

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: The Demon Realm!

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Amadeus can't help but let out a laugh and a whoop as they fall through the air. Even if their surroundings have drastically changed from the nice penthouse to a bleak and dreary desolate landscape, he's still having fun... but then to be fair, he CAN fly.

“Ruuuumiii!!!”

Of course, as the Huntrix girls all start to fall past him, Amadeus' good humor vanishes as he realizes... they *can't* fly yet. Nobody has taught them how. Blinking, he immediately locks in, swooping down and grabbing at first Zoey and then Mira. He matches their speed first before taking them both by the arm and pulling them in close so they can latch onto him.

Of course, he only has two hands... and Rumi is still falling. It's not a favoritism thing though to be clear, it's just practical. Rumi is a Rook, meaning she has much higher durability. Zoey and Mira are Pawns, so while they would probably survive the fall, they might still come away with injuries.

Fortunately, there's one other upside... the area of the sky they've come out in is over the top of a massive pyramid with a flat top to it, one that rises hundreds of feet off of the ground. Just a quick glance around shows that it's the only structure worth anything within miles.

Rumi closes in on the top of the pyramid in moments while Amadeus shoots Grayfia a slight frown when the head maid makes no move to catch the half-demon. But in the end, it turns out it would have been unnecessary anyways... because right before she would have hit the pyramid, Rumi suddenly disappears and reappears in a puff of purple smoke, vanishing only to show up again on the flat top of the pyramid itself, no worse for wear.

As he brings Zoey and Mira down for a landing, Amadeus can't help but comment.

"That was most impressive! You just used your teleportation at the last second to arrest all of your momentum and land safely!"

Rumi, with her hands on her knees panting heavily, blinks and immediately straightens up at his smile.

"Ah... y-yes. Yes I did. Totally on purpose too!"

There's a brief pause followed by Zoey giggling and Mira snorting derisively. Which is when Amadeus realizes he's still holding both girls to his sides with arms wrapped around their waists despite all three of them being firmly on the ground.

"Oops! Sorry girls!"

Neither Zoey nor Mira look all that bothered by the close contact though. If anything, they look more upset by it coming to an end. Amadeus puts that out of his mind for now however, focusing instead on their surroundings. From the top of the pyramid, as far as the eye can see... is nothing.

Its completely desolate in this realm, a dreary place where no life seems to grow and nothing seems to happen. Its...

"Perfect! You were right Rumi; this place is perfect! Don't you agree, Grayfia?"

Coming down for a landing next to him, Grayfia gazes around for a moment as well before slowly nodding.

"This environ is... adequate for your purposes, Master."

Rumi, who had been puffing up more and more as Amadeus praised her, deflates a little bit at being reduced to 'adequate'. Amadeus shoots Grayfia a

look at that, but she simply gazes back at him as if to say 'you shouldn't over-inflate their egos too much'. But Amadeus didn't agree! Huntrix weren't just members of his peerage now... they were also the best musicians he'd ever seen! They deserved all of the ego inflating and all of the praise imaginable!

That said...

"Right. But before we get to my training... we should focus on the girls first."

Grayfia frowns as all three members of Huntrix straighten up at that. Amadeus gestures behind him... at the devil wings exuding from his back, which had appeared the moment he'd begun flying.

"You three need to learn how to fly!"

That, he can tell, gets their interest in a big way. And why wouldn't it? Everyone dreamed of being able to fly, didn't they? It was the best!

"Master... flight isn't something that just any newly reincarnated devil will be capable of. Your new Rook might be able to learn it now, but the other two... they'll have a lot more training to do first before they can reach that level."

Ah, but of course Grayfia had to come and rain on his parade. Amadeus frowns, considering her words. She... might have a point, admittedly. Devil wings weren't actually made for flapping around and carrying a devil from place to place under their own physical power. Rather, flight for a devil was more of a magical power thing, and it did require them to have trained a fair amount first.

Hm...

"Alright then, here's what we'll do. Grayfia, you'll teach Rumi how to fly. Meanwhile, I'll train Mira and Zoey and help them get stronger!"

Sure, he didn't necessarily want to split up the girls... but the difference in their power was undeniable. Without the Honmoon, Zoey and Mira had been reduced

to a pair of human shamans who could summon spirit weapons out of their souls. Now they were Devils, which was a step up in power, but not by much.

Rumi on the other hand was a special half-demon, half-human who ate a whole bunch of soul energy before being reincarnated. And while she'd chewed through a lot of it and nearly killed herself in the process, she'd still cost a Rook to reincarnate, which spoke to how much power she had.

Having all three of them train together wouldn't be fair to either side of things, not at this point.

"Are you sure about this, Master? It would behoove your own personal progress to have your Rook train your Pawns while you and I trained together. You're not going to get to Ultimate Class while helping a couple of Pawns reach High Class."

Ouch... Grayfia knew exactly where to strike for maximum damage, didn't she? After all, Amadeus' primary goal remained the same. He wanted to get closer in power to Grayfia in order to be able to use his Queen Piece on her. He wouldn't be truly content until she was his Queen, full stop.

... But Amadeus also knew that Grayfia didn't really care about becoming his Queen outside of that it would make him happy. He knew that she would be perfectly satisfied being nothing more than his loyal head maid for the rest of their lives.

So reading between the lines, he could tell that what Grayfia really thought was that he was 'wasting time' on the likes of Zoey and Mira when he could be furthering his main goal instead. She was effectively advocating for him... to him.

But the thing was, Amadeus had reincarnated these girls. He'd brought them into his peerage. And that made them his responsibility now, like it or not. So he wasn't about to ignore them or let them languish, no sir!

“It’s alright, Grayfia. You and I can always spar later, especially now that we have this place. Nobody knows we’re here; nobody even knows we exist. We have all the time in the world! So please... show Rumi how to fly, alright?”

He injects just a hint of command into that last sentence... prompting Grayfia to straighten up and then bow sharply.

“Yes Master. As you wish.”

With that, Grayfia leads a slightly bewildered Rumi away from the rest of them, all the way to the other side of the large flat top of the massive pyramid. This leaves Amadeus with just Zoey and Mira, who both seem a little nervous... but also ready based on the intense looks that they’re giving him.

“Alright boss man, where do we start?”

“Yeah, how do we get stronger?”

Well... maybe Amadeus and Grayfia should have switched places, because teaching someone how to fly for the first time is probably a lot easier than training two people in how to get stronger. Especially when he’d never done either before. Eh, too late now, he supposed!

“Right... let’s start by seeing what you’re made of. Both of you should come at me with all you’ve got... weapons included!”

Blinking, Mira and Zoey share a look at that.

“... Weapons included?”

“But what if we hurt you?”

Amadeus just grins.

“You let me worry about that, alright? Now come on, don’t be shy... are you badass demon hunters or what?!”

That seems to get them motivated. Both have determined looks suddenly on their faces and in a flash they drop into battle stances while also summoning their weapons... only to freeze up because their weapons no longer look like they used to.

Amadeus peers at them curiously, remembering the light blue glowing daggers from Zoey and the equally blue glaive that Mira had summoned. The shape of their weapons hasn't changed admittedly... but the color has. They've gone from glowing blue to a dark red and he can tell that it shakes them both up a little bit, even as they pretend like it doesn't.

"Tch. Red was always more my color anyways."

"H-Heh... guess we really did join the Dark Side after all..."

Amadeus hums, wondering if he should say something... but nothing comes to mind. After all, the color change is pretty much his fault for reincarnating them as Devils, so at the end of the day... nothing he could say would make them feel better, would it? On the other hand... fighting might!

"Alright girls! Come at me!"

To their credit, neither Zoey nor Mira hesitate for a second longer before launching themselves forward. Mira goes low while Zoey goes high, the former darting in and the latter leaping into the air. Both of them come at him with their weapons... and Amadeus meets them with a smile as he smacks aside Zoey's thrown daggers and then kicks down on Mira's glaive, burying it in the top of the pyramid.

They both pause at that, staring somewhat numbly at the sight of Mira's weapon being held down by his foot. The pink-haired woman gives her glaive an experimental tug, prompting Amadeus to arch a brow as he holds it in place. Her face pinks up the same color as her hair at that, flushing as she tugs harder.

Finally, Amadeus lets her drag it free, both of the pyramid stone and from beneath his foot by stepping back. Then, he grins at them both playfully.

“Alright, do it again... but this time, don’t stop after one exchange, yeah?”

Mira and Zoey exchange another look at this before Zoey pouts at him.

“You... back in the penthouse, you were never even in any danger from us, were you? You were probably laughing at us the entire time we were threatening you with our weapons!”

Well... the first part was true. Amadeus shakes his head at the second part though.

“Laughing at you? Never. I just wasn’t really all that afraid.”

Admittedly, he’d been a little nervous in the first instance after teleporting in before he’d fully taken their measure. But at a certain point it had become clear... these girls were out of their depth in more ways than one.

“Now... like I said, come at me, please.”

This time around, Mira and Zoey really don’t hold back. They come in again, working as a team to try and attack him with all their might. Amadeus can’t help but smile a little bit, even as his face lights up red due to their weapons.

What follows is... an exhilarating sparring match if nothing else. It’s not challenging, at least not for Amadeus, and he can see why Grayfia would try to push him away from this idea. However... at the same time, there’s something to be said about watching Zoey and Mira improve in real time. Which they do, to be fair.

Both young women are determined, hard working fighters to their core, after all. They already have years of experience fighting with their weapons too, and fighting side by side, so it’s not like they have to learn anything about that either. Their strength was previously tied to their Honmoon, but now its tied only to

themselves and their new nature as Devils, so all they really have to get used to is relying upon their own personal strength more than anything else.

Amadeus, meanwhile, is feeling pretty playful as they go about things. He's all grins and joyful comments, praising Zoey and Mira whenever they do something new or inventive, and lightly criticizing them whenever he sees areas for improvement. Of course, as previously mentioned he's not actually any sort of real instructor, so the latter moments are few and far in between. Mostly, he's just letting them try to use him as a training aid, a force they aren't strong enough to beat yet, no matter their skill.

Soon enough, they're both panting and sweating profusely, breathing heavily as they struggle to keep going. Mira is having a hard time lifting up her spirit weapon still, the heavy glaive drooping a quarter of an inch more with every pass. Zoey, meanwhile, has gone from summoning three of her glowing daggers in each hand every time to only summoning one in each hand, clearly struggling to muster the power for more than that.

Amadeus considers them both for a moment and then looks past them to where Grayfia and Rumi have also been training. When he sees what's going on over there, he smiles softly and lifts up a hand, calling for a halt.

"Alright... that's enough for today, I'd say."

Both Mira and Zoey immediately try to protest this.

"What? No, we can keep going!"

"Y-Yeah! I'm not... ah, t-tired at all!"

Mira is a bit more convincing than Zoey, but not by much. Amadeus though just smiles and shakes his head.

"You've both made amazing progress today already. And besides... you should go and congratulate Rumi on her success."

He gestures past them and both turn to see Rumi is actually doing it. Not only has Grayfia helped her manifest her devil wings, but she's also learned to use her inner devil magic to fly, floating a dozen feet off the ground and staring down at herself in wonder and awe.

Zoey gasps in delight and immediately races off to do exactly as Amadeus has suggested, that being to congratulate her friend and leader on her success. Mira though... Mira goes stiff, her grip on her glaive becoming white knuckled and her jaw clenching when she sees Rumi flying.

Furrowing his brow, Amadeus tilts his head to the side.

"Mira? Are you alright?"

Turning to face him, Mira's nostrils flare and she purses her lips for a moment before speaking.

"I *will* find a way to prove myself worthy like Zoey and Rumi have. I swear it."

Uh... what? Amadeus blinks, caught off guard by the solemn oath Mira has just sworn. On the one hand, he kind of wants to know what that's about. On the other hand, he doesn't want to embarrass her or anything...

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