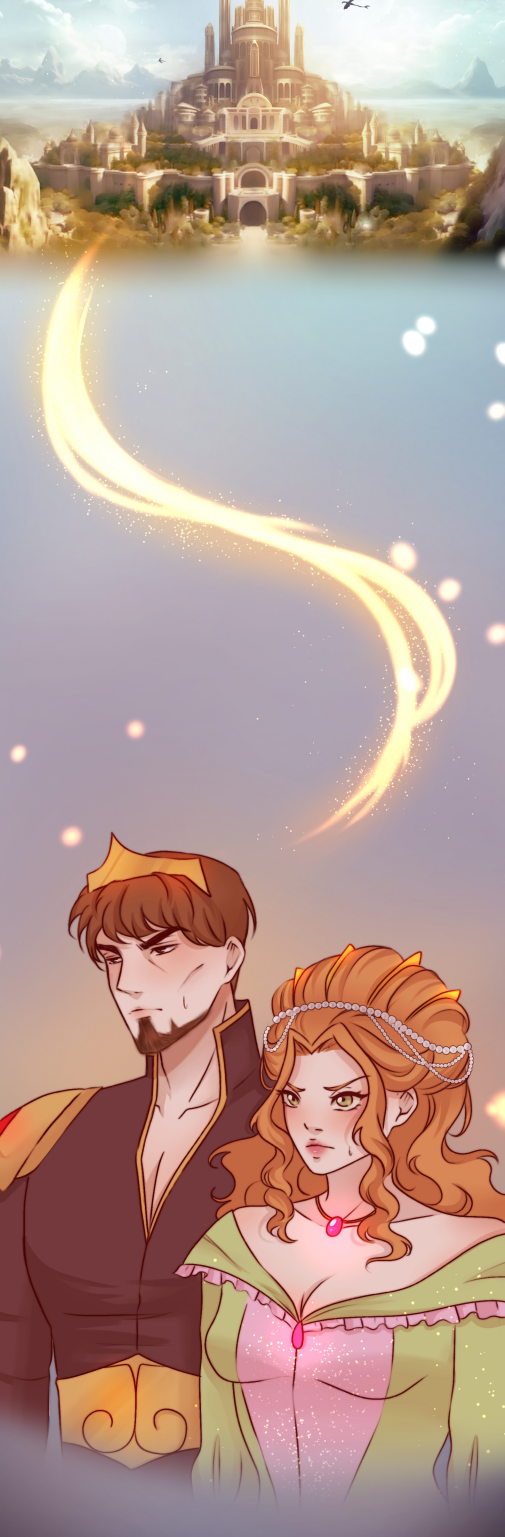


AND THAT ONE MEETING...

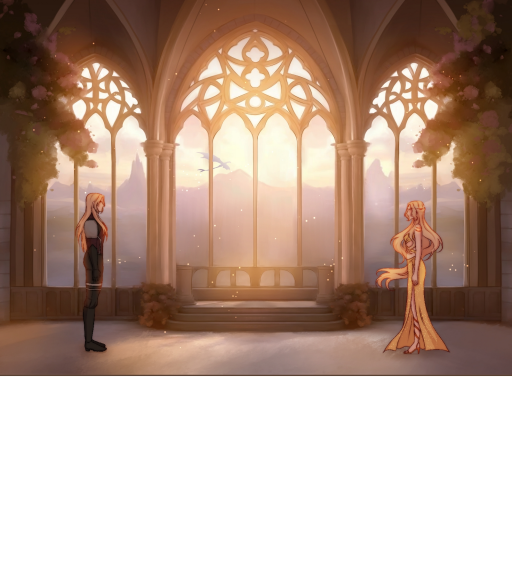


CHANGED THE COURSE OF DESTINY.

IT WOULD BE EASIER TO SHOW YOU.

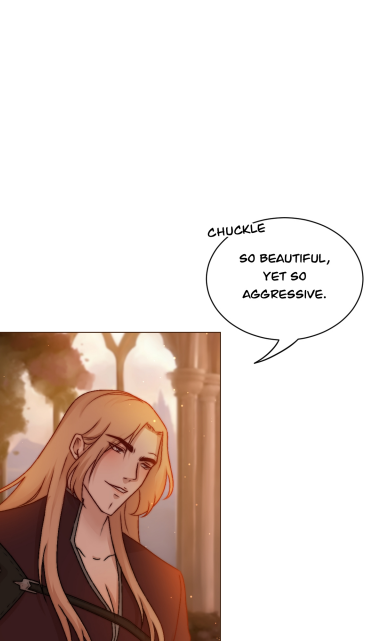






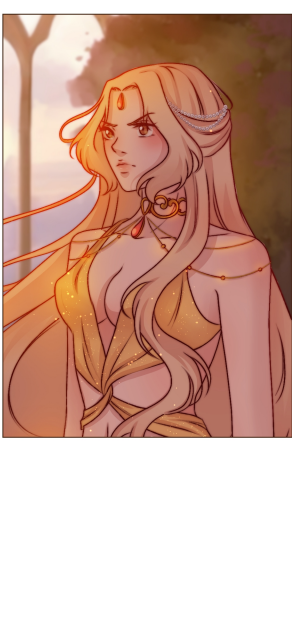
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, DEMON?!

GET OUT BEFORE I CALL THE GUARDS OR BLAST YOU FROM THIS CASTLE MYSELF!



CHUCKLE

SO BEAUTIFUL, YET SO AGGRESSIVE.

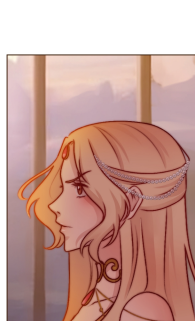
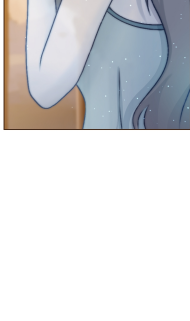


BUT I AM NOT HERE TO FIGHT YOU, NYMPH.

NOT YET AT LEAST.



IN AN HOUR, THE WITCHES WILL ATTACK DOMINO.

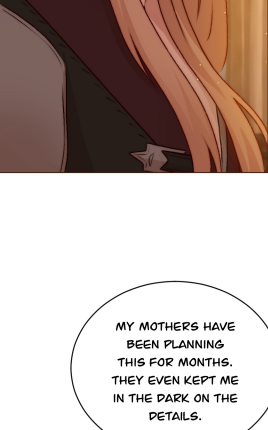


AND WHY WOULD YOU WARN US, DEMON?

WHY SHOULD I TRUST A SINGLE WORD YOU SAY WHEN EVERY ONE OF THEM IS LACED WITH POISON AND LIES?



I'M AFRAID MY WORD IS ALL I CAN GIVE YOU.

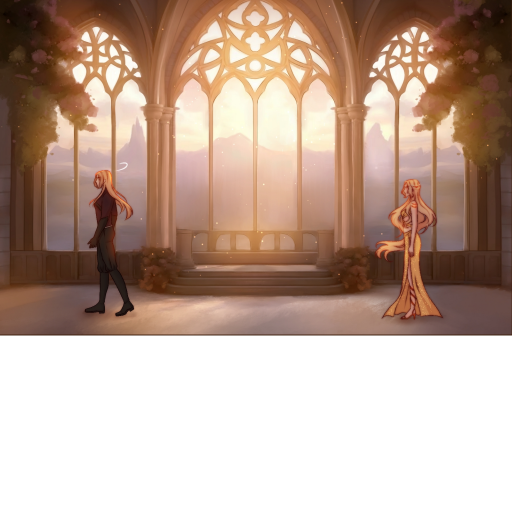
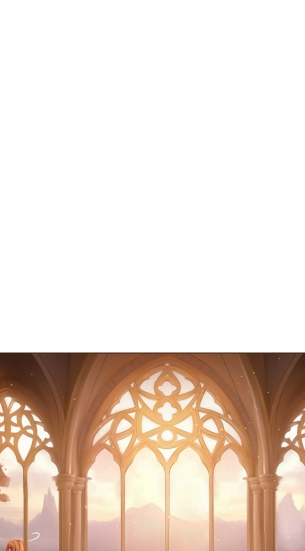


MY MOTHERS HAVE BEEN PLANNING THIS FOR MONTHS. THEY EVEN KEPT ME IN THE DARK ON THE DETAILS.

I JUST RECEIVED MY ORDERS, MY PART IN THIS WAR HAS ALREADY BEEN SET.



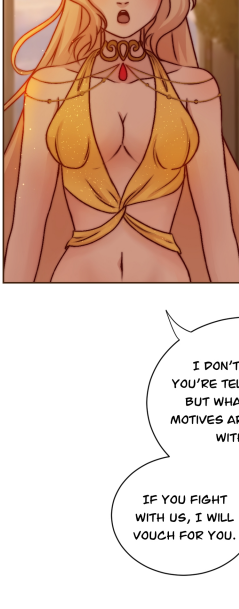
THIS WARNING IS ALL I CAN OFFER YOU.



THEN FIGHT WITH US.



HELP US STOP THEM,
AND I WILL MAKE
SURE YOU AREN'T
SENT TO OMEGA FOR
YOUR CRIMES.



I DON'T KNOW WHY
YOU'RE TELLING ME THIS,
BUT WHATEVER YOUR
MOTIVES ARE, THEY ALIGN
WITH OURS.

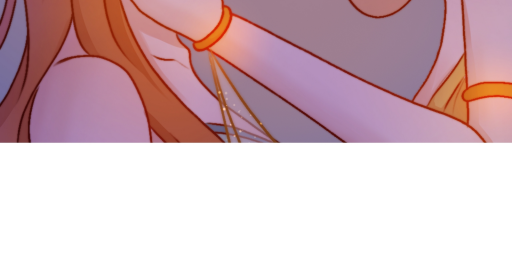
IF YOU FIGHT
WITH US, I WILL
VOUCH FOR YOU.



YOU KNOW I
CAN'T.



GASP



JUST AS HE WARNED,
THE WITCHES
ATTACKED AN HOUR
LATER AND DOMINO
FELL.

WE WERE ALONE THAT
DAY. THE COUNCIL OF
MAGIX NEVER CAME.
OUR SUPPOSED ALLIES
ABANDONED US.

BUT BECAUSE OF HIS
WARNING... I HAD JUST
ENOUGH TIME TO COME
UP WITH AN ESCAPE
PLAN.

FOR YOU.

HE DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT
YOU, BLOOM. SO I CAN'T
SAY HE DID THIS OUT OF
THE GOODNESS OF HIS
HEART.

BUT... WHATEVER HIS
REASONS WERE THAT DAY,
IT WAS BECAUSE OF HIM
THAT I HAD JUST ENOUGH
TIME TO SAVE MY LITTLE
SISTER, EVEN IF IT COST
ME MY LIFE.

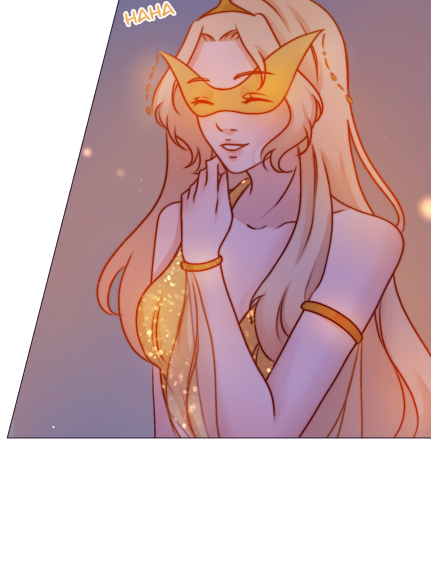
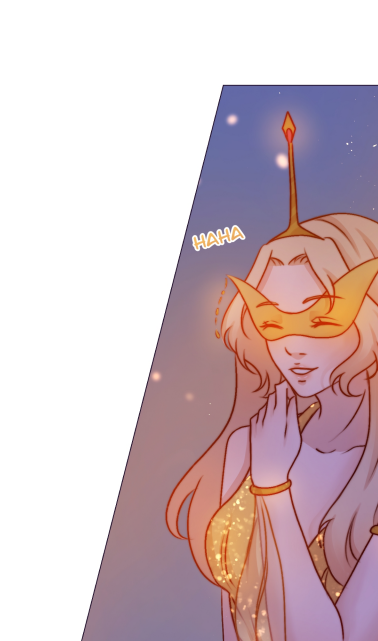
FATE IS STRANGE,
ISN'T IT?

NO MATTER WHAT YOU OR I MAY THINK OF VALTOR, FATE SEEMS TO HAVE TIED YOU TOGETHER.

YOUR CONNECTION.

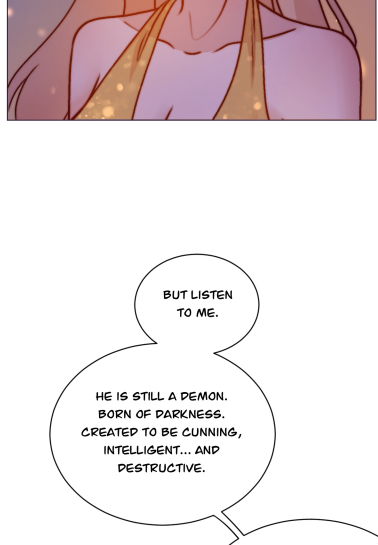
YOUR ATTRACTION TO EACH OTHER—

D-DAPHNE!



HAHA

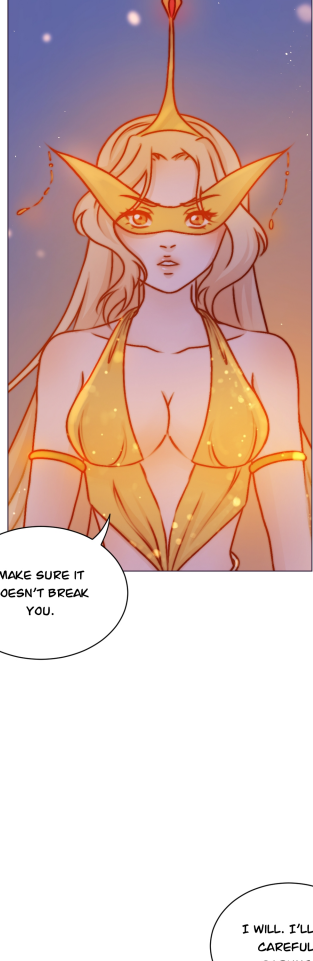
I ONLY SAY THIS BECAUSE I LOVE YOU, MY LITTLE SPARK.



BUT LISTEN TO ME.

HE IS STILL A DEMON. BORN OF DARKNESS. CREATED TO BE CUNNING, INTELLIGENT... AND DESTRUCTIVE.

PROMISE ME, BLOOM. ALWAYS STAY A STEP AHEAD OF HIM. AND IF—WHEN—THE DAY COMES THAT HE BETRAYS YOU...



MAKE SURE IT DOESN'T BREAK YOU.

I WILL. I'LL BE CAREFUL, DAPHNE.

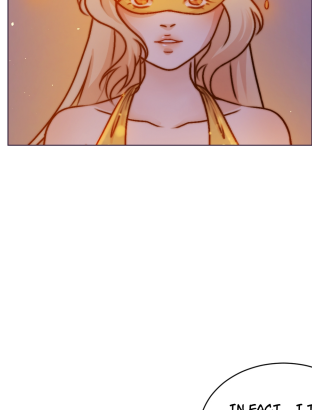


I KNOW I CAN'T GIVE YOU THE REASSURANCE YOU SEEK ABOUT HIM.

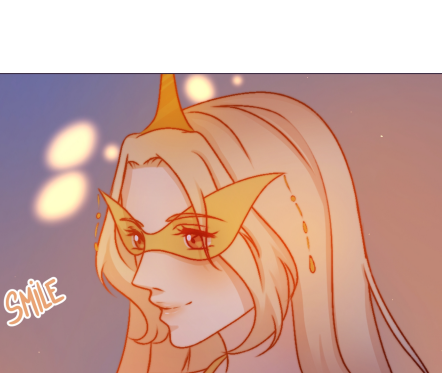
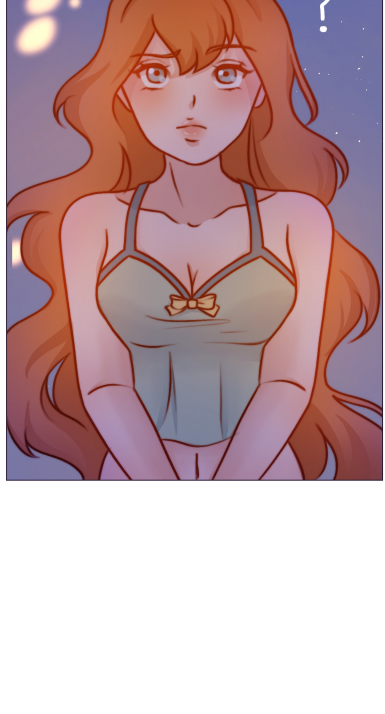
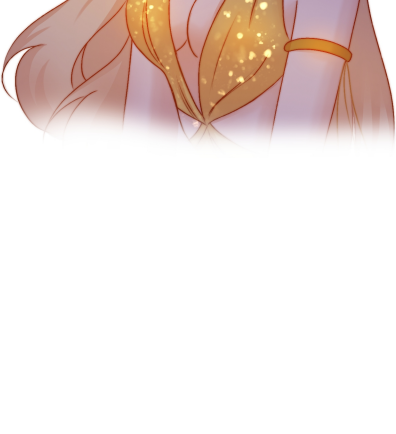


BUT THERE IS ONE THING I DO KNOW.

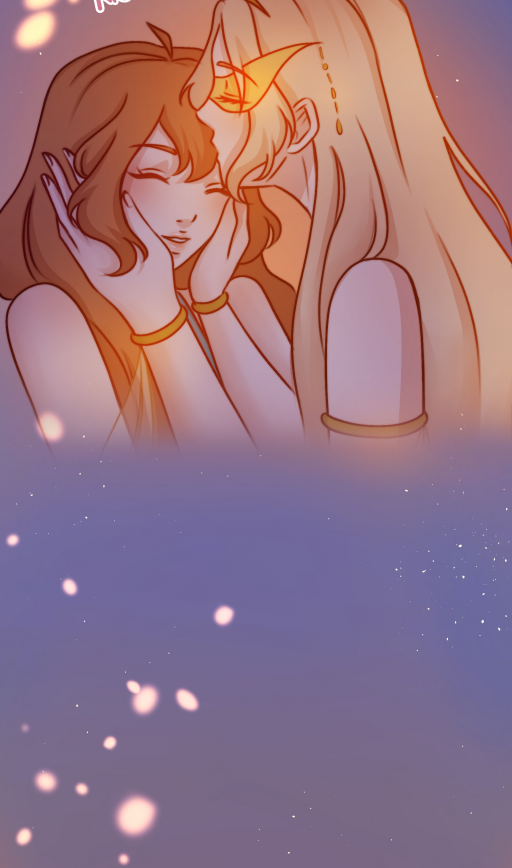
THE SHADOW VIRUS INSIDE YOU IS NOT WHO YOU ARE. AND YOUR CONNECTION TO VALTOR DOES NOT MAKE YOU EVIL.



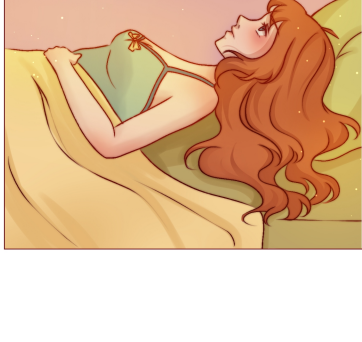
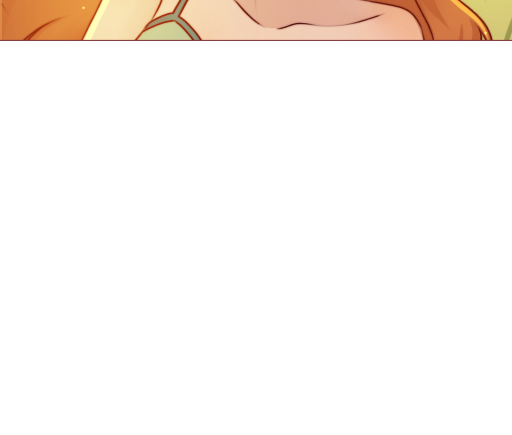
IN FACT... I THINK IT'S QUITE THE OPPOSITE.

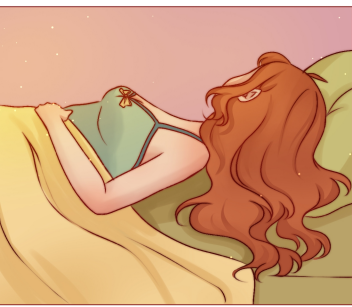


KISS



GASP





End



Episode 20

Story • Art by Shiroyuki