

Akeno whimpered and pulled on her chains from the corner, so horny she felt like she was in heat. It had been hours, she was sure, though she'd long since lost track of time while watching the others have their orgy. It was maddening, enough to drive her completely insane, and if not for Harry's gift, she'd have never agreed to put up with this for as long as she had, but when he told her what they could do, she found the idea too tempting not to agree.

All around her the debauchery was over the top even for them, as hours of being fucked by an incubus flexing his powers had driven them all utterly wild with lust. Hermione was lying on a chaise lounge, covered in sweat and still shaking like a leaf from the mind-melting orgasms Harry had driven her to. She's been the most recent one to bathe in the pleasures of his touch, and as she just lay there, twitching and staring off at nothing with glassy, unfocused eyes while smiling widely, she'd have looked well-fucked even if her hair wasn't a total mess and her poor, bright pink pussy wasn't gaping as badly as it was.

The others had had more time to recover from their most recent round with him and were piled around, enjoying each other while he was busy. Rias was grinding her dripping quim on Koneko's face, moaning and crying out as the nekomata ate her out, while Luna pumped four fingers in and out of the white-haired girl, whose legs were shaking nearly as badly as Hermione's.

"Mmm, you're taking them so well," Luna grinned. "I think you're ready for the thumb."

"Do it," Rias moaned. "I want you to wear my...oh, gods, just like that...my darling little kitty here like a hand puppet."

Koneko's muffled scream at that was all the permission Luna needed, and she quickly worked in her thumb, pushing her entire hand inside her pussy. Akeno salivated at the sight, both wanting to try that herself and knowing that it was only possible because Harry had fucked the shit out of Koneko earlier. She's returned to normal, of course; they always did, but knowing that his big, thick cock had stretched the smallest member of their harem out so much that she was able to take a fist in her pussy as easily as she had was enough to make the raven-haired beauty cum on the spot.

"Uh, uh, uh," Fleur purred from behind her. "We wouldn't want you to ruin things after being such a good girl for so long."

The Veela tapped a finger against Akeno's diamond buttplug, and she felt her arousal wane just a touch, enough to keep her on that madness-inducing plateau she'd been stuck on for what felt like days, and she growled.

"I hope...you know...I'm going to get you for this," Akeno panted and Fleur giggled.

"Oh, I certainly hope so, my dear," the blonde grinned, moving around her and tracing a finger down along her sweat-slicked abdomen. "Fuck, I could lick every inch of you. Maybe later, I will."

Akeno whimpered at that visual, struggling against the chains she was hanging from. She could have escaped, of course, or just broken the chains if she wished, but she didn't truly want to, enjoying the edging torture of it all, even if she'd started to hate it too. An orgasmic squeal from the center of the room stole her attention, and she let out a shuddering breath as she saw the source of it shaking and convulsing in pleasure while Harry continued to pound her from behind like a whore.

"I'm surprised you...looked away," she panted, looking at Fleur, who sighed and looked over at the greatest show on display for them.

"I like seeing her enjoy herself, but...it will take me a little while to see this without feeling some level of regret," the Veela sighed. "I know they both swear it had nothing to do with 'Arry, but I...I can't help but feel responsible."

Akeno sighed at that, not knowing what to say as she remembered what had led them to this point, or at least the story she'd been told.

"So you possess some gift for healing magic?" Sebastian asked warily as he stared down at Asia.

"It's not really magic, at least in the sense that you know it," Asia replied.

"Asia's right, Papa," Fleur said. "She has what's known as a Sacred Gear, a magical...artifact, I suppose you could say, inside her. It's something she was born with, apparently the will of the biblical deity."

"Really?" Apolline asked. "How does it work?"

"I used to think that it was just the Lord responding to my prayers, but in truth, it's a power inside me that I can call on to heal people," Asia replied, conjuring a knife and slicing it along her palm, wincing as she did so.

"What in the..." Sebastian went to ask, only to trail off as she turned her hand over, hovered the other one over it, and, in a flash of green light, healed the cut. Drawing his wand, he vanished her blood and said, "You didn't cast a spell of any kind."

"It's not a spell," Asia smiled. "I wasn't a witch before I became a devil, and your magic is something I never learned, but this I was born with, and it's just instinctive."

"So you should be able to heal the lasting damage done to Sebastian?" Apolline asked, her voice full of hope.

"I can try," Asia replied. "I can heal pretty much any physical injury on a living being, and even scar tissue I can dissolve."

"Healer Yamamoto did say that part of your problem might be scarring from the curse," Apolline murmured, and Sebastian sighed.

"He also said that the damage might extend beyond the physical," he said, and Apolline hissed.

"Why do you insist on being so negative!?" the older Veela exclaimed.

"Maman!" Fleur exclaimed. "Papa is just..."

"It's alright, mon ange," Sebastian said softly. "Apolline, I am not trying to be negative but merely to stop you from getting your hopes up too much. As they say in the Taiyo Clinic, the first step towards healing is accepting what is instead of what we want to be."

"How will this work?" Apolline asked tiredly, looking at Asia.

“I’ll need to examine Mister Delacour here...with clothes,” Asia stammered. “I should be able to find lasting damage if there is any and then work to heal it. If you could lie down here...”

“Allow me,” Apolline murmured, transfiguring their living room table into a rather tall bed that Sebastian immediately settled down on.

“Alright,” Asia smiled, hovering her hands over his head. “I’ll see what I can...oh, wow, you have quite a few scars.”

“I was in magical law enforcement for many, many years,” Sebastian sighed. “You should see some of the less lucky living ones.”

“That Moody man made you look like a newborn babe,” Fleur murmured, and Sebastian nodded.

“That one’s seen more combat than most aurors ever dream of,” he said. “Even in France, he is a legend. I was genuinely surprised to learn that someone had managed to abduct him and take his place like that.”

“What?” Asia asked.

“It was a part of how ‘Arry was forced into the tournament we both took part in last year,” Fleur replied. “Goodness, I can’t believe it’s nearly been a year since that whole mess started.”

“A mess that turned out well for you, my dear,” Sebastian murmured as Asia’s hands came to hover just above his crotch and she went still.

“Dear G...I need to find a new name to swear by,” Asia grumbled.

“That bad?” Sebastian asked.

“It’s...I honestly don’t know what I’m feeling,” Asia admitted.

“That would be the curse,” Fleur said.

“I dealt with people who had suffered curses once or twice,” Asia replied. “This feels different. Darker.”

“It was one of the darkest curses ever devised,” Sebastian replied, gasping as her hands began to glow green.

“Sebastian?” Apolline asked breathlessly.

“It...I feel lighter in some way,” Sebastian replied as her healing magic took effect.

“There’s definitely scarring in here,” Asia murmured.

There had been a time when healing damage of this nature would have bothered her on some level, but she’d healed so many people of so many different types of injuries over the years that she had developed an almost clinical approach to it, at least emotionally. She could feel the damage and tried her best to heal what she could, but while the physical damage healed easily enough, as she pulled back, she couldn’t help but feel that there had been something there that she couldn’t quite get a grasp of.

“How do you feel?” she asked.

“Better,” Sebastian murmured. “I wasn’t in pain anymore, but I guess there was a little tightness that I’d simply gotten used to, and it seems to be gone.”

“And me?” Apolline asked, cupping his cheek and turning his head towards her, only to swallow thickly in disappointment when she didn’t feel anything coming from him.

Fleur closed her eyes, sensing, as her mother did, that her father felt no desire for her at all. Veela couldn’t help but notice such things, and for her mother, who would have felt her husband’s desire for her as a comforting constant every day since they met, the absence of it had to be heartbreaking.

“What’s wrong?” Asia asked, noticing how everyone’s mood soured.

“You did well, my girl, but the damage done to me went beyond the physical,” Sebastian sighed. “Thank you for trying.”

“I’m sorry,” Asia sighed.

“It’s okay, Papa,” Fleur assured him. “We have a genuine lead on the final piece we need to make a Philosopher’s Stone, and with it..”

“Even the elixir of life couldn’t heal damage done to my very soul, Fleur,” Sebastian sighed as he stood up.

“What are you saying?” Apolline asked.

“I’m going to head over to the Taiyo Clinic and see if I can meet with Healer Yamamoto,” Sebastian replied. “With the physical damage healed, he might be able to recommend other treatments.”

Without another word, he apparated out, and Apolline sat down heavily, undoing her transfiguration and burying her face in her hands.

“Maman, what was that?” Fleur asked. “Even before Asia tried to heal him, he seemed so...melancholic.”

“I do not know,” Apolline muttered. “Your papa, he is rarely home these days, and when he is, it is like we are two ships passing each other in the night. He hasn’t mentioned his treatments in a while, and believe me, I’ve asked.”

“That’s...” Fleur went to say.

“Don’t say it’s not like him because it is,” Apolline sighed. “I learned a long time ago that when Sebastian wishes not to worry me, he says nothing because he knows I can tell when he’s lying. I’ll corner him later and see what I can get by insisting; let me worry about him for now.”

“I hate this,” Fleur sighed.

“I’m sorry,” Asia murmured, staring down at her feet, and Fleur smiled sadly at her before hugging her tightly, making her squeak.

“Don’t apologize,” she said. “You tried to help him, and it sounds like you managed more than anyone else has so far.”

“Harder!” Apolline screamed. “Fucking destroy me, you horse-cocked devil! Fuck me until my mind goes completely blank!”

“As you wish,” Harry grunted, digging his fingers into her fleshy hips and picking up his pace.

His hips were a blur, and the wet sound of flesh smacking against flesh echoed through the air as he fucked her hard and fast. She bit down on the pillow in front of her, shrieking at the top of her lungs as pleasure thundered through her so intensely it was enough to make her cry. This was what she needed; a young, fit, incredibly well-hung man to fuck her into a stupor so she couldn’t think about what she was avoiding at home. She was rocking herself back against him in time with his thrusts, grinning when the sight of her plump ass cheeks jiggling and rippling with his every thrust made him groan, and buried her face in that pillow, desperately wishing that fucking her daughter’s boyfriend wasn’t her greatest escape from her life just then.

Her orgasm hit without warning, shattering her and making her shriek in ecstasy, and yet even in the haze of that pleasure, she couldn’t help but remember why she’d been staying at the Rookery for the past few days.

“Sebastian, we need to talk,” Apolline called out the moment he appeared through the floo.

“Indeed we do,” her husband sighed, walking in and pouring himself a glass of his favorite armagnac.

“Talk to me,” Apolline all but begged. “You’ve been distant for a little while now, and I want to know why.”

“The program set up by the Taiyo Clinic is incredible, and the benefits it’s had on my basic mental well-being have been incredible,” Sebastian replied. “I’ve managed to let go of things in the past couple months that I didn’t even know were still bothering me, and it truly has been wonderful.”

“The fact that you’ve felt so at peace is why I didn’t start questioning you sooner,” Apolline murmured.

“What I didn’t know is that they’ve been running subtle tests on me the entire time,” Sebastian replied, “and what they’ve found is...”

“What?” Apolline asked, blinking away the tears that formed in her eyes as her mind went to the worst possibilities.

“The curse that was used on me, it did more than physical damage,” Sebastian replied. “We knew that before, as it was a thing of soul magic, but the healers here have come to believe that some of

what I've experienced since has been specifically because of those aspects of it, and what that young girl did today confirmed their worst suspicions."

"What does that mean?" Apolline asked. "You...they think you're not going to get better?"

"They think that it didn't just render me physically impotent but that I've lost the ability to feel arousal of any kind," Sebastian replied, "and while my body might heal in time, the curse of the spirit is very likely permanent."

"No," Apolline breathed. "No, we..."

"Apolline, I know you've felt how little I feel when I look at you and I hate that you've had to," Sebastian sighed. "I desired you more than life itself from the day we met, before I should have, probably."

"I was of age," Apolline smiled sadly, and he returned the look.

"You were so young and so beautiful," Sebastian whispered, taking her hands. "You are just as beautiful today, and I know that objectively, but when I look at you now, it's like looking at a beautiful painting or a field of flowers, and it is not fair to you to keep forcing you to feel that."

"What are you saying?" Apolline asked, desperately not wanting the answer.

"I...Healer Yamamoto is going to be leading a number of apprentice healers on a retreat to the Himalayan Mountains, and he's invited me to go along," Sebastian replied, and Apolline furrowed her brow.

"For how long?" she asked.

"Six months," Sebastian replied, and her jaw dropped.

"Six months?!" Apolline exclaimed, jumping to her feet. "Why? Why would you want to go along with the apprentice healers anyway?"

"Because I think I might enjoy learning from them," Sebastian replied. "I can't be an auror anymore, but I gained a lot of experience with treating injuries in the field during my career, and over the past couple months I've realized that I knew more of healing magic than I thought. This could be a viable career path for me going forward."

"There are ways to pursue becoming a healer that don't involve spending half a year in the mountains," Apolline hissed.

"I know that, and it's not the only reason why I think this would be a good idea," Sebastian sighed. "We would continue my treatment during it, but they're increasingly coming to fear that what ails me is not curable and..."

"Then we find other healers!" Apolline exclaimed.

"Apolline, I know you well enough to know that, like me, you've been researching other clinics while we've been here," Sebastian sighed. "Have you found anything with a reputation like the Taiyo clinic?"

“No, but that doesn’t...you’ve been looking at other places?” Apolline asked. “The way you’ve been speaking about them for ages now, I would have thought you weren’t bothering.”

“Never have only one plan,” Sebastian murmured. “I taught you that once, long ago.”

“The other reason you have for this...it’s us, isn’t it?” Apolline asked.

“I see the look in your eye every time I look at you without the desire I once felt, and it’s killing me disappointing you like that,” Sebastian sighed.

“I love you,” Apolline wept, and he hugged her.

“I love you too,” Sebastian whispered.

“Then don’t go,” Apolline begged.

“I’m not the man you married anymore, though,” Sebastian sighed, letting her go and stepping back, “and it looks increasingly like that isn’t going to change. I care too much for you to keep you shackled to a husband who cannot be a husband to you.”

“What about Fleur and Gabrielle?” Apolline asked.

“I am still their father, and I will always be there for them,” Sebastian said. “I’ll return for Yule this year, and we’ll bring Gabby home as we planned.”

“What would we tell them?” Apolline asked.

“That we still love them and we still love each other, and while some aspects of our lives might change, that never will,” Sebastian sighed, running a hand over his face and through his hair.

“Is this...is this about...the lovers I’ve tak...” Apolline tried to ask, and he shook his head, taking her hand in his.

“No, it isn’t,” Sebastian said, cutting her off. “This is about me trying to figure out where my life is going to go next. I cannot do the only job I’ve ever had anymore, and I cannot, in truth, be a proper husband to you. I need to sort out the direction I’m going to take, and I cannot ask you to come with me on this next part.”

They’d argued from there, but nothing had changed. He felt that the next direction of his life wasn’t going to include her and that she was better off free of him and there was no changing his mind. He’d left a couple days later, and she’d gone to the Rookery, a sobbing mess, seeking comfort and help and found plenty. As Harry came inside her with a strangled grunt, she gasped and fell forward, luxuriating in the peace she only found at his hands these days.

“That was beautiful,” Luna murmured as Harry pulled out of Apolline, crawling over and lapping up his seed as it spilled from the older woman’s overstuffed quim.

He looked over at Koneko, who had gone utterly limp after cumming around the blonde’s hand, and chuckled at the blissed-out look on her face.

“You were incredible,” Rias purred, kissing the white-haired girl softly before turning to Akeno and grinning. “Have you had enough?”

“I had had enough in the first thirty minutes,” her queen replied, crying out when Fleur leaned down and blew on her throbbing clit.

“Poor baby,” Harry chuckled as he walked over, his still-hard cock swinging freely with his every step. “How are you enjoying my gifts?”

“The torture is exquisite,” Akeno purred. “I’ve been on the edge of orgasm for hours thanks to these.”

“I think I might need a pair myself,” Fleur grinned, cupping Akeno’s breasts and looking at the pair of barbell rings in her nipples. “They seem to be incredible.”

“You felt everything?” Harry asked.

“Every bit of pleasure you felt made them radiate pure bliss through me,” Akeno replied, gasping when he walked around her and licked a trail through the salty sweat covering her back. “Please, Harry, stop teasing me. I need to cum so badly.”

“You look so fucking beautiful like this,” Harry whispered in her ear. “Hanging from the ceiling and utterly dripping sweat. If I left you like this for days, do you think you could take it?”

“Oh, fuck!” Akeno cried. “I’d go mad.”

“But part of you wants to, huh?” Harry asked. “My mad, wonderful little masochistic slut.”

“Your slut!” Akeno cried. “I’m your slut; oh, please fuck me, Harry.”

“It is starting to border on cruelty,” Hermione chuckled, having regained her senses. Looking down at Apolline, she couldn’t help but ask, “This really doesn’t bother you being here with all of us?”

“You should see the orgies they hold in the Veela communes,” Fleur sighed. “The stories Maman used to tell when I was a girl, nothing excited my imagination more, at least until I met ‘Arry.”

“Veela are not human, ‘Ermione,” Apolline reminded her. “By the goddess, you’re good at that, Luna.”

“Thanks,” Luna beamed. “You taste really, really good.”

“I’m fisting you back later,” Koneko breathed as she sat up. “Holy fuck, I can’t feel my legs.”

“Yay!” Luna exclaimed. “I always wanted friends just like this.”

Hermione shook her head fondly and looked over at Akeno just as Harry sank to his knees in front of her.

“Fuck, you actually left a puddle down here,” Harry chuckled, swiping his fingers through the vaginal fluids on the floor. “Maybe I should make you lick it up later.”

“Fuck!” Akeno cried, nearly cumming from his words alone. “Harry, please, just...YEEESSS!”

She squealed as he leaned in and started speaking Parseltongue directly against her clit, making her cum harder than she ever had in her life. The hours of edging were nearly enough to drive her insane, but the orgasmic reward she got for them was more than worth it, and she flailed around wildly as she squirted all over the place. Apolline turned around to look at her and sighed, shaking her head at the sight.

“This is fun but it isn’t...truly what I need,” she thought to herself. *“Harry and the others seem more than capable of taking care of my needs and downright eager to do so, and I’ll happily let them indulge me, but it’s not like I’ll ever date any of them or anything.”*

She put those thoughts out of her mind and chose to focus on the orgy seeming to wind down around her. Her situation with Sebastian was too new and her feelings too raw to focus on anything more complicated than these simple pleasures, and so she chose not to bother.

“I wish I could have killed Diarmid Lynch myself,” she thought to herself, trying to put her rage at how her life had been changed out of her mind too.

“That is marvelous,” Ciri sighed as Asia finished healing a rather bad scar on her right side.

“It’s all done,” the other blonde murmured, backing away as Ciri put her simple white tank top back on. “You really didn’t need to undress.”

“I wanted to watch it happen,” she said, pointing to the mirror. “Your ability is incredible. I’ve seen a lot of healing magic in my time, but never quite on the level of yours.”

“It’s a gift,” Asia murmured. “You and Fleur managed to find clothes you liked on your trip.”

“We did,” Ciri murmured. “I think she wanted to dress me in greater finery than I settled on, but after years on the road, I developed a fondness for simpler things.”

“Living in a place that drips wealth like this one has been a bit of an adjustment for me too,” Asia chuckled, looking around. “Growing up, I was taught to live within simple means, and that doing otherwise was sinful, though I was taught many things that I’ve come to question.”

Ciri noted the slight bitterness in her voice at that and chose not to comment. She’d gotten a pretty good sense of just who these odd devils she’d been taken in by were in the two weeks she’d stayed with them, and Asia, for all her bubbly nature and openness, seemed to hide a wellspring of pain at her core. She’d gotten a little of the reason for that, how the poor girl had been betrayed by seemingly everyone she knew before she met Rias and the others, and that was something she understood all too well.

“I...” she went to say when they were interrupted by the sudden appearance of Akeno and Harry, neither of whom wore more than a simple robe.

“Oh!” Asia exclaimed, flushing scarlet at the sight of them while Ciri tried not to openly wrinkle her nose.

“I’ve been in actual whorehouses that didn’t reek as much of cunt as they do right now,” she thought to herself in amusement.

“This really isn’t necessary,” Akeno grumbled. “I put the damn thing back in.”

“Akeno dislocated her right shoulder,” Harry explained, paying her no heed. “We got it back in the socket but...”

“Goodness, let me get that,” Asia breathed, hovering her hands over Akeno’s clearly irritated shoulder. “Wait, how did you...I thought you were...”

“You probably don’t want to know,” the raven-haired beauty replied, chuckling when Asia blushed even harder. “Let’s just say it wasn’t one of my best ideas.”

“How one can dislocate their shoulder in an orgy, I really can’t fathom,” Ciri thought to herself as she watched the blonde work her magic.

Living with the odd group, it had been all but impossible not to notice that Luna hadn’t been exaggerating in the slightest about their dynamic. Rias, Akeno, Hermione, Koneko, Fleur, and the unusual blonde did all share Harry and, seemingly, each other. It was a relationship she really couldn’t understand, and it immediately made her more suspicious of his nature as an incubus, but between the fact that they all insisted most of them had started sleeping with him before he awakened that nature and how they all were with each other, she’d ultimately concluded that there was no degree of mind control at work there.

The strangest part of all was Harry himself, who, far from being like she’d have expected any other man with such a harem of beauties to be, was genuinely caring, loving, and respectful with all of them. She’d have expected him to behave like the worst kings she’d ever met or the more hedonistic among the Aen Elle, but it wasn’t the case. He didn’t force them to share him in any way or influence them through any sort of magic that she’d managed to detect, but simply accepted the love they had for him and returned it eagerly, something that honestly baffled her.

Of course, that wasn’t all that it did to her.

“What manner of a man can keep up with that many women?” she couldn’t help but wonder. *“Fleur even got him to keep her mother satisfied after her marriage fell apart, and I can’t even begin to understand that impulse.”*

They weren’t under his spell, that much she’d figured out, but they were entranced by him regardless. Just seeing the way they all looked at him was enough to make her feel hot, something not helped by how incredibly attractive they all were.

“The sex must be insane,” she thought to herself, figuring that had to be the reason they were all so willing to share. *“Of course, they all share each other as well, so it’s not as though he has to take care of all of them on his own.”*

“There,” Asia smiled. “Um, what’s that smell?”

“Love,” Akeno purred, and the blonde let out an eep, realizing what she meant.

“I...err...left something in my room,” Asia stammered, keeping her gaze on the floor as she ran out.

“I’m going to miss that delightful innocence of hers when you finally fuck it out of her,” Akeno sighed, and Harry rolled his eyes.

“Akeno, we’ve talked about this,” he muttered, and she giggled.

“Please,” Akeno scoffed. “She wants you, and you’re you, Harry. Some things are inevitable.”

“So how exactly did you manage to dislocate your shoulder in bed?” Ciri asked. “If you don’t mind me asking.”

“Not at all,” Akeno purred, her stretching her arms over her head and letting her robe open up just enough to give Ciri a slight glimpse of her incredible breasts. “I was chained to the ceiling and left hanging as Harry fucked the others senseless, teasing me to the edge over and over again until I thought I was going to go mad.”

“Akeno, she might not want all the details,” Harry chuckled, embracing her from behind and cocking an eyebrow at Ciri, who suppressed a shiver as she felt heat pool in her core.

“Oh, I don’t mind,” the former princess replied. “I’m no blushing maiden, but I just couldn’t picture how such an injury was possible during sex. I take it, you didn’t unchain her before getting her off?”

“Got in one,” Akeno grinned. “Anyway, we should get back and let the others know I’m fine.”

With that, the two of them disappeared, and Ciri let out a shuddering breath, shaking her head.

“They make the witchers look chaste,” she chuckled to herself as she looked out the window at the town below.

This world might not have been the one she intended to go to when she opened a portal from Malus Island, but she couldn’t say that she was unhappy with how things had turned out. The hosts she’d unwittingly stumbled upon had proven themselves to be most generous, something that she knew was partially motivated by their fascination with her abilities, but she’d become used to that, and she actually believed them when they said that she was free to go whenever she wanted.

“How sad that that’s how low my bar is for people,” Ciri muttered to herself.

Shrugging, she made her way downstairs and smiled when she saw Sirius having a rather animated discussion with Gnarl.

“I’m just saying that this hotel idea sounds delightfully evil,” the aged minion chuckled. “If we could pull it off, who knows what people might be willing to give in order to finally get out?”

“We’re not making a real Hotel California, Gnarl,” Sirius sighed, shaking his head.

“I just think...ah, Ciri,” Gnarl grinned. “Tell me, have you ever come across an inn that people could check into but couldn’t truly leave?”

“No, I can’t say I have,” Ciri murmured, wondering if it was actually worth getting Harry to use the language charm he had on her. The devils she’d already been able to commune with, since they instinctively knew her language, but Sirius and Gnarl, not to mention the other minions and any guests that came by, had been a different story.

“It’s just a song, mate,” Sirius chuckled. “I still can’t believe that bloke put his entire record collection up on that last hand.”

“His despair when you won warmed the cockles of my heart,” Gnarl sighed happily.

“Ciri, could I have a word with you?” Rias asked, and she looked over to see the redhead wearing a fluffy robe with her hair wrapped in a towel, having clearly just finished bathing.

“Of course,” Ciri replied, following her out. Once they were out of earshot, she murmured, “I have to say it is kind of funny that, while you’re devils, the only truly evil one here is Gnarl.”

“I’ve taken to considering him comic relief, really,” Rias chuckled. “He’s largely harmless, I assure you.”

“What’s this about?” Ciri asked, tensing as she wondered if the other woman was about to do what she promised she wouldn’t and pressure her about her decision on her offer.

“I’m having a couple friends over in a bit, and it would likely be best if you steered clear of at least one of them,” Rias replied. “They’re my cousin and her cousin, and both are powerful enough that they might sense your power.”

“And then wonder why a human who feels like I do is living with you,” Ciri nodded. “Fleur promised to show me around Kyoto today, and I imagine she and her mother will be leaving soon, so I can go with them.”

“Perfect,” Rias smiled.

“Rias...thank you for keeping your word,” Ciri sighed. “So many different people have tried to use me over the last few years, and to be given full time and space, it...”

“I meant what I said the day after we met,” Rias said softly. “I would love to make you a member of my peerage and your abilities would be incalculably helpful to us all, but I will not force or pressure you into joining us. If you choose to move on, we’ll wish you well and look for other ways to do what we want to.”

“I could try to take you to this odd world you wish to visit without becoming a devil,” Ciri murmured. “It’s the least I could do to repay you for your hospitality.”

“Yes, but you said yourself that your control over your power isn’t absolute,” Rias replied, and Ciri took a deep breath.

“Do you truly think that becoming one of you would help that?” she asked.

“I can’t say for certain,” Rias replied honestly, “but I do know that when someone who possesses an innate power, be it a Sacred Gear or something else, becomes a devil, their ability to control that power generally improves. It’s entirely possible that devilry would allow you to become more in-tune with the gifts of this elder blood and thus, through sheer demonic power, bend reality itself to your will. From what you’ve told me of the things you can do, I think that your potential is incredible.”

“So I’ve been told,” Ciri muttered.

“I said that I won’t pressure you to make a decision, and I mean that, but there is one thing that I must say,” Rias murmured. “If those odd elves you mentioned the other day ever were to find a way to reach you, you would be safer here, as a member of my peerage and family, than you would anywhere else.”

“Because of how your Evil Piece would enhance me?” Ciri asked, and Rias grinned, shaking her head.

“Because of my brother,” Rias replied. “Sirzechs can lay waste to entire armies at will, and being a friend of mine grants you his protection as well. You’ve lived on the run since you were a girl, Ciri, but here, you wouldn’t need to run from anything ever again.”

“Rias, your guests are here!” Sirius called out.

“Except them,” Rias winced and Ciri chuckled, shaking her head.

“I’ll go find Fleur and take her up on her offer,” the ashen-haired beauty replied, disappearing in a flash of green light.

Rias smiled to herself, knowing instinctively that she’d been very tempting just then, and made her way to the anteroom, where Seekvaira and Latia stood waiting for her.

“Rias,” her green-haired cousin beamed, rushing to hug her.

Rias hugged her back happily and looked at Latia, who was staring down at Gnarl curiously.

“What in the world are you?” the blonde asked haughtily.

“I am Gnarl, Miss, the minion master,” the aged creature replied.

“It’s a long story,” Rias said before he could say anything else. “It’s nice to see you again, Latia.”

“Indeed,” the Astaroth girl replied. “I must say, this tower isn’t quite what I pictured when you said you had a new home.”

“It does seem more like something Sona would live in,” Seekvaira said, and Rias chuckled.

“It belonged to the family of one of my pawns, and when she and the others moved here, she offered to bring it over for us,” the redhead explained, earning a curious look from Latia. “Please, come along. There’s something that I need to tell you both.”

“Is it about Harry?” Seekvaira asked quietly, and Rias nodded.

She led the two of them to one of the sitting rooms, and with a wave of her hand, summoned a pot of tea and cups from the kitchen and started pouring. Seekvaira sat down next to her, looking quite excited, while Latia sat across from them, looking far more aloof. The blonde’s almond-shaped blue eyes regarded her curiously, and she pulled an ornate fan from between her large, full breasts and started fanning herself.

“That’s a lovely dress,” Rias murmured, looking her up and down and noting how well the silver gown she was wearing clung to her incredible figure. “Is that real fur?”

“Ermine,” Latia murmured, ghosting her fingers over the white fur trim that covered her shoulders. “I do love the look of it, even if it does earn me increasingly dirty looks on Earth.”

“Most humans, at least in the Western world, have come to deem the wearing of fur to be wrong,” Seekvaira explained, and Latia scoffed.

“Humans are fools,” she muttered. “Stouts have infested New Zealand terribly, and Daddy and I do them a favor by hunting them now and then. How can making use of them after we’ve killed them be wrong?”

“I don’t exactly disagree,” Rias murmured, handing her her tea and looking over at Seekvaira.

Unlike the glamorous Latia, who looked like she was going to be attending a gala of some sort, her cousin was dressed far more simply, wearing a simple button-up white shirt and a black skirt that reached her knees.

“So, before you tell us, can I give my best guess?” Seekvaira asked, and Rias chuckled.

“Go for it,” the redhead replied. “If you get this right, I’ll be incredibly impressed.”

“Harry’s the descendant of one of the extinct houses, isn’t he?” Seekvaira asked. “I’m guessing Valefor, given his looks.”

“That...would actually explain why Lady Venelana seemed so eager to have you marry him,” Latia murmured. “You’re not showing yet, so it’s likely not that you’re pregnant.”

“I’m not pregnant, no, and Harry isn’t the descendant of one of the pillar clans either,” Rias replied. “He’s an incubus.”

They both blinked at her in confusion at that, each one looking for some sign that she was joking with them.

“An...that’s not possible,” Seekvaira breathed.

“How?” Latia asked. “As far as any of us know, the Tyrant and his forces hunted them to extinction.”

“They did, and Harry wasn’t the descendant of one of them either,” Rias replied. “What I’m about to tell you is a secret of the utmost importance. My family is aware of it at this point because of my personal connection to it, but other than them, the only person connected to any of us who’s aware of it is your cousin, Latia.”

“Ajuka,” Latia nodded. “Was this his doing?”

“We’ll keep our mouths shut, of course,” Seekvaira promised.

“Thank you and no, it wasn’t,” Rias replied. “Harry was experimented on as a baby by Rizevim Lucifer.”

“Rizevim,” Seekvaira breathed. “Rias, are you in danger?”

“He’s made no effort to contact us,” Rias replied. “Whatever his aims were with Harry, he seems to have written his efforts off as a failure and moved on.”

“This is huge,” Latia declared. “A living incubus, one who...why are you telling us this?”

“Word is going to start spreading soon, and when that happens, every noble family in the Underworld is going to want at least one woman of their bloodline to come to Harry,” Rias replied, and both girls sighed.

“It’s going to be a madhouse,” Seekvaira nodded. “I can’t imagine what Mother is going to say. She was curious enough before.”

“I remember,” Rias muttered.

“You’re already his wife, the rush for which now makes so much more sense,” Latia said, “but while that will curb the worst impulses of the nobility, it won’t outright stop them from seeking what he can give them.”

“I’m sorry, cousin,” Seekvaira sighed. “This is going to be quite the complication for you soon.”

“Harry’s more than worth it,” Rias smiled. “The reason I’m telling you this now is that Lord Zekram believes I might spare us both the worst of the Underworld’s insanity if, when the announcement is made, it is also announced that I’ve agreed to bring a few noblewomen into our household already.”

“You make yourself look welcoming and not at all jealous, and their attention will turn from seducing him to negotiating with you,” Latia surmised. “This truly has reached the highest levels of our society if he’s contacted you himself. We did all wonder why he attended your wedding in person.”

“He didn’t actually know at that point, but he sensed a mystery worth solving and decided to investigate personally,” Rias replied.

“Both of our families will push us to join you the moment they learn about this anyway, so coming to us makes sense,” Seekvaira murmured. “How many others are you thinking about telling ahead of time?”

“Sona already knows, though I’ve decided not to make her the offer unless I have no other choice,” Rias said. “If her parents make the first move, Serafall will blame them, whereas if Harry or I do...”

“She’s still as obsessed as ever, I see,” Latia murmured. “We both know that Seekvaira’s single, but I’ve been seeing a girl for a little while now.”

“You would, of course, be able to keep seeing her,” Rias assured her. “Who is she?”

“An aspiring nun my dickhead cousin tried to seduce,” Latia scowled. “She has the most gorgeous eyes and I was so taken with her beauty when I met her that I decided to sweep in and charm her before Diodora could get his vile claws into her. I made her my pawn as he intended to make her his and she’s been warming my bed for months now.”

“He must have been furious,” Rias murmured, knowing all too well how much bad blood there was between them.

“He was,” Latia grinned, twirling a lock of her hair around her finger and scowling when she saw a tangle in it. “Her name’s Maria, and I’ve actually become quite fond of her.”

“Well, as I said, we wouldn’t expect you to stop seeing her,” Rias nodded.

“I’ve never bothered trying to date anyone, knowing that my mother and father would make my ultimate decision for me, whether I liked it or not,” Seekvaira muttered. “Harry seems perfectly lovely, and he’s not exactly hard on the eyes, which makes him far better than some of the options they might have chosen.”

“He’s a wonderful man,” Rias smiled. “Neither of you will regret this, I assure you.”

“Where is he, anyway?” Latia asked.

“We had a rather long morning, and he’s likely resting still,” Rias replied. “I figured this would be simpler for the two of you if we met alone this first time anyway.”

“So how many noblewomen are you thinking of reaching out to?” Seekvaira asked.

“Lord Zekram suggested three to start with,” Rias replied. “You two were obvious choices, and I’m mulling over potential thirds.”

“If you haven’t considered Roygun Belphegor yet, I’d definitely suggest her,” Latia said, and Rias chuckled.

“Of course I’ve considered her,” Rias chuckled. “I do wonder if she’d be entirely willing, given the age gap, though. She’s over a century old.”

“Oh, that wouldn’t be a problem,” Latia grinned.

“Oh?” Rias asked.

“You sound like you know something,” Seekvaira murmured.

“My mother is a massive gossip, and there are few things that she doesn’t learn about eventually,” Latia murmured. “Your husband’s age won’t be a problem for Roygun.”

“She’s into younger men?” Rias asked.

“Very,” Latia replied. “Even if he weren’t an incubus, you two could have likely seduced her given that, and once she learns that he is one, it will be simple.”

“Hmm, well, there’s something to think about,” Rias grinned.

“This place really is beautiful,” Ciri murmured as she and Fleur walked through the streets of Kyoto.

“I still say that Paris is the most beautiful city in the world, but I have to say this comes close,” the veela replied.

“How’s your mother doing?” Ciri asked, and she sighed.

“She’s heartbroken and furious, though at the situation in general more than at Papa,” Fleur muttered. “I did not expect him to just give up like this.”

“Given how you’ve described him, he spent his life as a fighter, and suddenly feeling so diminished and incapable can’t be easy,” Ciri said. “I can’t imagine how it would feel to go home everyday, and just feel so...useless.”

“I don’t truly blame him, and I do understand it, but it’s all just so awful,” Fleur sighed, stopping and leaning against the wall of the nearest building. “He did say that he means this to be more of a trial separation than anything else, and it’s not as though he’s stopping his treatments, so he may yet recover, but...”

“I’m sorry, but I have to ask, is sharing Harry with her something...normal for your people?” Ciri asked.

“Not normal, per se, but it isn’t unheard of either,” Fleur replied. “Veela are creatures of sex and passion; our sex drives are significant, and finding men capable of satisfying us can be quite difficult, so when we lose one, it’s common enough for us to seek out another willing to share for a time to keep us sane. Maman did not lose Papa, but given his condition...”

“Right,” Ciri murmured. “It was just the mother-daughter thing that...”

“That’s also not too common, but incest among us is not seen as quite as much of a taboo as it is for others,” Fleur replied. “We’re all women, so it’s not like we’ve ever had to worry about inbreeding, and the lack of that particular fear meant that the fear of it never developed.”

“That makes sense, I guess,” Ciri murmured. “Some of you are so much more open about your lives than I’d have expected, given that we are still pretty much strangers.”

“It’s not true of all of us, but I’ve gotten rather used to being an open book with those I trust; I feel I can trust,” Fleur chuckled. “Luna is much the same, of course.”

“I know, trust me,” Ciri smiled. “How easy was it for you to decide to become what you are?”

“You’re considering Rias’ offer?” Fleur asked rhetorically as she silenced the area around them with a wave of her hand. “To be honest, it was a very difficult decision. My people have long suffered because of our purported connection to the devils. I had been raised to fear them and distrust them, and I did for quite a while.”

“What changed?” Ciri asked.

“I spent more time with them,” Fleur replied, “and I saw how much Rias and Akeno had come to care for ‘Arry, ‘Ermione, and Luna, as I had as well. Once I accepted that they weren’t the evil monsters I had been led to believe they all were, and fell for him, the choice became easy.”

Ciri regarded her curiously, studying her beautiful face for any sign of deception, and nodded when she realized that the other woman seemed to be utterly sincere.

“I’ve brought trouble to everyone I’ve spent time with for years now,” she murmured. “I left my world because I was tired of it and also because I didn’t want that to keep happening. I should be safe here, or on some other world, for that matter, where no one knows about what lies in my blood, but...I can’t shake the fear that I’ll end up followed eventually.”

“You want to grow stronger,” Fleur said. “Rias could help you there for certain.”

“These powers of mine, I don’t know what the limits of them are,” Ciri muttered, staring down at her hands. “I’ve caused significant harm before when I was threatened and my control slipped, as I know my mother did once. How did devilry affect your control over what you can do?”

“My control over my allure was already good, but it’s absolute now,” Fleur replied. “If I loosed it here, every man and more than a few women in the vicinity would swarm me out of uncontrollable desire.”

“It gets that bad?” Ciri asked.

“Even before, I could still get the occasional boy who started openly drooling onto his shoes in front of me despite my best efforts,” Fleur replied.

“I can sort of understand that,” Ciri smirked, and she chuckled.

“Trust me, Ciri,” Fleur purred, making the other blonde shiver, “if you felt my allure, you’d truly understand that it is more than my looks that causes such things. If Rias turned you into a devil, you might very well find that your control over your powers would improve as mine did, though given that none of us have ever met anyone from your world, much less made one a devil, we cannot say for sure. What we can say, though, is that you’d gain the protection of a rather extensive devil clan, one whose power is terrible.”

“Rias mentioned her brother earlier,” Ciri nodded, and Fleur chuckled.

“He once wiped out an entire species of soul-sucking monsters on a whim,” she replied, making her jaw drop. “You would become more powerful in your own right too? These elves you fear wouldn’t stand a chance.”

“Gnarl already assured me that he’d do everything in his power to convince the others to exterminate them,” Ciri murmured. “I politely thanked him for his offer and said that wasn’t quite necessary.”

“He hates elves in general for reasons that none of us truly understand,” Fleur said, shaking her head. “The choice is yours, of course, and it’s not like we’re going to kick you out any time soon if you need more to make your decision, but I would say that the benefits would be extensive.”

“So it seems,” Ciri murmured. “The past couple weeks have been the most peaceful I’ve known in far too long. Even after I found people able to protect me back home, the constant dread that some new threat was coming and that the people I cared about might get hurt made it almost impossible to relax for long at all, but here, now...I had almost forgotten what it was like to not worry.”

“I cannot imagine how it was going from being a princess to a fugitive,” Fleur sighed, and Ciri let out a humorless laugh.

“It’s sometimes hard to believe that I ever lived such a carefree life as I did,” she sighed.

“I learned all too painfully not long ago that no matter where you are, threats can always come,” Fleur said, resting a hand on her shoulder, “but we are powerful, and in Kuoh, with multiple entire peerages around us, we have a lot of firepower to call on if anything arises. Not long ago we took down multiple centuries-old angels who had been wreaking havoc in the town without suffering a single casualty.”

“Yeah, Asia told me how you saved her,” Ciri murmured, ghosting her fingers over her cheek as she did pretty much every time she thought of the other blonde.

“You almost can’t see the tan line anymore,” Fleur said, and she chuckled.

“I had Asia heal a couple other scars earlier because I didn’t stretch enough when they were healing and they’d stayed annoyingly tight, but I could kiss her for healing this one,” Ciri said. “I hated it so much.”

“I think I would drop dead on the spot if I ended up with a facial wound,” Fleur shuddered. “Asia would also probably faint if you kissed her.”

“She does seem rather adorably innocent,” Ciri laughed. “I haven’t been like that since before Cintra fell.”

“I must admit that the prospect of seeing whole other worlds does entice me greatly,” Fleur murmured. “What’s the strangest one you’ve ever seen?”

“To be honest, I haven’t been to many yet,” Ciri replied. “This one would probably be my answer, but that’s just because your technology is so utterly bizarre.”

“And something I don’t truly understand all that well,” Fleur admitted and Ciri looked away at a nearby wooded park as she contemplated the choice before her.

She’d only known them for mere weeks, and the idea of trusting them so soon was stupid, she knew, but they seemed so genuine and good, and she was so tired. She’d been tired long before she watched Geralt nearly die and Yennifer nearly kill herself trying to save him. She was tired of being unable to truly relax, tired of always wondering when the next terrible threat to her life was going to come, and she was so fucking tired of needing to be rescued.

“I’m not the pampered princess I was before my life fell apart, but I’m not Geralt or Yen either,” Ciri thought to herself, closing her eyes and remembering the battles she’d fought in and the countless people and monsters she’d killed. Even Geralt had seemed perturbed by how easily she killed the last time they fought alongside each other, but the truth was, that was simply how she’d survived, and she couldn’t bring herself to regret a moment of it. *“Even if Eredin and the others never find me, I doubt I’ll truly know a peaceful life in any world. There will be other threats, other monsters of one sort or another, and if this offer of Rias’ could make me more capable of defending myself and anyone else I come to care for, can I really afford to turn it down?”*

“To what extent does she control you?” Ciri asked and Fleur blinked at her.

“I mean, technically, she’s my master, but she’s no tyrant,” the Veela replied. “We’re expected to live with her, and we all serve as a sort of family to each other, but other than that, she lets us live our lives.”

“That would be the one rub in all of this, but I have seen how they interact, even when they don’t think I’m watching, and she truly isn’t a tyrant,” Ciri thought to herself. “Of course, if that changed, I could always leave and take the power she granted with me.”

It was tempting, so very tempting, and she knew Rias knew that. She wasn’t a monster, that much was clear, but she was a noblewoman of terrible power who was used to getting what she wanted and who knew how to make people offers they wouldn’t even think of turning down. In truth, despite her well-earned paranoia, Ciri realized she wasn’t considering that at all. To become a devil would mean becoming stronger, more powerful, and more capable of defending herself, and after the life she’d lived, that was entirely too tempting a prospect to turn down.

“Thank you for showing me around the city,” she murmured, and Fleur smiled.

“It was my pleasure,” the Veela murmured, reaching out and tracing a finger over the back of her hand. “Veela, being creatures of lust and desire, can sense the desires of others.”

“Is that so?” Ciri asked with a slight smirk, and Fleur smiled.

“It is,” she replied, stepping close and pulling a tiny twig out of Ciri’s hair. “For the record, I hope you take Rias up on her offer.”

“Like a bloody succubus,” Ciri thought to herself, feeling heat pool in her core as the Veela stepped back and flicked the twig away. “Let’s go back to Kuoh.”

“Tres bien,” Fleur smiled, taking her hand and opening up a magic circle around them.

Ciri could have done it herself, of course, but let the other woman take her back to the Rookery, intending to have another chat with Rias.

“It’s done, then?” Euclid asked tersely as he sat down next to Reinhardt at the ridiculous concert he was attending with Arashi Yamamoto and cast a silencing spell around their seats.

When he’d gotten word that the two were meeting, he figured it was most likely regarding the matter they’d been contracted in and quickly made certain that the seat next to them became available to him.

“Ah, Herr Lucifuge,” Reinhardt chuckled, stroking his long, white beard. “I was going to contact you after we were done here.”

“It is, great devil,” Arashi replied more formally. “Sebastian Delacour has all but given up on his marriage and will be joining me on a trip out of the country for the next six months.”

“Ze fool vas never going to be fully restored anyway,” Reinhardt muttered. “I don’t do half-measures and while I did not specifically target zis man, it was my curse zat he vas struck by.”

“And yet, he lives,” Euclid scowled.

“I explained my reasons for zat,” Reinhardt replied. “Zis vay, it looks like a simple consequence of what already happened und not something in need of further investigation. His survival vas not

expected, but...it all vorked out anyway, und his infernal majesty should get vwhatever it is he seeks from Apolline Delacour's connection to young Potter."

"You're hedging your bets, you little worm," Euclid thought to himself, feeling tempted to strangle the human even though he knew it wouldn't do anything. *"I can't prove it, and Master Rizevim wouldn't care either way, but you wonder deep down if we're going to end up at conflict with this Potter and lose. Why?"*

"It still seems like an unnecessary precaution," Euclid probed. "Either way, she'd have turned to Potter as the nearest stud capable of seeing to her needs, and her daughter would have allowed it."

"Veela are such strange creatures sometimes," Arashi murmured.

"Keep in mind zat Potter managed to stop the original attack on Delacour from fully succeeding und take down a centuries old vizard in ze process," Reinhardt replied. "He is resourceful und annoying, und vhen von has ze opportunity to avoid making an annoying und resourceful man a problem for zem, it is generally wise to take it."

"I concurred with Klaus on this, and our plan has worked," Arashi said. "There was no need for bloodshed in this case."

Euclid grumbled at that and looked down at the stage, asking, "What manner of concert is this anyway?"

"Yodeling," Arashi replied and he just blinked at them.

"In Japan?" Euclid asked, confused. "What? You two are fans of yodeling music?"

"Vell, I am German," Reinhardt chuckled. "Herr Yamamoto und I actually met at von of zis man's concerts years ago, recognizing each other as vizards among muggles, und have stayed in contact since."

"His name's Takeo Ischi and he's actually really good," Arashi added, and Euclid just closed his eyes.

"Well, I'll leave you two to it," he muttered, thinking for far from the first time that he was genuinely never going to understand humans.

He stood up and left just as the show started, disappearing the moment he was able to duck into an empty hallway and reappearing in Cocytus. Shivering immediately, he warmed himself with a wave of his hand and flew off towards his master's hidden laboratory. No one outside of a select handful knew about this facility, something that Rizevim Lucifer had set up nearly a century ago to house his most secret projects. Cocytus was the most remote and terrible part of the Underworld, a place used mostly as a prison for those deemed worthy of the punishment. Icy and terrible, it was no one's idea of pleasant, which made it the perfect place to hide things you really didn't want other people to find.

"Even that ridiculous bitch Serafall wouldn't enjoy it here," he muttered, scowling as he remembered the last time he fought the lunatic ice-magic aficionado.

The guards let him in without a word, recognizing him at once, and he flew right down to the lowest level, knowing that his master would be nowhere else. Letting himself in, he turned, as he always

did when he visited the lab, to the glass sarcophagus sitting on a pedestal just next to the door and knelt down reverently.

“Blessed Mother,” he breathed, looking upon the rotting yet still-living form of Lilith.

“Your devotion pleases us,” Rizevim murmured next to him, and he turned on his knees to kneel to him. “We hope your news will too.”

“The humans’ plot has borne fruit, Your Majesty,” Euclid nodded. “Sebastian Delacour is going to be leaving his wife for at least the next six months.”

“Which should be more than enough time for her to become utterly addicted to Potter’s touch,” Rizevim nodded. “Good, good, rise, Euclid. That one has greater connections to the other Veela than her daughters do; we have determined that much, and she will spread word of the incubus’ prowess to them in time.”

Euclid went to ask the question burning in his mind before deciding against it and his king chuckled.

“You find us in a rather good mood, Euclid,” the man replied, licking his thumb and smoothing out his silver eyebrows. “Ask your question.”

“Why do all this?” Euclid asked. “Potter is a fully realized incubus, not a hybrid as you hoped. You don’t need him to breed half the Veela species like you hoped before.”

“No, we do not,” Rizevim murmured, “but you are mistaken. He’s not a fully realized incubus, not yet. We remember what they and the succubi were like, and he has not begun to reach his full potential yet. Bedding others will feed him, feed that potential, and in time, he will come into his power; this we’re certain of.”

“So you’re fattening him up like a turkey, then,” Euclid nodded, and Rizevim chuckled.

“Something like that,” the Lightbringer’s heir replied. “That odd success moved our plans up centuries. If he had appeared more like a success back in the day, we would have snatched him up and ensured he grew up in a Veela commune, spending every day of his life from the moment his balls dropped being a bull for them in the hopes that one might produce a proper incubus for us. What appeared to be a failure, however, turned out to be a greater success than we ever imagined.”

“I take it you want me to continue keeping an eye on him, then?” Euclid asked.

“We do,” Rizevim nodded. “His development must continue apace if he is to be of use to our designs, and with the coming Veela boost, it should.”

Rizevim walked over to Lilith’s coffin and ghosted a hand over the glass, his hazel eyes dimming slightly as they always did when he looked at her.

“If only our other plans were proceeding so well,” he murmured.

“Jenna’s had no further luck tracking down any other samples, then?” Euclid asked, keeping all pleasure he felt at the irritating whelp’s failure out of his voice.

“I found a Gaap sample just three months ago,” a childish, bratty little female voice hissed, and Euclid closed his eyes, scowling at the fact that he hadn’t felt her presence.

Turning around, he glared at the short, buxom figure before him. Her dark hair was pulled back in a tight bun, and her forest green eyes were alight with defiance as she glared back at him. Clad in a black tracksuit that clung to her voluptuous figure, he couldn’t help but admire her body, as he’d done countless times in the years since she’d developed it, yet as always, the delight of her figure was ruined the moment she opened her mouth.

“Enough,” Rizevim hissed. “We will not have you two arguing in front of our ailing mother. Jenna, what news do you bring?”

“The lead we had on the last known battle that a member of the Seere clan took part in turned out to be nonsense, your majesty,” Jenna replied as she knelt before him. “I’m sor…”

She didn’t manage to finish that word before Rizevim was on her, grabbing her by the throat and holding her in the air.

“As we have told you more than once, Valefor, apologies are worth less than the air spent on them,” Rizevim scowled. “Actions matter, results matter, and you would not be foolish enough to waste our time with this if you had nothing of substance to bring.”

“I found a possible lead on two more samples,” Jenna choked, and he dropped her. “I received confirmation that Kokabiel keeps the preserved severed heads of at least four devils belonging to clans we haven’t found anything for in his vault. If I could steal them, that would bring us down to only six unaccounted-for bloodlines.”

“So do it,” Euclid muttered. “Stealth is your thing, no?”

“Euclid, be silent,” Rizevim commanded, scratching at his clean-shaven chin. “Invading Kokabiel’s fortress will be difficult.”

“I can sneak in through the shadows, but from what I saw in the mind of the fallen angel I slew to get this information, his treasure room is kept entirely lit at all times from all possible directions,” Jenna replied, and Rizevim laughed humorlessly.

“Your clan has been extinct for centuries, and that paranoid old fool still maintains his old defenses,” Rizevim muttered. “He’s infuriating. We must ponder this for a time; leave us.”

“Yes, Your Majesty,” Jenna replied, disappearing into Euclid’s shadow, and he scowled at the unpleasant chill that sent down his spine.

“I do loathe that irritating child,” Euclid muttered.

“She has her uses,” Rizevim murmured, “as do you. Continue to keep a subtle eye on Potter. He is essential to our plans.”

“Yes, Your Majesty,” Euclid nodded, leaving as Rizevim dismissed him with a gesture.

The ancient devil grinned to himself and pulled his decanter of a forty-year-old whiskey from one of his private distilleries. Pouring a generous couple fingers' worth into a glass, he added a little conjured water and swirled it around before taking a sip.

“We’re getting close, Mother,” he murmured, walking over and looking down at the familiar sight of Lilith’s pallid form.

She’d been beautiful once, tall and pale with long dark hair, eyes the same color as his, and a truly incredible body. She’d been the first one he ever imaged as he touched himself at night, and while he’d never tried to fulfill that particular fantasy, owing mostly to the fact that she started to get sick not long after he came of age, he’d thought of it often. What his father did to her made her immortal, insofar as she couldn’t die, but while that allowed her body to handle the strain of the dozens of artificial births she’d gone through, they still took a toll.

She’d barely managed to have him, and while she managed to hold herself together through his childhood and adolescence through sheer willpower, she started to grow weak not long afterward. and by the time his father died, she was a shell of herself. She still couldn’t die, her eternal life being as much a curse as a blessing, but she couldn’t heal herself either and soon fell into a coma. What remained of her now was a living corpse, bloated and sickly, and yet clinging to life. The burning hatred that she’d carried for the Tyrant lived in her still, long since his death, and Rizevim had always thought that it was that which truly preserved her. He loved her for that, as much as he could love anything.

“You showed the world what true, unrelenting hate can do,” he murmured. “Your rage was even more beautiful than you were, and when we burn what remains of the Tyrant’s joys to ash, we want it to be under your haunting gaze. Jenna Valefor serves well, our one undeniably successful since we started all this, and soon, the others will wake too, joined by their most recent fellows.”

He grinned at that and flew up to the ceiling and peered through the windows near it at the room next door. In sarcophagi just like the one his mother had been in for centuries, dozens of beautiful young devil girls slept, ranging in age from infants to adults, just waiting to be awoken and made use of.

“*We never did figure out how Father did what he did with the part of the Book of Creation he stole,*” Rizevim thought to himself as he landed back on the ground and pushed a hidden button on the wall.

It opened, revealing the fully functional vagina in the wall, one that he knew all too well led to a matching artificial womb, which had borne him these new devils. Made from a sample of his mother’s flesh, it was a perfect recreation, one that let him work on his pillar revival project without running the risk of doing her further harm.

“Just a few more samples to go and then in time, these creations will bear me an army of fully fertile devils to build my new world with,” he chuckled to himself as he turned around, reaching into his desk and pulling out what he’d decided to rename the Book of Lucifer and the Paimon sample that Jenna had acquired for him a few weeks ago.

Fully thawed and ready for use, this simple sample of DNA would, soon enough, be transformed into a functional zygote ready for implantation inside the artificial womb. He opened the book and got to work, ensuring, as he had with all the others, that the child resulting from this would be female. After all, one incubus could, in mere months, do what would take a succubus more than a half century if the genders were reversed. He grinned to himself, already imagining his perfect army, and completed his task.