

Once Human 741

Chapter 741 - One Hit

The Dark Blaze Sect was founded by the Evil God of Dark Flames, Phantro. He mated with a human, thus creating a slightly malformed and rather infamous lineage. The reputation of the Dark Blaze Sect was rock bottom during the second and third eras, and despite being decently strong in terms of manpower and cultivation techniques, they were regarded as spawn of Phantro.

Slowly but surely, the prejudice disappeared and the sect rose to prominence, becoming one of the highly-distinguished powers in the Cloud Sea Universe, though it fell short in comparison to the clans and sects in the Divine Planets, or even a handful of others all around the universe. Still, every Patriarch that took over the sect was always an Exalted God, which solidified their position and reputation, as well as drive some rogue but talented cultivators and explorers to seek refuge and knowledge in the Dark Blaze High-Realm.

Randuin Ak Dark Blaze, grandsire of Holand and father of Rasnod, wasn't lucky enough to inherit the special Dark Blaze Technique of his ancestors, nevertheless, he managed to rise to the apex by learning the mysterious mystical arts.

Although eccentric and unsocial, Randuin deeply cared for his sect and, very much like his son, was angered by Cristina and Bora's desertion. However, what mattered most were the Twin-snake Black Snake Spear, and the Unbreakable Bow of Faith, which were two priceless artifacts lent to two of their strongest disciples.

The Dark Blaze Sect wasn't wealthy, but it had a decent amount of artifacts, however, the bow and the spear were special as they dated back to the second era. The records briefly mention their origin and how they belonged to an antagonistic clan which had waged war against the whole of the Dark Blaze Realm.

Apparently, that reason, along with the massive loss of face, had driven Rasnod to concoct a sinister plan and execute it in the MoonStar Sect out of all places.

By now, there hasn't been any cultivator who has not heard of Arthur and Lucy MoonStar, the couple of century. Two monsters, one was a White Specter and the other was a Parasite, two people who were banished into Oblivion yet came back stronger and totally unscathed.

Unfortunately, Rasnod did not conduct a thorough investigation on Arthur and Lucy. He saw them as slightly talented cultivators who just founded a sect in a random middle-realm. He has severely underestimated the duo and only when he witnessed the Black Dragon Formation and seen them with his own eyes did he feel their might.

Nevertheless, with Randuin, a peak Exalted God, along side him, Rasnod refused to back down or change the plan. While he was participating in the last two trials, his father would perform a costly summoning to call forth the avatar of their one and only ancestor, the Evil God of Dark Flame, Phantro.

Although the avatar was not real and wasn't as strong as the real one, it would still wreak havoc in the city and cause the parasite a lot of trouble. Not even the Black Dragon Formation covering the entirety of the city will be able to retaliate against the avatar.

While things were progressing smoothly for Lucy in the Trial stage, Arthur no longer sat down and watched. As he had confidently proclaimed, there was nothing in the city he couldn't feel, see or hear. So, when Holand was dragged away by his aunt, Arthur saw it, but that wasn't the end, he also noticed the suspicious Randuin, holed up in his room and positioning the materials to begin the summoning.

"I will be back shortly."

The parasite stood up from his seat and soon vanished into thin air, his body appearing a couple of paces away from the startled Randuin.

The eccentric old man had laid a formation that should have covered his presence, but such trivial trickery wouldn't work on Arthur. Even if his Sixth Sense wasn't able to notice anything, his special eyes would have seen through the formation.

However, Arthur did not immediately attack the old man. Although Randuin was wearing a strange wizardly outfit and looked harmless, he was still an Exalted God.

A bout of silence flowed between the parasite and the old man, and when the latter was about to make a move, he suddenly found himself in a totally different environment.

No longer was he standing in the inn room, surrounded by a bunch of materials; He was unwittingly brought to a foreign dimension, in which the sky was a mix of grey and crimson, and the hissing of countless snakes reverberated repeatedly.

"I thought you were wise enough not to attempt anything."

Finally, Arthur spoke, his expression grim and his body enveloped by sinister black flames.

"Hohoho, it appears I failed to fool you."

The parasite shrugged and unsheathed Makaze, looking unfazed by the old man's rising pressure.

"I wouldn't want my precious city to be destroyed by our fight. How do you like this place?"

Randuin Ak Dark Blaze looked around, his hand holding a lengthy staff and tapping it on the ground, which was enough to disintegrate any snake that got too close to him.

"It's not a bad pla-"

Unfortunately for him, Arthur didn't wait for him to finish, his figure blurred and the dark blade was swung with full force. Randuin was fast enough to raise a white crystalline shield, but it was all in vain as Makaze cut through it with ease and slashed his ?h?st, causing a fountain of blood to splatter on the parasite.

As he faced an Exalted God, even in such advantageous circumstances, Arthur held nothing back and immediately used [Thousand Waves].

The intensely vibrating dark blaze, happy to be used after a long rest, was raised upwards, its glowing tip pointing toward the canopy. In a matter of seconds, the world was covered by a looming darkness, su?k?n? the light and even the energy dwelling within.

Even though he was attacked by surprise and sustained a heavy injury, Randuin was composed and counter-attacked by summoning an enormous illusory green tiger, which fought back against the threatening darkness.

Alas, it was eventually crushed and the first wave of [Thousand Waves] was unleashed at the stiffened silhouette of the old man.

'First Wave: Black as Night, Calamity Descends!'

Makaze was swung vertically, splitting the very fabric of reality in two and unleashing a devastating and unstoppable gale along with a swirling darkness.

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It all happened in the blink of an eye, and when Arthur finally returned to the inn room, he was standing alone. Not even a piece of Randuin was left, he was ripped into shreds by the Dark Blaze's gale then swallowed by the darkness.

It was an underwhelming battle considering that his opponent was an Exalted God. Nevertheless, Arthur wasn't the least bit surprised. Before he even retrieved Makaze, he had been able to face an Exalted God, so it's to be expected that after getting such a huge power-up, he would be able to one-shot someone like Randuin.

In fact, it was the enemy's fault, after all, he was the one who underestimated Arthur. Then again, the parasite used all of his strength, going as far as activating [Eternium] and using [Thousand Waves], which was arguably his strongest skill.

Just like that, the threat was eliminated before anyone could be harmed. Randuin Ak Dark Blaze, the Grand Elder of the Dark Blaze Sect, was killed and his corpse was turned into nothingness. The only one left was Rasnod, who would be finished by Lucy.

Chapter 742 - Weak Resolve

After Halone surrendered, there were seven participants remaining. The two defeated guardians lost to none other than Lucy, who soon turned her attention to Rasnod Ak Dark Blaze.

The man chose the farthest circle from Lucy and when he noticed her chilling gaze, he snorted and immediately sprung into action.

He did not hesitate to take out his strongest weapon, a thick spiked club enveloped by black flames. In addition, he used other artifacts to erect more than two spherical translucent barriers, protecting himself, the flag, and its circle.

Rasnod, along with the other five, all witnessed Lucy's prowess and what she was capable of, and as arrogant as the Patriarch might be, he was aware that he stood no chance against the White Specter.

After spending a couple of seconds recovering Mana, Lucy's right devil arm manifested itself again, letting out bursts of dense steam, which twirled around her like a tornado.

Like a shooting white star, Lucy charged at Rasnod and reached him within a split second; She clenched her right hand and punched the barriers, breaking them instantly and destroying the ground in the process.

Fearful and shocked, Rasnod took flight while swinging his club at Lucy, who flew at him like a lightning bolt. Alas, his attempt was poor and unsuccessful as his club hit nothing but air. He simply wasn't fast enough to react to Lucy's absurd speed, thus getting hit in the spine by Lucy's punch.

The physical hit was enough to incapacitate the Patriarch and break his bones, but since Lucy wanted to kill him, she did not hesitate to use her fusion fire.

Rasnod's body crashed into the ground, rolled a few times then limply laid on the ground, seemingly lifeless. The poor man did not even let out a groan, he fell unconscious and his spiked club was blown far away.

Just when the spectators thought the battle was over, Lucy landed next to Rasnod and hovered her left hand above his body, emitting a spark of greyish of fire, which invaded the victim's body and, in just a couple of breaths, scorched his insides and froze his skin and clothes.

The fight was over before it had even begun... then again, Rasnod, despite being an Exalted God, would never have stood a chance against Lucy. It was surprising to see Lucy outright kill Rasnod, which was prohibited, but the outcome of the battle was expected by almost everyone.

"We apologize for the unexpected sight. The Dark Blaze Sect has been caught trying to cause 'mischief' in our city so, my wife and I, took it upon us to exert the appropriate punishment."

Arthur explained what had just happened with an orotund voice, which was enough to quieten the curious crowd. His voice not only was heard by the spectators but by the participating guardians too.

"So they really were trying to do something?"

As Arthur returned to the VIP box and sat back on his seat, Isadore, unable to hold back his curiosity, eyed the parasite and commented.

"They should've tried it elsewhere. They got what they deserve."

"I see..."

The King of Green-Leaf nodded his head in agreement and after a momentary silence, asked again,

"So... did you kill Randuin?"

"Yes."

"Was he any trouble? I thought he was a Peak Exalted God."

"He was alright."

"What do you mean by alright? Like... did he put up a fight?"

"He did try... nevermind that. Let's watch the trial."

...

"Oh look who's back!"

Cristina angrily stomped her foot at the ground and glared at the red-haired youth who just entered the room.

Ho Qing was supposed to be meditating in his room, but since he came back, it means his period of enlightenment and learning was short-lasting. However, his cultivation was significantly higher and even his aura had a qualitative change, which meant it wasn't all for nothing, fortunately.

Ho Qing did not retort at the girl's snappy attitude, he walked closer to the bed and stared at Shu Ru.

"How are you feeling?"

"I'm great, thank you!"

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She sweetly smiled at the youth, but after her quick response, the atmosphere was dominated by an overwhelming awkwardness. All the members of the MoonStar team were finally in one room, but no one talked. They stared at each other in silence, some hesitating to talk, some looking crestfallen, and others simply lost in their thoughts.

At last, Bora, who looked the most cheerful of them all, broke the silence and said,

"I think we should leave."

"What? Leave? What are you on about?"

Cristina looked at her smiling childhood friend, a frown surfacing on her slightly exhausted face.

"We can't be under our teacher's protection forever. We have to leave Green-Leaf and visit other realms to hone ourselves and get stronger."

"I concur."

Ardor raised his hand and agreed with Bora, but the rest of the team members kept their mouths shut.

"I heard about what happened."

He walked in front of the princess and coldly looked down at her.

"..."

The girl did not even glance at him, she kept absent-mindedly staring at the ground.

"If you're going to be like this then it's better to leave."

"Hey!"

Cristina attempted to stop him but was stopped by Bora, who shook his head and signaled for her to stand still and listen.

"Such a weak resolve after one defeat. You acting like a kid is embarrassing to us and even our teachers. I'll say it again, if you don't have the will to continue then leave right now. I don't want you in my team."

The girl was unresponsive, though her body twitched ever-so-slightly, clearly affected by Ho Qing's harsh words.

Even the others were shocked by this display; Cristina broke free from Bora's grasp and lunged at Ho Qing, grabbing his collar and shouting at him. Shu Ru furrowed her brows and worriedly looked at Rosea whereas Bora was nervously looking at Cristina.

The only one who did not react was Ardor, he stood at the back and calmly watched everything. Even though Ho Qing was going overboard, he still chose to sit still and watch everything unravel, not because he enjoyed it but because this was necessary.

They had tried talking some sense into Rosea but it didn't work at all. This might be the only effective method to snap her out of it and push her to make a decision. By now, the six of them established a close relationship and if they were going to continue training and getting stronger together, they need to be of the same mind.

Rosea wiped her bleeding lips then looked at her hand, tears trickling down her cheek.

She suddenly leapt to her feet and rushed at Ho Qing, who was still held by Cristina.

Just like what he did to her, the girl viciously slapped him, separating him from Cristina but causing him to fall on the ground. She did not even let him time to react as she mounted him and unleashed a torrent of slaps, which he tried to resist but failed.

"Who said I wanted to leave?! You arrogant prick!"

She kept crying, slapping him, and insulting him over and over again.

"I tried my best! Alright! I want to get stronger too!"

"I like staying here and learning from Madam Lucy and Mister Arthur! Who are you to tell me what to do?!"

"Just because you showed off in front of everyone, you think you can order me around?!"

"Y-you... you ungrateful idiot! Not everyone is as lucky as you! Damn you!"

...

By the time Rosea stopped, Ho Qing's cheeks were red and his lips were bleeding. Nevertheless, his face was expressionless and he no longer tried to push her away.

Thankfully, Bora and Cristina stepped in and separated Rosea from Ho Qing, the former was choking on her tears but looked much better than before.

Chapter 743 - The Demonic Shades

One would have thought that Ho Qing's mocking words and Rosea's punches and slaps would have eventually caused a rift to form between the six youngsters, but it wasn't the case, fortunately.

Although Rosea failed to notice it at first, it was crystal clear that Ho Qing deliberately uttered such provocative words to rile her up and make her vent her frustration. However, he didn't expect her to actually lunge at him and slap him until his cheeks were reddened, bleeding, and puffed.

"I-it's not right to dwell on what happened."

After a pretty long and awkward silence, Bora spoke up, breaking it and gaining everyone's attention.

"We began this together and I believe we have the strength and capability to continue. Every team faces troubles at the beginning, but if we manage to overcome them, we will rise to greater heights!"

With the five of them focusing on him, the tanned youth gained confidence and raised his voice a little louder.

"We can do this, guys! Let's not let our loss or failures get the better of us! If our teachers saw this, they would surely be disappointed! We must forge our own path and prove to the whole world that we're the best."

"..."

"..."

"..."

Once he voiced his thoughts and puffed his chest proudly, poor Bora was met with only silent gazes.

In the end, Ardor could not hold it any longer and burst out in laughter. The others too laughed, even the stoic Ho Qing

"Seriously! Is that supposed to be an encouraging speech? It was really bad." Ardor wiped his teary eye and snickered at the embarrassed Bora.

"Yeah... it was lame."

Rosea joined in, giggling and stealing glances at the others.

Once Rasnod was taken care of, Lucy did not rest. Instead, she targeted yet another guardian, both to showcase her prowess to the world and battle those considered her peers.

So far, only the Ageless Elven Maiden proved to be a challenge. Veia and Rasnod were relatively weak in comparison, and they never really stood a chance against Lucy.

Even if Lucy had a mediocre talent and did not have the fusion flame, the Devil Right Arm, or the Ice Lotuses, she would still be unimaginably strong thanks to Soul Bond with Arthur.

Her stats had already broken through the mortal limitations and gone beyond one billion points. That means her physical body and absurdly large Mana Pool allowed her to be a force to be reckoned with.

After Arthur recovered the upgraded Makaze and his first clone, he had become stronger than Lucy, but the disparity between them wasn't that large. After all, Lucy excels in Magic and destructive areas of effect spells whereas Arthur's fighting style was versatile and ever-changing.

His unique ability to change forms and cast all types of skills, spells, and techniques, allowed him to be unpredictable and hard to manage in a fight.

With Rasnod, Halone, and Veia gone, six participants remain. The thick-bearded dwarf clad in an oversized enchanted armor was holed up in his own circle and apprehensively eyeing the motionless Lucy.

Dan, who was the weakest of the bunch, was cautiously looking at Xavier Lander and his opponent, Ceclina, the Mother of all Mermaids.

If they could, everyone could pick a flying flag and simply wait for the timer to hit zero. However, most, if not all of the participating guardians did not come here to win like that but to demonstrate their power and fight, much like Lucy.

Apart from the Serpentine Patriarch of the Eternal Rouge Sect and his feisty opponent, Celina, the rest were spectating.

Lucy deemed Dan and Buolong unfit so she locked her gaze onto the Demon Duke. He was caressing his long cane and faintly smiling back at her, looking as relaxed and nonchalant as before.

From all the opponents, Xavier was the strangest and most mysterious of them all. Lucy could not properly gauge his strength even after his brief fight against Celina.

"Lucy MoonStar, I had hoped our first meeting would've been different. More amicable... at least."

"..."

She coldly glared at him, her Mana exploding forth and the nine blooming Ice Lotuses were back behind her. The freezing aura was unleashed with full force, accompanying Lucy as she shot at Xavier with an impressive agility.

She was like a lightning bolt, reaching Xavier within the blink of an eye. She did not hold back her strength and performed a punch with the Devil Arm, consequently releasing a lot of dense steam and a devastating shock wave.

Her fist clashed with the demon's cave but it was eventually able to push it back and blew its holder several hundred meters to the back. However, Xavier wasn't injured, he properly landed on the ground, looking amused.

"Please bear in mind that I mean no harm or malice. This shall be a contest to determine who's stronger... agreed?"

"You talk too much."

"And rightly so, Lucy MoonStar."

A swirling translucent crimson aura emanated from Xavier's body, soon taking the shape of skeletal shape thrice his size and linked to his back via countless thin crimson threads.

"Please do not hold back."

As he uttered these words, he jumped in the air and swung his cane vertically, which made the skeletal shape behind him lunge at Lucy with a newly-formed scythe.

The incoming illusory scythe cut the freezing aura and the steam, reaching its target almost immediately as if it teleported.

Lucy braced herself and performed another, much stronger punch, embedded with the fusion flame. The ominous and small spark of grey flame clashed with the illusory scythe, disintegrating it upon contact then dispersing.

Lucy flew at the skeletal shade and made use of the Ice Lotuses, which rapidly spun and unleashed [Absolute Zero] for the second time today.

For a couple of breaths, this miniature dimension was dominated by an azure color and a bone-chilling coldness.

The land below Lucy as well as the air itself were frozen, even the skeletal shade wasn't spared. However, this wasn't the end as Lucy cast an enormous golden fireball right at Xavier.

The demon frowned, stabbed his cane on the ground and performed an unfamiliar sign with both hands. Another crimson and illusory shade manifested itself; This time, it was a bestial shape with human hands holding a shield.

With the Demon Duke controlling it, the beast raised its shield and blocked the fireball and the ever-spreading coldness.

Just when Xavier thought he succeeded, he saw the shield and its holder literally explode as a large cloud of darkness appeared from nowhere and consumed everything.

After firing the 2nd-grade Darkness Bullet, Lucy distanced herself to not get affected and watched as Xavier's bestial shade was devoured.

Now that two of his shades were defeated, Xavier looked pale. He wiped the blood leaking out of his lips and chuckled.

"We will finish with this one, Lucy MoonStar."

He concentrated all of his swirling aura in the cane then removed it from the frozen earth. It shone with a bright blood-red light then escaped his hand, transforming into a real shade this time, taking the shape of half-naked hideous and large horned devil with red skin.

Lucy changed her stance and readied herself to punch again. The devil arm was releasing an absurd amount of steam, so much that it became an enormous fog shrouding her within, but only for a couple seconds as a blinding golden radiance dispersed it.

A miniature blazing sun appeared in her hand, however, instead of rising in the air then exploding like before, Lucy grasped it with her right hand and crushed it. The Golden Crow Fire was injected into the Devil arm, enveloping it with the flames and greatly strengthening it.

The horned devil charged at her and slashed with his claws while she just punched her front, bringing with her an earth-shaking tremor.

The force of the explosion was so big and intense that Arthur's dimension broke apart, blasting everyone within it outside.

All that was left of it was a sea of golden flames, soon sucked by the ever-appearing spatial tears.

The participants were shocked by this outcome but, fortunately, none was injured.

Lucy's flames shone brighter than Green-Leaf's sun, spreading across the canopy like a golden carpet.

Although it was soon dispersed by Arthur, the spectacle was astonishing and unforgettable for every single person in the crowd.

Soon, everything cleared up; Lucy was floating in the air, looking exhausted but not injured. Meanwhile, Xavier was a distance away, also hovering but in a worse condition. His clothes were ripped and his breathing heavy.

"I forfeit."

He kept smiling and reassuringly waved his hand.

"The winners of the Trial are Lakandro of the Eternal Rouge Sect, Buolong of the Blossom Merchant Company, and Dan of Green-Leaf."

Technically, only those who defended their flags till the end were victorious. However, the crowd was more excited about Lucy's fight against Xavier and almost forgot about the other guardians.

"Are you okay?"

After declaring the winners, Arthur appeared next to Lucy and took her elsewhere. She spent the entirety of the Mana, but that was about it.. After a brief rest, she will recover to peak state.

Chapter 744 - The Blood Duke

The tournament hosted and prepared by the MoonStar Sect has come to an end. It concluded with a flashy and exciting spectacle. Undoubtedly, everyone from the crowd was provided with a show worthy of their contribution.

Whether it was the Trials in which the youngsters participated in, or the last stage where the Guardians fought and displayed their prowess.

Of course, there were some complications, mainly originating from the Dark Blaze Sect and John from the Ancient Federation. Nonetheless, Arthur dealt with those without inciting too much fear or distress.

There was a grand celebration for the crowd to enjoy, but neither Arthur nor the guardians were interested in participating.

After checking on Lucy and- despite her protest- using Life Energy to hasten her recovery, the couple met up with their team.

The six disciples were standing next to each other in an orderly fashion, and once their teachers entered the room, they performed a bow of respect.

Arthur softly smiled and nodded, proud and satisfied. Lucy, however, was frowning as she noticed the visible bruises on some of their faces.

"You fought?"

Her voice was bone-chilling and her eyes were narrowed to a dangerous degree. For a couple of breaths, none of the six dared to open their mouths.

"We... we sorted it out, teacher."

With a bit of mustered courage, Ardor spoke up but kept his head lowered. He knew that she forbade them from fighting each other no matter the reason. True, it wasn't a 'real' fight, but the fact that they resorted to violence was enough for her to be angry.

"It was my fault!"

Rosea took one step forward and bowed again, this time bending her head lower than ever before. She was a royalty, a Princess, but in front of Arthur and Lucy, she did not dare to act arrogant. She had indeed gone overboard, like Ho Qing, and because she was conflicted and doubtful, they had fought.

Fortunately, everything had been, more or less, cleared up. Admittedly, Rosea and Ho Qing still refused to look at each other and the atmosphere was slightly tense, nevertheless, they chose to stay together... as a team.

"I did not agree to teach you just for you to end up fighting." Lucy raised her voice and swept her piercing gaze across all six of them.

She let out a soft sigh and added, "You made many mistakes during the Trials and many things could have been done better. However... I am satisfied. For now, at least."

"You heard her. Cheer up. There's room for improvement and, as long as you're willing, I know you will achieve your goals. Be it becoming the strongest or gaining the respect of the masses."

Arthur's speech, which wasn't anything impressive, resonated with the youngsters. They responded with smiles and enthusiastic nods.

"We will resume training tomorrow! Go rest now."

After saying those words, which changed their expressions, Lucy left the room along with a grinning Arthur.

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It was a long day for everyone, therefore, Arthur and Lucy planned to retreat to their room. However, they were suddenly called by Edward.

"Someone would like to meet the Madam."

The man maintained a safe distance from Lucy and muttered those words. He nudged the succubus next to him, thus urging her to continue.

"It's Xavier Lander, the Demon."

"What does he want?" Asked Arthur as a frown surfaced on his face.

Xavier was undoubtedly strong, but he was a man shrouded in mystery. He specifically wanted to battle Lucy and though, on the outside, he seemed kind and amicable, Arthur was wary of him.

He thought the Demon would leave after the competition was over but it clearly wasn't the case.

Lucy thought for a moment then looked at Arthur, who solemnly nodded.

Before long, the two were in another room, in which Xavier was patiently waiting. The Demon was sitting on a sofa and fiddling with a half-empty glass of wine.

"Ah, greetings... again."

When the couple entered, the Demon, in appreciation, smiled at Edward and Fariya.

"I believe this is our first official meeting, Arthur MoonStar."

Xavier put down the glass and approached the parasite. He stretched his arm and kept the same smile,

"I am Xavier Landres, the 29th Demon of Hell. My formal title is 'The Blood Duke'. Pleased to make your acquaintance."

He shook hands with Arthur then elegantly bowed. He did glance at Lucy but, aware that she disliked touching other men, he did not deign to get too close or say anything out of place.

"Would you please sit down?"-Xavier

The parasite and his wife sat across the Blood Duke, and after a brief silence, the latter spoke again.

"I was genuinely impressed by your prowess, Lucy MoonStar. Not to boast, but I am amongst the strongest of my kind... to be bested in front of so many eyes is a bit embarrassing, hahaha..."

"..."-Lucy

She looked at him in silence, still wondering why he had called them here. He did not seem like a bad person, but since she and Arthur had limited knowledge regarding the Demons of Hell, they couldn't properly evaluate Xander.

"Counting this year, I am 12,521 years old and I have held my title for half that time. Excuse this unnecessary remark but I deem it necessary for what I'm about to say next."

Arthur crossed his arm and perked his ears, awaiting for the Demon to continue.

"It might seem ridiculous or too sudden, but, I believe that Madam Lucy and I share a connection. Please don't misunderstand... what I meant was; She might be my biological daughter."

"I beg your pardon?"-Arthur

"I believe a proper exposition is in order." Xander sat straight and cleared his throat, "Long ago, Katrina, the Matriarch of the White Specter Clan and I shared- for want of a better word- a special relationship. Now, I do not know for a fact that Madam Lucy is my daughter, but... recent affairs suggest she is."

He looked at Lucy and chuckled, "You arm. I saw how it can transform."

Xander Landres pulled his sleeves and, after a second or two, the strange scales and miniature holes appeared. It was strikingly similar to Lucy's devil arm.

"This is a unique trait for the Sanguis Demon Family. A heritage from my family. Only direct descendants can use this."

Arthur, surprised, looked at Xander's devil arm but did not speak. Lucy too, was startled, her lips opening and closing but not saying anything.

"I truly understand that this might be a shock and I did not come here to demand anything. In fact, I just learned that I have a daughter. Katrina did not deign to reveal the truth to me."

"It doesn't make sense, though." Arthur interrupted the Demon as he kept looking at his Devil Arm.
"Lucy's father is confirmed to be Thordan."

"Yes. Thordan was indeed Katrina's husband and the father of her children. That's what I thought too. However, the Devil Arm could not be a coincidence."

"When I was young, there was an accident and I was lost. It was then that I was 'poisoned' by a Demon, or so Katrina had said." Lucy seemed composed as she calmly uttered those words.

"Mayhap she lied to you to protect you? Or did not want the truth to come out?"

Xavier looked a bit nervous, unlike his previous self. Seeing Lucy deny what he said and lack any kind of positive reaction made him less enthusiastic. Still, he did not burst out in anger or insist.

"If you do not mind, I have the means to confirm if we are related by blood or not."

He took out a triangular red device and put it on the table. "This is a practical magical artifact, often used by Demon Royalty. Once cleaved, two people can sacrifice a drop of their blood and, in a matter of seconds, they can see if they are related or not."

"How convenient." Arthur snorted as he glared at the Demon, clearly not believing him.

"I will not force you to do anything, Lucy. Even if we are related, I will not ask for anything. In your times of need, you can call for me and I will help you the best I can."

Xander let out a heavy sigh as he added, "You have your own life and family now and I am in no position to interfere. I just want to make things right and be responsible for a past mistake."

"Mistake?" Retorted Lucy as her eyes were fixated on his.

"Yes. It was honestly a mistake born out of inconvenient circumstances. Everything happened in the heat of the moment. Nevertheless, having a daughter is a welcome surprise. Believe me."

"..."-Lucy

Sensing her getting a bit emotional, Arthur grabbed her hand and gently whispered,

"You don't have to do this, Lucy. Whatever you decide, I'll support you."

She turned her head ever-so-slightly and faintly smiled at him. There was a long silence, in which Xavier sat there and said nothing whereas Lucy gazed at the device resting on the table.

Finally, she stretched her hand and, with a simple gesture, a drop of blood fell on the triangular artifact.

"Thank you."

Xavier bowed his head then did the same, which caused the artifact to rapidly spin then magically open; When it had stopped spinning, it magically opened and revealed an unfamiliar golden word.

Upon reading it, Xavier breathed a sigh of relief and said, "We are indeed related by blood. You are my daughter, Lucy."

"And? I don't think it changes anything."-Lucy

"You are right. As I had said, I demand nothing." The Blood Duke stood up and performed one final bow.

"I will remain here for a few days. If you want to talk, you need but call. By infusing that device with a drop of your blood, you can notify me even after I leave. That way, whenever you need help, I will come. That's all I can do. Now, if you'll excuse me..."

...

"I will not talk to him." Said Lucy, late at night. Her head was resting on Arthur's shoulder as they were soon about to sleep.

Arthur did not ask for her opinion or anything yet she voiced it nonetheless.

"It's fine."

"Still..." Lucy snorted and moved her head closer to his chest, "At least Thordan is not my father. I abhorred that man."

"I didn't like him either."

Chapter 745 - The Blood Duke

The tournament hosted and prepared by the MoonStar Sect has come to an end. It concluded with a flashy and exciting spectacle. Undoubtedly, everyone from the crowd was provided with a show worthy of their contribution.

Whether it was the Trials in which the youngsters participated in, or the last stage where the Guardians fought and displayed their prowess.

Of course, there were some complications, mainly originating from the Dark Blaze Sect and John from the Ancient Federation. Nonetheless, Arthur dealt with those without inciting too much fear or distress.

There was a grand celebration for the crowd to enjoy, but neither Arthur nor the guardians were interested in participating.

After checking on Lucy and- despite her protest- using Life Energy to hasten her recovery, the couple met up with their team.

The six disciples were standing next to each other in an orderly fashion, and once their teachers entered the room, they performed a bow of respect.

Arthur softly smiled and nodded, proud and satisfied. Lucy, however, was frowning as she noticed the visible bruises on some of their faces.

"You fought?"

Her voice was bone-chilling and her eyes were narrowed to a dangerous degree. For a couple of breaths, none of the six dared to open their mouths.

"We... we sorted it out, teacher."

With a bit of mustered courage, Ardor spoke up but kept his head lowered. He knew that she forbade them from fighting each other no matter the reason. True, it wasn't a 'real' fight, but the fact that they resorted to violence was enough for her to be angry.

"It was my fault!"

Rosea took one step forward and bowed again, this time bending her head lower than ever before. She was a royalty, a Princess, but in front of Arthur and Lucy, she did not dare to act arrogant. She had indeed gone overboard, like Ho Qing, and because she was conflicted and doubtful, they had fought.

Fortunately, everything had been, more or less, cleared up. Admittedly, Rosea and Ho Qing still refused to look at each other and the atmosphere was slightly tense, nevertheless, they chose to stay together... as a team.

"I did not agree to teach you just for you to end up fighting." Lucy raised her voice and swept her piercing gaze across all six of them.

She let out a soft sigh and added, "You made many mistakes during the Trials and many things could have been done better. However... I am satisfied. For now, at least."

"You heard her. Cheer up. There's room for improvement and, as long as you're willing, I know you will achieve your goals. Be it becoming the strongest or gaining the respect of the masses."

Arthur's speech, which wasn't anything impressive, resonated with the youngsters. They responded with smiles and enthusiastic nods.

"We will resume training tomorrow! Go rest now."

After saying those words, which changed their expressions, Lucy left the room along with a grinning Arthur.

...

It was a long day for everyone, therefore, Arthur and Lucy planned to retreat to their room. However, they were suddenly called by Edward.

"Someone would like to meet the Madam."

The man maintained a safe distance from Lucy and muttered those words. He nudged the succubus next to him, thus urging her to continue.

"It's Xavier Lander, the Demon."

"What does he want?" Asked Arthur as a frown surfaced on his face.

Xavier was undoubtedly strong, but he was a man shrouded in mystery. He specifically wanted to battle Lucy and though, on the outside, he seemed kind and amicable, Arthur was wary of him.

He thought the Demon would leave after the competition was over but it clearly wasn't the case.

Lucy thought for a moment then looked at Arthur, who solemnly nodded.

Before long, the two were in another room, in which Xavier was patiently waiting. The Demon was sitting on a sofa and fiddling with a half-empty glass of wine.

"Ah, greetings... again."

When the couple entered, the Demon, in appreciation, smiled at Edward and Fariya.

"I believe this is our first official meeting, Arthur MoonStar."

Xavier put down the glass and approached the parasite. He stretched his arm and kept the same smile,

"I am Xavier Landres, the 29th Demon of Hell. My formal title is 'The Blood Duke'. Pleased to make your acquaintance."

He shook hands with Arthur then elegantly bowed. He did glance at Lucy but, aware that she disliked touching other men, he did not deign to get too close or say anything out of place.

"Would you please sit down?"-Xavier

The parasite and his wife sat across the Blood Duke, and after a brief silence, the latter spoke again.

"I was genuinely impressed by your prowess, Lucy MoonStar. Not to boast, but I am amongst the strongest of my kind... to be bested in front of so many eyes is a bit embarrassing, hahaha..."

"..."-Lucy

She looked at him in silence, still wondering why he had called them here. He did not seem like a bad person, but since she and Arthur had limited knowledge regarding the Demons of Hell, they couldn't properly evaluate Xander.

"Counting this year, I am 12,521 years old and I have held my title for half that time. Excuse this unnecessary remark but I deem it necessary for what I'm about to say next."

Arthur crossed his arm and perked his ears, awaiting for the Demon to continue.

"It might seem ridiculous or too sudden, but, I believe that Madam Lucy and I share a connection. Please don't misunderstand... what I meant was; She might be my biological daughter."

"I beg your pardon?"-Arthur

"I believe a proper exposition is in order." Xander sat straight and cleared his throat, "Long ago, Katrina, the Matriarch of the White Specter Clan and I shared- for want of a better word- a special relationship. Now, I do not know for a fact that Madam Lucy is my daughter, but... recent affairs suggest she is."

He looked at Lucy and chuckled, "You arm. I saw how it can transform."

Xander Landres pulled his sleeves and, after a second or two, the strange scales and miniature holes appeared. It was strikingly similar to Lucy's devil arm.

"This is a unique trait for the Sanguis Demon Family. A heritage from my family. Only direct descendants can use this."

Arthur, surprised, looked at Xander's devil arm but did not speak. Lucy too, was startled, her lips opening and closing but not saying anything.

"I truly understand that this might be a shock and I did not come here to demand anything. In fact, I just learned that I have a daughter. Katrina did not deign to reveal the truth to me."

"It doesn't make sense, though." Arthur interrupted the Demon as he kept looking at his Devil Arm.
"Lucy's father is confirmed to be Thordan."

"Yes. Thordan was indeed Katrina's husband and the father of her children. That's what I thought too. However, the Devil Arm could not be a coincidence."

"When I was young, there was an accident and I was lost. It was then that I was 'poisoned' by a Demon, or so Katrina had said." Lucy seemed composed as she calmly uttered those words.

"Mayhap she lied to you to protect you? Or did not want the truth to come out?"

Xavier looked a bit nervous, unlike his previous self. Seeing Lucy deny what he said and lack any kind of positive reaction made him less enthusiastic. Still, he did not burst out in anger or insist.

"If you do not mind, I have the means to confirm if we are related by blood or not."

He took out a triangular red device and put it on the table. "This is a practical magical artifact, often used by Demon Royalty. Once cleaved, two people can sacrifice a drop of their blood and, in a matter of seconds, they can see if they are related or not."

"How convenient." Arthur snorted as he glared at the Demon, clearly not believing him.

"I will not force you to do anything, Lucy. Even if we are related, I will not ask for anything. In your times of need, you can call for me and I will help you the best I can."

Xander let out a heavy sigh as he added, "You have your own life and family now and I am in no position to interfere. I just want to make things right and be responsible for a past mistake."

"Mistake?" Retorted Lucy as her eyes were fixated on his.

"Yes. It was honestly a mistake born out of inconvenient circumstances. Everything happened in the heat of the moment. Nevertheless, having a daughter is a welcome surprise. Believe me."

"..."-Lucy

Sensing her getting a bit emotional, Arthur grabbed her hand and gently whispered,

"You don't have to do this, Lucy. Whatever you decide, I'll support you."

She turned her head ever-so-slightly and faintly smiled at him. There was a long silence, in which Xavier sat there and said nothing whereas Lucy gazed at the device resting on the table.

Finally, she stretched her hand and, with a simple gesture, a drop of blood fell on the triangular artifact.

"Thank you."

Xavier bowed his head then did the same, which caused the artifact to rapidly spin then magically open; When it had stopped spinning, it magically opened and revealed an unfamiliar golden word.

Upon reading it, Xavier breathed a sigh of relief and said, "We are indeed related by blood. You are my daughter, Lucy."

"And? I don't think it changes anything."-Lucy

"You are right. As I had said, I demand nothing." The Blood Duke stood up and performed one final bow.

"I will remain here for a few days. If you want to talk, you need but call. By infusing that device with a drop of your blood, you can notify me even after I leave. That way, whenever you need help, I will come. That's all I can do. Now, if you'll excuse me..."

...

"I will not talk to him." Said Lucy, late at night. Her head was resting on Arthur's shoulder as they were soon about to sleep.

Arthur did not ask for her opinion or anything yet she voiced it nonetheless.

"It's fine."

"Still..." Lucy snorted and moved her head closer to his chest, "At least Thordan is not my father. I abhorred that man."

"I didn't like him either."