It's a Hard Life

by UnluckyLeek

Summary

Vergil is finding the experience of living with Dante more and more unpleasant as the days go on and desperately wants to find a way to leave. His irritation only increases after a few annoying interactions with that "Lady" woman. Meanwhile, Nero has an interesting suggestion. (I suck at summaries, but this is mainly comedy at the moment with potential future Lady/Vergil).
Chapter One

It all began with a cold shower.

Ever since escaping from Hell, Vergil had had no choice but to live with Dante in his shop; a decision which he was steadily beginning to regret. As soon as he stepped into the shower, Vergil was met with a blast of cold water, causing goosebumps to rise all over his body.

"Damn it Dante, how many times do I have to remind you..." he muttered under his breath, wrapping a towel around his midriff and stepping out into the shop's main foyer. As he started to make his way towards the perpetually empty hot water metre, the front double doors suddenly burst open and Lady sauntered her way in, removing a pair of sunglasses. Vergil froze in place, unsure whether to retreat or keep going.

"Hey! Dante, are you-" Lady's words froze on her lips as she caught sight of a very dishevelled looking man wrapped in a small towel facing her. "Oh! Uh... Sorry, Dante..." Lady said, averting her eyes. "Guess I shoulda knocked huh..."

Vergil said nothing and decided to continue towards the metre. He stopped at the desk halfway and rummaged around in one of the drawers a little, before retrieving a bit of pocket change. "This ought to cover... Ten minutes maybe?" he said quietly to himself, ignoring the obviously embarrassed woman who was trying to look in the other direction. He walked over to the box on the wall and started to insert the coins, each one making an awkward clunk that echoed in the silence between them. Finally, Lady spoke again.

"Uh, so... I guess I'm just so used to walking in, I didn't think to knock. Although, whoever decided to build their bathroom leading into the front lobby of their shop clearly didn't plan ahead." She snuck a cheeky glance at the man behind her who was now starting to make his way back to the bathroom. "Are... Are you mad at me?" she asked, turning to face Vergil's retreating back completely, still none the wiser.

Vergil stopped walking and looked over his shoulder slightly. He wanted to get back to the shower before all the hot water ran out again. "Dante isn't here," he said at last, slicking his hair back with one hand, while the other attempted to keep the towel from slipping down. "Come back later."

With that, he walked into the bathroom and slammed the door behind him, leaving Lady with a very confused expression on her face. As the realisation of what had just happened sunk in, she felt her face flush and quickly ran outside to try and cool herself down.

Five minutes later Vergil emerged from the bathroom, this time fully dressed minus his coat, and with the towel now wrapped around his shoulders. The shower had lasted nowhere near as long as he had hoped. He made an internal note that he would have to do something about this and started to head upstairs, only to find Lady sitting on Dante's chair at the big desk in the middle of the room. "You're still here," he said matter-of-factly, not even bothering to phrase it as a question.

"Well yeah, it's only been a few minutes," Lady said, still trying to hide her embarrassment. "I wanted to pass a message on to Dante," she continued. And apologise to you, she thought, but she knew she wouldn't be able to.
"You couldn't just leave a note or something?" Vergil asked, taking a comb out from his back pocket and starting to brush back his already slicked hair.

Lady regarded him for a moment, admiring his exposed arms a little, despite herself, before saying something that took Vergil by surprise. "You know, you should really invest in some hair gel or something. Then you wouldn't have to keep pushing your hair out of your eyes."

Vergil's arm stopped in mid-air and he brought his hand down, placing the comb back in his pocket. "Human products don't work on… this," he said, gesturing to his silver locks.

"Is that what it is?" Lady asked, raising a disbelieving eyebrow. "Maybe you just haven't found the right product yet. Or maybe it's a comfort thing, what do I know?"

Vergil grunted in response and started to head up the stairs again. "Anyway, Dante is out on a mission tonight. Just leave a note on his desk, he'll pick it up eventually."

"I was hoping you could pass a message on actually," Lady said, swinging around in the chair until she faced Vergil was who still hesitating near the bottom of the almost inconspicuous staircase, which was mostly hidden in the shadows. Lady hadn't even realised there were stairs in the shop until a good few months after she had first started hanging out there. From what she knew of the few times she had been up there, it was mostly just rooms full of junk, and now Vergil's room. Dante, being the lazy bum that he was, often just slept on the couch in the corner of the lobby, but he did apparently have his own room on the ground floor somewhere behind one of a few hidden doors.

"I'm not your errand boy," Vergil said coldly, starting to ascend. No sooner had Lady hopped off the chair and started to make her way towards him, than she suddenly found the tip of Yamato pointed at her forehead. "Do not approach me from behind without warning, woman," Vergil growled. "Next time I may not be so lenient." He sheathed his katana and continued upwards, saying nothing further.

"Wow… Jerk," Lady said, just quiet enough that she hoped he couldn't hear her. She found a piece of paper on the desk and wrote down a location and a time, before leaving it in a place she hoped was obvious enough. With one last look behind her towards the shadowy staircase, she put her sunglasses back on and finally left.

The slam of the doors closing was a welcome sound to Vergil, who let out a big sigh having realised he was unconsciously holding his breath while waiting for her to leave. Despite being back for a good few months now, he still wasn't used to dealing with Dante's… associates.

He sat himself down on the small rickety bed and looked around the dark, cramped room. The moonlight shone through the window behind the bed, illuminating things slightly. He had tried his best to make the space look as presentable as possible. He had cleared out all the junk and empty pizza boxes, he had dusted it thoroughly and replaced the carpet; hell, he had even repainted the walls and lined them with a variety of demonology and poetry books, but it still didn't feel like home. After this evening's incident, he knew he had to do something.

After a moment of hesitation, he opened his bedside drawer and took out the flip phone that Nero had given to him as a gift to 'welcome him back to the real world'. He still wasn't entirely sure of its purpose, but he knew that if he opened it and pressed the right buttons he could talk to people. He pressed the button which connected him to Nero. After a moment, the boy answered.
"Well, this is a rare treat," the smug sounding voice answered, without so much as a hello. It always irked Vergil how Nero sounded more like his uncle than his own father. "Whatcha want, pops?"

"You know I dislike it when you refer to me that way," Vergil responded angrily, forgetting for a moment why he had called in the first place.

"Hey, lighten up already, just be glad I answered at this hour," Nero said, sounding slightly miffed. Vergil checked the clock on his bedside table. It was 11pm.

"Hmph, fine," Vergil said, the closest thing he would ever get to making an apology. "Listen, I… I need your advice," Vergil continued, trying to sound less embarrassed than he felt.

"Uh, sure? What's up?"

"I can't stay here any more," Vergil said bluntly. "It's driving me insane. I almost impaled that dark haired woman just now for walking in my direction."

"Damn dude…" Nero said, trailing off, unsure how to respond further. "And here I thought you were getting better at human interaction."

Vergil sighed again before responding. "You sound more and more like Dante every day. It displeases me."

"Aww, what's wrong dad? Getting jealous?"

It took all of Vergil's strength not to throw the phone across the room, or grip it so hard it would break. "Enough, Nero. Listen, I want you to help me find a new place to live. And… Maybe a job."

Nero was silent on the other end of the phone for so long that Vergil wondered if he had disconnected the call by accident. By the time Nero spoke again, it was clear he was trying to hold back laughter. "You? With a job? You?"

"Is that so strange?"

"Listen, I don't know how it was back in your day, but nowadays you walk into an office with a katana strapped to your hip, you'll be quick to find yourself arrested."

Vergil pondered this for a moment. "All right, so perhaps a different type of job. Something that doesn't involve office work."

"I'm gonna be honest with you pops, your choices are either officer work or manual labour, and I don't really think you're suited to either. Besides, I thought you were helping Dante run his business?" Nero said, still trying not to laugh.

"I was, but the pay is awful," Vergil replied. "Not only that, but he hardly even needs me. He just goes out with those women all the time, and with you and that redneck driving around, there's nothing left for me to do."

"Hey!" Nero said sharply. "You know I draw the line at you insulting my friends Vergil, come on." Suddenly a different voice mumbled something in the background and Nero responded quietly before coming back to the phone. "And now you've woken Kyrie up," he whispered angrily.

"Are you going to help me or not?" Vergil asked, feeling his own frustration rising.
"Let's talk about this in the morning," Nero said bluntly. "I'll give you a call after breakfast."

"Fine."

"Fine." Vergil heard the click as Nero hung up the phone. He sighed and tossed the small object towards the end of his bed, where it bounced and fell off onto the floor, making a small thud. Despite himself, he grimaced a little; if he broke the phone, Nero definitely wouldn't help him. He leant over the edge of his mattress and picked it up to inspect it. Fortunately, it seemed fine. He reached over to turn on his bedside lamp, only to remember that the bulb had blown the night before and he had not yet been able to replace it. Defeated, he lay back on the lumpy pillow and tried to get some sleep.

Chapter End Notes

A/N - Okay, so I've never written a DMC fanfiction before. I'm not totally sure where this is going and it may take a little while to finish, but hopefully people will find this somewhat enjoyable~

P.S. This is also on FanFiction.net
Chapter Two

It was 4am before Dante and Trish finally returned home. As usual, they were about as subtle as a brick through a window, and Vergil found himself jolted awake by the sound of the slamming doors reverberating throughout the entire building. How they hadn't snapped off their hinges by now, he had no idea. He could hear the low murmurs of their voices followed by what sounded like laughter, as they presumably shed themselves of their bloodied clothing and weapons, and prepared to fight for who would get to have a shower first.

Their relationship still confused Vergil. The woman looked like their mother and Vergil tried to avoid her as much as possible because of this. Yet for some reason, she and Dante seemed particularly close. What puzzled him was the exact dynamics of it all. It was clear that Dante saw her as nothing more than a friend, or perhaps a work colleague, but he often caught the wretched woman looking at his brother with a strange expression in her eyes; one which wasn't quite lust, yet didn't seem entirely platonic either. He often had to remind himself that while to them she looked like a dead relative, she was in fact her own entity, with her own thoughts and her own… feelings. Vergil shook his head in disgust at the mere thought of Dante getting involved with anyone, let alone someone resembling their mother.

His thoughts wandered back to the other one; Lady, she called herself. He hadn't much liked the way she was looking at him earlier, either. Her stare had been just slightly too intense and it made him strangely uncomfortable.

He sat up and shivered slightly, realising he had fallen asleep on top of the covers wearing just his trousers and vest. It was unsurprisingly chilly given that they couldn't afford to have the heating on, and he was yet to obtain some pyjamas that didn't make him look like a fool. Vergil let out a loud yawn and stretched a bit, before deciding to head downstairs and see if they had managed to make a decent amount of money this time. He pulled on a pair of boots and slung his coat over his shoulders before descending.

Before he was even halfway down, he spotted Dante passed out on the couch with his shirt and coat lying in a heap on the floor next to him. Vergil tutted in disapproval and walked over before whacking Dante square between the eyes with the hilt of Yamato. "Look at the state of you," he said coldly as Dante jumped up, flailing wildly in an attempt to grab his own sword.

"What the hell, bro?" Dante asked, rubbing his forehead with the back of his hand, smearing what looked to be blood all over himself. "What'd you do that for?"

"I am growing weary of cleaning up after your messes," Vergil said, gesturing to the trail of demon entrails covering the floor from the entranceway to where Dante was now lying. "And I'm especially tired of clients complaining that this couch smells of an abattoir."

Dante looked around at the mess he and Trish had left behind and scratched the back if his head lightly. "Okay, so maybe it looks kinda bad right now, but it's cool. Just leave it to us and it'll be fixed by the morning comes."

"It's already morning, Dante," Vergil said, rubbing his temples slightly. "And from the sounds of things, your companion is already in the process of cleaning herself up, so I doubt she intends to come out here and fix this mess."

The sound of the shower ceased, and Vergil found himself suddenly on edge. The last thing he wanted to see was the doppelganger in a state of undress. He glared at Dante and asked quickly,
"Mess aside, how much did you make this time?"

Dante pondered for a moment and seemed to do some calculations on his hands before holding up three fingers. "About three months worth of bills," he said, grinning.

"That's… Actually not too bad," Vergil said, nodding slightly in approval.

"Right? By the time we pay off the debts we owe, we should have-"

Vergil let out a defeated sigh and turned towards the stairs again. "Clean up this mess, Dante. If I come down in the morning and this place is still like this, demon blood won't be the only thing covering the floor."

Somehow, despite the rage that flowed through him, Vergil must have fallen back asleep because he was suddenly awoken by the sound of his phone ringing next to his head. He groggily reached over to the bedside table, grabbed it and flipped it open, stopping the heavy metal music mid-scream. He still needed to get around to asking Nero how he could fix it after Dante had changed the ringtone.

"Devil May Cry…" he half mumbled into his pillow.

"Dad?"

Vergil shot up, suddenly wide awake, narrowly avoiding hitting his head on the windowsill in the process. "Nero. You actually called."

"Well yeah, I may remind you of Dante, but I'm not as bad as him just yet." The two of them shared a light chuckle between them before Vergil coughed in embarrassment and went back to serious mode.

"So… Did you find a way to get me out of here?" Vergil asked, talking quietly so Dante wouldn't hear him. Not that he would be awake this early in the morning anyway.

"Uh so yeah, about that…"

"Spit it out already, foolish boy."

"Hey, manners. I'm doing you a favour here." Vergil remained silent and Nero continued. "So, I talked it over with Kyrie and… How would you feel about helping us run the orphanage?"

"Absolutely not," Vergil said without a moment's hesitation.

"But-"

"No."

"You would be-"

"I said no. I'd rather take my chances on the street," Vergil said coldly.

"At least hear me out," Nero said irratatedly. "If you agree to help out, I'll be able to get you an apartment as a business expense. All you'd have to do is help look after a few kids and negotiate with our suppliers to make sure they keep providing us with food and clothes."
"Nero, your orphanage is run on charity handouts and government grants. I want to earn money, not lose it."

"Yeah, but you also want to get out of there right? Plus, it would be an excellent way for you to work on your people skills," Nero said. Even over the phone, it was obvious from the tone of his voice that he had known this wouldn't work.

Vergil remained silent for a moment, looking around at the small box he referred to as a bedroom. Eventually he spoke, and even he was surprised at how genuine he sounded. "I'll consider it," he said before snapping the phone shut.

The shop was quiet as Vergil descended the stairs and made his way over to the refrigerator. Perhaps most surprisingly, the room was also clean. He opened the door and reached in for a bottle of milk. Even before he had wrapped his hand around it, he was aware of someone behind him.

"You didn't pass my message on, did you?" asked an irritating feminine voice.

"I see you did not learn your lesson last time, woman," Vergil said, still leaning inside the fridge. He put the bottle back down and his hand quickly moved to the hilt of the Yamato. Lady was able to dodge the swing with ease. "What do you want?" he asked, pointing the tip of the blade between her eyes.

"That's no way to greet a guest," Lady said dryly, stepping to the side and leaning against the large wooden desk. Vergil's gaze followed her closely as he resheathed the sword.

"Answer the question," he stated, ignoring her comment.

"Well, if you must know, I'm here because Dante didn't turn up to our appointment." She turned around to face the desk, looking for the note she had left last night.

"Unwise to turn your back on me, human," Vergil said, although he did not move from where he stood. He watched as she leant over the desk, opening various drawers before letting out an annoyed sigh and ducking underneath the desk. If he hadn't know better, he'd have said she was swaying her hips back and forth on purpose as she did so.

"I knew I should have weighted it down," she said, standing with a piece of crumpled up paper in her right hand.

"An amateur mistake," Vergil said, somewhat smugly, walking over to her. He grabbed the piece of paper from her hand without warning, much to Lady's annoyance. "What is this anyway?"

"It's- Was, a job," Lady huffed, crossing her arms and leaning against the desk. "At a big farm down south. They were having issues with what they thought were locusts. Turns out they were massive insectoid demons instead. For some reason they only appeared in the early hours of the morning, hence the 'be there at 5am' requirement. It now being, what…" she glanced at the clock above the door. "9am," she continued, "We kinda missed the mark."

"So you intend to head back tomorrow?" Vergil asked, unfolding the paper and skimming over it. Lady let out a light scoff. "Yeah right. I ended up doing it all by myself in the end. Turns out I didn't even need Dante."

"That makes two of us," Vergil said looking back up at Lady, a faint smile tugging at the corners
of his mouth.

"Whoa hold up," Lady said, raising her hand. "Am I mistaken or did you just make a joke?"

"Can I interest you in a coffee?" Vergil asked suddenly, his smile disappearing again. He screwed up the piece of paper and threw it into the nearby trash can with pinpoint accuracy.

"I'm sorry, what?" Lady asked in disbelief. "Were'n't you about to impale me earlier? And now you're offering me a coffee?"

"Oh, don't get the wrong idea," Vergil said, walking back to the fridge. "I just need to make sure the milk hasn't gone off. Our electricity has a bad habit of running out during the night."

He's teasing me, she thought. Or at least, she hoped he was. Surely no-one could be that inconsiderate... "Oh well, that's a shame," she said after a moment. "I drink my coffee black."

"Ah, just like your personality," Vergil said, opening the milk bottle and giving it a slight sniff. "Bitter and unpleasant, but people convince themselves to like it so that they look better in front of their friends."

"Damn Vergil, you seem to be on a roll this morning, huh?" Lady uncrossed her arms and walked over to where he stood, careful not to approach him from behind this time. "Well, how is it?"

Vergil's nose screwed up slightly as the sour aroma hit his nostrils, and he started to pour it down the sink. "Take a guess," he said, rinsing out the bottle and dropping it into the recycling bin that he had insisted they get due to the amount of cardboard boxes they went through.

"Well isn't that a shame," Lady said, somewhat mockingly. "Guess you'll have to join me for bitter coffee."

"I already drink it black," he replied, testing the other bottles in the fridge, only to find that they too had gone off. "I was actually planning on having cereal."

For some reason the image of this terrifying man sitting down to eat a bowl of cereal brought a smile to Lady's face, and it took all she had not to giggle to herself. The grin quickly disappeared however, thanks to a sharp glare from Vergil. He turned to face her again, hand hovering over his sword. "Do you find something amusing?" he asked, coldness creeping into his voice once more.

"Not at all," she said, raising both hands and stepping back slightly, only to find herself trapped against the open door of the refrigerator.

"Good. I'd hate to have to clean up such a mess this early in the morning," he said, stroking the hilt of his sword slightly before stepping towards Lady. "Move."

"Huh?" she asked, almost unintelligibly, unable to take her eyes away from the weapon which hung at his side.

"You are wasting electricity by keeping the door open," he said, pushing her out of the way and closing the fridge. He sighed and ran a hand through his hair again.

Yep, definitely a comfort thing, Lady thought to herself as she watched him struggle with a few strands that kept falling into his eyes. "Where is Dante, anyway?" she asked, breaking the uncomfortable silence.

"Hm? No idea," Vergil responded, walking past her to check on the electricity metre. "Ah good,
we have a few days worth left at least…” Adjusting his coat slightly, he unsheathed his sword again and created two large slashes in front of him. A shimmering void opened up and he prepared to walk through.

"Hey, wait a second!" Lady shouted, running over. "What the heck are you doing?"

"I am going to obtain milk," Vergil said, looking at her as though she were some sort of idiot.

"By walking through an interdimensional portal?" Lady asked, incredulously. "You couldn't, oh, I don't know, just walk to the nearest corner shop?"

"Oh, I'm still going there," Vergil said calmly, resheathing Yamato. "This just means I have to deal with less people on the way."

"You have some issues, you know that?" Lady asked, hands on hips. "This is why I don't invite you out on jobs instead of Dante."

Vergil said nothing and just gave an abrupt wave before stepping forward. The air made a strange humming sound as the opening closed behind him.
Chapter Three

Generic corner shop music greeted Vergil's ears as the portal opened up into the doorway of the cheap but reliable 7-Eleven he had been frequenting recently. "Ah, Mister Vergil!" the shopkeeper called out from the back somewhere, overly friendly as usual.

"Rashid," Vergil responded, giving the jolly middle-aged man a small salute as he finally appeared and positioned himself behind the counter.

"Early today, Mister Vergil. Milk go off again?"

"You know it," Vergil responded, cold as usual, before heading towards the large refrigerated area at the back of the store.

"Apologies if you think it rude of me," Rashid said, chasing after Vergil slightly, but careful to remain in his sight at all times - he had dealt with Vergil for a number of months now - "But, might I make a slight suggestion?"

Vergil stopped walking and turned to face the shopkeeper. "You may."

"Well see, we actually have this non-refrigerated milk," Rashid said, reaching towards the shelf and grabbing a small can. "It lasts a lot longer, even without electricity keeping it cool."

Vergil reached out and took the container from Rashid's outstretched hand. He turned it over a few times, eyes narrowing slightly. "UHT…" he mumbled. "Interesting. Do you have anything else like this?"

Back at the office, Lady was pacing up and down wondering what she should do next. First and foremost, she wanted to give Dante an earful for standing her up last night. However, another part of her knew that if she hung around much longer and the other one returned, there could be trouble. After a while, she let out a frustrated sigh and decided to try a few of the doors to see if she could find Dante.

It didn't take her long to open a door which seemed to contain a short staircase leading upstairs, seemingly to a different area than the stairs in the lobby gave access to. She unholstered one of her guns just in case and started to ascend before she came to a thick wooden door. She placed her ear against it and listened for any signs of life. After a moment, the sounds of snoring reached her and she figured she must have the right place.

Ordinarily, she would have just kicked the door open and fired a shot in Dante's direction to get her point across, but after last night's blunder she decided to be a bit more careful. Raising the butt of her gun, she gave the door three hard whacks and waited for a response. After a few moments of silence, she did it again, even harder this time. An irritated groan came from within and she suddenly found the door flung open, a very groggy looking Dante standing in its place. Thankfully, he was clothed, minus his coat. "Whadya want?" he slurred, rubbing his eyes.

"I need to talk to you," Lady said, poking the barrel of her gun into Dante's chest.

"Lady?" Dante asked, eyes widening suddenly when he realised who was standing there. "Well, this is a pleasant surprise. Just couldn't stop thinking about me huh?" he jested, dodging the bullet that was suddenly flying past his head. "You uh… Wanna come in?" he asked, stepping back.
Lady looked past him into a surprisingly clean looking room, although it still smelled of stale food and demon blood. "I'm good thanks," she said, remaining where she was. She knew better than to enter a man's bedroom alone.

"Alrighty then," Dante said, stepping outside and closing the door. "Shall we head downstairs? This seems like official Devil May Cry business and I don't really feel like discussing it on a small staircase."

"Fine," Lady said, turning her back on him and heading back to the lobby.

Once they got back to the main foyer, Dante dumped himself into his chair, put his feet up on the desk, and let out a loud yawn. "So what's the problem?"

"The problem," Lady said, pushing Dante's feet off the desk and leaning over it to glare down at him, "Is that you totally stood me up last night and almost got me killed."

"Say what?" he asked, sitting up a bit straighter. "Wait… Did I agree to go on a date with you or something? Because lemme tell ya, I've had a very hectic few days and I barely even remember what happened a few hours ago, let alone-"

"Can you not read?" Lady interrupted. "I left a note for you, clear as day in the middle of your desk. Right here," she said, pointing to where the note had been earlier.

Dante rubbed his eyes again and looked down at the now empty spot. "Hey, maybe I'm just sleep deprived, but I'm not seeing anything."

"Well obviously it's not there now," Lady said, crossing her arms. "The point I'm trying to make is, you need to start being more aware of your surroundings before someone gets seriously hurt."

Dante held up his hands in defeat before stifling another yawn. "Look, I get what you're saying, but if it was that important you should have asked Vergil to pass on a message, he was in all day yesterday."

"I…" Lady trailed off as she remembered what had happened last night again and tried not to blush. "I tried asking him, but he pretty much told me to shove it," she said.

"Classic Vergil…" Dante muttered. "But hey, you seem to have turned out okay in the end. Mind telling me what it was all about?"

"You wouldn't have made it anyway," a cold voice suddenly interrupted, as a portal appeared from nowhere behind Lady, causing her to jump back in surprise. "The woman is so selfish she only intended to give you six hours' notice." Vergil stepped into the room holding what appeared to be a couple of paper grocery bags. Despite the fact that the demon was insulting her, Lady couldn't help but stifle a laugh again at the ridiculous image. Here was this man, so full of pride and anger, standing before her with the weekly shopping tucked in his arms.

"Is that right?" Dante asked, looking at Lady again, who blushed slightly at being called out on her short notice. "You know I didn't get back home until 4am right?"

"Well I didn't know that would be the case, did I?" Lady asked. "Maybe if you kept me more up to date with what you were doing then-"

"Might I remind you that I also exist," Vergil said, walking over and placing the bags on the end of the desk. "I am just as capable, if not more capable than Dante at dispatching demons. If you ask me, this just seems like a case of unnecessary stubbornness."
Dante gave his brother a slight glare following the subtle jab, but nodded in agreement. "He's got a point. I've told you numerous times that if I'm not here when you need me you can always ask Vergil. He's just as much a part of this business now as we are, yet you always seem to forget that."

Lady had given up trying to hide the embarrassed flush that covered her cheeks. She looked away from them both, arms folded. She didn't like being wrong. "Y-Yeah well, if he was that invested, he should have volunteered to go last night," she stammered.

"You did not reveal how urgent it was," Vergil said, grinning slightly. He seemed to be enjoying himself far too much.

"Yeah, well you didn't ask!" Lady retorted, jabbing her finger into Vergil's chest. He didn't even flinch.

"I shouldn't have to if it's important," Vergil responded, glaring down at her.

"All right, that's enough," Dante said, standing up and pushing them apart. "Jeeze, for two people that hate each other so much, you sure do sound like an old married couple sometimes."

"Shut up!"

"Foolishness!"

Lady and Vergil both turned to shout at Dante simultaneously. Dante just looked between them and grinned, as if to prove his point. "Anyway, are we done here?" he asked, scratching the back of his neck. "I've got some beauty sleep to catch up on."

"Whatever," Lady said defeatedly, shoving on her sunglasses. "I'm out of here."

"Permanently, I hope," Vergil said, stepping to the side to avoid the bullet rushing towards him. Dante just looked at him with a 'come on bro' kind of expression, but Vergil either didn't see it or chose to ignore it. Lady continued on out of the doors, sticking her middle finger up behind her as she left.
Chapter Four

The rest of the morning passed relatively unremarkably for Vergil. Dante gave him a few stern words about manners before heading back to bed, then Vergil found himself alone once more.

He very quickly discovered that he did not like the 'shelf milk', and looked at the large pile of shopping he had bought with similar features in disdain. It would be far too wasteful to just throw it away, but at the same time he figured if the milk was this bad, then the food could only be worse. He pondered for a moment what the easiest way to dispose of it would be, before an idea suddenly struck him. Vergil reached into a desk drawer and pulled out a notepad and a roll of sticky tape. 'Vergil's - Do Not Touch' he wrote on a few scraps of paper, sticking them all over packets of food. He left them in an obvious location on the kitchenette counter and smiled to himself, knowing that they would be gone before the day was over.

He made himself a small cup of coffee and some toast with the few slices of bread they had left that wasn't mouldy, before heading back over to the desk and taking up residence in the only comfortable seat in the room. Picking up a book he had been reading earlier, he continued to sit in silence, enjoying the time alone until he heard the inevitable thud of Dante's boots making their way downstairs. Vergil glanced up at the clock quickly and realised a good few hours had passed without his realising.

A door swung open behind his right shoulder and Dante emerged, still looking as tired as he had this morning. "Morning, bro," Dante yawned, patting Vergil's shoulder as he walked past, heading towards the bathroom.

"It's 2pm, Dante," Vergil said, not looking up from what he was reading.

"Exactly, morning!" Dante called back before slamming the bathroom door. A few moments passed before a high pitched yelp came from the same direction. Dante stuck his head out of the door, hair dripping wet. "Uh, hey… Any chance you could top up the hot water metre for me? It's freezing in here!" Vergil paid him no mind and ignored Dante entirely until he ended up walking over to the desk, wrapped in two different towels. "Hey, did you hear me?" Dante asked, waving his hand in front of Vergil's eyes.

The older brother sighed and placed a bookmark between the pages, before placing the book neatly on the desk. "You have legs, don't you?" Vergil asked sternly, looking up at him. "Do it yourself."

"I mean, I would have, but you were already at the desk, so what's the big deal? Is it really that difficult to help your bro out?" Dante asked, searching the desk desperately for coins. When he found none, he looked at Vergil with a pleading look. "Spare some change?"

"I already used up all of my change," Vergil said, pointing at the pile of food on the counter. "Besides, what happened to the pay from last night?"

"Huh? That was all in notes as usual, that thing only takes coins."

Without warning, Vergil stood, slamming his hands on the desk in anger. "I am so sick of this damn hovel!" he shouted. He grabbed his coat which he had slung over the back of the chair and stalked angrily towards the doors.

"Whoa hey, where ya going?" Dante asked, following behind and forgetting for a moment that he was dressed in nothing but towels.
"Out." Vergil said sternly, yanking open the doors and slamming them with enough force to send his coffee cup flying from the table.

Dante let out a low whistle before turning back towards the bathroom. "Cold shower it is, I guess," he said to himself. Before he entered the bathroom however, his eyes were drawn to the pile of food with Vergil's name all over it. "But first…"

The sun hit Vergil's eyes like a laser, and he had to bring up a gloved hand to shield them before he could see anything. It suddenly occurred to him how unused he was to being outside, usually spending most of his time in the dim office, or out at night hunting things. There was also the fact that he tended to teleport everywhere, which probably didn't help.

He decided to go for a walk to clear his head, oblivious to the strange stares he was getting from passerby. "Mama, why is that man dressed like that?" a small boy asked, tugging on his mother's coat. "Is that a real sword?" someone else whispered to their friend. "Damn cosplayers," an old man sitting on a bench growled. Vergil paid them no heed and carried on until he found himself at a surprisingly pleasant little park. He was disappointed in himself for not knowing this was so close by until now.

Vergil located a quiet bench next a pond, hidden in the shadows of a large willow tree. He leaned back and closed his eyes, letting out a loud sigh. He remained that way for a while, enjoying the warmth of the sun, a feeling he had almost all but forgotten.

"...gil? Vergil!" a voice suddenly called out to him.

He reluctantly opened his eyes and looked ahead to find Nero's woman running over to him waving. What was her name again? He never could work out how to pronounce it. "Kylie," he said, attempting to smile as she sat down next to him. A concerned look crossed Kyrie's face as he did so, and he quickly reverted back to his neutral expression. What do you want, he almost asked, but thought better of it when he spotted Nero in the distance. "To what do I owe the pleasure?" he instead asked through gritted teeth.

"Nero's been trying to get hold of you all day," Kyrie said, smiling sweetly. "We were starting to get worried so we decided to pay a visit."

"Clearly not worried enough if you're taking a detour through the park. "I spoke with him this morning," Vergil said, standing as Nero finally caught up.

"Hey! Never thought we'd find you relaxing in the middle of the park," Nero said, looking his very uncomfortable looking father up and down. "Although, I have to say, you're not really dressed for it… You are aware it's the middle of summer right?"

Vergil cast a glance at Nero and Kyrie who were both dressed in light and airy clothes, each with a pair of sunglasses pushed up on their heads. He was too ashamed to tell them that he only really had two outfits, so chose to ignore the statement completely. "I was just trying to clear my head," he said at last, and started to walk away.

"Yo, not so fast," Nero said, grabbing his father's arm as he tried to pass him, which earned him a swift whack to the leg with Yamato's sheath.

"Do not touch me so carelessly," Vergil growled, glaring at the hand which still held onto his right arm.
"Chill out man, I just want to talk," Nero said, finally letting go. "I've been trying to call you all morning but you weren't picking up."

"We spoke but a mere six hours ago," Vergil reminded him. "What could possibly be so urgent?"

"Well, we might have found you somewhere to live," Nero said, smiling. "The location is perfect. It's halfway between Dante's shop and our place, lots of shops nearby, plus the rent isn't all that bad and one of our suppliers had agreed to cover it! Only thing is, you need to say yes soon, or someone else will take it."

"At what cost to me?" Vergil asked after a moment. "Nothing in life is ever free."

"Ah well…” Nero and Kyrie looked between themselves nervously.

"A-All you'd need to do is look help after the children a few days a week, and whenever Nero has to go out on a hunting job," Kyrie chimed in. "It's really not that difficult, and is actually quite fulfilling…”

Vergil looked between the two of them, saying nothing. He had said this morning that he might consider it, but now that the option was actually there, he was feeling nothing but regret and undiluted dread. The idea of having to deal with humans was bad enough, but the smaller, unintelligent ones… "Go home," he said finally, walking away without looking back.
Chapter Five

Vergil returned to a once again empty shop, feeling slightly, but *only* slightly, more relaxed than he had when he left. There was a note from Dante stuck to the desk with a small dagger.

"Going out to get some real shopping. That food wasn't natural, yo."

*Dante*

*P.S. Nero was looking for you.*

Vergil removed the knife, throwing it at the dartboard in the corner. A perfect bullseye as usual. He looked over to where the shopping had previously been, only to find a pile of empty packaging. It seems his plan had worked as intended. He let out another sigh as he started to tidy up. He had been sighing a lot recently, he realised. All of a sudden, the phone on the desk started to ring, catching him by surprise. He threw the packets into the recycling bin and walked over, picking up the handset a little too aggressively.

"Nero, I don't want to talk right now. I need to think things over-"

"Hello?" a strange voice said on the other end of the phone.

"Who are you?" Vergil asked, sitting down in the chair.

"Is this Devil May Cry?" the voice asked. It sounded like a slightly older woman.

"It is…" Vergil answered hesitantly.

"So you must be the legendary Dante, right?" the woman asked. "You sound a lot angrier than I expected."

"Ah, no. I'm his older brother," Vergil responded.

"Brother? I never knew he had a brother. In that case, is Dante there?"

Vergil squeezed the handset in irritation before answering, trying to hide the anger in his voice. "I also work for Devil May Cry, how can I help?"

"I'd really rather talk to Dante. I've heard great things about him."

"I can pass on a message."

"It's okay, I'll just try calling later."

"Just spit it out already, woman!" Vergil shouted. "Do you need our services or not?"

The voice on the other end gasped in disapproval. "Well, I can certainly see why no one has heard of you. Your customer service is awful! Good day!" With that, the woman hung up the phone, leaving Vergil to wonder what the heck had just happened.

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Around an hour after the strange phone call, the doors to the shop were kicked open and Dante entered, arms laden with shopping bags and Trish in tow. Behind them, Nero and Kyrie followed,
along with a very disgruntled Lady.

"I mean, a hovel? Really?" Dante was saying. He stopped in his tracks when he noticed Vergil asleep on the couch in the corner, coat draped over him like a blanket. "Well well, looks like he came back after all." The small group stumbled inside, trying to remain as quiet as possible. "Who wants to be the one to try waking up sleeping beauty?" Dante asked, a mischievous grin plastering his face.

"A rare sight to see him asleep on the couch for once," Lady said, looking in Dante's direction. She was still pissed after this morning's events, but she could never pass up the chance to hang out with Nero and Kyrie when the opportunity presented itself. There was just something so wholesome about them that she couldn't resist. This unfortunately meant that when she got a call from Dante asking if she could guess who he'd bumped into while out shopping, she had no choice but to agree to attend their impromptu dinner party. Although where they would all sit, she had no idea.

"Guy's had a tough morning," Dante said, wandering over and rubbing his chin slightly. He seemed to ponder for a moment before reaching for his sword and pointing it hilt down towards Vergil's forehead. "Payback time…"

Dante felt the cold metal of Yamato pressed against his back before he'd even finished raising his weapon. "Foolishness," Vergil said from behind Dante, before driving his sword through Dante's chest. Kyrie let out a small squeal, causing Vergil to turn in confusion. "...What are you all doing here?" he asked, yanking out his sword and wiping the blood on Dante's jacket before resheathing it.

"I… ran into them while shopping," Dante gasped, kneeling down at Vergil's feet. He pushed himself up until he was able to collapse onto the now vacant couch. He coughed up a bit of blood before wiping his mouth on the edge of his already bloodied coat. "You seemed a bit down today, so I thought I'd invite them to dinner to try and cheer you up."

"I'm not interested," Vergil said bluntly, glancing at the blonde demon and the irritating dark haired woman. Before anyone could protest further, he walked up the stairs and slammed his door shut.

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Although he'd meant what he said, Vergil was still a little surprised when no-one came upstairs to bug him for the rest of the afternoon into the evening. For fifteen minutes, he had sat on the edge of his bed, hand hovering over his sword while he waited to confront whoever dared bother him. When it was clear that this would not be happening, he selected one of the many books from his shelf and laid back on the bed, tuning out the sounds of talking below. There was just enough daylight left for him to be able to make out the text.

He had read this particular book a few times before, and the more he tried to continue, the more he realised that he was just using it as a distraction. Nero and Kyrie's words kept invading his thoughts any time he tried to concentrate, and eventually he gave up and threw the book on the floor in frustration.

There was no way he would humiliate himself by working at an orphanage. He hadn't been to hell and back multiple times just so he could look after other people's' spawn. He got up from the creaky bed and paced back and forth in what little space he had. Sure, this place was always cold. And dark. And cramped. And - Vergil listened to the laughter below - constantly full of unwanted guests, but at least he could maintain his dignity.
His thoughts suddenly flashed to the night before, when he had been caught in a far more vulnerable position than he would have liked. Feeling his anger rising again, he picked up his useless bedside lamp and was preparing to throw it at the wall when he heard the phone downstairs start to ring. He put the lamp down and walked over to his door, straining his ears to see if it was the same woman from earlier.

"...that's me," he heard Dante say, as the chatter and music downstairs suddenly quietened down. "Uh huh. Oh, really?"

A pause.

"Well ma'am, I really am sorry you feel that way. You have my deepest apologies."

It had to be her again. He wondered how long it would be before Dante came storming up the stairs to give him another lecture on customer service. Vergil listened a little longer, trying to make out more of the conversation, but he couldn't quite hear enough. Finally, he heard Dante replace the receiver and seemingly call someone over. For a few moments he heard muffled speech before a high pitched voice shouted "No way!" There was some more back and forth between them before some light footsteps started to stomp their way upstairs.

Vergil heard his unwanted guest knock at a few different doors, clearly lost, before he yanked his own door open in frustration. "What do you want?" he asked, not knowing who to expect - the footsteps hadn't been loud enough to belong to Dante.

Lady turned to face him from the opposite end of the hallway. She was using her phone as a torch and the light caught his eyes, making him look oddly intimidating as he hid in the shadows. Well, more intimidating than usual anyway. "Huh, there you are," she said nonchalantly, walking over. She shone her light up at him, causing Vergil to squint further.

"Could you not?" he asked, gesturing at the device in her hands.

"Oh right. Sorry," Lady said, surprising them both with her apology, before turning off the light and tucking the phone in her back pocket.

"I repeat the question," Vergil said, still glaring down at her.

"Dante sent me," Lady responded, matter-of-factly, placing her hands on her hips. Vergil just stared back at her, waiting for her to continue. "So… This is your room, huh?" Lady asked, changing the topic. She tried looking past Vergil who stepped forward and closed the door behind him, still not speaking. "I have to say, it smells a lot better than Dante's," Lady said, moving back a little. "What is that, sandalwood?"

"You've been in Dante's room?" Vergil asked stiffly, finally giving in and talking to her.

"Only in the doorway," Lady said defensively. "I know not to enter a man's room alone, let alone a man who is half demon."

"I see..." Vergil responded. Lady wasn't sure if she was imagining things, but he seemed somewhat relieved.

For a moment, neither of them said anything further and just stood there uncomfortably until Dante's laughter echoed up the stairs, reminding Lady why she was there in the first place. "Oh, right!" she exclaimed, clapping her hands together. "So, I have something I've been forced to ask you."
"I already dislike where this is going," Vergil said, crossing his arms. "...Continue."

"Okay, so you know how earlier we were arguing about me never inviting you out on jobs instead of Dante?"

"Yes..." Vergil said hesitantly. That whole situation felt like a completely different time now, it was hard for him to imagine it was only a few hours ago.

"Well, Dante just received a call regarding a job that he apparently thinks we'd be perfect for."

"Is that so."

Lady hesitated a little before leaning slightly closer and angrily whispering "Well actually, no, but he's beyond pissed at you for both your bad customer service, and the fact you impaled him in the damn chest for literally no reason. I also think he's still angry at me over the whole short notice thing; he just hides it really well behind that dumb grin of his. Just shut up and play along before we get into even more trouble." She straightened up again and cleared her throat. "So yeah. Dante said you've been looking to go out hunting again for a while, so what do you say?"

Vergil stared back at her, unable to hide the slight smile tugging at the corner of his lips as a result of her small outburst. "I can't say yes to something I have no details about," he said at last, hoping it was dark enough up here that she wouldn't notice his bemused expression.

Lady studied him closely, the light from downstairs only illuminating the edge of the left side of his face. "You find something funny?" she asked, about to poke the barrel of her gun into his chest, but thinking better of it after what Vergil had done to Dante. She suddenly found her chin being lifted slightly by the hilt of Yamato, which was now being pressed firmly against her jaw. "Hurry up and explain before I lose my patience," Vergil said, fully serious again.

"...Promise you won't get mad? ...er," she added. Vergil responded by increasing the pressure of his sword. "Okay, okay," Lady said, stepping back and rubbing her throat. "So, this woman called-"

"Slightly older sounding?" Vergil asked, curiosity getting the better of him.

"Huh? Beats me. Anyway, she has this daughter right? Got a new boyfriend recently, planning on moving in with him - a little soon if you ask me, but whatever - and things seem to be going pretty well."

"And? We deal with demons, not unhappy mother-in-laws."

"Ah well, here's the thing," Lady said, leaning against the wall in an attempt to appear more comfortable than she felt. "A few weeks ago, the daughter and the boyfriend go away somewhere. Daughter refuses to say where, just that they went to visit his family. Here's where things get interesting."

Vergil sighed. "Let me guess, the daughter and, or, boyfriend acted differently upon their return and the mother had been feeling strangely ill, or something along those lines."

"Pretty much," Lady said. "Although it's less that the mother has been feeling ill, so much as the daughter's friends keep disappearing."

"Sounds like possession or some form of skinwalker to me," Vergil said thoughtfully, recalling some of the many texts he had read. "Quite a rare occurrence indeed. I may be interested."
"Excellent!" Lady said, standing straight again and starting to walk away. "Okay, the dinner reservation is at 7pm tomorrow. Try to wear something at least a little more normal looking and-" She didn't get far before she felt Vergil's hand grabbing the back of her collar and pulling her back towards him, before she was shoved quite forcefully against the wall.

"It seems you haven't quite finished explaining," Vergil said coldly, stepping to the side and blocking her only route of escape down the narrow hallway.

"Okay fine, ya got me," Lady said, rubbing her shoulder. "The mother might have decided to lure them to us under the pretence of asking them out to dinner. I think she told them she had some important news or something. Anyway, the downside of that means-"

Vergil turned around and started to head downstairs, saying nothing further.

"Oh hey! Look who finally decided to join us!" Dante called out, waving Vergil over as he appeared at the bottom of the staircase. "Someone get this guy a drink, he's got a face like… thunder…" Dante trailed off as Vergil stalked towards him, swords forming in the air with each step. "I'm guessing Lady-"

"Are you out of your mind?" Vergil asked, disregarding the concerned stares from everyone else in the room.

"I just thought it would be a nice way to get you back in the hunting game," Dante said, hands raised.

"I refuse." Vergil said, pointing the summoned swords towards Dante's chest. "I'm not as desperate as you might think. Get Nero to do it, or heck, you can go with your harlot-"

"Hey!" Trish shouted angrily.

"But I am not about to humiliate myself in such a manner-"

"The woman offered to pay for the meal," Dante said, grinning. "And clothes."

"I don't…" Vergil hesitated. It had been so long since he'd eaten proper food he didn't even know what counted as a good meal any more.

"Plus I'll let you keep all the earnings," Dante said, casually pushing the swords away from him. "And…"

"Dante, don't try to bribe me…"

"I'll even keep the hot water and electricity metre full for the next two months. I promise."

The whole room turned to look at Vergil expectantly, including Lady who had snuck back downstairs and was currently hiding behind Trish.

"...How much is she offering to pay?" Vergil finally asked, defeated.
"Come on bro what are you, a nineteenth century butler?" Dante asked as Vergil stepped out of the changing room for the third time.

"It's still a mystery to me how I was conceived," Nero said, shaking his head in disapproval.

"Why are you even still here?" Vergil asked angrily. "Don't you have dying children to look after?"

"And miss the chance to help my old man dress up for his first date? I don't think so," Nero said, choosing to ignore his father's harsh words. "Besides, Kyrie and Nico have it covered."

"It is not a date," Vergil growled, pulling off the fancy dress jacket and throwing it at the wall next to Nero's head. "It is a business meal only."

"Look, why don't you just let us give you some recommendations?" Dante asked, picking up the jacket and walking over to his clueless sibling. "You're the one that said you wanted to get this over with quickly."

Vergil turned to face Dante and looked him up and down. "You are the last person I would want to take fashion advice from," he said bluntly. "Haven't you ever wondered why I'm the one with the son and not you?"

"Ohh, burn!" Nero hollered, earning a glare from both brothers.

"There are many answers I could give to that, none of which would be appropriate right now," Dante said, looking through the selection of outfits Vergil had taken into the changing room. "Okay, how about this," he said, pulling out a dark blue shirt with black buttons. "It's very you."

"I can't just wear a shirt by itself," Vergil said, snatching the hanger from Dante's hand.

"Shame, I'm sure Lady would love that," Dante grinned, earning himself a smack to the back of the head.

"What about these?" Nero asked, walking over with a pair of black dress pants.

"Hey, not bad," Dante said, nodding in approval. "See? I knew it was a good idea to bring a hip young person along," he added, patting Nero's shoulder.

"Everyone knows that blue and black look good together," Vergil said dismissively.

"Then why is it that you've you tried on three outfits and still look ridiculous?" Dante asked, looking around distractedly. "Aha!" He walked over to a corner of the shop just out of sight and came back holding a sleek looking dinner jacket. The outer matched the trousers Nero had found while the inner was lined with a dark blue not too dissimilar to the shirt Vergil was holding. "Perfect."

"What about a tie?" Vergil asked, eyeing the garments with reluctant approval.

"No one wears a tie these days," Nero said, passing Vergil the clothing he was holding.

"That's right. You want to look classy, but relaxed. You want to be able to enjoy yourself," Dante
said, throwing the jacket towards Vergil, who caught it mid air. "Besides, this restaurant is pretty fancy, but I don't think it's *that* high end. The last thing you want to do is look out of place."

"I'm not doing this to enjoy myself," Vergil grumbled as Nero and Dante pushed him back into the changing room.

"Just be quiet and get dressed," they both said, pulling the curtains closed.

"What about this?" Lady asked, stepping out of her bedroom in the first outfit she'd decided to try on.

"Perfect," Trish said, giving her the thumbs up.

Vergil stepped out of the changing room for the fourth time, wearing his new ensemble. "Well?" he asked stiffly.

"Damn bro, you're looking *fine,*" Dante said. He got up from the small seating area he and Nero had resigned themselves to for most of the morning. "Just a few small changes…" He walked over and undid the buttons on the jacket and the top button of the shirt, which Vergil had done all the way up. It took all of Vergil's strength not to swat him away.

"Much better," Nero said, giving a thumbs up.

"This feels wrong somehow…" Vergil said, holding the jacket closed again.

"Nah man, remember. You want to look *relaxed.* No one is going to have a good time if you look uncomfortable," Dante said. "You might even want to untuck the shirt."

"I feel more uncomfortable like this than I did before," Vergil responded, tucking the shirt in even further.

"Okay, okay, let's try something," Dante said, looking around until he spotted a young shop assistant with light brown hair tied back in a small ponytail. "Hey! Pretty lady over there; that's right, you," he said, winking as the young girl looked over. "Can we borrow you for a sec?"

"Can I help you with something?" the girl asked, walking over. "Are the clothes not to your liking?"

"No-" Vergil started to say before Dante held up a hand to silence him.

"This here is my brother," Dante said, pointing over his shoulder at a very disgruntled Vergil. "We need your advice on something."

"Um… Sure?" the girl asked, glancing behind Dante.

"This outfit," Dante said, walking over behind Vergil and placing his hands on his brother's shoulders, much to the other's chagrin. "It looks good right?"

"I…” The girl looked the outfit up and down, working her way up until she reached Vergil's glare. "I feel like it would look a lot better if the man wearing it didn't look so angry…” she said quietly, looking away in embarrassment.
"Okay, but my brother's internal rage aside, it's a fine outfit for a classy, but not _too_ classy restaurant right?"

"I-It ties together very nicely," she said, still looking away nervously.

"And how about now?" Dante asked, doing the buttons back up while Vergil tried to push him away and stop him from manhandling him.

"Unhand me!" Vergil shouted, pushing Dante with enough force to send him flying into the wall opposite.

"Oh my!" The girl exclaimed, wide eyed. "Is he okay?"

"He's fine," Vergil said, turning to face the girl while adjusting the jacket. The shop assistant looked over at Dante who gave a thumbs up from the floor and smiled. "This is much better right?" Vergil asked, gesturing to the tidied up outfit.

"Say no," Nero whispered obviously.

"U-Um actually," the girl started, about to agree with Dante and Nero before she was interrupted.

"What about now?" Vergil asked, forcing a smile.

The colour drained from the shop assistant's face and she let out a small whimper. "It looks fine however you want it," she said very quickly without pause, before running away.

"See?" Vergil said smugly, turning to face Dante and Nero who were both shaking their heads.

"Brother… Just, do yourself a favour and don't attempt to smile ever again," Dante sighed.

By the time they left the clothes store, it was getting on for midday. They had been there pretty much since it had opened three hours ago, and Dante and Nero were starting to get hungry.

"Anyone want to grab a quick bite?" Nero asked cheerfully. "...I'll pay," he added flatly when he saw Vergil and Dante's faces fall.

"In that case, count me in," Dante said, putting on his new sunglasses. In the end, both brothers had bought a few new clothes each, in addition to Vergil's outfit for tonight. While the older twin had initially protested at taking advantage of their client's generosity, he quickly changed his mind when not just one, but multiple people in the store had asked him where the convention was in town. Both of them now wore pairs of dark coloured jeans, something which Vergil was very much unused to but actually found to be quite comfortable. Dante had opted for a red polo shirt - buttons of course undone - while Vergil had opted for a light blue dress shirt. He too had a pair of sunglasses, but they were pushed back on his head, keeping his hair out of his eyes.

"I'll see you back at the shop," Vergil said, starting to walk away. "I've already had enough human interaction for today, I need a break before this evening."

"Aww, come on," Nero pleaded. "It's been ages since we hung out as a family!"

"I had plenty of 'family time' last night, I don't need any more," Vergil responded, finally slipping the glasses over his eyes.

The remainder of the 'dinner' last night had been... interesting, to say the least. Once Vergil had
agreed to their ridiculous mission, they wouldn't let him retreat back upstairs and demanded that he spend some time socialising. He'd ended up spending most of the evening talking to Kyrie while the rest of them got increasingly drunk and played all manner of foolish games, charades and twister amongst them. As it turned out, Nero's taste in women wasn't all that bad, and she had helped him throw everyone into taxis once they had all passed out. With the amount of alcohol Nero had consumed, Vergil was more than a little surprised when he had turned up at 8am to go shopping. Dragging Dante out of bed had been a struggle, however. Vergil shook his head, trying to erase the memory.

"Lame," Nero called out behind Vergil, but he didn't try to stop him. "Fine, looks like it's just me and you, Uncle Dante," he said, teasingly.

"Man, I will never get used to that," Dante muttered as they walked off in the opposite direction.

The evening came round faster than Vergil would have liked, and he soon found himself standing in the middle of the lobby arguing with Dante about buttons again. Nero had gone back home by this point, so it was one word against the other.

"I'm telling you, I've checked with the client and it's business casual at most!" Dante was shouting.

"I'm already not wearing a tie, any more sloppy and we may as well be attending a burger joint," Vergil growled, trying to dodge Dante's attempts at loosening things.

Suddenly there was a knock at the door and the two of them ceased their pathetic battle.

"Come in!" they both called.

The doors opened and Lady strolled in, Trish following not too far behind. "Ready?" she asked, looking surprised to see Vergil already downstairs. "Aww man, no dramatic walk down the stairs like in the movies?" she asked, walking over.

"What on earth are you wearing?" Vergil asked, looking her up and down.

Lady was wearing a tight fitting sleeveless dress that stopped just above her knees, and a small black cardigan. Beneath it she wore black tights, and on her feet were a pair of heavy ankle boots. "Oh these?" she asked, gesturing to the shoes. These were just for the ride over here." She extended her hand and Trish handed her a pair of black stilettos. "Hang on a sec."

"Not those," Vergil said, looking away and she stood on one leg and then the other, swapping her footwear over. "That dress is…"

"Practical," Lady stated, standing up again. "It allows my legs to move freely so I can kick demon ass, but it's also long enough to hide my guns," she said, lifting it slightly to reveal the hidden holsters.

"Good thinking, I approve," Dante said, nodding. "Not too sure about the pantyhose though, won't they hold you back?"

"Way ahead of ya," Lady said, rubbing her legs. "These are actually stockings. Offers a lot more freedom."

"I suggested those," Trish added. "She was originally planning to go bare."
"Not bad at all," Dante said. "I'll almost tempted to switch places with Vergil to see how this plays out-"

"Please do," Vergil said quickly, still looking away. "We're twins. It's not too late. I'm sure the clothes would fit fine."

"Sorry bro it's too late for that, I have other arrangements now" Dante grinned, pushing his brother towards Lady.

Vergil finally turned his gaze back to his companion for the evening. "I want you to know that I am going to despise every second of this," he said coldly.

"Thanks, you look great too," Lady said sarcastically. She walked around him slowly, admiring his outfit. "I have to say, you clean up pretty nicely. Is that aftershave I smell?"

"No expenses spared here," Dante said. "I couldn't just let my big bro do this half heartedly. I even got him to put some gel in that hair of his!"

"Wait, really?" Lady asked in surprise, inspecting Vergil's slicked back locks. "But it doesn't look any different…"

"Well okay, it didn't work, but the thought was there," Dante admitted.

"Will everyone stop staring at me like I'm some sort of exhibit?" Vergil growled in irritation. "Let's focus on the matter at hand here."

"You're absolutely right," Lady said seriously. "We need to focus on the main problem."

"Thank you," Vergil said tensely before Lady suddenly stepped in front of him.

"I mean seriously, what's going on here?" she asked, pointing at the done up jacket and top button. "I would have expected better advice from you, Dante," she said, shaking her head.

Dante looked at Vergil with raised eyebrows. Neither of them said anything until Vergil finally sighed in frustration. "Fine," he said, undoing the jacket and loosening his top button.
"Okay, so we're clear on how this works right?" Dante asked. They were all standing around the desk with some photos spread out in front of them.

"We go in and state that we have a reservation under 'Redgrave'," Lady began. "The waiters, who are in on this whole thing, will then sit us at a table which is just one other table apart from the targets so as not to be too obvious."

"The woman will make her excuses and head to the bathroom so that we can observe the demons and see how they act," Vergil continued.

"Now remember, we don't know 100% that they're demons yet," Dante said, wagging his finger. "That's why we need to watch them until we can figure out what's up."

"What if the separation tactic doesn't work?" Lady asked.

"Unless they want to draw attention to themselves, it should," Dante said. "When you're prepared, tell the waiter that you're ready for the dessert menu. They'll signal to their colleagues who will come along with the wine, which they'll 'conveniently' spill."

"And if they don't head to the bathroom?" Vergil asked, displeased with how much of this relied on sheer luck and chance alone.

"Then you follow them outside and shank 'em in the street," Dante said, winking.

"You just said we weren't sure if they're demons," Vergil protested. "And if they are in fact possessed-"

"I say we just go for it," Lady said at last. "It should be easy enough to just capture them if need be anyway."

"Now that's what I'm talking about," Dante said happily. "Okay, memorise these photos otherwise this could get tricky."

Lady and Vergil studied the pictures of the young couple and the girl's mother closely before nodding and straightening up. "Okay, let's do this!" Lady said, a little too enthusiastically.

"That's the spirit!" Dante said, giving her an equally enthusiastic thumbs up. "Okay, the hire vehicle should be here any moment, do you both have everything you need?"

"I'm still uncomfortable with the idea of leaving my sword in a strange, unattended vehicle," Vergil said doubtfully, clutching Yamato tightly.

"Maybe, but I have a feeling the patrons would be even more uncomfortable seeing you walk into the middle of the restaurant lugging a katana around," Dante said dryly. "Remember, you're trying to blend in."

"Besides, the Kalina Ann will happily keep Yamato company," Lady said reassuringly.

A horn sounded from outside. "I'll go deal with that," Trish said, turning towards the door. "Come out whenever."

"Be careful with my weapons!" Lady shouted after Trish as she walked out.
"Right!" Dante exclaimed, clapping his hands. "Looks like it's go-time! Oh right, you both have your phones with you I'm assuming?"

"Roger that," Lady said, holding up a small shoulder bag.

"We never used to need phones," Vergil grumbled. "I'll manage fine without."

"Come on Vergil, the world has moved on," Dante said, rolling his eyes. "Besides, I need you to be contactable at all times; I'm leaving one of my best assets with you and need to make sure she's being kept safe. That and it'll make it easier to call for backup."

"You said you had other engagements," Vergil reminded him.

"I did?" Dante asked, finding himself caught in his own lie. "I… Did," he said more confidently. "Sorry, confidential Devil May Cry business," he added, grinning.

"Wait a second-"

"Anyway, I'll just go get your phone, so why don't you guys take a final inventory check and be on your way?" Dante said, running towards the stairs.

"I'll get it," Vergil said stopping Dante in his tracks. "The idea of letting you into my room makes me feel physically unwell."

"Fine, but hurry up," Dante said, sounding slightly hurt.

"So as you can see, you pull this cover over and it conceals the contents of the trunk completely," Trish said, trying to explain how the vehicle worked to Vergil, who looked both confused and concerned.

"But what if it gets broken into?" he asked, still holding his beloved sword close to him.

"That is highly unlikely," Lady said, walking up behind them with Kalina Ann slung over her shoulder. "Besides, once they see what kind of things we're packing, they'll probably think twice about stealing from us." She hoisted the weapon forward and packed it into the trunk, covering it with a dark coloured blanket for extra protection.

After a few more moments of hesitation, Vergil finally gave in and slotted his sword into the vehicle amongst Lady's guns. "If anything happens to this, I'll turn Nero's entire existence into a new weapon," he said coldly.

"Would that even work?" Dante asked, walking over with a scrap of paper and leaning into the car to programme the navigator.

"Hopefully we won't need to find out!" Lady said cheerfully, trying to diffuse the situation. "Anyway, I think we're all ready," she continued, slamming the rear of the vehicle shut. "So, who's driving?" She looked at Vergil expectantly.

"I can't drive," he responded bluntly. "I've never needed to."

"Oh…" Lady said, slightly disappointed. "Guess I'm driving myself to my own date then," she teased, sticking her tongue out when Vergil started to protest. She quickly swapped back into her boots while Vergil made his way over to the passenger side.
"All done," Dante said, ducking out of the vehicle. "I've programmed the location into the car, so it should be fairly straightforward."

"It's still not too late to switch," Vergil whispered, almost pleadingly. "I think she likes you more anyway."

"Have fun brother!" Dante said, patting Vergil on the shoulder before practically shoving him into the vehicle. "Make sure to tell me how it went!"

The first few minutes of the journey were quiet. Vergil spent the entire time sitting up straight and looking out of the window, while Lady tried to get used to driving a vehicle that wasn't a motorbike for a change. Eventually she glanced over at him and cleared her throat.

"No."

"What?"

"I do not wish to engage in idle car chatter with you," Vergil said, still looking out at the passing buildings and trees.

"Can I at least put the radio on?" Lady asked, trying not to sound too pissed. Vergil just nodded in response. She fiddled around with it a bit until a piece of music came on that Vergil recognised all too well. He reached into his inside pocket and pulled out his phone, surprised to see that it wasn't ringing.

"Looks like I found your ringtone," Lady chuckled. "Honestly though, I thought you'd be more of a classical music type of person."

"I am," Vergil replied angrily, placing the device back inside his jacket. "... I can't figure out how to change it," he admitted when she looked at him, indicating for him to continue.

"I could take a look at that for you," Lady offered, looking back at the road and turning left as it flashed up on the small screen to do so.

"We'll see," Vergil responded dismissively, before pressing a few buttons on the dashboard to try and change the music.

"Hey, careful! You'll cancel the-"

*Route cancelled. Please add new destination or press back to turn off.*

Vergil and Lady looked at each other with panic in their eyes.

"I-It's fine, we're close anyway," Lady stammered. "You remember what it was called right?"

"Of course..." Vergil said hesitantly.

The sleek looking vehicle pulled up to the restaurant with only minutes to spare. The rest of the drive there had been silent. Lady found a parking space close to the rear entrance and positioned the vehicle so that their weapons would be easily retrievable. She quickly swapped back into her stilettos while Vergil scoped out the location and its various exit points. Finally, they walked
around to the front of the building, Vergil maintaining far too much distance between them.

"The King's Cross, huh?" Lady asked, looking at the sign hanging above the doorway. "I wonder what made him so mad?" She looked over at Vergil who just hid his face in his palm and shook his head.

"Let's get this over with," he said at last, opening the door and walking through, letting it almost slam into Lady who was right behind him.

"Going well so far," she mumbled.

The sight that met them when they walked in was unexpected to say the least. The 'restaurant' was a crowded room with dirty wooden tables and a busy bar in the corner. Old men were slumped over the counter and the whole place smelled of sour beer.

"Are you sure this is the right place…?" Lady asked, dodging a gruff looking waitress as she pushed past with six pint glasses on a sticky looking metal tray.

"It's the name the woman gave," Vergil said, looking for someone in charge. He finally found a waiter who seemed to be dressed slightly better than the others and approached him. "Excuse me…" he said, tapping the man on the shoulder. The waiter turned to face Vergil and looked him up and down, sneering slightly.

"What can I do for ya, bud?" he asked, wiping his hands on his trousers, leaving a greasy stain behind.

"We… Have a reservation under 'Redgrave'…" Vergil continued hesitantly, looking behind him at Lady who just shrugged.

"Reservation? We don't do reservations here mate, just pick a table and sit at it. I'll bring some menus over," the waiter said, walking towards the bar where a stack of papers sat.

"You heard him, mate," Lady said teasingly, nudging Vergil with her elbow.

"This… Doesn't seem right," Vergil said, watching a middle aged woman exit what appeared to be the bathroom with puke stains on her shirt.

"Let's just see how this pans out," Lady said, grabbing hold of Vergil's arm and leading him towards a table in the corner. She suddenly realised that she'd never actually touched Vergil with more than her fingertip, and secretly enjoyed how firm his bicep felt beneath the soft material of his jacket.

"Looks like I was right not to wear a tie afterall," Vergil said, yanking his arm from Lady's grip and dumping himself into one of the rough looking wooden chairs.

"No kidding," Lady said, hovering by the table.

"What are you doing?" Vergil asked after a moment, looking at her with a raised eyebrow.

"Ah well, you know…" Lady said, blushing slightly. "Atmosphere aside, I was kind of expecting…" she looked at the chair opposite Vergil's. He looked between Lady and the chair a couple of times before his eyes widened slightly in realisation.

"My apologies," he said unexpectedly, rising from his seat and pulling the other chair out a bit. "I wasn't thinking."
"Thank you," Lady said sitting down. "You know, I wasn't actually expecting you to do it."

"I may loathe this entire situation, but I still have etiquette," Vergil said, returning to his own side of the table.

Just then, the waiter from before appeared. "Here's some menus for you both. We have a three courses for the price of two deal going on at the moment," he said, placing grubby cardboard menus in front of them. "Can I interest you in some drinks?" he asked, pulling out a dog-eared notebook.

Lady and Vergil looked between them, each waiting for the other to say something. "We'll just take a jug of water," Vergil said at last. "We need to keep our wits about us after all."

"Uh… huh," the waiter said, scratching his head with the pen he was holding. "Well okay then. I'll come back in a bit so you have some time to choose your meals." With that he walked away, whispering something to a colleague as he passed him, who looked over at Vergil and Lady and laughed.

"Really? Just water?" Lady asked, picking up the soggy menu by the corner before thinking better of it and letting go again.

"You're driving and I don't drink very often," Vergil said distractedly, looking around trying to find the targets. "Besides, we're working; we need to be focussed."

"I mean, that's a good point but couldn't we have got a soft drink or something?"

"Frankly I'm not even sure if I trust the water here," Vergil said, turning to face her again. "I'm not seeing the client anywhere."

"Are you sure? There are a lot of older looking women here," Lady said looking around.

"I'm going to explore," Vergil said, standing up. "If anything untoward happens, try calling me. I might pick up if I can remember how to."

"Wait!" Lady said, grabbing onto the corner of his jacket as he started to wander off, only to find her hand swatted away.

"What is it?" Vergil asked harshly.

"I don't have your number," Lady answered, taking out her phone. "Give your phone to me for a sec." Vergil hesitated for a moment before handing over the small flip phone. "Wow, retro," Lady said turning it over in her hands. "Does this thing even have a camera?"

"It was a gift," Vergil said impatiently. "Hurry up."

Lady quickly added their numbers to each other's phones before handing Vergil's back to him. "There ya go," she said, smiling. "Oh, Vergil?" she asked as he turned away again.

"What do you want this time?" he asked, turning back to face her again, only to have his vision obscured by a bright flash.

"Caller ID," Lady grinned. "Don't worry, I'll take a better one later." Vergil said nothing further and stormed off towards the bar.
Chapter Eight

Chapter Notes

A/N - Perhaps not the most exciting chapter, apologies if so. But, it was getting a bit long and I wanted to split it from the next chapter because it seemed to make more sense that way. Hopefully the upcoming chapter will be a little bit more fun!

The acrid smell in the air grew stronger as Vergil approached the run-down looking bar. With some difficulty, he pushed his way through the gaggle of patrons surrounding it until he was able to lean on the damp wood; a decision which he swiftly regretted when he felt various unknown liquids start to seep through into his shirt. He lifted his arms in disgust and opted instead to stand with them hanging awkwardly at his sides.

After what seemed like an eternity, one of the bartenders turned to face him, his eyes for some reason growing wide as he did so. "What can I get you… bud?" he asked hesitantly, casting his eyes over Vergil's face.

"I am here to ask questions only," Vergil said, feeling slightly unnerved at how intensely this man was staring at him.

"Sorry, kinda busy here," the bartender said, looking away at last. "If you aren't ordering, stop taking up space."

"If you would just lend me your ear for a moment-"

"Dante?" a voice suddenly called out behind Vergil. He turned to his left to see an old man propped on his elbows, looking up at him with a dazed expression. "Dante, it is you," the man continued, sobering up a little. "I'd never forget that hair!"

"I'm afraid you are mistaken," Vergil said dismissively, trying to get the attention of the bartender who had now moved on to another customer.

"Well, I'd understand if you don't recognise me; you were drunk most of the times we hung out," the old man said, grinning. He straightened up and looked Vergil up and down. "You sure have cleaned up well."

"I am telling you, you have the wrong person."

"Even got yourself a pretty gal to boot, huh?" the old man said, nodding his head in Lady's direction. "'Bout time you settled down. Hell of a place to bring her for a date though."

"We're not here on a date," Vergil said irritatedly, finally taking a seat at the bar. It was clear this man wouldn't be taking no for an answer, so Vergil figured he may as well try to get some information from him about Dante which could be useful.

"Well whatever it is, this isn't really a place for a lady," the man said, taking a sip from his pint glass. "How long's it been now anyway? Ten years? Fifteen?"

"I'm afraid I have no idea," Vergil said truthfully.
"Huh…" the man took another sip. "You, ah…" the man hesitated. "You still fighting them
demons of yours?"

"What?" Vergil asked harshly, looking around to make sure no-one had heard. "How did you-"

"It's like I told you back then - we all have our personal demons, Dante. Ain't no shame in
indulging in a few reckless activities every now and then to numb the pain, so long as you don't let
the despair consume you." The old man took another large gulp from the dirty glass he was
holding. "I'm happy for you, I really am," he said after a moment.

"What are you talking about?" Vergil asked hesitantly.

"Well, I didn't want to flat out ask in case it was still a sore subject, but you seem to have moved
on," the man replied. "I'm glad you finally appear to have come to terms with the death of your
brother."

Vergil stared back at him, trying to maintain a neutral expression despite the thoughts whirling
through his mind. "He…" Vergil cleared his throat. "I was really bothered by that it seems," Vergil
said quietly, looking away.

"Bothered is putting it lightly," the old man chuckled, regarding Vergil with uncertainty when he
didn't respond. "Hey, sorry if I've dug up some bad memories," he said at last. "I know how hard it
was for you."

"It's fine," Vergil said, glancing over at the old man again. "It was… Nice to see you again," he
added, standing up. He did not wish to continue this conversation any further; not when he had
more important matters to focus on. "Perhaps we shall have to talk more at some point."

"Well, you know where to find me," the man grinned, gesturing towards the dingy pub.

"Indeed," Vergil said, nodding in a slight bow before walking away, giving up on his attempts to
speak with the bartender. He cast his eyes over the room a few times, desperately trying to spot
anyone who looked remotely similar to the people they were meant to be watching. Just as he was
about to head back to the table, his ears picked up the end of a conversation somewhere in the far
corner of the room, close to the bathroom door.

"I say we just do the old bag in," a grimy looking man seemed to be whispering to someone. Vergil
looked over and spotted a young couple covered in piercings and dressed in varying shades of
black. Both of them had such long, lanky hair, it was hard to tell who was the male, and who was
the female.

"I don't know if that's a good idea," the lighter voiced, presumably female, one was saying.
"What'll we use instead?"

"Don't worry about it, I got a new one that's much stronger," the male said.

"Okay, okay… Meet me out back in ten," the female replied.

Vergil observed them as closely as he could from the distance he was standing at. They looked
nothing like the photos, but if they were shapeshifters of skinwalkers, that could make sense.
Either way, something didn't seem right. He hovered for a few more moments before making his
way back over to Lady, who was hesitantly taking a sip of water from a cloudy looking glass.

"Oh hey, there you are," she said as Vergil approached. "I've been spending the last few minutes
trying to find a part of the glass that isn't chipped so I can actually drink something. I may just end
up drinking directly from the jug…"

"I think I found our targets," Vergil said, ignoring her comments. He stood by the table, resting his left hand on the rough wood before leaning over her and extending his right hand. "Give me the keys."

"Hey, hang on a second!" Lady exclaimed, looking up at him. "We're in this together, remember? What's going on?"

"I need my sword, hand over the keys," he stated again.

"I need my sword, hand over the keys," he stated again.

Lady let out an angry sigh and stood up herself. "I'm coming with you," she said glaring into his eyes. The two of them stared at each other for a moment, neither of them budging until Vergil finally let out an irritated tut and turned towards the door.

"Fine, but don't expect me to protect you when things go wrong," he said, walking away.

"Excuse me?" Lady asked indignanty, running after him. "I don't need any damn protection, especially not from the likes of you!"

"And I work best alone," Vergil said over his shoulder. "Let me handle this and we'll be back at the shop in no time." He reached the door and yanked it open, pausing to hold it open for Lady before continuing towards the car.

"The whole point of this job was to try and get you to work better with others," Lady said, pulling the door closed behind her and catching up with him. "Besides, we haven't even had anything to eat yet, isn't that the whole reason you agreed to this?"

"I'd rather drink shelf milk for the rest of my life than eat something from that pathetic excuse for an establishment," Vergil said, reaching the vehicle and turning to face Lady.

His odd comment took Lady by surprise and she let out a confused laugh. "I'm sorry, what? Shelf milk?"

"Forget it," Vergil said, holding out his hand again. "Keys."

"You'll get the keys when you explain what's happening," Lady replied, taking them out of her bag and twirling them around her finger. "This wasn't part of the plan."

"I think it's clear the plan wasn't going to go ahead the second we stepped inside," Vergil said, grabbing the keys before Lady even had time to react. One moment they were in her hand, the next Vergil had the rear of the vehicle open and was reaching inside.

"You and your damned teleportation," Lady huffed, placing her hands on her hips. "You're really annoying to work with, you know that?"

"Feel free to go back inside," Vergil said, holding up Yamato and smiling slightly. "Much better..." he muttered to himself, attaching it to his hip. He looked at Lady again. "Gruny looking couple. Dressed in black. Said something about 'doing someone in', and I believe they're due to come through the back exit at any moment."

"Thank you," Lady said walking over to the car and retrieving some of her own weapons. "See, that wasn't so hard now was it?"

"You guard the front entrance in case they try to escape," Vergil said, starting to head towards the
dark alleyway at the back of the pub. "The back exit is a dead end, so I can handle it by myself."

"Wait a second, how do you know they're demons?" Lady asked.

"If they're not, we'll soon find out," Vergil replied without turning back. "Now go."

Lady slung the Kalina Ann over her shoulder and nodded. "Fine, let's try things your way then," she said reluctantly. She closed the trunk and locked it up again before heading in the opposite direction.

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Vergil approached the back exit stealthily, keeping himself hidden in the shadows as he watched for any signs of movement. The door was rusted metal with a light above it, illuminating the years of neglect on its surface. To its right was a short alleyway which ended in a brick wall, and to the left was the side of the rest of the building. There was another building opposite the pub, which formed the other side of the small brick corridor. Vergil pressed his back against this building and peeked around the corner towards the door.

As anticipated, it creaked open after a few minutes and the scraggly looking couple spilled out into the alleyway. They were holding what looked to be a burlap sack between them, from which they pulled out a smaller package. A strange odour emanated from it and filled the air. It was unpleasant and caused Vergil's nostrils to itch slightly, cementing his suspicions that this couple weren't entirely human.

"So where's this other bag?" the woman asked, looking around.

"I hid it behind one of these bins," the man said, unknowingly turning his back towards Vergil and rummaging in a nearby dumpster slightly further down.

"Man, are you serious? Anyone could have come along and picked this up, yo," the girl whined. "This better be some good shit if you're planning to just throw the other stuff away."

With them both distracted, Vergil took the opportunity to step forward into the light cast by the naked bulb above the door and walked towards his targets. "Reveal yourselves, demon scum," Vergil growled, raising Yamato and pointing its tip at the man and woman before him. The couple quickly turned around and stared back at him wide-eyed, dropping the small package they were holding.

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Lady carefully positioned herself behind a large oak tree near the entrance, which allowed her the benefit of cover while still being able to keep an eye on the building. She carefully hid her purse at the base of the tree so that it wouldn't get in the way, and checked that her guns were all fully loaded. Just as she had finished clicking the barrel of the last gun into place, she heard a noise coming from below. She sighed in frustration as she realised it was her phone ringing. Maybe Vergil was right about not bringing these along, she thought, frantically digging around for it before using her shoulder to hold the phone against her ear. "What do you want?" she asked rudely, still watching the building closely.

"Where the heck are you?!" an angry voice shouted from the other end.

"Dante?" Lady asked, starting to panic a little and grabbing onto the phone properly. "What's going on? What's wrong?"
"I should be asking you that!" Dante yelled. "You guys are over forty minutes late, what are you doing?"

"What are you talking about? We're outside right now!" Lady protested.

"Oh really, is that so?" Dante asked. "Then how come I've had calls from both the restaurant and the client asking where the hell you are?" Dante sounded a lot angrier that Lady was used to, and she started to shake a little despite herself. Her mind flashed back to when they had accidentally cancelled the navigator on the way over, and she was suddenly overcome by a feeling of dread.

"B-But we made it on time…" she stammered, looking over at the sign hanging above the door. The King's Cross… It had certainly sounded right when Vergil said it earlier.

"...What's the name of the place you're at right now?" Dante asked, trying to sound a little calmer. He knew from dealing with Vergil that being angry seldom resolved anything, and made a mental note that he would need to apologise to Lady once this was all over.

"T-The…" she gulped. "The King's Cross…" she said quietly. The voice on the other end was silent for what seemed like an eternity, and Lady could practically feel the facepalm through the phone.

" Les Quinze Croissants," Dante groaned at last. "You're meant to be at Les Quinze Croissants!"

Lady's feeling of panic only increased as the realisation of what was happening hit her. "Dante, I've got to go," she said frantically.

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"H-Holy shit, is that a fuckin' sword?" the guy stammered, raising his hands. "L-Look man, we don't want no trouble. I know we owe Slayer some money, but there ain't no need for this!"

"Yeah!" the girl chimed in, trying to hide behind the male. "He said we was good 'til next week!"

"Your grammar is just as foul as your stench," Vergil said, stepping forward, swords forming in the air around him. "Now, prepare to die-"

"Vergil, darling, there you are!" a voice suddenly called out behind him.

Vergil glanced over his shoulder, still pointing his weapons at his unsuspecting victims. "What on earth are you-" he started to ask before Lady slammed her hands down on his shoulders, resting her chin on his right.

"Oh you silly boy," she said, forcing a fake smile. "Have you been at the rum again?" she asked, digging her nails into Vergil's flesh.

"Unhand me, fool-"

"Mission abort, mission abort," she whispered desperately, still grinning unnaturally.

"Look lady, I dunno what kinda shit your dude is on, but we don't want nothin' to do with it, ya hear?" the man said, slowly backing away despite the fact there was nothing but a wall behind them.

"Yes, yes so sorry!" Lady said, trying to drag Vergil away, who was refusing to budge.
"Either explain yourself, or stop touching me before I end you where you stand," Vergil said, pointing some of the summoned swords in Lady's direction.

"Wrong goddamn restaurant," Lady growled through clenched teeth, before smiling at the couple once more. "So sorry, lover's tiff, haha!"

Vergil hesitated for a moment more before resheathing his weapon and dissolving the swords in the air. He shook himself free of Lady's grasp before turning his back on the couple, and started to walk away. "You'll pay for this," Vergil whispered angrily to Lady as he passed her. Lady gave a short bow to the man and woman who had now fallen to the ground, their legs presumably having given way due to the shock, before running after Vergil.

As she caught up with him, he turned and grabbed the strap of her bag, pulling her close to him until they were almost face to face. "Explain," he hissed, looking down at her.

"Hey, not so rough! This is a designer handbag," Lady heard the click of Yamato returning to its scabbard before she had even noticed it move. A moment later, she realised that her bag was now lying on the ground.

"Next time I'll cut through more than just the strap," Vergil threatened, still towering over Lady.

"Okay, okay!" she said, bending down to pick up her now dirtied purse. "Look, I'm sorry for the act back there, I just panicked and didn't know what to do…"

"You caused me great embarrassment," Vergil admitted, stepping back a little. "And how many times do I have to tell you not to touch me unexpectedly? I could have impaled you if I wasn't paying attention."

"Fortunately, you're always paying attention," Lady said, trying to hide the slight tremor in her voice as she realised that she could indeed just have been stabbed to death. "Except of course when it comes to restaurant names it seems."

"That couple, they smell strange," Vergil said, pointing back towards the alleyway. "Whether we have the right place or not, they need to be dealt with."

"Vergil, I don't know how to explain this to you," Lady said, trying to tie the strap on her handbag back together. "But the only thing I smelled back there was some sort of drugs. Nothing demonic about it. Well, other than the effects it can have on your body anyway."

"But…" Vergil paused. He hated being wrong, but he also knew when to back down during an argument, and from the way Lady was staring daggers at him, he had a feeling it would be best if he dropped the subject. "Fine. Now would you please tell me what is going on?"

"Right," Lady started, giving up and tucking her bag under her right arm. "So, you know how you cancelled the navigator?"

"...Yes."

"And how you told me the name of the place so I could reprogramme it?"

"...Yes," Vergil said, examining a thread on his jacket. Tonight really wasn't going too well for him.

"Well guess what? You got the name of the place wrong," Lady said smugly. "And Dante is none too pleased about it," she added.
"Let's stop talking about it and go the the right place then," Vergil said, heading over to the car. He could slowly feel his fantasies of hot showers and cold milk fading away as he realised there was no way Dante would react well to his blunder. He hated how reliant he had become on Dante; it made him feel like a small child and it angered him. The old man's words came back to him however, and he suddenly felt a strange pang of guilt, which he quickly dismissed. He didn't have time to think of such things right now.

"You're in luck by the way," Lady said, dumping her weapons back into the rear of the vehicle. "Apparently the couple are running late too. There are concerns that they may not even turn up at all."

"Is there even any point in going then?" Vergil asked, reluctantly placing his sword next to the Kalina Ann again. "I've already had quite enough of this evening and I'd much rather head back."

"Hey now, a jobs a job," Lady said, locking up. "We can't just leave it half finished because you made a couple of mistakes." She was enjoying rubbing this in as much as possible. All the more because Vergil's expression remained neutral despite her jabs, which only irritated her further.

"...Fine, but once this is over, I'm never agreeing to go out on a job with you again," Vergil replied, yanking the passenger door open a little too forcefully before slamming it shut behind him.

Lady entered the vehicle shortly after, having switched back to her boots. "See something you like?" she asked as she spotted Vergil looking away while she dumped herself into the slightly too low seat with some difficulty.

"For someone called Lady, you are very inelegant," Vergil stated. "That dress is far too short for you to be throwing yourself around like that."

"I guess it does have a tendency of riding up a little," Lady said, adjusting the hem of her dress which had hitched up slightly as she was climbing into the car. "Maybe full tights would have been better instead of stockings after all." She looked over at Vergil who was still staring awkwardly out of the window. "Dante was probably right though, tights would have been too restricting."

"I wish not to discuss the intricacies of women's legwear," Vergil said at last, hoping she wouldn't see the slight blush that was starting to creep onto his cheeks. "Let's go."

"You're just gonna stare out of the window again the whole time, aren't you?" Lady asked, typing the correct location into the navigator this time.

"After what happened last time, I daren't do anything else."

"Probably for the best," Lady said patronisingly. "All right, let's do this!"
In 100 yards, turn right. Then, you have reached your destination.

True to his word, Vergil had not said, or even moved, any further since they had set off. The indicator clicked as Lady prepared to turn, echoing through the silence between them. Fortunately, it had been a short journey.

"I'm… Sorry about your bag," Vergil said suddenly, causing Lady to jump.

"Um. It's fine?" she answered hesitantly, glancing over at him. He was still looking out of the window. "It wasn't really designer you know, I was just saying that to be annoying. Sorry."

"I see."

Lady pulled into the (much fancier looking) car park and tried to find a similar space to the one she had found last time. Just as she was starting to get worried that she wouldn't be able to find one, she came across an empty space by the back door with a small white sign propped up at the back of it, reading 'Reserved for Redgrave'. Somehow it made her feel even worse about their error, but she paid her guilt no mind and carefully slotted the vehicle into the space. They had a job to do - feeling bad could wait.

She turned the engine off and turned to face Vergil. "We're here," she said. "Although I guess that was kind of obvious."

"Let's go," Vergil replied, finally looking at her again and smiling ever so slightly.

"Are… You okay?" Lady asked, starting to feel slightly concerned. Usually if Vergil smiled he was about to do something evil, or had just done something unsavoury. She checked all around her to see if he had done something without her noticing.

"I've just been thinking about some things," Vergil said, getting out of the car. He walked around to Lady's side and opened the door before extending a hand towards her. "That and this establishment looks a lot more high end than the last one; I'm trying to keep up appearances."

"I knew you were up to something," Lady said, shaking her head. "Does this mean you're actually going to try and be nice to me now?"

"Only as much as necessary," he replied, still hovering awkwardly. Lady removed the keys from the ignition and slapped his hand away.

"I can stand up myself, thanks," she said, sticking her tongue out.

"...As you wish," Vergil said, his previously outstretched hand now forming a fist at his side. He was no longer smiling.

Vergil turned his back towards Lady as she stubbornly tried to get out of the vehicle without revealing her underwear to the world. "Interesting how a demon such as yourself can still have manners," Lady said at last, slamming the door shut.
"Interesting how someone so crass insists on being referred to as 'Lady'," Vergil retorted, giving her a moment to adjust her dress before turning round again. "Don't forget to swap your shoes."

"I know," Lady said huffily. "I don't need you to remind me how to dress."

"Well hurry up then."

Lady was about to say something sarcastic in response, when someone suddenly came running over to the pair. As they got closer, it was clear it was a waiter of some sort, dressed in some of the finest materials available. "Excusez-moi?" he was calling out. "Excusez-moi? You are, ah, you are Redgraves oui?"

"That's us," Lady said nodding. "Sorry for the delay."

"Non, non, it's fine," the waiter said, waving his hands in the air. "But the Madame, she is getting very impatient, oui? Her daughter has just shown up, you see."

Lady and Vergil looked at each other, now fully serious again. It was go-time.

"Has the male turned up?" Vergil asked, feeling mildly self conscious at how much more smartly dressed this waiter seemed to be than him.

"Eh? Oh non, no males, only women," the waiter replied, looking at Vergil and Lady's dresswear for the evening with slight scepticism. With her boots and dirtied handbag, Lady was looking slightly rougher than the waiter was used to. He shook his head and decided not to concern himself with such things. "Come, come," he said, gesturing for them to follow him.

"Give us just a moment," Lady requested, opening the vehicle to get her stilettos out. "We'll be right there."

"Of course," the waiter said, bowing. "I will wait for you inside." Vergil and Lady watched as the nervous looking man scarpered back around the side of the building towards the entrance.

"Did you see how well dressed he was?" Vergil asked, buttoning up his jacket.

"Well yeah, he's a waiter," Lady said, slipping out of her boots and into the much more uncomfortable heels. "What do you think? Reckon I'll get away with hiding an extra handgun in my bag or would that be too obvious?"

"If you're going to be bringing so many weapons with you, then I'm bringing Yamato. I don't care what Dante says about unnerving people," Vergil said, reaching for his sword.

"Hey, not so fast," Lady protested, stepping in front of him. "What happened to keeping up appearances?"

"I'd rather be prepared."

"Yeah, but it's not like we're going to fight them in the middle of the restaurant," Lady said. "I have specifically parked here because it is next to the back exit, which means once they head to the bathroom, you run out here, get the sword and return inside. That was the plan."

"And if the bathrooms are on the opposite side of the building?" Vergil asked, wondering if he could teleport past Lady without knocking her over.

"They're not, we checked, remember? That's why they reserved this space. Come on, we've already
messed up enough tonight, let's at least try to do this properly."

Vergil glared at her for a moment, eyebrows twitching slightly. "Fine," he said at last. "Let's follow the plan, but-"

"But don't come running to you when things go wrong, yeah yeah, I get it," Lady said, slipping a small gun into her handbag and locking up the vehicle. "Now come on."

The two of them headed towards the front of the restaurant, which was already looking a lot better than the last place. A large round fountain sat by the entrance illuminated by yellow lights, which gave it the appearance of flowing gold. Various plants lined the pathway, and climbing roses covered the walls up to the elegant roof. As they approached the building, Lady quickened her pace until she was walking next to Vergil, who had once again left far too much distance between them. "This place is beautiful," she sighed, her eyes lit up by the various white fairy lights adorning the entrance.

"It certainly is something," Vergil admitted as they reached the door. He stopped and turned to face Lady who almost bumped into him because she was looking around so much. "Before we enter, I want to lay out some rules," he said.

"Uh, okay, but if they're weird then I reserve the right to refuse," Lady said hesitantly.

"It's more for your protection than anything," he continued. "After your little… act, at the last place, I would like to propose that while I will do my best to act gentlemanly in order not to draw attention to ourselves, I request that any unnecessary touching is kept to a minimum."

"Right…"

"Furthermore, there will be no approaching me from behind without sufficient warning. I don't know how many times I have to tell you this."

"Okay?"

"And finally - if you humiliate me in any way, I will be leaving and you can deal with this yourself," Vergil finished.

"Um… I'll try my best not to do any of those things?" Lady said, unsure how to react. "In return though, I need you to try your best to work with me as much as possible. Remember, we're in this together."

"Very well," Vergil agreed, opening the ornate looking door. "After you,"

"Thanks…" Lady said, walking into the restaurant with Vergil behind her. They were standing in a small lobby with a dark red carpet and brown mahogany walls. A large staircase extended in front of them which split into two and spiraled around to an unseen landing above them. Tanks containing various exotic looking fish sat in each corner of the room, save for the one closest to the door, which instead contained a small podium.

The waiter from earlier suddenly came running out of an open doorway from the right and made his way over to the pair. "This way please," he said bowing and beckoning for them to follow. They followed him through into a room a lot smaller than pub they had been to. Unlike that place, this room was also a lot brighter, with white walls lined with candles, and a soft cream carpet underfoot. Two large crystal chandeliers hung at equal distance above a collection of neat tables covered in white tablecloths. In the middle of each table stood a small vase of two red roses, with a small tealight inside a red dome carefully positioned next to it.
Lady paused for a moment, trying to take it all in, while Vergil quickly glanced around, trying to work out where the nearest exits were. It seemed that the room curved round to the left, presumably behind the staircase in the other room. He could just about make out the edge of another chandelier hanging over that portion of the room, which was currently obscured by the corner of a wall. As the waiter started to lead them towards a table that just so happened to be in this left part of the room, Vergil noticed something else which made him instantly uncomfortable.

"What's wrong?" Lady whispered, noticing his concerned expression.

"Ties," he hissed. "They're all wearing ties."

Lady glanced around, then looked back at Vergil's slightly unbuttoned shirt. "Well, okay, but…" she thought for a moment. "But you look better," she said finally, winking.

"Here is your table, Madame and Monsieur," the waiter said before Vergil could react, leading them to a small table just big enough for two people. At the back of this extra part of the room were what appeared to be the entrances to the bathrooms, around three table lengths away. In between the two bathroom doors was a pair of large double doors with a fluorescent green sign reading "EXIT" above it. The fire doors blended almost perfectly into the pale walls.

The pair were taken to one of the tables closest to the left wall, with one other table in front of theirs, which sat exactly on the corner of the turning. There were around five tables running parallel to theirs, some slightly larger in size. It was at one of these, with one table between them, that the middle aged woman and her daughter were sitting. "Please, take a seat," the waiter said, pulling out the chair facing towards the rest of the restaurant for Lady.

"Thank you," she smiled, enjoying the soft cushiony feeling as she sat down. Even the chairs were well made, and seemed to be some sort of white leather stuffed with feathers or similar. From where she was sitting, the bathrooms were behind her and she could look to her left to observe their targets. Vergil positioned himself on the other side, glancing at the doors behind Lady and trying to calculate how long it would take to get from the table, to the car, and then to the bathroom.

"I apologise for the unsavoury view, Monsieur," the waiter said to Vergil, gesturing towards the doors. "However, I was advised that you would need easy access to the…" he glanced around, briefly making eye contact with the woman and nodding slightly. "Well, I'm sure you can understand."

"Thank you," Vergil said. So far he was sensing nothing strange from the woman's daughter, and he wondered if this would be yet another pointless endeavour.

"Can I get you something to drink?" the waiter asked. "Or perhaps you would like to see the wine list first?"

"Just some water," Vergil started to say before Lady butted in.

"We'll take the house red," she said, smiling up at the waiter.

"Of course Madame," the waiter replied with a bow. He took the opportunity to whisper to Vergil, "I am also to make you aware that the alarm for the exit has been silenced tonight, should you need to… use it." Vergil nodded in response and the waiter straightened again. "I shall return with your menus shortly."

"What are you doing?" Vergil growled at Lady as their server walked away.

"Fitting in," Lady said, still looking around in awe. "This place is amazing!"
"You're driving," Vergil reminded her.

"The wine isn't for me," she replied, turning her gaze towards Vergil at last. "I made a guess and assumed you were more of a red wine kind of guy. If I'm wrong, we can always send it back."

Vergil started to protest again before letting out a sigh. It was pointless trying to reason with this woman. "You're right. When I do decide to drink, I prefer red wine. But that's not the point; we have a job to do."

Lady did a small fist pump, happy that she had guessed correctly. "That may be so, but one of our targets is missing," she said. "You said yourself it had been a long time since you had something good to eat, and that woman is paying for everything, so we may as well enjoy ourselves right?"

Vergil considered what she was saying for a moment. He didn't want to admit it, but she had a point. It hadn't escaped his attention how he had almost always been hungry for the last few months. He'd thought recently that he might even have been losing some weight, which concerned him. "Fine," he agreed. "But only one bottle, and I will not be finishing it."

"Of course!" Lady said, giving him a thumbs up. "The last thing I need is a sloppy combat partner anyway."

The waiter returned then with a large bottle of red wine in a bucket of ice, which he placed on the table. He put down two wine glasses and proceeded to fill them both with a small amount of liquid. "Would you like to try before I serve?" he asked Vergil, sliding a glass towards him.

"If I must," Vergil conceded, lifting the glass and sniffing it before taking a small sip. "It's good," he admitted, returning the glass to the waiter so he could fill it.

"Et Madame?" the waiter asked, turning towards Lady.

"Only a little for me," she said, gulping down the small amount of wine before holding out her glass.

"...Of course," the waiter said, seemingly put off a little by her behaviour. He took the glass from her and filled it halfway, before returning it to her and placing the bottle back inside the bucket. A very smart looking waitress approached and handed her colleague a set of posh looking menus before bowing and walking away. "Here are your menus," the waiter said, handing one to each of the mismatched couple before him. "I will be back soon to take your orders."

"Thank you," they both said in unison, looking at each other with bemused expressions straight after. The waiter hesitated a moment more before walking over to another table.

"You just told me you weren't drinking," Vergil said, admiring the long, red velvet lined menu he was holding. The restaurant's name was engraved in gold on the front page and when he opened it, he was pleasantly surprised to see the dishes listed in both French and English.

"Well, I figured a small glass wouldn't be too bad," Lady said, also admiring the menu which was much fancier than the last one she had held. "Besides, it would probably have been more embarrassing for you if I'd turned him down."

Vergil let out a disgruntled "Hmph" and the two of them cast their eyes over the options available to them, all the while carefully observing the woman and her daughter a small distance away. As the male had not yet turned up, they decided to order three courses to give themselves as much time as possible. Very few words were exchanged between them while they awaited the waiter's return, other than a slight telling off from Lady when Vergil tried to button his shirt all the way up.
"It just looks weird like that if you don't have a tie," she argued.

"But if I don't, it looks sloppy," Vergil protested.

"I already told you it looks good as it is," Lady said, blushing slightly.

"You assume I care about your opinion," Vergil replied, undoing the button anyway when Lady wouldn't stop glaring at him. They sat in silence again after that.

Finally, the waiter returned to take their orders. They both opted for a starter of garlic mushrooms, their reasoning being that if one had it and not the other, the one who didn't would have to put up with foul smelling breath from the other on the way home. For a main, Vergil ordered Salmon with Sorrel Sauce, while Lady opted for something called "Coq au Vin". They held off on ordering the desserts until they were ready to make their move, as planned.

While they waited for their first dish, they observed the two females, trying to get a feel for what was going on. The daughter was very pretty, but she also looked very dishevelled; perhaps even quite ill. There didn't seem to be anything demonic about her, but there was definitely something slightly off…

"Afraid," Vergil said, startling Lady from her train of thought.

"What?"

"She looks afraid. I'm beginning to think it's not her we should be concerned with." Vergil went to take a sip from his wine and realised he had already finished the glass. Fortunately he still felt completely fine, so he allowed himself to pour another, slightly fuller glass.

"It is strange that the boyfriend hasn't turned up," Lady admitted, sipping her own glass. "I'm glad you like my choice of beverage by the way," she added.

"It was pure chance whether it would be any good," Vergil said dismissively.

"I got the colour right though," Lady said, grinning.

"Fifty, fifty."

A different, younger, waiter than the one that had served them previously appeared then, pushing a small silver serving cart in front of him with two domed lids on top of it. "Your starters," he said proudly, removing the coverings and placing each plate on the table. "Can I get you anything else?"

"Could I get a lemonade please?" Lady asked finishing off her wine.

"I'd like some sparkling elderflower," Vergil added. The young waiter nodded and bowed before pushing the cart away.

"See, I'm being good," Lady said, already feeling slightly lightheaded from finishing the wine so quickly.

"Indeed," Vergil said, impaling a mushroom and inspecting it briefly before taking a bite. He was unable to hold back the satisfied sigh that escaped his lips as he did so, and quickly took a drink from his glass, hoping that Lady hadn't noticed.

"That good huh?" Lady asked, lifting one of her own mushrooms to her mouth.
"It's not bad," Vergil said quickly, looking towards the woman and her daughter again to avoid Lady's mocking gaze.

"Damn, this is good," Lady said with her mouth full. She quickly shoveled a few more mushrooms in while Vergil watched in disbelief.

"You… Have been to a restaurant before?" he asked, taking a small bite from his second mushroom.

"Huh? Of course," Lady said, gulping down the rest of what she had been chewing.

"Your manner of eating is…" He wondered how best to phrase the word 'disgusting'. "...A little rough perhaps."

"I'm sorry," Lady apologised, looking sheepish. "Genuinely, I am. I guess I'm just so used to eating fast food that I kinda forgot how to behave properly." She looked down at the few mushrooms she had left on her plate. "I'll try to behave from now on."

"Thank you," Vergil said, feeling somewhat surprised. He had expected some sort of sarcastic response, not an actual apology.

For the rest of the starter they didn't really say much else, although Vergil couldn't help glancing at her every now and then to make sure she was staying true to her word. Halfway through their first meal, the younger waiter returned with the lemonade and elderflower they had ordered, along with a quiet message that the male target was expected to turn up at any moment. By the time they had finished their mushrooms however, there was still no sign of him.

"He must realise that something's up," Lady said, dabbing at her mouth with her napkin.

"And yet he has let the girl attend…" Vergil mused, taking a sip from what was now his third glass of wine. He still felt completely fine, despite not having had anything alcoholic to drink for a long time.

"Perhaps it's some sort of trick or distraction," Lady theorised. "He could very well be nearby; he might even be waiting outside."

"In that case, if they leave we are to follow," Vergil stated. The woman and her daughter had just had their starters delivered; it seemed they had given up on waiting for the male and decided to go ahead and order.

The young waiter walked over to their table again and offered to take their empty plates, to which they both nodded. "I trust the food was good?" he asked, smiling.

"Very much so," Vergil stated. "I look forward to the mains if the starters were this delectable."

"I am sure you shall not be disappointed," the waiter replied, bowing happily before walking away with a slight spring in his step. Vergil watched him for a moment and saw him whisper something to the waiter that had greeted them initially, who then looked over to their table and smiled, giving them a small wave.

"You really do have a way with words when you want to," Lady said, resting her chin on her hands and looking over at Vergil who had now turned back towards her.

"It's called eloquence," Vergil replied. "It can get you very far in life if used appropriately."
"I still find it hard to believe that you and Dante are twins sometimes," Lady said, straightening up when she noticed Vergil staring at her elbows on the table with disapproval. "I've never known two people to behave so differently."

"Dante and I have lived very different lives," Vergil stated, reaching for the wine bottle again before thinking better of it and taking a sip of his elderflower instead.

"True that, but for someone who has spent most of his life in hell, I'd expect you to be more… I don't know, feral? Lacking in knowledge? I don't really know," Lady trailed off, wishing she hadn't said anything.

"What you're saying is, you would expect Dante to be the one with manners and knowledge of human etiquette, and myself to be a rough oaf who doesn't know how to interact with humans?"

"Exactly!" Lady said, pointing at Vergil. "I mean, don't get me wrong, you still have pretty poor social skills generally, but it seems when thrown into a situation like this, you handle it perfectly. Seems like I should drag you to fancy restaurants more often-" She stopped talking as she realised the implications of what she was saying and blushed. "U-Um, what I mean is, you're a lot more bearable to be around when you're being polite to people instead of threatening to stab me every time I look in your direction… Although having said that, even when you're making threats you sound super classy, so uh-"

"Just stop talking," Vergil sighed.

"Yessir," Lady replied, pretending to zip her mouth shut.

"Madame et Monsieur, your mains," the original waiter from before suddenly said, approaching the table with yet another fancy serving tray. He lifted the shiny covers revealing two plates of steaming food, the smell of which alone was enough to make Lady and Vergil's mouths water. The waiter lifted the plates onto the table and once again smiled warmly at them both. "Can I get you anything else?"

"I'm fine, thank you," Lady said, eyeing the dish in front of her hungrily.

"Any update on the male?" Vergil asked quietly, glancing over at the other table. The woman and her daughter now seemed to be about to tuck into their main courses themselves; their starters had been a lot simpler.

"Nothing yet..." The waiter responded. "The current thoughts are that he may cancel. The Madame wishes for me to tell you that if this is the case, she will still pay for your meal and she apologises for the inconvenience."

"Send her my thanks," Vergil said.

"Of course, Monsieur," the waiter agreed, before bowing and leaving their table.

"That's pretty nice of her," Lady said, desperate to start eating her food.

"It is..." Vergil agreed, lifting his wine glass. "Cheers."

"Cheers," Lady said, clinking her lemonade glass against Vergil's. They were both silent for a moment while they savoured the first bites of their meal. They each looked at each other and nodded. There was no need for words - it was delicious. "Admit it," Lady said after a few minutes. "You're glad you agreed to this."
"I certainly won't deny that the food has made this all worthwhile," Vergil stated, realising that he had once again finished his glass of wine. Lady noticed his hesitation and reached for the bottle.

"Go on, one more won't hurt," she said, filling his glass halfway.

"If you're trying to get me drunk, it won't work," Vergil said, taking a reluctant sip. "I still feel completely fine."

"All the more reason to enjoy it then," she responded, offering to fill his glass further.

Vergil shook his head. "No thank you."

Lady placed the bottle back in the bucket and ate some more of her chicken. "You know," she said after a moment, "You're actually kind of bearable to be around when you act like a normal person."

"...I'm sorry?"

"Well, I didn't want to say anything in case you took it the wrong way, but I'm actually kind of enjoying myself right now," Lady admitted.

"Is that so..." Vergil asked, sipping his wine without taking his eyes off her.

"Well yeah. It's just a nice change of pace, you know? I'm not used to hanging out with someone so... formal? Polite? I guess it's just nice not to have to deal with constant quips from Dante all the time. I mean, you still piss me off, but you do it in a classy way. I actually need to think before I respond to the crap you say."

"You're...welcome?" Vergil said, shoving a piece of marinated salmon into his mouth. "I suppose you aren't too bad yourself when you're not making a fool of me."

"See, this is nice right? We're actually talking for once. A lot of people are put off by how quiet and mysterious you are all the time, but when you actually start talking, it turns out you're not as terrifying as you might seem," Lady said, smiling.

"You say that, but I feel I have done nothing but criticise you for the whole evening," Vergil said, although he couldn't help but smile himself a little. It had been a while since he had spent more than a few minutes with the same person. He realised that perhaps he might be enjoying himself just a little bit as well.

"Well let's talk properly then," Lady said suddenly. "Tell me about yourself. What do you do in your spare time? Do you ever have nightmares about your time in hell? How did you feel when you found out you had a son? Are you enjoying living with Dante?"

Vergil held up a hand to silence her. "She who asks many questions receives no answers," he said bluntly. "I dislike talking about myself, so please do not ask."

"But why?" Lady asked. "Doesn't it get lonely having no one to talk to? I'd be going crazy if I were you."

"Who's to say I'm not?" Vergil responded. He hesitated slightly before downing the rest of his wine and wiping his mouth. "I will answer one question, but only because I'd like a second opinion on something. And you can't mention it to Dante."

"Sure!" Lady said a little too enthusiastically. "Fire away."
He paused a moment more before he began to explain to her the horrifying experience that was living in the Devil May Cry building. He told her of the repeated lack of food, the cold showers, that his room was always freezing. He lamented over the fact that he couldn't read in peace without unexpected guests turning up at all hours, and how he frequently had to deal with seeing a demon in his dead mother's image walking around. The constant mess that Dante left behind, the countless times he had been left to clean up pools of blood and demon entrails while Dante lay passed out somewhere. The fact that he was almost always poor and could only just afford to keep himself fed and watered. "...and then there was what happened with you the other day," Vergil finished. "It was then that I realised I can't take this any more, so I'm trying to move out."

Lady stared back at him in silence, chewing on the last bit of food she had left before gulping it down. "Wow," she said at last.

"This is why I don't talk about myself," Vergil said coldly, realising that he had been talking long enough for them to both finish their meals.

"What? No, don't say that," Lady said, trying to sound sympathetic. "I didn't realise you were struggling so much. I guess that's why you were so pissed at me, huh?"

"No, I just naturally dislike you," Vergil said, smirking slightly. "Although, I will admit my current situation probably hasn't been helping things."

"Well… I'm sorry for walking in on you like that," Lady said, choosing to ignore his harsh remark. "I can't believe that was enough to make you want to move out though."

"It's been a long time coming," Vergil sighed, pouring some more wine and realising he was about to finish the bottle after all. "Anyway, the reason I told you all this is because I want to ask you something."

"I mean, I'll try my best to answer," Lady said.

"All right. So, I have discussed my current living situation with Nero, who has surprisingly agreed to help me."

"Man, Nero is such a decent person. I still find it hard to believe he's fifty percent you." Lady quickly shut up when she received a death glare from Vergil, who was also gripping the wine bottle a little too tightly.

"The catch is," he continued, dumping the bottle back into the bucket, "In order for him to get me somewhere to live, he wants me to work at that damn orphanage of his."

Lady, who was mid sip from her lemonade glass, spluttered and started to choke. After a few moments - and some rather disapproving stares from the other diners - she managed to get her breath back and started at Vergil in disbelief. "No way!" she said. "You can't agree to this Vergil, those poor children would be traumatised for life!"

"I had a feeling that would be the case," Vergil said sadly, swirling the last of his wine around in his glass. "I was planning to reject his offer anyway, but this just cements my decision. Thank you." He raised his glass and downed the rest of the liquid before standing up.

"Hey, where are you going?" Lady asked as he walked around the table, wobbling slightly.

"I think I've had too much to drink after all; I've talked too much. I'm going to go and freshen up a bit."
"What do you want to do about dessert?" Lady called after him. The woman and her daughter seemed to be ordering desserts as she spoke.

"I think it's safe to say the plan is off, so just pick something you like," Vergil said before stumbling into the bathroom.

Shortly after that, the younger waiter appeared again. "What happened to your friend?" he asked, as he started to clear up the plates.

"Bathroom," Lady replied, starting to regret pushing Vergil into talking.

"Is he all right?"

"I think so," Lady said. "By the way, the plan seems to be off. Can we have the dessert menu normally please?"

Vergil stared at himself in the bathroom mirror, cursing his foolishness. He realised he looked terrible; he had dark rings under his eyes and his hair was looking unkempt. He quickly wet his hands and ran his fingers through his locks, trying to fix them back into place. He also splashed his face a couple of times, before drying it off with some surprisingly high quality paper towels.

"Well well, a son of Sparda. I knew that old bag was up to something," a deep voice suddenly said behind him.

Vergil turned quickly, reaching for Yamato, only to internally curse as he realised he didn't have his sword with him. "Who goes there?" he shouted, looking around the small tiled room. He disliked how slurred his voice sounded and hoped that it wasn't too noticeable. Receiving no response, he proceeded to check the empty cubicles and found nothing. Slowly, he backed his way towards the door and, still seeing and hearing nothing further, slipped back out into the restaurant.

"Hey Vergil," Lady called out to him as he approached the table. "I took the liberty of ordering us both a black forest gateau, I hope that's okay-

"He's here," Vergil whispered, standing next to Lady's chair and keeping his eyes trained on the bathroom door. "Give me the keys, now" he demanded, reaching behind him.

"Wait, what?" Lady asked in surprise. "You saw him?"

"Heard him," Vergil answered. "Someone needs to stay here to guard the women, give me the keys."

"Okay, okay," Lady agreed, frantically rummaging through her bag before placing the keys into Vergil's outstretched hand.

"If anyone comes out of that bathroom, shoot without hesitation," Vergil said, slowly making his way towards the exit. "It was empty when I left."

"Roger that," Lady said seriously, moving round to Vergil's seat so she could face the doors herself. "Be careful," she added, receiving only a nod in response.

Chapter End Notes
A/N I think I like this chapter a bit more than the last one. It was certainly fun to write anyway. Next time - combat!
The night air felt welcome on Vergil’s skin as he stepped outside, carefully closing the fire doors behind him. As promised, the alarm had remained silent. Although it was summer, there was a slight chill in the air as he started to make his way towards the vehicle, and he felt instantly refreshed. The last remnants of daylight were now starting to disappear in the distance, causing the sky above him to take on a strange purple hue. The first few stars were just starting to make their appearance.

Listening for any sounds of movement, Vergil pondered his next moves. It was not yet clear whether the demon was inside the building or not, but Lady would hopefully have that covered for now. Keeping his eyes on the exit, Vergil unlocked the car and felt around behind him for the latch to release the trunk. After fumbling hopelessly for a few seconds, he gave in and turned briefly in order to open it.

“So, you must be the legendary Dante,” a voice suddenly called out from behind him. Vergil turned towards where the voice had come from, instantly shooting a summoned sword in its direction as he did so.

“Why does everyone keep making that mistake tonight?” Vergil asked irritatedly, more swords forming in the air around him. He quickly retrieved Yamato before locking the car again and pressing his back up against it, his right hand hovering over his beloved katana’s hilt. Vergil looked into the darkness ahead of him, flitting his eyes back and forth while straining his ears, waiting for even the slightest sound. With almost no warning, he sensed an object flying towards him from his right and managed to dodge out of the way at the last second, landing in a defensive stance. With the vehicle no longer offering protection from behind, he turned in slow circles, trying to anticipate the demon’s next move.

“Not bad, halfbreed,” the voice said, now somehow above Vergil. He rolled out of the way as what seemed to be a talon of some sort shot out of the sky towards him. Within seconds, Vergil had thrown another summoned sword and heard a slightly pained grunt in response.

“Come out and face me, coward,” Vergil said coldly. “I don’t have time to play foolish games.”

“Aww, but I’m having fun,” the deep voice replied, sounding slightly more strained than it had before.

“I don’t do fun,” Vergil responded. The sound of Yamato clicking back into its sheath echoed around the car park before a flurry of slashes suddenly flew in the direction of his aggressor.

“Not bad,” the voice said, behind him again now. Vergil turned quickly, unsheathing Yamato as he did so and sending another wave of damage ahead of him.

“You bore me,” Vergil said, resheathing his sword. “If you won’t reveal yourself, then I’ll be leaving.” With that, he started to head back to the restaurant, hoping that the demon would follow so he could get a better view of it where there was more light.

“I guess the rumours were just that after all,” the demon responded, seemingly following Vergil who now refused to turn around. “They told me you had a mouth on you and that you were fun to
toy with, but you’re way too serious.”

Vergil stopped walking and took a deep breath. “You mistake me for my brother,” he said calmly. “I have better things to do than banter with demons.”

“Brother huh?” the demon asked. “I must say, I haven’t heard much about you.”

“That’s because I kill everyone who crosses my path,” Vergil said, a circle of swords suddenly impaling the air behind him. He heard a surprised gasp and turned to see the man from the photos slumped over on one knee, bleeding from a multitude of freshly opened wounds. “Pitiful,” Vergil spat. “To think we went through all of this for a mere insect that could be crushed in seconds.”

“As if such a thing would kill me,” the man said, grinning. Vergil looked down at the demon in disgust, as blood flowed through its teeth and down its chin. “I am over one thousand years old!” it cried. Its grin grew wider, until it took up almost half of its face and continued to spread. Within seconds, it seemed as if the beast’s entire head was now nothing but a large pair of swollen, bloodied lips and increasingly sharpening teeth pointing towards the sky. Vergil stepped back slightly as the jaws suddenly wrenched open, growing wider and wider until it looked like the demon’s whole body was trying to turn itself inside out. Shaking himself out of his stupor, Vergil prepared to slice Yamato through the beast’s body, when something suddenly shot out of the mouth into the darkness, leaving a discarded pile of bloodied flesh on the ground.

Lady was starting to get concerned. Vergil had been gone for a good few minutes now, much longer than she knew it would take to get to the car and back. She looked over at the two women and hesitantly nibbled a cherry from one of the cakes that had now turned up, and been placed on their table. Just as she was considering sneaking outside herself, the woman’s daughter suddenly stood up and ran to the bathroom. Lady froze, unsure whether to follow the girl or keep watch over the restaurant. Her mind was made up when the client locked eyes with her and frantically looked over to the female toilets, jerking her head in their direction.

Lady gave a short nod in response and stood up. She stroked her guns through her dress just to make sure, and headed towards the door reading “Femmes.” She paused briefly before throwing the door open, hands ready to unholster her weapons if needed. For a moment, she thought the room to be empty, before she suddenly saw something coming towards her from the corner of her eye. Without any time to think, she managed to dodge what she soon realised was a heavy plaster bust as it smashed on the ground, mere inches from where she had been standing. Lady looked towards the door to see the girl standing there, tears streaking down her face as she held her hands over her mouth and nose, seemingly hyperventilating. An empty pedestal stood next to the row of sinks by the door, now missing its blank eyed model.

“I-I’m sorry!” the girl stammered, reaching out to Lady who, still half kneeling on the cold tiled floor, responded by pointing one of her guns at her attacker.

“What the hell was that for?!” Lady asked angrily, standing up while still keeping her weapon aimed at the quivering woman before her.

“H-He, he,” the girl sniffed deeply, trying to catch her breath. “He told me to do it! He told me you were planning to kill us!”

“Well I mean, he’s not entirely wrong…” Lady said, lowering her weapon slightly, but still keeping the gun cocked. She slowly approached the girl and stared into her watery eyes. “You’re human right?” Lady asked her.
“W-What? Of course I am!” the girl said, pressing her back against the door as Lady got closer.

“Then you should leave before this gets ugly,” Lady advised. “You’re nothing but a victim here; take your mother and go. We’ll handle the rest.”

“What are you talking about?” the girl asked, now slightly calmer but still wide-eyed. “What about Alex?”

“‘Alex’, is using you,” Lady stated, using air quotes as she said the demon’s so-called name. “It’s even more obvious now that I’ve seen you up close.”

“Alex loves me!” the girl cried, suddenly attempting to strike Lady, only to find not one, but two guns pointed in her face.

“Trust me when I say that he’s not worth it,” Lady said, feeling slightly bad for the poor girl. “I don’t have time to explain right now, but if you stay with him, you’ll soon be dead. Just like your friends.” The girls eyes widened further as realisation seemingly sunk in. Without saying another word, she nodded before letting Lady lead her out of the bathroom and back to her very worried mother.

“What happened?” the older woman asked, looking her dishevelled daughter up and down.

“You need to leave,” Lady whispered, trying not to draw any more attention from the other guests, who were already looking over and murmuring amongst themselves. “Where are you parked?”

“I… came with Alex,” the girl said quietly.

“Looks like you’ll both be getting a taxi then,” Lady said, catching the waiter’s attention as he started to walk away and asking him to order one. “I’ll stay with you until it arrives. I want you both to go straight home together, and stay indoors until either myself or one of the people I work with contacts you.” The two women nodded in agreement, saying nothing further. Once the bill had been paid, the three of them made their way to the small lobby to wait for the women’s ride out of there. Lady realised that Vergil was still nowhere to be seen.

“Disgusting,” Vergil said, lifting the slowly dissolving skin with the sheath of his sword. He flicked it away, still trying to work out where the thing that had emerged from within it had disappeared to. After a few minutes of sensing nothing further, he once again started to make his way back towards the restaurant before thinking better of it and taking out his phone. The last thing he wanted to do was draw whatever this thing was into a crowd of unsuspecting humans. Pressing his back against the wall, he fiddled around with the device a bit until he managed to find the word ‘Lady’ and pressed the call button.

“Vergil?”

“...Woman.”

“I have a name you know… Where are you?”

“I’m round the back. It attacked me before running away somewhere. What’s the situation?”

“I’m seeing off the client and her daughter,” Lady replied, closing the door to the taxi and
watching it carefully as it drove off until it was out of sight. “Wait there, I’ll come to you.”

“No need,” Vergil said, suddenly appearing behind her. He grabbed her phone from her and ended the call.

“Damn it, you and your teleportation,” Lady said, jumping in surprise. “Give me back my phone.” Vergil looked at the phone and smiled at her. Lady felt a chill run down her spine.

“My my, this is an interesting wallpaper you have here,” Vergil said, holding her phone just out of reach. “I didn’t realise you were such a fan.”

Lady blushed furiously as she tried to get the device back off him. “Dante sent it and I just thought it was a nice photo okay? It doesn’t mean anything!” she cried.

The photo in question was a rather artsy looking shot of Vergil sitting by one of the large windows in the office, his back propped up against the wall and a cup of tea resting on the ground next to him. His legs were extended in front of him, one slightly bent. The sun was shining through the dusty glass, casting intricate shadows across his face, while illuminating his frosty eyes and silver locks as he looked down at the book he was holding. Dante had sent it to her with the caption ‘LOL, look at this nerd, amirite?’ She had responded by vaguely commending his photography skills, at which point Dante had called her a nerd too.

“Is that so?” Vergil asked, admiring the photo. “I must admit, I do look exceptionally handsome in this shot, so I guess I’ll give you a pass.”

Lady regarded him closely, her eyebrows beginning to knit in concern. She stopped trying to retrieve her phone and stepped away from him. “Where’s your sword?” she asked, slowly backing away further.

“I put it back in the car,” Vergil replied, walking towards her. “I figured we may as well finish our desserts at least.” He smiled warmly. “Perhaps I’ll even feed it to you.”

“Okay, this is beyond creepy,” Lady said, drawing her guns. "What's going on?" Before she had even finished unholstering her weapons however, she found herself pinned to the wall. Her weapons clattered to the ground at her feet as the man before her made his move.

 damning

Vergil tapped his fingers against Yamato impatiently as he looked around the car park. Surely it didn’t take that long to order a taxi, he thought. She had told him to wait where he was, which must have meant she was done with the client right? He was sure he had even heard the door of the vehicle slam during the call. He waited for a few more seconds before letting out an irritated sigh and started to head towards the front of the building.

Chapter End Notes

A/N - Just a reminder that I work shift work, so apologies if updates are a bit scattered! Thanks for all the support so far, and I’m really glad people are enjoying it ^_^
Chapter Eleven

Chapter Notes

A/N - Sorry for the delays everyone, been very busy with work! This chapter turned out a lot darker and weirder than I planned it to haha... The next one will be a lot lighter though, I promise!

The sight that met Vergil as he turned the corner was unnerving, to say the least. Yet strangely enough, what bothered him most was not the fact that he was staring at a mirror image of himself, nor was it the fact that Lady, notorious for her combat abilities, had allowed herself to be trapped in such a manner. No, what was starting to cause his blood to boil and his body begin to glow with a powerful energy, was the fact that the demon, the thing using his face, had its lips firmly pressed against those of the woman it had pinned against the wall.

Vergil was momentarily frozen to the spot, trying to rationalise his thoughts before he charged forward, unsheathing Yamato as he did so and aiming its tip directly at the demon's unprotected rib cage. Within seconds however, the monster had turned to face him, holding Lady in front of him like a shield. Its right hand was wrapped around her neck, while it supported the rest of her weight by snaking its left arm around her waist, lifting her off the ground. Lady hung in the air limply, seemingly unconscious. Fortunately, Vergil managed to stop himself in time, albeit with millimetres to spare.

"How rude," the demon said in Vergil's voice. It sounded strange to the real Vergil's ears and made him feel uncomfortable. "Don't you know it's impolite to interrupt someone's meal?"

"Unhand the woman immediately," Vergil said coldly, trying to calm himself. It would be easy to devil trigger where he stood and end this now, but doing so would likely put Lady at risk, and Dante would kill him if he let anything happen to her. That and any moment now people could start to leave the restaurant, and he needed to draw as little attention as possible.

"We both know that's not going to happen," his doppleganger replied, starting to back up slightly. The door to the restaurant was to the demon's right now, and Vergil quickly glanced towards it, praying that no-one else would come outside. He hated how powerless he currently felt against such a low level demon, just because he had to worry about other people. This was why he preferred to work alone.

"Only cowards hide behind others," Vergil said, still not lowering his weapon.

"Only fools would sacrifice the lives of many to save just one," the demon retorted. He shook Lady slightly, her body flopping around like a ragdoll. "I'm surprised. You don't seem like the sort to be concerned about others."

"You assume I care about the woman's welfare," Vergil said, pointing his sword at Lady's chest. If he thrust forward now, he would impale the demons heart, killing it - he hoped - instantly. "Unfortunately, I promised my brother I would bring her back in one piece, and he doesn't take kindly to his belongings being broken." He watched Lady closely, waiting.

"Well that's a shame, because this pretty little thing belongs to me now," the demon replied,
"Why are you using my image?" Vergil asked angrily, stepping forward. He hoped to distract the demon before it could sully Lady once more. The question worked and the demon looked at Vergil again, laughing.

"I was wondering when you would ask that," the demon chuckled, looking down Yamato's blade towards its increasingly uncomfortable wielder. Vergil stared back at the demon, indicating for it continue. "It's simple really," it said matter-of-factly. "I merely take the form of my target's ideal man."

The answer took Vergil by surprise and he jolted slightly, Yamato's tip wavering in the air. "What?" he asked dumbly, annoyed at himself for sounding so foolish.

"That's right, bet you weren't expecting that answer, were you?" the demon asked, grinning.

"You're lying..."

"You can't prove that."

"Nor can you," Vergil said, steadying his weapon again. He need to stop letting himself get so distracted this evening; it was uncharacteristic of him.

"You're right," the demon said nonchalanlty. "I probably am lying, but you'll never know. Either way, it was worth telling you just to see the expression on that overly serious face of yours."

Vergil was about to argue further when he saw what he was looking for; Lady's eyebrows had started to twitch. He gave an almost imperceptible nod to her as she cracked open her right eye, before moving suddenly, stepping back further before rushing forward, driving the tip of Yamato in front of him.

At the last second, Lady kicked her aggressor in the shins with her heels, wiggling free and ducking down as Vergil drove his weapon into the demon's chest. The demon gasped as Vergil followed the motion through with the full force of his weight, causing his victim to stagger backwards, desperately clutching the cold blade that cut through it as though it were nothing. Much to Vergil's irritation, he had missed the heart, a blunder which he blamed on the alcohol still in his system. The demon felt a second wave of pain as Vergil teleported behind it, shoving the sharp tip of his sword into its spine before twisting it sharply. "Scum," Vergil growled into the copy of his left ear as he yanked the sword free, flicking the blood from the blade. There was a small flurry of blurs, almost invisible to the human eye, before the quiet click of Yamato being returned to its sheath rang through the demon's skull. Milliseconds later, a series of blue slashes surrounded the demon, before it fell to the floor in a bloodied mess. Prepared for it this time, Vergil summoned a circle of swords in the air, which impaled the fleshy creature that suddenly burst forth from the now discarded skin.

He stood over the quivering demon in front of him, which looked like some sort of overfed leech with a bulbous head, the size of a small dog. A large pair of gnashing jaws clicked at Vergil as it tried desperately to pull itself free. Unsheathing Yamato one more, Vergil raised it above his head, pointing its tip downwards in preparation for the final blow.

"P-Please!" the demon begged in a screeching high pitched voice. "Please spare me! I was just messing with you I swear! I'll do anything! I'll even bend to your will and serve you if I must! Just-" The demon's pleas were interrupted by a large bang as a small missile flew towards its body, exploding on impact. Vergil flinched away in disgust as small chunks of demon splattered all over turning Lady's face towards his.
him, painting him head to toe in dark red. He returned his sword to its scabbard and looked up to see Lady slumped over the Kalina Ann, using it as support while she tried to catch her breath. It seemed she had managed to retrieve her weapon while Vergil was distracted.

"No-one violates me and gets to live," she panted angrily, before collapsing. Vergil shot forward and caught her before she managed to hit the ground. She was out for good this time. He carefully laid her down next to her weapon before standing up and attempting to assess the damage.

For one thing, his brand new outfit was ruined. Slightly more disconcertingly, he now had a slowly dissolving copy of his own corpse blocking the entrance to the restaurant. His own blue eyes stared up at him in wide-eyed horror, fear forever etched into them as they started to cloud over. It was enough to make even Vergil feel perturbed. He took a moment to walk over to the large fountain at the front of the restaurant and washed his hands in it before splashing his face in an attempt to rid himself of some of the gore. The water turned a cloudy pink colour, but he paid it no mind and sat on the fountain's edge with his head in his hands, trying to process what had happened; it wasn't every day you stabbed yourself in the back.

"Monsieur," a voice said to his right. Vergil didn't look up. "Monsieur, I have sent the restaurant into lockdown so that no-one may leave."

So that was why no-one had come outside. So much for miracles. "Thank you," Vergil said, straightening up and turning to face the man beside him. It was the original waiter from before.

"We were prepared for something like this happening," the waiter said, sitting down and taking a small silver lighter and a pack of cigarettes out of his waistcoat. He offered one to Vergil who shook his head. "As soon as your friend left the restaurant, I sent out an announcement advising people that they couldn't leave due to an 'incident'." The waiter placed a cigarette in his mouth and tucked the small packet back into his pocket. "Fortunately we're always booked far in advance, so all we had to do to stop others from turning up was make a few phone calls."

"You seem oddly prepared for a civilian restaurant…" Vergil said hesitantly, waving a small cloud of smoke away as the waiter lit his cigarette. The previously nervous sounding man had taken on an entirely different demeanour now.

"Unfortunately this is not the first time we have had to deal with something like this," the waiter sighed, blowing out more smoke. "I knew the risks when I agreed to set up my business in this cursed city."

"I see…" Vergil said, looking over at what was now becoming a mushy pile of skin and bones wearing his clothes. Still the eyes seemed to stare into his soul somehow; the head had fallen to the side as it melted and it was now looking directly at him once more.

"I must say this is a new one, even for me," the waiter said, nodding towards the remnants of the demon. "Seems like you had a hard time."

"It was nothing," Vergil said dismissively. "Just a mere lesser demon; I'm fine."

"You don't sound fine," the waiter responded, looking Vergil up and down. "You're allowed to talk about it if you like."

Vergil looked at the waiter and scoffed. "No thank you. I don't need counselling from some waiter. Go back inside; I'll get this cleaned up and let you know when it's safe to come out again."

"It's fine, I can help," the man next to him said calmly, taking another drag from his cigarette. "As I
said, I've dealt with incidents like this before, often on a much larger scale too."

Vergil continued to look at the man in confusion, not sure what to say. Although he didn't want to admit it, he would appreciate some help with clearing up the mess, if only so he could get Lady back to the shop a bit quicker before Dante accused him of anything untoward. "Why would you choose to run a business here?" Vergil asked at last, curiosity getting the better of him.

"It's a long story, you probably wouldn't be interested."

"All right," Vergil agreed, standing up. "Let's start-"

"My wife," the waiter said, continuing anyway.

Vergil hovered awkwardly before sighing and sitting down again.

"My wife, she loved this city," the waiter said sadly, staring off into the distance. "Marie, her name was. We moved here from France... Hmm, it must have been some twenty years ago now. We could never have children you see, and she wanted to travel the world." Vergil nodded, tapping his foot impatiently. He didn't want to listen to this man's life story, but on the other hand he had been quite helpful this evening, so he decided to give him just a moment more. The waiter noticed Vergil's restlessness and stood up, apologising. "Let us start the clean-up. I can talk while we work," he said.

"Very well..." Vergil agreed. The two of them walked over to the bubbling mass on the ground and the waiter indicated for Vergil to follow him inside the restaurant briefly. Once inside, the man made his way to a small cupboard behind the staircase, from which he retrieved some shovels and some very thick looking bin-liners. The waiter put on a pair of gloves and offered Vergil some, which he gratefully accepted. The two of them returned outside and sized up the job ahead of them. The first thing Vergil did was lift the creature's - his - head and throw it into one of the bags. He hadn't actually expected any cleanup as a result of this; the demons they killed usually just dissolved into nothingness and got re-absorbed into the ground. Vergil wondered if he could bribe the man before him into doing it all himself while he and Lady made their escape.

"So, as I was saying," the waiter continued, shovelling some of the mess into the bag next to him. "We came to England a long time ago. We had planned to travel more of the world, but for some reason Marie fell in love with this country and we ended up staying here. We travelled around a lot of this country, but when we came to this city, Marie turned to me and said 'Marcel this is it. This is where I want us to spend the rest of our lives'."

"What did she like so much about it?" Vergil asked.

"Now that, I'll never understand. I always told her there was something strange about this place but she refused to listen. Even when strange things started to appear around the city, she still wouldn't leave, until it was too late. For years we lived here, years. Always somehow managing to avoid whatever catastrophes plagued the area." Marcel had stopped shovelling now and was leaning on his spade, glaring angrily at the ground. "And then that tree came. That damn tree."

Vergil also paused, a sudden feeling of dread pooling in his stomach. "Perhaps we should focus on the matter at hand-"

"I told her to leave," Marcel continued, ignoring him. "But she refused. 'Everyone is looking at it', she said. I told her I would be leaving whether she came with me or not and we parted on angry words, not speaking again because we were both too stubborn to make the first move. Imagine then my regret, my unending guilt when I watched that thing on the news as it suddenly lashed out,
killing thousands where they stood. I thought to myself that perhaps she was fine, maybe she had listened to my warnings." Marcel looked up at Vergil with tears in his eyes. "But then the camera changed and I saw her - 500 feet in the air, impaled on one of that damn thing's roots."

"I…" Vergil looked back at the waiter he now knew to be called Marcel and swallowed. Dante and the others had never let him forget the destruction he had caused atop the Qliphoth, but it has always been in generalised terms and although he had regretted his actions, he had never really thought too deeply about them, instead choosing to believe that it hadn't really been him that had killed all of those people. This was the first time he had actually spoken to someone who had been directly affected, and it felt deeply unpleasant.

"Do you know how hard it is to lose someone you love?" Marcel asked desperately. "I won't lie, I almost took my own life." Marcel flicked away his cigarette and lit another one. "But then, I realised that Marie would never want that. And the more I thought about it, the more I thought this - If everyone who lost a loved one killed themselves, the world would be empty, you understand?"

"Why are you telling me all of this?" Vergil asked at last.

"Hey, you wanted to know why I decided to open a restaurant here. Context is important."

"I would have accepted a short answer, or none at all," Vergil said, hoping the sadness in his voice didn't sound too obvious. This whole evening had been nothing but a guilt trip for him and he was starting to get sick of it. He looked over at Lady who was still passed out and cleared his throat. "Listen, I need to get my colleague back home. I don't think my brother would appreciate me just leaving her lying on the ground like that."

"I understand, I do," Marcel said, nodding. "I'm happy to take care of the rest of this for you, but I haven't finished my story yet."

"I'm sure I can guess the rest. You moved back here in her memory and opened a restaurant because it was something she had always wanted to do, right?" Vergil guessed dismissively. He just wanted this conversation to be over.

"Impressive…" Marcel admitted. "You are correct. However, this restaurant also operates as a base for demon hunters like yourself," he added. "Much like tonight, I have assisted many a hunter in the last couple of years since the tree fell. I feel it is the least I can do until I gather the strength and knowledge to confront the one who destroyed the only thing in my life that ever made me happy. I may never find the one responsible, but the day I do… One of us isn't coming out of the encounter alive."

"I admire your dedication," Vergil said, nodding. "Your quest for power is something I can relate to." If only the man before him knew the truth.

"One can never have enough power," Marcel nodded, wiping his tears away. "It's just important that one remembers not to let it corrupt them." He looked at Vergil and held his hand out in front of him. Vergil stared back in confusion for a second before Marcel grabbed Vergil's hand and pulled it towards him in a firm handshake. "I told you all of this because I hope that we can meet again, Mr Redgrave," Marcel said, grinning. "Now take your lady friend and go. I've got this."

"Marcel, this has been a very strange conversation," Vergil admitted, removing the gloves he was wearing and dropping them on the floor. "You are right, this has not been an easy night for me, but I'll be fine. May we meet again." With that, Vergil gave a small bow and walked over to Lady. He kicked her lightly with his foot and when she didn't respond, he bent to pick her up and slung her over his right shoulder, before resting the Kalina Ann over his left. He looked behind him at
Marcel once more, who gave a small wave before getting back to shovelling.

It was only as Vergil was approaching the car that he realised he didn't actually have any way of getting it back home if Lady remained unconscious. He was also surprised to see that the vehicle appeared to have been broken into, with the rear windscreen lying in shards all over the parking lot. After a moment however, he figured out that it must have been Lady while attempting to retrieve her weapons, as he still had the keys to the vehicle in his jacket pocket.

Vergil leaned the Kalina Ann against the car and pulled Lady forwards, standing her up in front of him. He winced a little as he realised that she too was now covered in blood, and that she probably wouldn't be too happy about that when she woke up. He slapped her face lightly, then a little harder in an attempt to rouse her, but she seemed to be out cold. Sighing in frustration, he slung her over his shoulder again before slashing Yamato through the air, opening up a portal to the shop; they would just have to come back for the car later. He picked up Lady's weapon and stepped through, oblivious to the waiter's quiet sobs in the distance.
The shop was empty as Vergil stepped out of the portal, much to his surprise. He had expected Dante to be waiting eagerly to press him for all the details. In fact, the foyer was dark and Vergil had to stumble his way over to the sofa in the corner of the room so he could dump Lady on it. He removed the now scuffed heels she was wearing and placed them on the floor next to her. Leaning the Kalina Ann against the wall, Vergil made his way over to the lightswitch and flicked it on, only for nothing to happen. He sighed in exasperation and turned the switch off again. He walked to the window and angrily yanked the curtains open so that they would at least have the light from the moon and the streetlamps outside.

Vergil turned towards Lady again and felt himself start to blush as he realised that her dress had ridden up, revealing her muscular, stocking-clad thighs. After debating for a moment whether he should try to adjust the garment, he instead ran upstairs and returned holding his duvet, which he quickly threw over her. He then hesitated for a moment more, before going upstairs again and returning with one of his pillows, which he carefully placed under her head. With the blood and guns (which he hadn’t dared to try and remove from their holsters) hidden beneath the blanket, she almost looked like a normal woman. Almost. He stood over her for a few seconds, pondering his next moves.

He decided the next priority was probably to divest himself of his bloodied garments before he ended up making yet another mess on the recently cleaned floor. He made his way to the bathroom, fully prepared to deal with both a cold shower and having to hopelessly fumble his way around the gloomy room. He considered leaving the door open to let some light in, but decided he couldn’t risk Lady waking up and seeing him in a towel yet again. He instead closed it behind him, engulfing himself in darkness. He quickly disrobed, throwing the bloodied items into what he hoped was the corner to be dealt with at a later date. Turning the shower on (with some difficulty), Vergil was surprised to find that the water was actually warm for once. It felt comforting on his skin as he stood under the steaming stream, letting it wash the last remnants of the demon’s blood from his hair.

As the events of the evening replayed through his mind, Vergil knew he would not be sleeping tonight. Not that he usually got much sleep anyway. He wondered where Dante was, which reminded him of the old man he had spoken to earlier. When he tried to stop thinking of him, he instead thought of the waiter and imagined what his wife must have been like. He shook his head, trying to stop that train of thought, but his mind was instead brought back to the moment he had found the demon kissing Lady, and wondered not for the first time why it had bothered him so much. This in turn reminded him of the demon’s words about why it had chosen to look like him. He stood there in the shower like that for a long time, each thought linking back to another, until he realised that the water was starting to run cold. After what must have been at least thirty minutes, if not more, he shut the water off, feeling barely cleaner than he had when he got in. He felt around the room until he managed to find a towel and wrapped it around himself before cracking the door open to make sure Lady was still asleep. Satisfied that he would not be repeating the events of the other day, he made his way upstairs again before returning a short while later in his usual attire, a few books tucked under his arm.

Vergil approached the desk and rummaged around in the drawers a bit until he managed to find some square based candles and a box of matches that he kept in there for emergencies. He lit enough of the candles to be able to make out some text before settling himself into the chair and preparing for the night ahead, fully expecting Dante to return at any moment. The books he had brought with him were mostly about one thing - Incubi. Vergil had realised that his initial guess of
skinwalkers or possession had been largely incorrect, and while the demon had somehow changed its form, it wasn’t as he had expected. Having seen how it had behaved towards Lady and piecing together some more information on the case, Vergil had come to the conclusion that it instead had been some sort of incubus. He resolved himself to reading as much lore about the things as he could, both to work out if there was any immediate treatment needed for Lady, and to see if there was any truth in what it had said about the ‘ideal man’. He had convinced himself that he was mostly just planning to read about treatments, however.

Just as he was starting to get comfortable, the phone on the desk suddenly rang, almost causing Vergil to knock some candles over as he jumped in surprise. He quickly reached over and picked up the receiver. “Devil May Cry…”

“Vergil, that you?” Dante’s concerned voice asked from the other end.

“Speaking.”

“Oh thank god, I was starting to get worried. You both okay?”

Vergil looked over at Lady, who was still unconscious and now starting to drool slightly. “We just got back.”

“Damn bro, I’ve been trying to call you both all evening! What the heck’s going on?”

“We…” Vergil glanced towards the bathroom, realising that he must have left his mobile phone tucked into his discarded jacket. He looked around a little more and noticed that Lady’s handbag - presumably containing her own phone - was nowhere to be seen. “We were busy dealing with the demon. We must not have heard the calls, I apologise.”

“Oh hey, how did that go?” Dante asked, starting to sound slightly less panicked.

“The job is complete,” Vergil said, vaguely.

“Awesome, great job guys!” Dante said enthusiastically. “I’m actually with the client and her daughter right now to give them a debrief. I think I’ll probably end up staying the night, they’re both pretty shaken. You okay to take care of things until I get back?”

“I’ll handle it.”

“How’s Lady doing by the way? She there still? Can I talk to her?” Dante asked.

“She’s…” Vergil looked over at Lady again, hoping she would wake up before Dante got back. “She’s in the shower. She’ll probably head home soon.”

“Oh right, about that… The hot water should be good, but we kinda ran out of electricity. I’ll fix it when I get back, I promise. Anyway, reason I asked was because after talking to this girl a bit more, I’m starting to think that the thing you just killed might have been an incubus. Just wanna make sure it didn’t do anything weird to Lady.”

“She’s fine…” Vergil said, hoping he sounded convincing enough.

“Glad to hear it,” Dante replied, seemingly believing the lie. “Just make sure she stays that way, ya hear? I know she’s cute and all, but if I hear that you tried to make a move on her while you were all alone in a dark shop, I won’t be too happy.”

“Dante… What kind of man do you take me for?”
“I’m just sayin’, Nero is your son not mine. Who knows what you’re capable of?” Vergil could practically hear the grin down the phone as Dante finished his previous sentence with a slight chuckle. “I’m just messin’ with ya bro. Rest well, you deserve it.”

“Goodnight, Dante.” Vergil said bluntly, hanging up before his foolish brother could say anything further. He sighed and walked over to Lady again, who was looking concerning pale. Or perhaps it was just the moonlight. He gave her a light flick on the nose to see if it would do anything to rouse her. It did not. Vergil paced up and down for a few minutes, wondering if he should just tell Dante the truth in case there really was something wrong with her, but decided against it, at least for the time being. He glanced up at the clock; it was starting to approach midnight. Vergil stopped pacing and stood by the window, lost in thought for a moment. He finally let out yet another exasperated sigh and grabbed Yamato, opening up a portal back to the restaurant.

The air outside was even colder now, and with Vergil’s hair still being slightly damp, it sent a chill down his spine. His plan was simple. He would check the car park and all around the building for the purse and if it wasn’t there, he would give up. He didn’t even know why he was doing this; guilt perhaps, or maybe some other reason that he couldn’t quite figure out. Vergil stealthily walked around the perimeter of the restaurant, which now lay in darkness. His search was slightly hindered by the fact that the bag in question was dark coloured and quite small, something which would be hard to find even if it wasn’t pitch black outside. As he was finishing his second lap, he noticed that the glass from the car had been cleared up and a tarp had been draped over the open back window. Almost as a last resort, he made his way over to the vehicle and lifted the covering to check if they had left anything else inside. He was more than pleasantly surprised - and relieved - to discover that someone had actually placed Lady’s bag into the rear of the vehicle. Looking around to make sure no one would suspect him of stealing, Vergil reached inside and retrieved it, happy to find that Lady’s belongings, including her phone, were still inside the bag. He checked the rest of the car and grabbed Lady's boots before replacing the tarp. Satisfied that there was nothing further for him to do here, he returned to the shop.

The warm smell of sandalwood filled Lady’s nostrils as she slowly opened her eyes, instantly shielding them against the bright morning sun that was shining directly into them. For a moment she panicked, trying to figure out where she was and what had happened, but once her vision had adjusted to the light, she realised that she was lying on the sofa in the Devil May Cry foyer. She sat up stiffly and stretched, feeling a dull ache ripple throughout her entire body. She noticed that she was wrapped in a dark blue duvet and seemed to have a pillow of some sort propping her up. She was almost tempted to lie back down and hide herself in the soft covers before her mind suddenly connected the dots. Blue. Sandalwood. Devil May Cry.

She jerked her head to the right to see Vergil sitting at the desk, asleep. He had his arms folded over his stomach and his chin was resting lightly on his chest. He looked oddly peaceful, Lady thought. In front of him were some burnt out candles and a couple of old looking books. Perhaps most interesting however was her bag, which sat on the desk next to a small box of sewing supplies. Wrapping the duvet around herself, Lady walked over and saw that the strap which had been so brazenly cut through the night before was now repaired. Lady hovered for a moment, wondering if she should try to wake him. Flashes of what had happened the night before came back to her though, and she instead decided that she would get out of there before she had to try and talk to him; it was bad enough that she had been kissed by a demon, but the fact that it had been using his face was too much for her to handle right now.
She unwrapped herself and was about to dump the duvet back on the sofa when she looked down and realised that she was covered in blood. She froze briefly, trying to work out whether it was hers and if so where she was injured, before she realised that it was only on the outside of her clothing and must have come from elsewhere. Sighing in frustration, she gathered the duvet and the pillow in her arms and started to head up the stairs - Lady made a habit of keeping some spare clothes at the shop for this very purpose and decided she might as well return the bedding while retrieving her change of attire.

Lady tiptoed quietly along the hallway, hoping that Vergil would remain passed out long enough for her to get dressed and go. She decided to head to his room first to get it over with. The air smelt stuffy but strangely comforting as she cracked his door open. With his room being towards the back of the building, the sun had not yet reached its windows and it was difficult to make out what was inside, other than a whole lot of blue and a bunch of books. Not wishing to spend any longer in here than she had to, Lady quickly placed the pillow back at the head of the bed and was in the process of checking the duvet for any blood stains when she sensed someone behind her.

"What happened to never entering a man's room alone?" Vergil asked coolly. Lady turned to see Vergil leaning against the door frame, arms folded over his chest. He looked at her disapprovingly.

"I-" Lady gulped. Her throat felt strangely dry. She stared at him for a few seconds, unexplained fear causing her skin to prickle. She wanted to run away from him and fast, but he was blocking the only exit. She wondered why she felt so afraid. Perhaps it was the dingy lighting? Or… The thought of the demon shot through her mind again. Lady shook her head. "I was coming up here anyway…" she said at last.

Vergil regarded her closely, able to see much better in the dim room than she could. She looked… scared? Her concerned expression unnerved Vergil for some reason and he stepped to the side, entering the room but freeing the doorway. "You should have just left them. They need to be cleaned anyway."

"Yeah well I didn't know that," Lady said, eyes flitting between Vergil and the door. She realised that she was holding the duvet in front of her like some sort of shield and lowered it. She started to slowly edge towards the door.

"Give that to me and get out of my room," Vergil demanded, watching her as she tried to shuffle away. Lady gingerly held out the duvet and Vergil grabbed it from her - perhaps a little too harshly, he thought - before throwing it on the bed. He turned to face the exit, arms folded again until Lady left. She wondered if he would follow her, but he instead closed the door behind her, leaving her standing in the hallway. Lady let out a deep breath that she hadn't realised she was holding and slumped against the wall, sliding down until she was sitting on the ground. Her heart was beating like crazy and for a moment she was worried that she would pass out.

On the other side of the door, Vergil leaned his head against the warm wood before turning around and also sitting down on the floor. She had looked absolutely terrified of him. It upset him, but he couldn't figure out why. After what seemed like a reasonable amount of time, Vergil opened the door to find Lady still sitting there, her face buried in her knees.

"...How are you feeling?" he asked hesitantly when she didn’t move for a good minute or so.

"Everything hurts," Lady mumbled without looking up. Every fibre of her wanted to run away, but for some reason she couldn’t get her body to move. What had started as a dull ache when she woke up had turned into a throbbing pain, and for some reason she felt completely exhausted.

"Do you remember what happened last night?" Vergil asked, trying to avoid looking directly at
“Enough,” Lady said bluntly.

Vergil hesitated, wondering what he should say next. He wasn’t very good at comforting people. “It was an incubus,” he said at last, deciding to skip the empathy and go straight to the facts.

“I figured that much out when I saw the girl,” Lady responded, trying to stifle a yawn.

“It seems like it fed on your life energy,” Vergil continued. “I have been reading about them all night.”

“Uh huh.”

“Apparently they can transform into whatever form they like.” He paused. “Not just the ‘ideal man’ after all,” he said triumphantly.

“Well duh,” Lady said, managing to lift her head slightly to look at Vergil. “As if you’d ever be my ideal man; bastard was just trying to distract us both.”

Vergil stared back at her, trying to hide the slight grimace threatening to spread across his face. “As you say, ‘duh’,” he growled through slightly clenched teeth.

“Just do me a favour and leave me alone,” Lady said, her head flopping forward again. “I’ll be fine in a minute, then I’ll get changed and be out of your hair.”

“At least try to be gone before Dante gets back,” Vergil said, lightly kicking Lady’s foot. “If he finds out I let something happen to you I’ll never hear the end of it.”

“Oh don’t you worry,” Lady said, straightening up at last and stretching. “There’s no way in hell I’m planning to admit to Dante that I got kissed by a demon with your face. I’d rather the demon killed me than endure the endless teasing I’d get for that.”

“It seems we are in agreement then,” Vergil said, extending a hand to help Lady up, which she reluctantly took. “If he asks, we dispatched it with ease and went our separate ways once we got back to the shop.”

“Sounds good to me,” Lady replied, yanking her hand away and making a show of wiping it on her dress, earning a subtle glare from Vergil. “Where is Dante anyway?”

“Apparently he’s debriefing the targets. Knowing him he probably won’t wake up until the afternoon, so you should have plenty of time.”

“Perfect,” Lady said, turning away from Vergil and starting to head down the hall towards the spare room she kept her clothes in. She didn’t get very far before she was overcome by dizziness and ended up leaning against the wall again. “I’m fine,” she called behind her.

“Clearly,” Vergil said, unmoving. He watched as she shuffled her way forward before opening one of the doors and disappearing inside. He decided he would give her half an hour, and if he didn’t hear her leave then he would go and check on her.

The slam of the shop doors reverberating throughout the building made Vergil jump. He was currently dozing on his bed, attempting to make up for his lack of sleep the night before. He
checked the clock next to his bed and his eyes widened. It was three in the afternoon.

“Hey guys, where you at?” Dante’s voice called up the stairs. Vergil shot off of his bed and yanked his door open, running into the hallway. He snuck a glance down the stairs and saw the Kalina Ann still leaning against the wall. Both pairs of Lady’s shoes sat under the sofa. “Bro, that you?” Dante asked, starting to walk up the stairs. “If you’re having fun-time with Lady just say, although I will kill you.”

“Dante,” Vergil said a little too cheerfully, meeting his brother halfway. “Welcome back.”

“Well this is creepy…” Dante said, raising an eyebrow.

“Is it so strange to greet my own brother?”

“Given that your greetings usually consist of trying to impale me with something, kinda,” Dante said trying to step around Vergil, who continued to block the stairwell. “Dude, let me through.”

“Why? You never need to go upstairs.”

“Well yeah, but I wanna make sure Lady is okay,” Dante said, starting to sound concerned.

“She’s…” Not here? Asleep? What excuse could he possibly give? In fact, he didn’t even know if she was here. “…out shopping,” Vergil said, unconvincingly.

“Shopping?”

“Shopping.”

“…Without her shoes?”

“She went home last night and came back this morning so she could talk to you about the mission,” Vergil lied. “You were taking too long so she left.”

“Right…” Dante turned around and headed back down the stairs. He took out his phone and started to call Lady. He looked over at the desk in surprise when Lady’s phone started to ring inside her handbag, which was mysteriously sitting on the desk. He turned back to face Vergil who just shrugged.

“Excuse me for a moment,” Vergil said before quickly running up the stairs.
Chapter Thirteen

Vergil stood outside the door he had seen Lady walk through, his hand hovering over the doorknob. Should he just walk in? Try knocking? He wondered what he would do if she wasn’t even in there. Maybe he should just tell Dante and get this all over with… No, she would be furious at him if he did that; she’d never live it down if Dante found out what had happened to her. Vergil took a deep breath and turned the handle, closing his eyes as he walked in. “Anyone present?” he asked, shutting the door behind him. He waited for a moment before cracking open his left eye and looking around the room. He quickly spotted Lady slumped in the far right corner of the room, leaning against a stack of cardboard boxes. A chest of drawers stood next to her, still open from where she appeared to have rifled through them. She was dressed, at least. She had changed into a loose fitting white shirt and a pair of dark coloured jeans. Vergil took a moment to note how unusual it was to see her with her legs fully covered for once.

He walked over to Lady and looked down at her, trying to work out how to proceed. He started by crouching down and taking her wrist in his hand, feeling for a pulse. It was slow, but it was there - she was still alive. Vergil breathed a sigh of relief. He wasn’t sure how he would have explained a dead body to his brother, let alone one belonging to a close friend and colleague. He released her wrist, letting her arm fall back to her side. Still crouching, he gave her a sharp jab to the ribs with Yamato’s handle, eliciting a pained grunt but nothing further. Next Vergil tried grabbing her shoulders and shaking her as hard as he could without causing further injury. Her head flopped backwards and forwards and he stopped when he accidentally hit her head on a sharp corner of one of the boxes. Finally, he decided to try and pick up one of the guns she had left lying in their holsters on the ground. She was always very protective of her weapons, so if this didn’t work, nothing would. He removed one of the weapons from its container and waved it around in front of her. Still nothing. It seemed she really was out cold again.

Vergil tutted in irritation and stood up. He looked around the small room. It was nothing but a bunch of storage and dusty furniture. Unfortunately, none of the items in the room seemed to be fit for the purpose of laying down an unconscious woman. He looked down at Lady again, fiddling nervously with Yamato before letting out a defeated sigh and leaning down to pick her up. He flung her over his shoulder as he had the night before, and opened the door. He decided he would dump her in his room for now; at least that way he would be able to keep track of her. Just as he was starting to cross the landing, Dante called up the stairs.

“Yo Vergil, why is there blood all over the bathroom? Weren’t you yelling at me just the other day for doing the same thing?”

Vergil froze. He had completely forgotten about the clothing he had discarded last night and was disappointed in himself for not dealing with it sooner. “I do apologise,” he said at last, trying to hide the strain in his voice from lugging Lady around. “It was dark last night, I will deal with it shortly.”

Chapter Notes

Apologies for the delay everyone! I’ve been pretty busy with work :( Hopefully you'll all enjoy this update, although it's still a little sad in places haha~
“Yeah well you’d better,” Dante called back. “Also, I need to talk to you about something so get your ass down here.”

“Soon,” Vergil responded, already expecting bad news. He quickly finished the short journey to his room and quietly slipped inside. He had made the bed before accidentally falling asleep earlier and carefully placed Lady on top of the covers. He looked at her for a moment more before removing his coat and throwing it over her as a makeshift blanket; he felt that actually tucking her into his bed would be a step too far. After making sure that she was still unconscious, Vergil left his room and headed downstairs.

“What the hell are you up to?” Dante asked, eyeing his brother suspiciously as he reached the bottom of the stairs.

“Nothing that concerns you,” Vergil replied bluntly, leaning against the bannister. “What did you want to talk about?”

“What happened to your coat?” Dante enquired, turning his desk chair around to face Vergil and sitting down.

“I felt warm. It’s not that unusual during the summer.”

“Uh huh… Anyway, I need to talk to you about the electricity and warm water I promised...” Dante said hesitantly. Vergil could already tell this wasn’t going to be good and nodded for Dante to continue. “Okay, so - The restaurant got in contact and told me that you apparently washed some blood off of yourself in their fountain or something? It wouldn't be that much of a big deal, except it turns out they had to empty and wash out the entire fountain, along with replacing the water cycling through it because it turned pink, and they had no other way of fixing it.”

“I see.”

“They also told me that that they had to deep clean the ground outside. Lucky for you though, they’ve decided not to charge for that because apparently they do it often, which seems kinda strange, but whatever. Something was also mentioned about a plaster bust being broken, but that’s coming out of Lady’s pay so you don’t need to worry about that.”

“And?”

“And… The car company also got back to me. They said the rear windshield of the vehicle was smashed and they had to replace that, which actually cost quite a lot. They also added some extra charges for the vehicle not being returned on time and charged us for an extra day’s hire because we only managed to get it back to them at two-thirty in the afternoon today,” Dante said. He let out a sigh. “I think you can see where this is going.”

“You’re going back on your offer of keeping the electricity and water metre full aren’t you?” Vergil asked, not even bothering to hide his disappointment.

“I’m sorry bro… I didn’t want to use up all of your pay, so I used some of the shop’s funding to cover it as well. Unfortunately there’s just no other way of paying them back and keeping on top of our bills, so the electricity and water will have to take a back seat. Obviously I’ll try my best, but I can’t guarantee that it won’t run out every now and then.”

“It’s fine, I’ll just use my leftover pay from the job,” Vergil said, starting to head towards the bathroom. “It’s not like I have anything else to spend it on.”

“Yeah, about that…” Dante continued. “There kind of isn’t that much left by the time you factor in
some of the other expenses; I had to use some of what you were due to get as well otherwise we’d
be even more in debt. You’ll get maybe a couple of weeks top, and that’s if you shower sparingly.”

Vergil paused without turning to face Dante. He felt surprisingly unbothered about the situation.
“I’ll deal with it,” he said at last. “I’m sure some more work will come in by then.”

Dante stared at his brother’s back in confusion. “Hey, you okay? I expected you to be a little
more… stabby.”

“I don’t have the time nor energy to be angry right now,” Vergil said truthfully. He had much
bigger things to worry about than water temperature.

“Seriously though, you’ve been acting kinda strange since I called you last night. Did something
happen?” Dante stood up and walked over to Vergil who appeared to have tensed up a little.

“Only what I’ve told you,” Vergil answered, avoiding his brother’s gaze. “I just didn’t sleep very
well.”

“You never sleep well,” Dante said, placing his hands on his hips and walking around until he was
-facing Vergil. “Something’s not right here, I can tell.”

“Everything is fine.”

“Where’s Lady, Vergil? Tell me the truth,” Dante asked, staring into Vergil’s eyes as he reluctantly
turned to look at him. “If something went wrong, I won’t be mad. I just need to know she’s safe.”

Vergil remained still, wondering what he should do. This was his chance to come clean, to rid
himself of this foolish predicament. They could get her some help, find a way to get her strength
back and maybe, maybe she would appreciate the fact that he had put her health first instead of
trying to protect his pride. He wouldn’t have to tell the whole story after all, and the longer he left
this, the harder it would be to tell the truth.

“Answer me, Vergil,” Dante demanded, unholstering one of his guns. “Please don’t make me need
to force the truth out of you.”

“...She’s out shopping,” Vergil said at last. “Just like I told you. Now if you’ll excuse me, I have a
bathroom to clean.”

Dante regarded his brother sceptically a little longer before stepping aside and letting Vergil access
the room behind him. “I’ll trust you, brother. Only because I want to believe that I can. But if I find
out you’re lying to me, we’re going to need to have a serious talk.”

Vergil nodded in response and walked into the bathroom. He closed the door behind him and
leaned against it before sliding down to the floor and holding his head in his hands. Why? Why had
he lied? What could he possibly hope to gain from this? He looked around the tiled room, relieved
to see that there wasn’t actually that much to clean up after all. He would probably be able to deal
with it using the supplies in the bathroom and without having to go back out and face Dante again.
He pushed himself to his feet and quickly got to work, trying to rationalise his thoughts. Was it
really something as selfish as pride that was keeping him from telling the truth? Or perhaps it was
because Lady had asked him not to say anything, but then why should he listen to her? Or… He
paused, looking at the bloodied dress shirt he was holding. Perhaps it was because there was
actually something strangely exciting about having an unconscious woman to deal with… Vergil
shook his head, ridding himself of such thoughts. No, the reason he was doing this was to protect
both their dignities. That was it. If she didn’t wake up soon, he would just confess everything and
take the hit. He finished cleaning and bagged up the ruined clothing before exiting the bathroom. Thankfully, Dante was nowhere to be seen, presumably having wandered off to his room.

Vergil tossed the clothes into the washing machine, hoping just a tiny bit that they might be salvageable. He made sure to remove his phone first and tucked it into one of his pockets. After starting up the wash cycle, he made his way to the cupboard to see if they had any food or drink that was still edible. He picked up a can of the ‘shelf milk’ he had bought before and a small packet of cookies before heading upstairs.

Once he got to his room he placed the items on the bedside table next to Lady, who still hadn’t moved in the time he had been away. For a little while while he paced the room, checking on Lady every now and then and occasionally opening his phone, hovering over the button that connected him to Nero before changing his mind and closing it again. After half an hour or so of debating, he finally sat on the end of his bed and made the call. He wasn’t entirely sure what he planned to say, but he decided that he needed to talk to at least someone to try and clear his mind. He hadn’t been able to stop thinking about the old man and the waiter he had spoken with last night, which was unusual for him given he didn’t usually care about anyone apart from himself. The phone rang for a couple of minutes before disconnecting. Vergil sighed and tried a few more times, still with no answer. Giving up on attempts to call, he instead got up from the bed, wrote a quick note to Lady, then used Yamato to open a portal to Nero’s place.

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“And that’s when I said, ‘Gun? You call that a gun? Check out these babies!’ and whipped out the new weapons I’d been workin’ on. You shoulda seen their lil’ faces!” Nico grinned from underneath her van.

“See Nico, this is why Kyrie is hesitant about letting you play with the orphans,” Nero said, trying to stifle his laughter. “Of course their guns wouldn’t be any good, they were children playing Cowboys and Indians.”

“I know, I know,” Nico said, waving her hand. “That’s why they weren’t loaded or nothin’, they were just for show- Whoa, Nero, behind you!” she said suddenly, looking over Nero’s shoulder.

“Huh? What-” Nero turned to look behind him, almost jumping out of his skin as he found his father standing almost face to face with him. “Damn it pops, what have I told you about randomly teleporting to places? It makes people super uncomfortable.”

“I tried calling,” Vergil said stepping back slightly. He glared over at Nico who was now standing up in front of the vehicle wiping her hands with some sort of rag. “Begone woman, this doesn’t concern you.”

“Nice to see you too,” Nico responded, folding her arms. She hadn’t had much interaction with Vergil, and frankly she didn’t really want to. He had been round for dinner occasionally, but she usually excused herself and went elsewhere during such events. The few times they had spent time in close proximity to each other, he never really spoke to her other than the odd grunt or dismissive one word response.

“Nero, I need to talk to you,” Vergil continued, ignoring Nico’s comment. “Is there somewhere we can go?”

“Uh sure, how about inside the van?” Nero suggested hesitantly, starting to head towards it. Vergil nodded in agreement and joined him, scowling at Nico again as he did so. “Nico give us a minute, would ya?” Nero asked.
“Sure thing, but make sure you gimme a call if he tries anythin’ weird,” Nico responded before leaving the garage.

Once inside the vehicle, Vergil and Nero sat on opposite couches and faced each other, sitting in silence for a while before Nero finally cleared his throat. “So… What’s up? How did last night go?”

Vergil stared back at him, unsure exactly of what he wanted to talk about or why he had come here. He pondered whether he should just go home. After a few more seconds he let out a sigh. “Nero… Am I a bad person?”

“Wow, talk about a loaded question,” Nero responded, scratching the back of his neck. “Do you really want me to answer that?”

“Just answer me truthfully,” Vergil said, not completely oblivious to the irony of his request given how much he was hiding from Dante.

“I…” Nero paused, trying to work out how he could answer this tactfully. “I think you’re a good person who’s been through a lot of bad stuff,” he said at last. “I think that… A lot of people are afraid of you because of how you present yourself, but if they just take the time to talk to you, they’ll realise that you ain’t so bad.” He sat back on the sofa, happy with what he thought sounded like a reasonable response.

Vergil nodded, taking it all in before looking at Nero again. “Do you know how many lives were affected because of the Qliphoth?” he asked calmly.

“That…” Nero gulped. “I thought we agreed to put that behind us? It wasn’t really you, remember? We’ve spoken about this.”

“Even if we refuse to talk about it, there’s no denying that a lot of damage was caused,” Vergil said quietly. “I’ve always thought that I didn’t have much control over what happened, but when I think about it, Urizen was still a part of me whether I like it or not. I killed those people, no one else.”

“Don’t you think this is kind of coming out of nowhere?” Nero asked, starting to feel uncomfortable. It had taken everyone a long time to forgive Vergil for what had happened, but they had in a way, at least. They had all, Vergil included, rationalised it as something that was out of his control and come to the conclusion that he hadn’t truly been responsible. No one had brought it up since.

“I’ve been lying to myself, Nero,” Vergil continued. “I thought I could handle being back in the human world, and I convinced myself that everything was fine and I could just carry on as if nothing had happened, but it’s all fake. Everywhere I go, people get hurt. I shouldn’t be here.”

“Don’t you think this is kind of coming out of nowhere?” Nero asked, starting to feel uncomfortable. It had taken everyone a long time to forgive Vergil for what had happened, but they had in a way, at least. They had all, Vergil included, rationalised it as something that was out of his control and come to the conclusion that he hadn’t truly been responsible. No one had brought it up since.

“You’d better not be thinking of running back to Hell,” Nero said angrily. “It was hard enough getting you back here, don’t even think about it.”

Vergil shook his head and sat back. “Don’t worry, I’m not planning to run away. Not this time. I just… I feel like I need to do something to atone for what I’ve done. I can’t carry on like this.”

“Well I mean, you help kill demons so that’s pretty good right?” Nero asked. “Plus, you know…”

“What do I know?”

Nero looked away before continuing. “There’s… Well, there’s always the orphanage…”
Vergil narrowed his eyes slightly. “We’ve spoken about this.”

“Yeah, but that was before you randomly turned up in my garage spouting a bunch of depressing stuff. Look, I’m not really sure what triggered this or whatever, but if you’re looking for a sense of atonement and want to give back to the community, helping us out is definitely the way to do it. Plus, you get your own place to stay which’ll probably make you feel a whole lot better straight away.”

“I have just discussed killing thousands of people with you and you wish for me to be around children?” Vergil asked incredulously. “And here I’d hoped that you would have inherited at least some of my intellect.”

“Hey now, hear me out. I know for a fact that you’re not about to go around slaughtering little kids. Plus there’ll be other staff there at all times to keep an eye on you, and if it gets too much for you, you can just leave. I’m trying my best to help you out here.”

“Surely there must be something else.”

“Well maybe, but baby steps ya know? Get some more experience of being around people, then maybe you can consider working for charity or something. Maybe consider joining one of those ‘rebuild the city’ groups, I dunno.” Nero reached into his back pocket and pulled out a crumpled flyer showing a bunch of children’s faces looking up at the camera. Some were smiling while others looked slightly forlorn. ‘Help Wanted’ was printed along the top in bright, colourful letters.

“Here, at least take a look at this,” he said, holding it out to Vergil.

Vergil reluctantly took it and turned it over in his hands a couple of times. “...What exactly would I have to do again?” he asked.

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It was dark when Lady woke up, and she started to panic again, wondering just how long she had been unconscious. It took her a moment to realise that she was not lying collapsed in a dusty room, but actually seemed to be on a bed of some sorts. She sat herself up and stretched, trying to get her bearings when she noticed that what she had thought was a blanket was in fact a coat, and a very familiar one at that. With a surprised yelp she kicked the garment away from her onto the floor and frantically looked around the room. It didn’t take her long to spot a piece of paper on the bedside table next to her along with what seemed to be a candle and a box of matches. She quickly lit the candle and brought the note up to read it:

’If I’m not here when you wake up, stay put. I’ll be back soon. I’m afraid all I could find for you was shelf milk but maybe you’ll like it more than I did.

Dante, if you’re reading this, get out of my room and I’ll explain everything once I’m back. I didn’t do anything to her, I swear.

- Vergil.’

Lady glanced over at the can of milk and packet of cookies that had been left behind. She was planning to ignore them and make her escape when her stomach let out a loud growl, and she realised how hungry she was. With a reluctant sigh, she ripped open the packet of cookies and wolfed a few down before opening the can and taking a gulp of this legendary ‘shelf milk’. To her surprise, it wasn’t actually as bad as she thought it would be, and she ended up finishing the can
pretty quickly. Just as she was about to eat the last cookie, a portal suddenly opened up at the foot of the bed and she froze, hand hovering in the air. Vergil stepped out a moment later and ran a hand through his hair before noticing that she was finally awake.

“You’re conscious,” he said bluntly. He had fully expected her to still be lying there and had been planning to tell Dante everything. He cursed himself for explaining the situation to Nero before he’d left, and hoped that he wouldn’t say anything.

“What the hell am I doing in your room?” Lady asked defensively, pressing her back up against the headboard of the bed. She still felt an odd sensation of fear when she looked at him, but it was less so than earlier now. She wondered if the demon had messed with her head and it was starting to wear off.

“Well, it was this or leave you amongst a pile of boxes,” Vergil responded calmly, walking over to her. The portal closed behind him, plunging the room into almost complete darkness again, save for the candle. He stood next to the bed and looked down at her. “I apologise if you have been waiting a long time. I ended up being forced into having dinner with Nero and that woman of his.”

“You… You ate dinner while I was lying here unconscious?!” Lady shouted angrily. “What if something had happened to me? What if-” Vergil raised a hand to silence her and pointed towards the door.

“I’d keep your voice down or Dante might get suspicious,” Vergil said quietly. He sat down on the bed and turned to face her. Lady had to hold onto her knees to stop her feet from touching him. “It’s not as bad as it sounds,” he continued. “I was actually researching ways to cure you at the same time.”

“Wait, you told Nero what happened?” Lady whispered indignantly. “I thought we agreed we wouldn’t tell anyone?”

“I didn’t tell him everything,” Vergil answered. “I wasn’t even planning to tell him anything, but he kept asking about you and I finally cracked. It might not seem like it, but I was actually starting to get a bit worried about you.”

“Yeah right,” Lady said dismissively. “More like you were worried about what would happen if Dante found out, right?”

“I won’t deny that that concern may have factored into it,” Vergil responded truthfully. “But you’re awake now and that’s all that matters.”

“So… What now?” Lady asked, swinging her legs around so that she was now also sitting on the edge of the bed. “What cover story did you give?” She wanted to tell Vergil to move away. She was currently trapped between him and the bedside table and she didn’t like it. Vergil seemed to notice her discomfort and shifted along slightly, giving her more room.

“I told Nero that you had been acting strange since we got back and had fallen unconscious. I mentioned nothing of the… Interaction, between the demon and yourself.”

“And Dante?” Lady asked, also moving along a little so that she could bolt for the door if needed.

“I told him you were out shopping…” Vergil admitted. It may have just been the poor lighting coming from the candle, but for a moment, Lady thought Vergil actually looked embarrassed for once.

“And he believed that?” Lady said in disbelief.
“Whether he did or not, he’s acting like he did. Which leads us onto the next problem,” Vergil said, standing up at last. “We need to find a way to get you out of here and explain why you were shopping for…” he checked the clock. “Why you were out shopping until nine in the evening.”

“Whoa hold up, just how long have I been unconscious?” Lady asked, following suit so that there were now standing face to face. "I swear it was morning not too long ago."

“Speaking of which, how are you feeling?” Vergil asked, ignoring her question. “You seem to be standing up just fine.”

“How am I feeling?” Lady stretched again and clenched her hands and toes a couple of times. “I’m feeling pissed off, is how I’m feeling!”

“Ah excellent, you’re feeling better then,” Vergil said, dodging a swift punch aimed towards his head. “From what Nero and I researched,” he continued, appearing behind her and causing Lady to jump, “the cure seems to be a lot of rest and ensuring that you eat and drink plenty of things while you’re awake. You should be better within a week or so, so I would take things slowly if I were you.” Lady directed a sharp kick behind her, only for Vergil to grab her leg and spin her around until she was on the floor. She let out a pained grunt as the air was knocked out of her. “Don’t think I’ll go easy on you just because you’re unwell,” Vergil said, standing over her. “I’ve been nothing but kind to you for the last 24 hours and I’d appreciate some respect.”

Lady stared up at him defiantly before looking away. “...Sorry,” she mumbled at last. She accepted his offer of help and let herself be pulled to her feet again. She sighed and leaned against the wall, arms crossed. “Truth be told, I’m still feeling pretty rough,” she admitted. “I know it’s not your fault I’m like this, but I just have this weird feeling every time I look at you that simultaneously makes me want to run for my life and shoot you in the face.”

“Glad to see nothing has changed there then,” Vergil chuckled. He reached down and picked up his discarded coat before shrugging it on. “Do you think you can remain conscious long enough for me to see if Dante is downstairs?”

“Probably,” Lady said, smirking a little. “What if he is?”

“Don’t worry, I have some ideas,” Vergil responded. He quickly slipped out of the room and tiptoed across the landing to check. He snuck halfway down the stairs and glanced over at the desk. Dante was sitting there in the dark, watching a small TV that he had set up in front of him. He was laughing at some arbitrary sitcom or other. Vergil noticed that Lady’s handbag had been moved over to the sofa along with the rest of her things. Although non-ideal, they could work with this. He turned around and headed back to his room. When he entered, Lady was looking through some of the books on his shelf.

“Wow you really like your old literature, huh?” she asked as he entered.

“Dante is downstairs,” Vergil said, closing the door silently and walking over to his unwanted guest. “Please don’t look through my things without my permission.”

“Why, what are you gonna do, fight me and draw attention to us?” she asked smugly, replacing the book anyway when she realised how tense Vergil looked. “Um, so what’s the game plan?”

“I need you to use my phone to call the one on Dante’s desk,” Vergil said, holding his mobile out in front of him. “Tell him you went home and accidentally fell asleep or something and you’ll come back tomorrow.”
“Uh, okay, but how does that get me out of here?” Lady asked, gesturing around them. “If you think I’m having a sleepover with you, you’ve got another thing coming.”

Vergil let out a snort that was a combination of surprise and embarrassment. “Of course not, foolish woman. I’ll just take you back home through a portal.”

“Oh hell no,” Lady said, shaking her head. “I’ve seen you go through those weird things. Ain’t no way in hell I’m walking through one of those.”

“Well it’s that or stay here and I’ll sleep in your flat,” Vergil said bluntly. “However, I feel like that would be slightly harder to explain in the morning.”

“Do you even know where I live?” Lady asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Of course…” Vergil trailed off as he realised that he actually had no idea where this woman resided. “Just go through the portal,” he said angrily.

“No,” Lady said, flipping open Vergil’s phone. “Leave this to me.” She quickly dialled the number for the office and waited until Dante picked up.

“Devil May Cry,” Dante yawned from the other end.

“Hey Dante, it’s Lady.”

“Lady!” Dante exclaimed, suddenly sounding a lot more awake. “Where have you been all day? I was getting seriously worried.”

“I went home briefly and ended up falling asleep,” she said, winking at Vergil who just nodded in response and went to sit on his bed again. “Sorry I didn’t call sooner, I guess last night really took it out of me.”

“Everything went okay last night, right?” Dante asked. “Vergil is being weirdly vague with the details and I haven’t really seen him all day.”

“Yes, all as planned. The demon was eliminated without issue.”

“That’s great,” Dante said. “But then I’d expect nothing less from you. And my brother, I guess,” he added, letting out a small chuckle. “Why’d you leave all your stuff here though?”

“I... was pretty tired last night so I ended up leaving my stuff there to pick it up today. It was only meant to be a short shopping trip this morning, but I went home to drop some things off and fell asleep by accident, haha…” Lady was starting to sound less and less convincing as she went on.

Dante seemed to be buying it however.

“Cool. Well, if you wanna come over tonight feel free, I’m gonna be up for a while and I’d be super interested in hearing how everything went yesterday.”

“Aww Dante, you don’t need to do that…” Lady said, trying to turn on the charm and failing miserably. “I’ll just see you tomorrow, you should go to bed, or go out if you want.”

“Sure… Rest well Lady, see you tomorrow.” Dante answered.

“Catch you later,” Lady said, ending the call. She turned to face Vergil who was looking at her with a concerned expression. “I think he bought it,” she said, and Vergil relaxed a little. “So now—” Lady was interrupted by the phone in her hands ringing, which she answered without thinking.
“Hey.”

“Hey Lady, I forgot to ask you something,” Dante said.

“Sure, what’s up?”

“Why are you calling from Vergil’s phone?” he asked before hanging up. Before Lady could say anything further, there was a knock at the door. Vergil and Lady looked at each other, wide-eyed.

“Get under the bed and don’t move,” Vergil whispered hastily. “And turn the phone off.”

“This is ridiculous,” she protested. “We might as well just come clean.”

“What, and let Dante think I’ve been hiding you in my room all day? Do you have any idea what the implications of that would be?” Vergil said angrily. “Now move.” Lady threw her hands up in frustration before ducking underneath the bed and positioning herself in what she hoped was a well hidden location. She still wasn’t feeling great and prayed that she wouldn’t randomly pass out again. Vergil took a deep breath and ran a hand through his hair again before opening the door.

“Dante. What brings you up here.”

“I know she’s in there Vergil,” Dante said coldly. “Cut the bull and let me in.”

“I have no idea what you are talking about,” Vergil replied, blocking the doorway.

“Don’t make me call your phone,” Dante said, taking out his own.

“I don’t know what that has to do with anything,” Vergil said calmly. “Besides, I leant my phone to your associate last night. I still need to get it back.” It suddenly hit Lady as she was hiding under the bed that Vergil hardly, if ever, used her name. In fact, she couldn’t remember the last time he had.

“Is that so?” Dante asked, looking behind Vergil into the candlelit room. “Where have you been all day, brother?”

“If you must know, I was spending some time with my son,” Vergil replied. “I only just got back in fact.”

“That seems like an odd thing for you to do when you knew Lady was due back at any moment,” Dante said sceptically.

“Not really. She wanted to see you, not me. Our association with each other ended last night once she went home. As usual, she wanted nothing to do with me once the job was over.”

“Why does she have your phone?” Dante asked, starting to relax a little. Vergil was surprisingly calm and Dante wondered for a moment if perhaps he had got the wrong end of the stick after all.

“Her’s stopped working last night for some reason. I let her borrow mine so that she could confirm she got home safely. She merely forgot to return it this morning.”

“Her phone seemed to be working just fine when it rang on my desk earlier,” Dante said, doubtful once more.

“Well perhaps it sorted itself out while she was gone. I know nothing of these things, so I can’t say,” Vergil replied.

“Can I come in?” Dante asked.
“You cannot.”

“I’d feel a lot better if.”

“I have already explained myself to you Dante, now go. I have some things I need to think about,” Vergil said, starting to close the door. Dante slammed the butt of one of his guns against it, pushing it open again and causing Vergil to instinctively reach for his sword.

“What were you doing at Nero’s place?” Dante asked.

“That’s none of your business,” Vergil answered, hand still wrapped around Yamato’s hilt.

“Try to see things from my side for once Vergil,” Dante said, raising his voice a little. “I send you out on a job with one of my closest friends and associates to fight an incubus. Then I suddenly don’t hear from said friend and associate for almost 24 hours and all I have to go on is your word that she’s fine. Then you mysteriously disappear all day before I randomly get a call from Lady from your phone. Can’t you see how weird this looks?”

“Dante…”

“And since when did Lady get exhausted after a job? Something happened to her last night, didn’t it? So what, you’re too ashamed to tell me about it but then you randomly go and visit your son? Is Lady at Nero’s place? Is that it? Just tell me the truth already Vergil, this is getting ridiculous-”

“Dante, I’m moving out,” Vergil said at last.

“What?” Dante asked dumbly.

“I don’t know where that woman is, and I don’t really care. The reason I went to see Nero is because he’s offered me somewhere to live. Somewhere with actual working hot water and electricity. Somewhere where I don’t need to worry about people trying to force their way into my room in the middle of the night. I’ve been considering it for a while, and now it’s happening. I’m moving out in less than a week.”

“Oh…” Dante said, lowering his gun. “That’s…” he scratched his ear. “Well, I’m real happy for ya,” he said at last.

“Thank you. Now please leave.”

“Uh huh…” Dante cast one last glance into the room before turning and slowly walking towards the stairs. Vergil closed the door behind him and breathed a sigh of relief. Under the bed, Lady quickly turned the phone back on and called the office again. “Devil May Cry…” Dante answered at last, a tinge of sadness in his voice.

“What the hell, Dante?” Lady asked, feigning anger. “Don’t just randomly call and hang up on me! I’ve been trying to call you back, where did you go?”

“Sorry, sorry, it was a misunderstanding,” Dante said dismissively. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Sure. Just don’t do it again.” Lady hung up the phone and rolled out from underneath the bed. She stood up and looked over at Vergil who seemed to be staring forlornly at the slowly melting candle. “Nice distraction,” she said, giving Vergil a thumbs up. “With my follow-up call I think we should be in the clear. How are you gonna get out of this new lie though?”

“It’s not a lie,” Vergil said, glancing over at her. “I’m actually leaving.”
“Wait really? Where are you gonna go?” Lady’s eyes widened in realisation. “Oh my god, please don’t tell me you accepted the orphanage job, Vergil. We were just talking about it last night, remember? You’re not suitable—”

“You need to go home,” Vergil said, walking around the bed until he was facing her. “Tell me your address.”

“I already told you I’m not—” Lady’s words were cut off by Yamato’s blade being pressed against her throat.

“I’m done playing now. You need to leave.” Lady gulped and hastily stammered out her address. Vergil turned his back on her and opened up a portal to her front door. He turned and grabbed her before shoving her through, following closely behind. “Open the door,” he said.

“I-I can’t, my keys are in my bag…” Lady stuttered nervously. Vergil let out an annoyed growl before closing the opening behind him and creating a new one into the living room he could see through the window.

“Here,” he said, dragging her through.

“Thank you…” Lady said quietly, shivering slightly. Going through the portals had made her feel worse again somehow.

“Do you have enough food and water?” Vergil demanded.

“Y-Yes.”

“Good. Get some rest. I’ll return your belongings later in the night. I’ll tell Dante I asked you to return my phone or something to explain why they’re gone. Goodnight.” He turned to go back through the portal when he felt a tug on the back of his coat. “What do you want?” Vergil asked, facing Lady again.

“Um, I just wanted to thank you for covering for me,” Lady said hesitantly. “And for making sure nothing happened to me, I guess.”

Vergil narrowed his eyes at her. “Stop sounding so nervous, it doesn’t suit you.”

“Sorry…”

“Anyway, you’re welcome… Mary.” With that he stepped backwards into the opening, giving her a small wave before closing it behind him.
The next few days that followed were relatively uneventful. Vergil had spent most of his time packing up his belongings and trying to avoid Dante as much as he could without being obvious. Every time Dante saw him, he would try to strike up a conversation and ask if Vergil was really sure that he wanted to move out. He had even offered to clear out one of the bigger rooms for him, which Vergil had politely declined. The subject of what had happened to Lady was not brought up again, although Vergil could tell that Dante knew he didn’t have the full picture. Lady had been in touch with Vergil to say that she was finally starting to feel a bit better, and the two of them had struck up an odd friendship of sorts via text (Vergil had had to ask for help on how to actually respond to the first few, but he was finally getting the hang of it). She hadn’t actually been to the Devil May Cry shop since that evening however, telling Dante that she was recovering from a sudden cold.

The guilt didn’t really hit Vergil until Nero took him to see the new flat he would be calling home. It was simple, but nice, and had everything he would need to live comfortably. The look on Dante’s face as Nero was showing him pictures once they got back however, made Vergil wonder briefly if he really was doing the right thing.

“It’s certainly very… you,” Dante said, scrolling through the photos on Nero’s phone as he sat at his desk. “When do you move in again?”

“Tomorrow…” Vergil replied, trying to sound more excited than he felt. He and Nero were stood either side of Dante, also looking at the pictures.

“Wow, that went fast huh?” Dante said, handing the device back to Nero. “You know, you’re welcome to come back any time… Even if it’s just to visit.”

“Don’t worry Dante, it’s not that far away,” Nero said cheerfully. “It’s a 20 minute drive, tops. He’ll be even closer than I am!”

“That’s great, really,” Dante said, giving his brother a light pat on the back. “It’s gonna be real lonely without ya though.”

“Well, it’s not like we spent much time together anyway,” Vergil said truthfully. “One or other of us was always out or in our rooms, so…”

“True, but at least I knew there was someone else here…” Dante slapped his knees and stood up. “But hey, your happiness is important to me, and you were a crappy roommate anyway,” he said, winking. “Maybe I’ll see if Trish wants to move back in or something.”

“I’ll be sure to drop in when I can,” Vergil said, stepping to the side as Dante started to walk towards the kitchen.
“Well, don’t force yourself or anything,” Dante said, taking a bottle of wine out of the cupboard. “Now, who wants leaving drinks?”

“It’s midday, Dante,” Vergil answered.

“Nothing wrong with starting early!” Nero exclaimed. “Count me in!”

“Alright, let’s get this party started!” Dante cried.

Vergil wasn’t quite sure how he’d let it happen, but he suddenly woke up face down on the sofa in the early hours of the morning. As he sat up, his head spun and it took everything he had not to get sick. He rubbed his eyes and looked around the foyer, surprised to see that they had been joined by Trish at some point. Empty wine bottles covered the floor, and everyone seemed to be either asleep or passed out. Vergil staggered his way to the bathroom and splashed some cold water on his face. The last thing he remembered was Dante daring them all to take shots. Of wine. Vergil wet his face again and chastised himself for agreeing to go along with it. He had only conceded because he could see how happy it was making Dante, and he wanted their last day living together to end on a high note. Vergil’s tolerance was obviously not as high as he had hoped.

He groaned as he pulled out his phone to check the time and saw that he had received a text from Lady a few hours ago. He prayed that he hadn’t said anything foolish. “Fat chance, you’ll just have to see me in person sometime,” the message read, followed by a little winking face. He opened it up to see what god awful thing he had said to elicit such a response. “Your turn,” the last message from him said. He gulped and scrolled up slightly further to see a fuzzy picture of him posing rather elegantly with a glass of wine, albeit clearly intoxicated. He hadn’t even realised that his phone had a camera. All of the prior messages just seemed to be general back and forth, including one where he had invited her to join them, which she had obviously refused. “I have got to see this,” she had said, when he’d told her how drunk he felt. Vergil sighed and made a mental note to himself to avoid drinking again if he could help it. He placed the device back in his pocket and stumbled out into the lobby again.

It was four in the morning, and Vergil doubted he would get back to sleep again. Instead, he headed up to his room and spent a few minutes packing the last of his things away. Technically he was allowed to move into the flat starting today, and he figured he may as well get an early start. He made sure he had the keys with him and prepared to open up a portal to his new residence. He knew they would probably wonder where he went, but he never was one for dramatic goodbyes and didn’t much feel like facing them in his current state. In any sense, it would likely be the afternoon before they regained consciousness. He looked one last time around the small room he had called home since his return, before taking a deep breath and slashing the air in front of him.

Vergil stood outside of his new front door, the key hovering over the lock. This was it. He was finally going to be independent again. He would no longer need to worry about unwanted guests intruding into his personal space, or random doors slamming in the middle of the night. He even had neighbours; perhaps he might even be able to make friends. Vergil shook his head. That was probably going too far - he preferred to be alone anyway. He jammed the key into the mechanism and slowly pushed the door open.

The flat opened into a short hallway which lead into a decently sized living area. On the right side of the hallway, an archway led into a small kitchen with everything a person living alone could possibly need. The left wall of the kitchen had a glassless window which looked out over the living
room, along with a ledge to place things on inside the frame; it was clearly intended for people who actually planned to have guests over. Or perhaps it was so one could still hear the television while preparing food. Speaking of which, Vergil finally had a television - not that he was planning to use it much. The living room at the end of the hallway and kitchen was relatively sparse, but it had all Vergil needed. A dark blue couch faced the wall mounted television on the right-hand wall, while a small black dining table and two chairs lined the left-most wall behind the couch. Just to the right of this was a simple looking wooden door which led into the bedroom, and on the right hand side the bedroom was an en-suite bathroom. Everything was of course decorated in varying shades of blue, with black and white accents here and there. There was a wall-mounted bookcase next to the bedroom door, while the bedroom itself had floor to ceiling bookcases lining the entire left wall.

Vergil nodded in approval and closed the door behind him. Finally, he prepared to do what was rather depressingly the thing he had been most looking forward to. He reached over to the lightswitch and flipped it to the on position. Within seconds, the apartment was filled with a warm light which actually stayed on. He let out a satisfied sigh and headed towards the living room. One of the only criticisms Vergil had for the new place he would be staying at was the lack of windows. There was one in the kitchen behind the sink as you walked in, and one in the bedroom behind the bed directly opposite the door, but that was it. It meant a displeasing lack of natural light, but Vergil was sure he would get used to it - it had to be better than no light at all when night fell.

He placed the bags he was holding on the floor and walked over to the sofa, which he promptly threw himself onto so that he was lying down on it, before letting out a small chuckle. He draped his arm over his eyes as he looked up at the ceiling, his laughter turning into an unhappy sounding sigh. This place was almost perfect for him, so why did he feel so... unsatisfied? It was quiet, just like he’d wanted. It was warm, it was clean, it was even decorated to his taste, so what was this strange feeling that he couldn’t shake? Vergil turned around until he was facing the large television in front of the sofa. After fiddling around with the remote a little, he finally managed to get it to work and flipped through a few channels until he found one that wasn’t just a “See you at 6am!” screen. It appeared to be a news channel of some sort and had a smart looking woman interviewing someone in a builder’s outfit.

“That’s amazing,” she was saying, smiling a little too forcefully.

“Well, it’s the only way to get it done,” the man responded. “Some of us even start working at two in the morning.”

“Such devotion,” she said, turning to face the camera. “And there you have it folks, even while you’re sleeping, these kind volunteers are working hard in the background to restore the damage caused by the mysterious tree that appeared-” Vergil swiftly turned off the television and sat up, deciding he would instead distract himself by tidying everything away and officially completing the move into his new home.

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As Vergil had expected, it was around 1pm before he got a phone call asking where he was. “I can’t believe you just left without so much as a goodbye!” Dante was saying angrily. “After all the fun we had last night too-”

“I didn’t want to wait around,” Vergil responded calmly. “I could have woken you up, but I thought it kinder to let you rest.”

“Liar!” Nero shouted in the background. “You just couldn’t wait to get away right? You knew I
wanted to be with you when you officially moved in! Talk about selfish!"

“You were with me when I saw the flat for the first time,” Vergil said, pouring some hot water into a mug of coffee he was making. He was currently standing in the middle of the small kitchen and was rapidly realising that he didn’t actually have any food. He would have to take a trip outside shortly.

“Yeah but that’s not the same,” Nero said, sounding slightly calmer. Vergil suspected that Dante had told him to stop shouting so much.

“That true, bro,” Dante chimed in. “You know we would have accompanied you to see you off.”

“Well there’s nothing to stop you from visiting,” Vergil replied, taking a sip of the coffee before grimacing and pouring it down the sink. Awful. He definitely needed to head out. “But at least let me get some supplies in first, otherwise we may as well just meet up back at your place.”

“I feel like there’s some sort of insult in there, but I would totally be up for visiting,” Dante said. “You free right now?”

“At least give the poor man a chance to settle in,” Trish suddenly said from somewhere.

“The doppelganger has a point,” Vergil said, rinsing out the mug. “Nero, you said I didn’t need to start working at the orphanage for a week or so right?”

“A little less than that, you start Monday,” Nero replied.

“Today being?” asked Vergil.

“Wednesday,” Dante answered.

“All right then. How about you all come over on Friday or Saturday? If I’m feeling generous I might even prepare a meal to celebrate,” Vergil suggested. As strangely lonely as he was feeling, he decided that if he had a couple of days to get used to the situation, he might start to feel slightly better. “No excessive drinking though,” he added.

“Good thing you added the word excessive in there,” Dante laughed. “Anyway, sounds good. We’ll contact Lady and see when’s best for everyone, then let you know.”

“Indeed,” Vergil said. “Anyway, if you’ll excuse, I need to stock my kitchen.”

“Make sure you dress like an actual human when you head out,” Nero added. “People around there won’t be so used to seeing a man marching around in a scary looking coat and lugging a katana around.”

“I shall dress how I wish,” Vergil responded. “Speak soon.” With that, he hung up the phone and headed towards the bedroom, where he had a full length mirror standing next to the door. He had already showered this morning and had washed the clothes he had been wearing the night before. As he had feared, the clothes he had worn to dinner had not survived the ordeal, so he currently only had his usual outfit, a pair of jeans, and a couple of other shirts at his disposal. He was wearing his usual attire at the moment minus the coat, and after looking himself up and down a couple of times, he decided he would be just fine as he was, perceptions be damned. He didn’t care what people thought of him.

Vergil shrugged on his coat and started to leave the flat. Ordinarily he would have just teleported to Rashid’s corner store, but he figured he may as well try and get used to the new town he would
be living in. That and he didn’t really trust Rashid after his shelf food recommendation. Just as he was locking the door, an overly friendly voice suddenly called out from Vergil’s left.

“Well hey there! You must be the new neighbour!”

Vergil froze before stiffly turning to face the source of the noise. A portly, middle-aged man wearing a pair of glasses was standing next to him in a chequered shirt, which was tucked far too tightly into his far too high chinos. He was bald and seemed to be wearing a pair of sandals and socks. “Hello,” Vergil said, unsure how to respond.

“Name’s Ronald,” the man said, extending a hand towards Vergil. “Me ‘n the wife live just opposite,” he added, pointing behind them with his free hand. There were three flats to a floor and Vergil had managed to get one at the end of the corridor in a corner, apparently opposite this strange fellow.

“Vergil,” Vergil responded coldly, hands remaining at his sides. After a few seconds, Ronald realised that his handshake was not going to returned and lowered his hand.

“That’s a pretty interestin’ name, Vergil,” Ronald grinned. “Should be nice ‘n easy to remember!”

“Thank you.”

“So, ah… Goin’ somewhere excitin’ Verge? Helluva outfit ya got there!”

“Excuse me?” Vergil asked tensely. He was not a fan of nicknames, especially from random people he had just met.

“Ah, I’m sorry. I just have a habit of shortenin’ people’s names ahaha,” Ronald said, chuckling. His laughter quickly stopped when he spotted Yamato peeking out from under Vergil’s coat. “Hey, ah… That a sword ya got there?” he asked nervously.

Vergil shifted his eyes downwards and pulled his coat back over the weapon. “I’m going shopping,” he said at last. “Perhaps you can recommend somewhere.”

“S-Sure,” Ronald answered, starting to sweat slightly. “There’s a real big department store inside a shopping complex not too far from here. I’d say a ten minute walk if that. Just exit the buildin’, head left and you’ll be there in no time…”

“Thank you, Ronald,” Vergil said calmly. “I look forward to getting to know each other.”

“You got it…” Ronald replied, slowly backing towards his front door. “I was thinkin’ of goin’ shoppin’ myself, but I just realised I forgot somethin’ so, I’ll uh, see you later…”

“Of course,” Vergil said, giving a slight bow before turning his back on Ronald and heading towards the staircase. He was on the top floor, but he didn’t mind taking the stairs; he’d always thought lifts to be too confining. As he headed down, Vergil smiled to himself. He thought their meeting had gone pretty well, all things considered. Perhaps he would make a new friend soon after all.

Meanwhile, Ronald sat inside his apartment, mopping his forehead and warning his wife not to upset their terrifying new neighbour if she could help it. The two of them considered calling the police but, scared of the repercussions, instead decided that they would just try to avoid Vergil as much as possible.

……………………
The walk to the shopping centre was surprisingly pleasant. It had started to rain during the afternoon, so the streets were mostly empty, giving Vergil a chance to look around without being stared at too much. He noted that there was a nice looking park directly opposite his apartment complex, and made a mental note to visit it at some point. The streets were all composed of perfectly square cobblestones and lined with trees every few feet or so. Although there were quite a lot of buildings, it had a very open feel to it, and seemed a lot lighter than the city near the Devil May Cry shop. Perhaps this wouldn’t be so bad after all. Eventually, Vergil could see a shiny looking building in the distance and figured this must be what he was looking for.

He had anticipated that it would be slightly busier here, but was not prepared for the sudden rush of people as he entered through the main doors. Vergil stood frozen in shock for a moment, trying to take everything in. There were shops everywhere. And from those shops, hundreds, if not thousands of people poured in and out, like some sort of sweaty, fleshy river. Vergil’s hand instinctively went to Yamato as someone bumped into him from behind, but before he could do anything further, even more people pushed past him, almost knocking him over. The rain had increased the humidity, and the whole area felt stuffy and unpleasant. Vergil managed to make his way over to a railing, which seemed to be the edge of a balcony overlooking a foodcourt of some sort below. He took a minute to catch his breath before looking for the so-called food store that had been advertised to him. He eventually spotted it on the lower floor, just to the side of one of many food stands. It seemed to take up a large portion of the outer edge. Not wanting to have to push his way through yet more sticky humans, Vergil instead climbed onto the railing he was leaning against and leapt to the ground below.

The sound of screaming that followed was almost enough to make Vergil never want to step outside again. A large circle opened up around the area he was heading towards. As he landed, people suddenly rushed towards him, many taking out their phones and shouting something about emergency services. Vergil stood up slowly, and looked around himself nervously.

“He’s okay!” someone shouted.

“What the fuck just happened?” another person yelled.

Vergil ran a hand through his hair and started to head towards the supermarket, the sea of people before him parting to let him through.

“Oh my god, are you Dante?” a girl suddenly screamed, running towards Vergil. “I’ve seen you on the TV! Oh my god, you’re so awesome, I’m such a huge fan—”

“You confuse me for someone else,” Vergil said, brushing past her. All the joy he had felt during the walk here was slowly disappearing and being replaced with frustration and anger. He decided he would need to find a new place to shop after this.

After what felt like an eternity, he managed to walk through the large doors into the food store. He grabbed a basket and made his way around as quickly as possible, painfully aware that his every step was being followed. He focussed on getting the bare essentials, including some better coffee and some milk which, at last, would actually be able to survive more than one day in the fridge. He decided he would have to do a proper shopping trip another time, possibly just before his brother and company were due to visit. Finally, he approached the checkout. He had ended up going back for another basket, and lifted them both effortlessly onto the conveyor belt. “You need to empty them first,” the male cashier said, oblivious to the commotion that had occurred earlier.

“I don’t understand,” Vergil answered.

“You need to take the things out of the basket, and put ‘em on the conveyor belt.”
“Can you just do that as you scan them?” Vergil asked impatiently. People were staring at him through the windows leading out to the food court.

“I can help you bag things, but I’m not gonna take the things out of the basket. I don’t get paid enough for that.”

Vergil sighed in frustration before tipping the baskets upside down onto the conveyor belt. “Better?” he asked. The cashier said nothing further and started to scan the items. Vergil refused his help to bag things, instead wanting him to process everything as quickly as possible, while Vergil dealt with shoving everything into as few bags as he could.

At last, the cashier finished and turned towards Vergil who was glaring at the people that kept trying to approach him. He had a small circle of followers around him now, and they were starting to block the aisle. “Are you a celebrity or something?” the cashier asked, suddenly slightly more interested.

“How much do I owe you?” Vergil asked angrily.

“Forty exactly. If you are, can I get your autograph?”

Vergil reached into his coat and withdrew a bundle of notes which he threw at the cashier. The people around him stepped back slightly as they spotted Yamato, but they still didn’t disperse. “Thank you,” Vergil said, picking up his bags before pushing his way through the crowd of people, desperately looking for enough open space to open a portal back to his flat; the last thing he wanted was these people knowing where he lived.

“There he is!” someone shouted before a microphone was suddenly shoved in Vergil’s face. “Sir, is it true that you just jumped off the balcony and then did your shopping like it was no big deal?” a woman in bright red lipstick asked. A camera was behind her back, pointed at Vergil. Fortunately, a lot of people were getting in the way, so he doubted they would be able to get any clear footage of him.

“Get away from me!” Vergil yelled, shoving past her. He was heavily regretting stepping outside. “I’m telling you, it’s Dante!” someone said in the distance.

“No way, Dante’s not such a dick to everyone,” another person responded.

“Dude, have you seen Dante on the TV?” a further person chimed in. “He hates cameras!”

Vergil broke into a run and headed towards the nearest staircase, pushing his way through even more people. He finally spotted a fire exit nearby and made a bee-line towards it, gasping as the cool outside air hit his face. Before anyone could catch up, he unsheathed Yamato and slashed the air in front of him. With the alarm caused by the doors opening still sounding behind him, he quickly walked through the portal, closing it as soon as he arrived in his apartment.

A mass of people rushed outside shortly after, shocked to find that he was nowhere to be seen. After wandering around aimlessly for a while, they eventually got bored and went back to whatever they had been doing before. The woman looked into the camera excitedly. “And just like that, gone! Will we ever figure out the mystery of the strange jumping man? Who knows! Stay tuned and find out.”

Vergil collapsed against the inside of his front door, breathing heavily. He sat there for a little
while, feeling regret at the fact he probably wouldn’t be able to show his face in the town for a little while, despite having only lived there for one day. He stood up and started to put his shopping away, when his phone rang.

“What?” he answered, not bothering to check who was calling.

“So… I just saw an interesting thing on the news,” Lady’s voice responded.

Vergil stopped what he was doing and leaned against the counter. They hadn’t spoken like this since the incident last week; instead they had only been texting every now and then. “Mary.”

“How many times do I have to tell you to stop calling me that?” Lady huffed. “You go from never using my name at all to using that name; makes me wish you would just go back to calling me ‘woman’, ya know?”

“What do you want, woman?” Vergil asked, smiling slightly. He was finding her voice somewhat calming, despite the anger in its tone.

“I just wanted to make sure you were okay,” Lady replied, laughing a little. “I seem to be the only one of you guys that actually watches TV regularly, so I figured no one else would think to check up on you.”

“I’m fine,” Vergil said, walking into the living room and turning the television on. It was still on the news channel from this morning and seemed to be currently running a very uninformed piece about him, accompanied by blurry footage and interviews with random passerby. Vergil turned the volume down and sat on the sofa. “It’s all just a misunderstanding. I’m sure it will be forgotten about soon.”

“Seriously though, jumping off a balcony in the middle of a busy shopping centre? What were you thinking?” Lady asked.

“I didn’t think anyone would notice,” Vergil admitted. “There were so many people that-”

“Vergil, you dumbass. Think of the way you’re dressed. People would notice you even if you were just drinking a cup of coffee in the corner of a cafe. You’re not exactly subtle.”

“Why did you call me?” Vergil asked, changing the topic. “We haven’t spoken properly for almost a week.”

“I got bored of texting,” Lady said.

“Lies. Tell me the real reason.”

“…Fine, you got me. I’ve had a new job request come in and I figured I’d ask you first, since I actually kind of had fun last time.”

“Interesting…” Vergil responded. “I could be convinced.”

“Great! Want to meet for coffee and talk about it?” Lady asked happily. “It feels weird to discuss these things over the phone.”

“I’d rather not go outside again if I can help it,” Vergil said, looking at the TV and cringing as he saw shaky mobile footage of him tipping the baskets over.

“Okay then, how about I come over?” Lady asked, surprisingly forwardly.
“Have you spoken to Dante yet?” Vergil asked. “We agreed no visitors until the weekend.”

“Oh that’s right, I did have a couple of missed calls from him,” Lady said. “I should probably go and visit him at some point. Hey, maybe I can meet you there?”

“I’ve only just left,” Vergil stated. “Just tell me what the job is already, I have things I need to do.”

“Nah, it’s fine,” Lady said, sounding slightly disappointed. “The deadline’s not for a week anyway. I’ll tell you about it when we all come over.”

“Fine.”

“Cool, guess I’ll see you whenever then,” Lady said. “Try to lay low for a while, I’m sure the news people will forget about you once the next big thing comes along.”

“I will not be leaving this flat any time soon,” Vergil said. “Now if you’ll excuse me…”

“Of course. Talk later!” Lady said before ending the call.

Vergil looked down at his phone and sighed before heading back to the kitchen and making an actually good cup of coffee, this time with milk, just because he could.
Chapter Fifteen

The last week or so had not been easy for Lady. Not just because she had practically no energy, but because no matter what she did, she couldn't get that damned jerk off her mind. Mary … She hadn't heard that name in such a long time, yet for some reason the fact it had been Vergil saying it didn't upset her in the way she thought it would. She still hated it, sure, and she was angry at that he had called her something so personal when she was already suffering, but part of her wanted to hear him say it again for some reason.

She had spent the first day curled up in bed, only rising to stuff her face with as much food as possible and use the bathroom before retreating to her cushiony fortress. She had also managed to muster up just enough strength to call Dante and tell him that she was suffering from a sudden cold. Dante had been surprised and possibly unconvinced, but he hadn't questioned it further. He seemed to have had other things on his mind.

As promised, Vergil had returned Lady’s belongings sometime when she was asleep. He had left her bag and handguns on the coffee table in her living room, and tucked her shoes neatly into the shoe rack by her front door. The Kalina Ann had been carefully laid down on her sofa. In addition to a small note saying nothing more than "Get well soon - Vergil.", Lady was also amused to find a pack of energy bars and high caffeine content drinks left for her.

By the second day at home, Lady was starting to feel slightly better. After much debating, she had decided to send her benefactor a text. Just to let him know I'm fine, she thought, feeling strangely anxious about the idea of talking to him again for some reason. She lay on her side in bed and sent the first message that would somehow end up making them phone buddies:

"Hey"

An hour later, she finally got her response: "Hello?"

Again, she felt oddly excited and nervous when she saw that he had replied. She convinced herself that the incubus' attack was still messing with her head somehow.

"It's Lady, I took down your number remember?"

Another fifteen minutes passed.

"Helloyes, howareyou?"

"Spaces Vergil, you need spaces" Lady giggled to herself at his incompetence. Perhaps this wasn't such a good idea after all.

"I don't understand" Vergil replied at last.

"Ask Dante for help"

"I'd id"

"...Anyway, I'm starting to feel a bit better now. Guess I just wanted to let you know that and thank you for your help even though you were still a bit of a jerk towards the end" Lady sent. Vergil
didn't reply for a while after that, and she wondered if she had insulted him. Finally though, after another hour or so, he got back to her.

"I am glad that you feel better. It would have been inconvenient otherwise."

"You seem to have figured this out at last"

"It took me thirty minutes to compile that note." Vergil had replied after another 20 minutes.

"They're called texts." Lady added a full stop to the end of this message, feeling slightly self conscious at Vergil’s perfect grammar despite the fact he had no idea what he was doing.

"I do not care what they are called. They are difficult. Rest well, Mary."

When she'd seen that name mentioned again, Lady had stared at her phone for a moment before she threw it across the room and screamed into her pillow. Her face felt hot, and she had told herself it was anger and nothing more. They didn't message each other again for a while after that.

Lady spent the third day trying to distract herself by doing some food shopping. She managed to get it done, but collapsed on the sofa when she got home, and ended up passing out until the evening. She had a late meal before dragging herself back to bed again.

She woke up on the fourth day to a message from Vergil that he had apparently sent during the night: "Still alive?"

"Unfortunately for you, yes." Lady responded before going about her day. She didn't bother to check her phone again until midday, and was surprised when she saw that Vergil had replied almost straight away.

"Well enough to talk?"

"Oh hey, I missed this sorry. Just about to have lunch, what's up?"

"Never mind." Vergil said a few minutes later. Before Lady had been able to say anything further, he'd sent another message. "I hope you are eating well, and that this message does not interrupt my prior one."

"Messages received just fine. I'm actually at a cafe right now." Lady had paused then before adding to the message "...What are you up to?" She'd taken a deep gulp from her glass after that, wondering what she was doing. She couldn't believe that she was trying to start a conversation with Vergil of all people.

"Do you care?" came the response.

"I do, strangely enough."

There was another long pause after that before he answered: "Packing."

"Oh yeah, that was a thing. When do you leave?"

"Nero is showing the flat to me tomorrow."

"Excited?"

A further pause. “What are you having for lunch?” came the response at last.
Lady stared at the answer in mild confusion, wondering if she should press the matter further. She decided to just play along. “A burger with potato wedges. I’m almost finished though.”

“That sounds nice. I’m eating cold pizza.”

The idea of this amused Lady for some reason. She had thought he would be well above eating such things. They ended up sending a few messages back and forth after that, during which Vergil explained he didn’t want to waste time and money buying food when he would be leaving soon, and Lady told him what she had been up to for the last few days (mostly sleeping and eating). She also thanked him for bringing her things back, while Vergil asked if she had appreciated the gifts he’d left behind.

“I don’t generally eat or drink energy based stuff, but it wasn’t bad, thanks.” Lady said.

“You can thank the shopkeeper at your local corner store for the suggestion. I stopped by there on the way.”

“He must have got quite the surprise seeing you turn up with a bunch of guns!”

“He seemed like he was used to it.”

“Excuse me madam, are you done?” The server’s voice had taken Lady by surprise, and she almost dropped her phone.

“Sorry, what?” Lady asked, looking around the small cafe. She had almost forgotten where she was.

“You’ve been sitting here for almost two hours. If you’re done, we need the table for other people please,” the server said impatiently.

“Oh right, I’m sorry,” Lady said, standing up. “Uh, how much do I owe you?”

Lady had continued to text Vergil as she walked home and, to her amusement, had kept talking to him on and off late into the night as well. It had started off as mostly silly things, but developed into Vergil asking Lady to tell him stories about what Dante had been up to during Vergil’s lengthy absence, what Lady had been doing for the last few years, and even what Trish was like and how she and Lady had become friends. He also asked if Lady knew what Nero thought about him, and if she had any interesting stories to tell about his formerly estranged son. Lady tried her best to keep things light, leaving out the slight depressive spell that Dante had gone through, and the fact that Nero had hated Vergil for a while. In return, she asked if he remembered anything from his time as V, something which she had been curious about. Vergil quickly shut this down however, and said that he didn’t want to talk about it, which Lady reluctantly accepted.

Before she knew it, it was approaching midnight and she was starting to get tired. “I think I’m gonna have to bail soon.” she told him.

“So early?”

“It’s almost midnight, Vergil.”

“I suppose I can forgive you since you are recovering.”

“Wow, that was strangely nice of you.” Lady responded, a little surprised that he had given up so
easily.

“Thank you for conversing with me today.” Vergil said, keeping up the oddly polite manner.

“Any time, I guess…” Lady had answered, still trying to come to terms with the fact that she was actually chatting casually with the man who had tried to stab her numerous times and, up until recently, refused to have anything to do with her. She thought that would be the end of the conversation, but a few minutes later she got one last message which gave her goosebumps.

“I’m sorry for everything. Goodnight.”

†

Lady had received a few more messages from Vergil the following day, mostly during what she assumed to be the car ride to his new apartment. He didn’t follow up on the message he had sent last night, and instead asked how Lady’s day was going, and talked about how awkward it was sitting with Nero for an extended period.

“Maybe you should try talking to him instead of texting me?”

“What do I say to him?”

“I dunno, talk about the orphanage or something.”

The next message came a few hours later and simply said: “Apartment nice. Dante forcing to drink. Please disregard all future messages.” Lady giggled to herself again and responded telling him to have fun.

A little while later, Trish called Lady asking if she wanted to go to Dante’s place, because they were apparently having a leaving party of some sort. Although she had considered it, Lady eventually decided against going, somewhat afraid of what might happen if she got drunk around Vergil given her current state. By now she had convinced herself that the incubus had put some sort of strange hex on her or something; it was the only explanation for why she kept feeling so strange every time she thought of that damn idiot. She knew she needed to see him again, to put her mind at ease and remind herself that he was just a terrifying, socially awkward weirdo, and not the handsome antihero with a dark and brooding past that her mind had conjured up over the last few days. She would much rather do so on her own terms however, than in the middle of a drunken booze-up.

A few more texts arrived throughout the evening, mostly consisting of Vergil chastising Dante’s drinking habits, the fact his son was more like Dante that his own father, and some mild irritation at Trish turning up. He also asked her to join them at some point just so he’d “have someone sane to keep him company” as he put it, but Lady again politely refused, saying she still felt a bit unwell. Eventually the messages got more and more ‘Un-Vergil’ like until he said “So drunk right now I dont even no how am alive im sorry”

Lady stared at the message in shock before bursting out laughing. To anyone next door or walking past, she probably sounded insane. “I have got to see this.” she had said.

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The rain had not stopped since Vergil had moved into the apartment, but that suited him just fine, since he wasn’t planning to go out anyway. Nero had left him some learning materials on how to deal with children, and Vergil had spent the last couple of days sitting in an armchair near the
window in his new bedroom, reading books and enjoying the sound of raindrops hitting the glass. It had been very relaxing, and almost therapeutic after everything he had been through recently. Dante had been in touch to say that they had all agreed Saturday would be the best day for them to visit, and Vergil had written a small note on the calendar he had hanging in his kitchen to remind himself.

On Friday morning, Vergil took a quick trip to Rashid’s corner store, despite it now being in a completely different city. They had exchanged a few harsh words about the shelf milk recommendation, before Rashid had apologised and given Vergil a large discount on his shopping. He told Vergil he was welcome back at any time, especially after the article he had seen in the news. After getting Rashid to promise he wouldn’t tell any journalists anything about him, Vergil gave his usual polite bow before heading home.

Once he was back, Vergil decided to have a bath for a change, a luxury which he did not have the option of back at Dante’s place. He had not heard from Lady since her phone call, and decided he might try and talk to her while he ate his dinner later, to see how her meeting with Dante had went. He was rather looking forward to their visit tomorrow, surprisingly. It would make a nice change from the solitude he had been getting used to.

Vergil planned to make himself some sushi for his evening meal, intending to keep the rest of the food he had bought today for the next day. He was preparing things in the kitchen, wearing nothing but a blue dressing gown that Nero had left behind as a gift, when he suddenly heard a heavy knock at the door. Vergil stopped what he was doing and grabbed Yamato, which had been leaning against the kitchen wall, before stalking over to his front door, remaining as silent as possible. Having only recently finished his bath, his hair was still down, and he quickly ran a hand through it before slightly unsheathing his sword in preparation for whoever or whatever was outside. He looked through the peephole and jumped back in bewilderment when he saw who was looking back at him. He resheathed Yamato and cracked the door open, half hiding behind it.

“You’re early,” he said bluntly to the dark haired woman in front of him. Lady looked up at him and smiled nervously.

“You said seven right? If anything I’m slightly late-”

“Twenty-four hours early,” Vergil said, narrowing his eyes. “What are you doing here?”

“I…” Lady looked down awkwardly. “Okay, I know I’m here on the wrong day. I was just on my way back from visiting Dante and figured I’d come say hi, so I could tell you about the job request without anyone interrupting.” She held up a small bottle of wine that she was holding. “I brought you a housewarming gift!”

“You live in completely the opposite direction to me, so I doubt you were just passing by,” Vergil said, starting to feel slightly self conscious about his current state of dress. He sighed and reached for the wine. “Some warning would have been nice.”

Lady let out a relieved sigh herself and handed it over. “Phew, I thought for a second you were going to be angry.”

“Who is to say that I’m not?” Vergil asked, slipping the bottle into his pocket. “Wait here a moment,” he said, before slamming the door in her face. Back inside, Vergil let out an annoyed grunt and made his way towards his bedroom, placing the wine on the dining table on the way. Before he had time to process whether he was angry or secretly pleased, he hastily grabbed some clothing and started to get dressed. Instead of his usual outfit, he decided to try out a pair of jeans and one of the shirts he had obtained. He combed his hair back properly and admired himself in the
mirror. After a moment’s hesitation, he grabbed the bottle of aftershave Dante had given him last 
week and sprayed himself a couple of times, before heading back to his unexpected visitor.

He yanked the door open to find Lady standing exactly where he had left her. “Oh hey, I was 
wondering if you’d come back,” Lady said, grinning. She looked him up and down quickly as he 
stood in the doorway, arms folded. “Hey, looking good!” she said, pretending not to notice the 
slight blush forming on Vergil’s cheeks as he let out a ‘hmph’ in reply.

“You’re looking well yourself,” Vergil said, glancing away. Lady was wearing a pair of black 
shorts and knee high boots. As she often did, lady was wearing a white blouse, but this one looked 
slightly tighter fitting that usual. “I suppose you’d better come in.”

“I hope now’s not a bad time,” Lady said, trying to look into the flat behind Vergil. It looked 
very… blue.

“It’s always a bad time,” Vergil said, opening the door wider and stepping to the side. “Go straight 
to get to the living room. Don’t touch anything.”

“Yeah, good luck keeping your place pristine tomorrow with Dante coming over,” Lady chuckled, 
walking past him. Damn it, he even smells good, she thought to herself. The real reason she was 
here tonight - in addition to talking missions - was to try and clear her head at last. She needed to 
remind herself that this was Vergil she was thinking about, and didn’t want to have to deal with that 
mess in front of the others tomorrow. She figured by talking to him tonight, she'd be able to 
rationalise her thoughts and be back to normal in time for the party.

“He knows to be careful,” Vergil said, closing the door and following Lady. She got to the sofa and 
turned to face him. Vergil leaned against the corner of the kitchen wall, watching her closely.

“Nice place,” Lady said, looking around. “It’s pretty open, I like that.” She looked through the 
small window into the kitchen and saw that Vergil had been preparing food on one of the counters. 
“Oh sorry, I didn’t mean to interrupt.”

“Nah, I don’t want to be rude.” Lady stood up again and leaned through the window into the 
kitchen. “I love this little window thingy here,” she said, watching Vergil as he carefully mixed 
two mugs of coffee. “It’s kinda cute.”

“I have no particular opinion regarding it,” Vergil responded. He walked over and handed her a 
mug. “So, about this job request.”

Lady took a sip of the coffee. It was good. “Huh? Oh right yeah. Hey, did you wanna finish 
whatever you were making first? There’s no particular rush.”

Vergil looked over at the half-finished sushi. “Hmm…” He glanced at Lady again. “Do you like 
sushi?” he asked.

“I certainly do,” Lady answered, smiling. “Don’t worry about making any extra for me though, I
had some food at Dante’s place earlier.” This was a lie, of course, but she didn’t want to make this any more awkward than it already was.

“Go and sit down” Vergil said, making his way towards the counter.

“How about I tell you about the job while you make your food?” Lady offered, not moving from her spot. Vergil stopped what he was doing and gave her a cold glare.

“I don’t like being watched. Please sit down and stop staring at me,” he said.

After a few more seconds, Lady obediently obliged and went back to the sofa. “So, I guess I should start from the beginning,” she began, sipping her coffee and sneaking glances at Vergil as he moved about the kitchen. So far this visit had done nothing to stop her strange thoughts, and she was steadily beginning to regret coming here by herself. “You remember that waiter guy from that fancy restaurant last week?”

Vergil didn’t answer for a while, and Lady wondered if he hadn’t heard her. She was about to repeat herself, when Vergil tensely said “Marcel. Yes, I remember him.”

“Huh, I didn’t know you guys were on a first name basis,” Lady said in surprise, taking another sip of her drink. “Anyway. I went there the other day to settle a bill regarding some plaster bust that got broken, and he pulled me aside to ask me about something. Turns out - prepare yourself because this is pretty weird - his restaurant also serves as a base for other devil hunters. Crazy right?” Lady turned towards the kitchen, expecting a shocked gasp or wide-eyed response. Instead, she watched as Vergil continued to neatly roll up sheets of seaweed.

“Get to the point,” he said, not looking up.

“... You seem remarkably unimpressed.”

“It takes a lot to impress me.”

“Right… Okay, I’ll cut the crap and just explain. Basically, there are some woods near this restaurant, right? But the strange thing is, those woods weren’t near the restaurant before.”

“I don’t understand,” Vergil said, finally pausing. He looked over at Lady who quickly whipped her head to the side and pretended she hadn’t just been staring at him.

“Basically, there were some woods nearby. But for the last few days, or possibly even weeks, those woods have been creeping closer and closer. No one noticed at first because it was so gradual, but Marcel has started overhearing a few people complaining about damage to their houses. One guy even mentioned how he started cutting some of the trees back, only to wake up the next day and find his entire garden full of thorns.”

“Interesting…” Vergil admitted, trying to think of what could be causing such a phenomenon.

“The reason that it’s finally come to our attention, is that some people have apparently wandered into the woods to see what’s going on.”

“And not returned,” Vergil finished. “How very cliché.”

“Cliché or not, there could be people in danger,” Lady huffed. “The only reason I’m so calm about the matter and why we’re not there right now, is because Marcel told me he is gathering a group of hunters to try and infiltrate the woods in a few days’ time. He asked me if I wanted to be a part of it, and I of course said yes, so he asked me to invite you and Dante too.” Lady took another gulp of
coffee. “I wanted to ask you first in case you knew anything about what could be causing this, and because knowing Dante, the second he finds out he’ll just rush in there without a second thought, ruining the plan.”

“It seems foolish to wait,” Vergil admitted. “Dante and I would probably be able to resolve the issue in a matter of minutes.”

“Bold of you to assume that,” Lady said, finally finishing her coffee. “They’ve already lost a few hunters to the woods.”

“Yes, but none of them are half demons,” Vergil stated, emerging from the kitchen with a tray of sushi and two plates. He walked over to the small dining table and carefully placed the items down, before heading back to the kitchen and returning with two wine glasses, which he placed either side of the bottle that was still in the middle of the table. Lady watched all of this in silence, impressed with how complex the dish looked. Finally, Vergil turned to face Lady, who quickly spun round and pretended to be playing with her mug.

“Care to join me?” Vergil asked.

“Um... Well, I don’t want to interrupt your meal or anything. I don’t mind finishing this discussion on the phone if that’s more convenient...”

Vergil walked over to the sofa and gripped the back of it, looking down at Lady. “Join me,” he said sternly. Lady nodded and stood up. The two of them walked over to the table and sat down. Vergil had laid out a pair of chopsticks on each side, and Lady hesitantly picked hers up and started to fiddle with them.

“This looks really good,” she said. “I didn’t realise you could cook.”

“It’s one of many secret talents I have,” Vergil said, lifting the bottle of wine. He had told himself he wouldn’t drink again, but the bottle was small, and between two people he suspected it would be fine. “Can I interest you in some wine?”

“Well, it was meant to be for you, but sure,” Lady nodded. She waited until Vergil had filled both glasses before raising hers in a toast. “To new beginnings, I guess!” she said.

“New beginnings,” Vergil agreed, touching his glass to hers. They discussed the job further over their meal, with Vergil proposing that they attend sooner rather than wait, while Lady said she would need to talk to Marcel, and see if he would be agreeable to this. Vergil continued to regard her closely, internally counting the number of times she looked over at him and either smiled or looked away awkwardly. Finally, as they finished, Lady let out a satisfied sigh and sat back.

“That was delicious,” she said, finishing her wine.

“I am glad you enjoyed it,” Vergil said, pouring them both another glass and finishing off the bottle.

“So... Guess I should get going soon, huh?” Lady said hesitantly. “I’ll let you know what Marcel said tomorrow.”

“Indeed...” Vergil’s eyes lingered on her a moment longer before he stood up and started to clear the dishes away. He wasn’t imagining it; she definitely kept staring at him. He couldn’t explain it, but it was making him feel strange.

“Do you need any help with those?” Lady offered.
“It’s fine,” Vergil answered. He walked through to the kitchen and returned a short while later looking somewhat distracted, with his hands behind his back. “Mary…” he began, just as Lady’s phone started to ring.

“Sorry, let me get this would you?” Lady asked, standing up and placing the phone against her ear.

“Of course,” Vergil muttered, backing into the kitchen again and placing the two small plates of black forest gateau he was holding back in the fridge. He had planned to serve it tomorrow, but decided it might be more fun to share some with Lady tonight, given that they hadn’t had the chance to eat dessert together last time. He chastised himself for doing something so foolish. Now he would have to make a completely new cake for nothing.

Lady suddenly let out a surprised sounding gasp, and Vergil quickly ran out of the kitchen holding the cake knife in defensive stance, Yamato currently being in his bedroom. He looked around the room trying to work out what was wrong and seeing nothing. Lady ended the call and turned to face him, amused at his somewhat comical appearance, before turning serious again. “Vergil, we have a problem,” Lady said.

“Explain,” he responded, straightening up and lowering the knife.

“That was the restaurant. The… Problem might need fixing sooner than we thought.”

“I told you as much,” Vergil said, somewhat smugly. Darn it, I’m sounding more like Dante every day, he thought.

“Yeah, yeah, whatever,” Lady said, waving a hand. “So you know how it’s been raining non-stop for a few days? Seems like it might have, uh… Helped the forest to grow a little.”

“How bad is it?”

“They’re surrounded,” Lady stated. “They just went outside and the trees are at the edges of the car park now. None of the customers can leave, and when they try to cut it, it just ends up growing back at twice the thickness.”

“Call Dante,” Vergil said. “I’ll get changed and we’ll head there straight away.”

“Wait a minute, I’m not ready for this!” Lady exclaimed, gesturing to her outfit. “I hardly have any weapons with me!”

“That’s not my fault,” Vergil said, walking into his bedroom and slamming the door behind him. He opened the door again briefly. “...We can take a detour on the way there,” he added before closing it again.

Lady sighed and started to call Dante. To her irritation, he didn’t answer. She tried a few more times before calling both Trish and Nero, still with no response. Finally she gave Kyrie a try.

“Oh hi, Lady! How unusual to receive a call from you!” Kyrie said cheerfully.

“Finally, someone’s answering,” Lady said. “Where is everyone?”

“Oh right, um, promise you won’t tell them I told you?”

“Told me what?” Lady asked, annoyed.

“They’re all out on a big job somewhere…” Kyrie said quietly. “They didn’t want to let you know
in case you thought they were ignoring you, but they only didn’t ask you along because you’ve been ill recently…”

“What about Vergil?” Lady asked, glancing over at the bedroom door.

“Oh they didn’t want to ask him either since he’s just left and all,” Kyrie admitted. “Please don’t tell him, they don’t want it to affect the housewarming party tomorrow.”

“Sure, I won’t tell anyone…” Lady said, starting to panic a little. Only two of them against an entire forest? Surely that was just asking for trouble. Her mind flashed back to the incubus again and she shivered. “Any idea where they are, or when they’ll be back? I could kind of use their help with something.”

“Not a clue I’m afraid, sorry,” Kyrie said sadly. “I’ll ask them to call you as soon as I hear from them though!”

“Please do, thanks.”

“Okay, talk soon!” Kyrie said, ending the call.

Vergil emerged not long after that, dressed as usual with Yamato by his side. “What’s wrong?” he asked, seeing Lady’s crestfallen expression.

“Looks like this could be a little more difficult than I thought,” Lady said.

Chapter End Notes

A/N - Let the shipping begin >:D
But like, still super slowly lol. This was going to be more of a shippy chapter, but ended up being mission based again... Sigh~
Chapter Sixteen

Chapter Notes

I'm so sorry this has taken so long to update! I have been super busy with life and work (and still am) ;_;
Anyway, I know it's a bit of a short update after so long, so I apologise, but hopefully I'll get some time to add a longer update soon...

“I can’t believe they didn’t ask us to go with them,” Vergil said angrily as he and Lady hastily ran down the stairs. Despite the urgency of the situation, Lady had flat out refused to go through one of those portals again, stating that it had made her feel even more unwell that she already had when she went through one last time.

“I just can’t believe they lied to my face like that,” Lady grumbled. “I was visiting them literally a couple of hours ago, there’s no way a job came in that quick. Imagine - they hung out with me as usual and completely neglected to tell me they had a mission coming up. I’m glad I came to you first.”

“It does seem a bit unlike them,” Vergil added thoughtfully as they finally reached the ground floor. He dashed forward and held the door open for Lady as she caught up to him. Outside, the rain continued to fall. “You know, this would be a lot easier if we just-”

“If we get pulled over it will only delay us further,” Vergil said, looking at the bike sceptically. “What if you rode the bike through a portal?”

“Enough with the damn portals already!” Lady shouted. “I’ve handled plenty of jobs alone with just this bike, and I’ll handle this one too.”

“What if I meet you there then?” Vergil asked, unsheathing Yamato slightly.

“I thought you said you wanted to stay with me to make sure I got there safely?” Lady asked, placing her hands on her hips. “Or do you suddenly not care anymore?”

“Truth be told, I thought I’d be able to convince you to just come with me by the time we got outside,” Vergil admitted. “Look at this rain, why would you willingly ride in this?”

Lady looked out at the wet streets and sighed. He had a point. Even if she were to ride as fast as she could, there was no doubt that the rain would make things more dangerous. Plus, at the rate the trees seemed to be expanding, perhaps it really was for the best that they got there as quickly as they could. Vergil looked at her and raised an eyebrow expectantly. Lady let out an annoyed growl and kicked one of her tyres. “Fine,” she said at last, turning to face Vergil. “But I’m taking my bike with me in case I don’t like it.”

“I already offered that,” Vergil replied, feeling slightly smug now that she had finally given in. He
stepped out into the middle of the road and made two quick slashes, while Lady pulled on her helmet and revved up her bike. Vergil prayed that no other traffic would suddenly come along in the meantime, or they would get quite the surprise.

“You joining me?” Lady asked, nodding towards the passenger seat.

"I have perfectly good legs that I can use, thank you," Vergil responded, pushing back a few locks of hair that had been loosened by the rain.

"Damn…"

"What?"

"Nothing," Lady said, looking into the distance distractedly. "Guess we'd better get going huh?" she added.

Vergil regarded her with a confused expression before nodding. "Indeed… After you." He stood back as Lady manoeuvred her bike into the road.

"Just to check - this isn't going to send me crashing into my front door is it?" she asked. The rain was starting to get heavy again, and she had to wipe the front of her helmet so she could see clearly.

"I have arranged it so that you should exit onto the road by your house," Vergil replied. "All the same, I would advise you ride with caution."

"Yeah, whatever," Lady said, suddenly shooting forward through the portal. Vergil followed shortly after, closing it behind him. He watched as Lady came to a skidding halt at the end of her street before turning the bike around, and then pulling into her parking space.

"Well?" Vergil asked, as Lady removed her helmet and unsteadily dismounted the vehicle.

"I feel like I'm gonna puke," Lady replied, swaying slightly. "My body just doesn't agree with those things for some reason."

"That is a pity…" Vergil said, lightly stroking Yamato's handle. "I shall have to see if there is a way to fix that."

"Yeah well unless you can fix it in the next ten minutes, I'll be riding my bike to the restaurant, and I don't care what you say."

"Now now, let's not make any rash decisions," Vergil said, nudging Lady towards her front door. "I'm sure we can discuss this further momentarily. Now could you please make haste? This rain is starting to soak me through."

"I already told you-"

"Just open the door," Vergil said, raising his voice slightly. Every second of arguing delayed them further from dealing with whatever was going on with the forest. Lady let out an annoyed grumble and opened the door. The two of them quickly went inside and slammed the door shut behind them. The entrance opened straight into a living room. Vergil hadn't really paid much attention before, but it appeared that Lady lived in a ground floor maisonette of some sort. The room turned into a kitchen on the right, while Lady's bedroom was straight ahead. Vergil shook his head and coat, earning an annoyed glare from Lady as drops of water went everywhere.
"Wait here while I get changed," she said bluntly. She thrust her phone into Vergil's hand. "Keep an eye on this for me in case we get any more calls. I want to get ready quickly, so I can't afford any distractions."

"I have no idea how to use this," Vergil said truthfully.

"...If it vibrates, press the green button," Lady explained before stomping into her bedroom, leaving a trail of wet footprints behind.

Vergil made his way over to one of two sofas and sat himself in the one facing the kitchen. He could hear Lady frantically searching through drawers and recognised the light clicks of ammo being loaded. He fiddled idly with the small device he was holding and felt mildly amused when he saw a photo of Lady, Trish and Dante all pulling stupid faces flash up on the screen. As he was admiring it, a drop of water fell from his hair onto the glass, and he wiped it away unthinkingly. He stared at the phone in confusion and then disbelief as the playful image suddenly turned into one of himself, reading by a window. He had no idea when such a picture could have been taken, let alone why this woman had a copy of it. He wondered how many other photos she could have of him.

Vergil looked over at Lady's door nervously. "Are you ready yet?" he asked.

"Just a few more minutes," Lady shouted back.

Vergil looked down at the phone again, desperately trying to remember how he'd seen Nero use such things. He poked the screen a little with no luck. As the sound of Lady unlocking her door rang through the silence, Vergil quickly threw the phone onto the sofa, hoping it would turn itself off somehow if he wasn't looking at it. "You didn't receive any calls," he said quickly, looking at Lady as she walked out of her bedroom, and praying that she wouldn't notice his flushed face in the darkness.

"Thanks for keeping an eye on it," Lady said, slinging the Kalina Ann over her shoulder. "You ready?"

"Of course I'm ready," Vergil said, clearing his throat. He stood up and started to head towards the front door. "Also, we're taking a portal there, whether you like it or not."

Lady picked up her phone and was about to retort, when she noticed that the screen was lit up. She stared at it for a few seconds before feeling a hotness spread over her cheeks. A bullet flew through the air towards Vergil's skull, which was deflected by Yamato at the last second. "It's not what it looks like!" Lady yelled, firing another few rounds.

"Foolish woman!" Vergil shouted back, blocking each one while trying not to damage Lady's house too much. "Save your bullets for the real enemies!"

"Why did you unlock my phone?" Lady asked angrily, lowering her weapon.

"I don't even know what that means," Vergil replied, still in a defensive stance lest any more stray bullets head his way.

Lady let out a snort before tucking the device into one of her pockets. "I've been meaning to change it, I just kept forgetting, that's all," she said, reloading her gun. "I just happened to think it looked kind of artsy, you know? It's only there for aesthetic, not because of-"

"Stop talking and follow me," Vergil interrupted. Although he would deny it, he desperately wanted to ask her more about why she had a photo of him on her telephone device, and enquire as to whether she had any more, but now was not the time.
“Whatever,” Lady said sharply. She walked over to what seemed to be a coat rack in the corner and quickly pulled on a waterproof jacket. “I’m not going through another one of those portals by the way,” she added.

“Perhaps not willingly,” Vergil stated somewhat menacingly.

“I’m sorry, what?” Lady asked, starting to feel scared. “Just what the hell are you planning on doing?”

“Nothing that need concern you,” Vergil said, attempting to smile. As usual, it had the unfortunate effect of making him look even more terrifying, and Lady found herself pointing her gun at him again.

“You stay right there,” she said, slowly walking towards her door, weapon trained on him.

“Of course.”

Lady opened the door and made her way over to her bike, still watching him closely. “Are… Are you planning to sit on the bike this time?” she asked.

“Get the vehicle ready and we shall see,” Vergil responded.

“I swear to god, if you try anything I’ll blow your brains out,” Lady said, pulling her helmet on again. Vergil watched closely as she started to push her bike out into the road. Once she had got it away from the house, Lady turned to face Vergil and was surprised to find that he was no longer standing by her front door. “Hey,” she began to call out, before she suddenly found herself flung over his shoulder. “What the hell?! Put me down you bastard!” she screamed, kicking her legs frantically.

“Soon,” Vergil answered calmly, quickly moving Yamato through the air in front of Lady’s bike.

“I’m serious! I’ll kill you!” Lady shouted, thrashing about.

“No you won’t,” Vergil responded, before pushing Lady’s bike through the portal with surprising ease.

“Don’t you dare!”

Vergil said nothing further and followed the vehicle until they arrived outside what used to be the restaurant. As soon as they had finished walking through, he propped the bike up on its stand before dumping a still kicking and screaming Lady in front of him. She immediately went to slap his face, but found her arms pinned to her sides before she even had the chance to raise her hand. “You seem a lot more energetic this time,” Vergil stated, holding her still until she finally stopped resisting.

“I still feel like crap,” Lady responded. “Don’t you ever do something like that again.”

“I’m sorry,” Vergil said, releasing her. “Desperate times call for desperate measures, you know?” He prepared himself for another earful from Lady as she took off her helmet, but instead found himself watching as she suddenly doubled over and got sick. Before he could do anything to comfort her, he heard someone yelling in the distance. He looked up to see a crowd of people running towards him, cameras pointed in front of them.

“Mr Dante!” someone shouted. Vergil let out an annoyed sigh and turned to face them. As he did so, he finally noticed the tangled mess of branches and thorns which had enveloped the restaurant.
They seemed to extend up into the sky for at least forty to fifty feet, and as he looked around, Vergil realised that he could see almost nothing but trees and vines for miles to the left and right. It looked like there had initially been police tape wrapped around the perimeter, but this had been absorbed into the branches as well, and was now nothing but a tangled mess, adding flashes of yellow to a sea of green and brown.

“Mr Dante, have you had any luck so far?” someone asked, thrusting a microphone into Vergil’s face.

“I’m not-”

“It seems like you only went in a few minutes ago, was it really that easy to solve?”

“Why are the branches still here? Will you be fixing this issue?”

“What about the people inside?”

“What happened to your associates? Are they still in the forest?”

“He’s not Dante,” Lady shouted over them, approaching Vergil and placing a hand on his shoulder. She pointed the Kalina Ann in their direction. “Now get the hell outta here before I paint those vines red.”

“If he’s not Dante then who is he?” someone shouted. Lady took her hand off Vergil and indicated that she was about to fire her weapon, and everyone suddenly went quiet and started to back off.

“Just let the professionals do their jobs and stop being so nosy,” Lady yelled, happy that her intimidation tactic had worked. She wasn’t sure what she would have done otherwise. She continued to glare at them until they were a good distance away, before turning towards Vergil, who was looking up at the branches thoughtfully. “That ought to make things a bit easier,” she said.

“...Thank you,” Vergil said without turning to face her. “In future I’ll defend myself though,” he added, ruining the slight happiness that Lady had felt at his gratitude.

“Whatever,” Lady huffed. “Still, from what they were saying, it sounds like Dante is here somewhere, huh?”

“So it would seem...” Vergil agreed. “Step back a moment would you?” he asked. Lady did as she was told and watched as Vergil delivered a flurry of rapid slashes to the branches in front of him. No sooner had he cleared some of them, than they quickly grew back, this time thicker than before. “This is curious...” Vergil stated.

“Do you think there are still people trapped inside?” Lady asked, concerned that she hadn’t heard anything further from Marcel.

“There may well be,” Vergil answered. “I’m going to try going inside,” he said. “Wait here and direct any people that exit to safety, maybe even call ambulances if you need to. I’ll try not to take too long.”

“How are you going to get them out?” Lady asked before realising what the answer would be. “…You know, I think I’ll call some ambulances anyway, just in case.”

“As you wish,” Vergil nodded before creating yet another portal, this time into the lobby of Les Quinze Croissants.
The sight that met Vergil as he stepped into the restaurant was not good. The walls, floor, and ceiling were all covered by thick green vines which had a layer of some sort of algae coating them. The air was humid and muggy, and smelt of sap, making it somewhat hard to breathe. Perhaps more concerning however, was the aroma of blood that seemed to permeate the building.

A group of people were huddled together by the staircase, and they looked up with panic in their eyes as Vergil approached them. “Are there any others?” he asked. The group collectively shook their heads and some of them started crying. Vergil looked through the faces in front of him and felt a pang of concern when he realised that Marcel’s was not amongst them. “Where are the waiters?” he asked. The group said nothing, but a few of them pointed silently towards the restaurant area. The doorway had been completely blocked by thorns. Vergil nodded and turned towards the group again. “Stand up, all of you. I’m getting you out of here.” The people just continued to stay where they were, frozen by fear. “Now!” Vergil shouted, and they frantically got to their feet. “Go through here,” he said, leading them over to the portal. “There is someone waiting on the other side that will take care of you.”

“Thank you….” someone said quietly to Vergil, who just nodded again. He stood by the opening until everyone had passed through, apart from an elderly couple who paused to look into Vergil’s face.

“Thank you so much, young man,” the old lady said, with tears in her eyes. “Please, tell us your name?”

“My name is of no importance,” Vergil replied. “Now go.”

“Please?” her husband asked, limping slightly. “You’ve saved our lives.”

Vergil pondered for a moment. “Just tell people you were saved by someone from Devil May Cry,” he said at last, before gently pushing them through.

Vergil closed the portal behind them and turned to face the restaurant area. With a quick movement, he had cleared the entranceway and walked through before it had a chance to grow back. The first thing he saw was red. He quickly realised that it was blood, and it was everywhere. The branches seemed to be writhing underneath it, as though they were drinking it up. It brought back some uncomfortably familiar memories for Vergil. He looked around and realised that there were various diners and staff impaled on large thorns that seemed to have emerged from the ground, walls and ceiling. He had to step carefully to avoid injuring himself. “Marcel?” Vergil shouted. His voice was muffled by his surroundings. “Marcel!”

“Mr Redgrave?” a feeble voice shouted back. Vergil looked around frantically, trying to locate the source of the noise. “I’m by the exit,” the voice called again. Vergil quickly made his way over to the fire doors, where he found Marcel trapped against the wall by vines. Only his face was visible.

“What happened here?” Vergil asked, preparing to cut him down.

“Please don’t,” Marcel responded, stopping Vergil mid-slash. “You’ll only make it angrier.”

“I’m not about to leave you stuck to the wall,” Vergil said, raising his sword again. “Are there any other people alive in here?”

Marcel shook his head. “It’s too late for me, Mr Redgrave,” Marcel sighed. “I wasn’t strong enough to protect Marie, and now I have failed to protect the restaurant I opened in her honour. To
think that I would die in such a similar fate…”

“Get a hold of yourself,” Vergil said sternly. “You are not dead yet, and I’m not going to leave you here to die. Now tell me, are there any others in here?”

“I’m the only one left,” Marcel said. “The rest have all suffocated by now.”

“I see…”

“Please listen to me, Mr Redgrave,” Marcel pleaded. “My leg, it’s gone. There is a thorn through my stomach. The only thing keeping me alive is being stuck to this wall. To release me means death.”

Vergil looked at him in horror before taking a deep breath and looking into Marcel’s eyes. “You will live,” he stated. “I know someone that can help regarding the missing leg, and as for the thorn, there is nothing a trip to the hospital won’t be able to rectify.”

“Mr Redgrave-”

“You need to live, for Marie, remember?” Vergil said, trying to remain calm. Usually he would pay no mind to a dying man, but the increasing guilt he had been feeling recently would not let him give up so easily. Unfortunately, he was still not the best at trying to comfort people, and he was struggling a little. He thought for a moment more before saying something he would likely regret. “This thing killed your wife, you can’t let it kill you too.”

Realisation seemed to hit Marcel and his eyes widened. “Mon dieu… This thing… Could this be related to what killed Marie?”

No. Vergil thought. I killed your wife, not whatever lowly demon this is. “Who can say?” he said aloud. “But it seems similar enough that I would not be surprised. You said you wanted to avenge her, but you won’t be able to if you’re dead.”

Marcel nodded grimly. “You are right,” he agreed. “Please help me.”

Outside, the cameras once again approached Lady as people started to suddenly spill out into the road. There had already been some ambulances nearby due to the situation, and Lady quickly gestured for them to come over. Both police and ambulance staff had to hold back the curious journalists as they tried to ask the people coming out of the portal what had happened, and what the inside of the restaurant was like. When the people stopped coming and Vergil wasn’t behind them, Lady started to get concerned.

“Did anyone see where the guy with white hair went?” she asked some of the people, who were all shaking violently, with some wailing in despair. An elderly couple waved at Lady and beckoned her towards them.

“That kind man saved our lives,” the old woman said. “I believe he was going to see if he could find anyone else inside.”

“Is that so?” Lady asked, looking back towards the restaurant. “I hope he’ll be okay…”

“He seems like he knows what he’s doing,” the old man replied. He was being laid down on a stretcher so his leg could be looked at.
“Are you from The Devil’s Cry too?” the old woman asked Lady.

“It’s Devil May Cry, and yeah I am,” Lady responded.

“Do you know what that wonderful man’s name is?” the old woman asked.

Lady had never in her life thought that she would hear the words ‘kind’ and ‘wonderful’ be used to describe Vergil of all people. Something had definitely changed in him over the last couple of weeks, and it was both kind of nice and a little unnerving. “Have you heard of Dante?” Lady asked. The elderly couple shook their head. “Fine. Well, that was his brother, Vergil.”

“Vergil…” the old woman said. “What a fantastic name for a hero.”
Chapter Seventeen

I'm worried this is getting a little too depressing and dark now, I'm missing the earlier humour a little haha. Once this strangely sad mission is over though, things should go back to being a little more lighthearted... I hope. Without spoilers for the chapter ahead, all I'll say is sorry in advance for the sadness :P

By the time Vergil emerged from the restaurant a short while later, word of his apparent heroism had spread and he quickly found himself surrounded by cameras and microphones once more as he stepped out of the portal. They were probably asking him questions, but Vergil paid them no mind and pushed his way through the group without thought, not even bothering to react when some of the journalists found themselves sprawled on the floor as a result. He marched his way over to Lady and grabbed her arm before starting to head towards the forest. “Let’s go,” he said bluntly. His voice sounded thick and nasally, and he was covered in blood.

“Hey, wait a second!” Lady replied, pulling herself free. “What about Marcel, did you find him?”

Vergil stiffened, and he did not turn to face her. “No,” he said at last. “He may have managed to hide somewhere. I was… unable to find him.”

“For real?” Lady asked, looking Vergil up and down. “Where did all this blood come from? Are you sure he’s not trapped in there somewhere-”

“I couldn’t find him,” Vergil hissed, turning to face Lady. To a casual observer, it might look like he had tears in his eyes, but anyone that knew him well would probably just assume it was the rain, which still continued to fall heavily.

“Ohay, okay…” Lady said, holding up her hands. “Are you hurt?” she asked, gesturing to his bloodied garments.

“I’m fine,” Vergil answered, wiping some of the blood off and flicking it away. He ignored the disgusted outcries from the journalists as some of it landed on them. “We need to get moving before this gets even more out of hand.”

“Sure,” Lady said, grabbing some extra weapons from her bike and slinging the Kalina Ann over her shoulder again. “Any idea where we’re headed?”

“I say we look for an opening, and if we can’t find one, we make one,” Vergil answered, tapping his fingers against Yamato impatiently as he waited for Lady to rejoin him. People still seemed to be attempting to engage him in conversation, but he continued to ignore them all. Once Lady was satisfied that she had everything she needed, she nodded and followed Vergil as he started to walk around the perimeter of the trees and vines. At last, they came across what appeared to be a weak spot in the wall of green. Although it had grown over again, it looked a lot thinner, and slightly burnt. “Dante…” Vergil said quietly.

“You think they’re actually here then?” Lady asked, stepping to the side as Vergil quickly
unsheathed his sword and re-opened the makeshift pathway formed by his younger brother and, from the smell of fuel that still lingered, his son.

“No one else could have caused such damage,” Vergil said matter-of-factly. Stepping through the opening, his suspicions were confirmed. A wide tunnel lay ahead, the trees on either side either cut down or badly charred. The smell of smoke and accelerant was still thick in the air. It was clear the forest had tried to repair itself but had been unsuccessful. “Let’s go.”

Lady turned to the gaggle of people that had followed them and waved them away. “I’d stay back if I were you, unless you want to die,” she said, before joining Vergil. By the time she entered the forest, he was already a good few feet ahead, and she had to jog to catch up with him. It got darker the further they went in, and eventually she was finding it hard to see anything at all. “Hey, wait up, would ya?” she called out.

“Dante and the others are already likely to be miles ahead,” Vergil said. “We don’t have time to dawdle.”

“Aww, are you worried about your little bro? That’s cute,” Lady said, using a stray trunk for support as she almost tripped over.

“Unlikely,” Vergil answered, slowing just slightly to make sure Lady was able to catch up with him. “I intend to give him a stern talking to about taking this on without us.”

“Well it’s not like he hasn’t handled things by himself before,” Lady said. “Besides, he probably has Nero and Trish with him.”

“If he had called us sooner, I may have been able to help more people in the restaurant.”

“Hey, I’m sure Marcel called us pretty much straight after he called Dante, you can’t blame Dante for that,” Lady said. True, she was still annoyed that Dante or Trish hadn’t called her, but she doubted there was that much of a time difference that it would have mattered.

“Perhaps you’re right,” Vergil said, stopping suddenly and causing Lady to slam into his back. “In that case, it’s your fault,” he added, looking around distractedly.

“I’m sorry, what?” Lady asked, rubbing her forehead.

“If we hadn’t had to go back to your place, perhaps I could have done more.”

“What are you talking about?” Lady asked angrily. “Don’t just start randomly blaming me for people dying that’s not-”

“Silence,” Vergil said suddenly, unsheathing Yamato slightly.

“What? No-”

“ I said be quiet,” Vergil said, turning in a slow circle. Or at least, Lady thought he was turning in a circle, she could only see shadows at this point. “There!” Vergil said, lunging forward and stabbing the air behind Lady.

“Missed me~” an ethereal voice echoed around them.


“Ah~ I can’t wait to tell the mistress we have even more playthings!” the voice giggled. A harsh
wind rushed past them, and the laughter seemed to get further away until they could no longer hear it.

“What the heck was that?” Lady asked, shivering slightly.

“Dryad,” Vergil stated. “I had my suspicions, but this confirmed it. Be careful, there are probably more of them hiding in the trees.”

“Dryads?” Lady asked. “I thought they were meant to be shy tree spirits? I’ve never heard of them killing people before.”

“It’s likely a demonic variation has taken a liking to these woods for some reason. It’s either brought some minions with it, or brainwashed any tree spirits that already dwelled here. Given the amount of strange things that happen in this city, it wouldn’t surprise me if Dryads already inhabited this forest.”

“Hmm, so now what?” Lady asked, feeling slightly self conscious at the thought they were being watched.

“We find Dante and see if he has managed to kill their leader yet,” Vergil answered. “If not, we deal with it once we get there.”


“What’s that?”

“I can’t see anything,” Lady sighed. “It’s way too dark in here.”

Vergil hesitated for a moment before holding out Yamato. “You can hold onto this with me so you don’t lose track of me,” he said. “But if you damage it or try to steal it, expect to lose your hand.”

“Wow, thanks,” Lady said dryly. “Can’t I hold onto your coat or something? I feel like that’s less dangerous.”

“I do not offer people the opportunity to touch Yamato lightly,” Vergil said irritatedly. “Either accept the offer or struggle blindly for the rest of the journey.”

“Fine, fine,” Lady said, grabbing hold of Yamato’s smooth sheath. She said nothing further as they started to walk again, side by side. After a few minutes, she spoke up. “I do appreciate it,” she said quietly. “I know how important this is to you after all.” Vergil just grunted in response. “I was just a bit concerned in case you need to use it and accidentally slice me in half or something…” She let out a nervous laugh. Vergil said nothing and continued forward, quickening his pace slightly. They walked in silence for a little longer before Lady let out an annoyed sigh.

“What is it now?” Vergil asked, making Lady jump.

“Nothing.”

“All right then-”

“I can’t stop thinking about what you were saying before we got attacked,” Lady blurted out. “Do you really think people died because of me?” Vergil did not answer and she began to wonder if she should repeat herself. Just as she was about to speak again, he answered.

“It’s my fault,” Vergil said. “I should have done more.”
“Well, neither of us were to know how bad it was going to get, right?” Lady said. “Besides, I’m the one that agreed to you coming with me. I should have just let you go ahead.”

Vergil shook his head. “I let personal attachments get in the way of work. You are perfectly capable of looking after yourself, I should have just let you go home instead of going with you.”

“Personal attachments, huh?” Lady asked teasingly, trying to lighten the mood and failing. “Listen, we didn’t take that long to get here, I doubt a few minutes would have made a difference. Besides, Dante was here, he would have helped if it was possible. It was probably already too late by the time Marcel put the phone down.”

“Perhaps we are all to blame,” Vergil said.

“I’m not sure if that makes me feel better or worse,” Lady huffed.

“Must it do either?” Vergil asked. “Can we not just accept that through a series of errors, the lives of a few dozen people have been lost?”

“It’s not that easy,” Lady stated.

“And yet you were all so quick to forgive me for my actions,” Vergil said. “Why is that, I wonder? Here you are, walking next to a man who killed hundreds, if not thousands of people, trusting him with your life. And yet, we let a few dozen people die and suddenly it’s the worst thing in the world.”

“Vergil you’re kind of scaring me a little…”

“Think of how you felt when I blamed you for those people dying. Now imagine that on a much larger scale. Think how you would feel if you knew that you personally had killed those people, and yet no one seemed to care. Do you feel guilt? Remorse? Or do you feel happy that you seem to have gotten away with mass murder? Does that mean there is something wrong with you? Are you likely to do it again?”

“Vergil!” Lady said sternly. She stopped walking and pulled on Yamato until he stopped as well. “What the heck has gotten into you? You’re freaking me out.”

“I’m just stating the facts,” Vergil said, pulling his sword free. “I destroyed an entire city, thousands of families and lives, yet people are just accepting of my existence as if nothing happened.”

“Vergil…” Lady paused. He had a point. But, they had all talked about this a long time ago. They had agreed that it wasn’t really his fault, that he had no real control over Urizen. They had moved past this, and Vergil had been completely fine. So why was he so hung up on this now?

“Marcel didn’t make it,” Vergil said suddenly.

“What?”

“I’m sorry.” He paused for a moment. “This kind of emotional speech is not like me at all, I’ll try to get a hold of myself.” With that, Vergil started walking again, leaving Lady to stare after him in disbelief.

“Whoa, wait a second!” Lady shouted, jogging after him. “What do you mean Marcel didn’t make it?!”
“I tried to help him,” Vergil stated, walking faster than Lady was able to keep up with, even while running. “He told me it wouldn’t work, but I insisted anyway. He bled to death because of me.”

“Jesus christ, Vergil!” Lady panted, trying to catch her breath. “That seems like the kind of thing you might mention early on in the conversation.”

“I did not want you to be distracted during the job,” Vergil said.

“Would you stop walking already?” Lady gasped. It was hard enough trying to navigate in here, but having to run without falling over was almost impossible.

“Now is not the time to discuss this,” Vergil stated. “I have already let emotions get in the way of this job, I refuse to let them delay us any further.”

“Damn it, just slow down!” Lady yelled, firing the Kalina Ann in Vergil’s direction. He stepped to the side to avoid the missile, his pace unwavering. “If you don’t slow down, I’ll tell Dante you let the incubus hurt me!” she shouted. She watched as Vergil finally stopped, before suddenly appearing in front of her.

“Blackmail is an incredibly unladylike thing to do, Mary,” Vergil said angrily.

“It worked though, didn’t it?” Lady retorted. “Let’s just talk about this for a minute, okay? I’m sure Dante and the others have got whatever this is under control, otherwise the forest would probably be trying to attack us right now.”

Vergil let out a deep sigh. He was beginning to regret saying anything. In fact, he wasn’t even sure why he had. Normally, the death of one man would mean nothing, but Marcel had been the one to send Vergil into this strange spiral of despair that he had been stuck in for the last couple of weeks, and something about that had seemed to make his demise all the more unpleasant for Vergil. He knew he needed to talk to someone about this, but not here. Not now. “There is nothing further to talk about right now,” he said coldly. Before Lady could protest, Vergil thrust Yamato into her hand again and they held it between them as they started to head deeper into the forest.

By the time they reached the first fork in the path, Lady had succeeded in getting slightly more information out of Vergil about what had happened to Marcel. It had not been very pleasant to hear, and Lady had only just managed to hold back tears. They had been walking in silence again for the last few minutes while Lady tried to work out how to respond, and the split before them was a pleasant distraction. “Left or right?” Vergil asked.

“Huh? Oh, uh… Which one seems more Dante-ish?” Lady asked, staring at the identical paths in front of them. There seemed to be a slight break in the trees above them, allowing just enough illumination to make it clear there were two different routes.

“Both seem equally crudely made,” Vergil responded, looking at Lady out of the corner of his eye. He wasn’t quite sure what had triggered his earlier speech, but he wished he hadn’t said anything. She probably thought him a fool, and he doubted she would want to spend any more time with him once this was over. Not that he particularly cared (or so he told himself).

“Well, I guess we could split up?” Lady asked, instantly taking it back when she saw Vergil’s pained expression. “I was just kidding, I promise,” she said quickly. “Everyone knows that’s a bad idea.”

“I fully understand if you do not wish to be around me right now,” Vergil said. “All I ask is that you be careful.”
“Vergil, I’m not going anywhere,” Lady said. “Okay, I’ll admit you kinda freaked me out a little, but that’s all the more reason for me not to leave you alone. I think you could really use the company.”

“If I wanted company I wouldn’t have moved out,” Vergil stated.

“Well, maybe you just need the right kind of company,” Lady said, letting go of Yamato and hesitantly patting Vergil on the shoulder. He tensed up at the contact and looked at her hand for a moment, before rather unexpectedly placing one of his own hands on top Lady’s and giving it a light pat in return. The unusual response caused Lady to jerk her hand away a little quicker than she intended to, and she gave a quiet apology.

“I say we take the right path and backtrack if we have no luck,” Vergil said, changing the subject and looking away nervously. Why was it every time he went out on a job with this woman, his thoughts and emotions ended up all over the place? He decided from now on he would go back to completing jobs either by himself or with his brother.

“That sounds like the right thing to do,” Lady said, once again trying to inject some humour into the miserable atmosphere. She was more than a little surprised to see a slight smile tug at the corner of Vergil’s lips, mostly hidden by the dark shadows surrounding them.

“Indeed,” he agreed, starting to walk forward again. The new path was slightly narrower, and Lady had to walk behind Vergil rather than next to him. He held out his weapon for her to grab onto again and carefully listened out for any signs of life as they made their way through. As they continued, the air started to get slightly more humid, and there seemed to be a strange, sweet haze floating around. On the plus side, their path was now slightly illuminated by what appeared to be fluorescent fungi lining the sides of the path and spreading up the trees.

“Hey, does something seem weird to you?” Lady asked after a while. She was sweating profusely and had unbuttoned her shirt slightly. Her mind was starting to feel somewhat fuzzy, almost as though she were drunk.

“It does seem to be unnaturally warm,” Vergil admitted. He stopped walking and shrugged his coat off, glancing back in confusion when Lady let out a small gasp behind him. “What?”

“Sorry, I don’t know why I did that,” Lady said, blushing. “My head doesn’t feel right.”

Vergil turned to face her and felt an equally strange reaction form on his lips, which he managed to hold back. “Hallucinogens…” he stated, wiping some sweat from his forehead.

“Hmm?” Lady asked, her eyelids drooping slightly.

“The strange haze around us,” Vergil continued. “I should have realised earlier.” He rubbed his eyes, trying to clear his vision. In front of him, Lady’s clothes seemed to be melting away, instead replaced by long flowing hair, which was growing at a rapid pace. “We need to turn back,” he said urgently.

“Really? It’s kinda nice here…” Lady slurred. Vergil seemed to be surrounded by a halo of pulsating light that kept changing colour and as he approached her, his eyes lit up, filling her entire vision.

“They’re trying to distract us,” Vergil said, pushing Lady ahead of him. He flung his coat over her shoulders in an attempt to break the illusion he was experiencing. Fortunately, it seemed to work. “Wake up, Mary. Don’t let it take over.”
“I am awake,” Lady said. She reached up and placed her hands over Vergil’s, which were planted firmly on her shoulders. “So soft,” she said quietly, stroking his hands gently.

“Please refrain from doing things you will regret later,” Vergil stated, resisting the hypnotic urge to return the gesture.

“Why are we on your apartment landing?” Lady asked suddenly, whipping her head around in confusion.

“We’re not,” Vergil answered, trying to keep his mind focussed.

"We should finish our dessert later," Lady said absently.

"Whatever you wish," Vergil said, trying to see the path ahead in the dim light.

"Vergil I need to tell you something," Lady mumbled, intertwining her fingers with Vergil's.

"Please don't say anything further in this state," Vergil said, untangling his hands and pushing Lady's away before gripping her shoulders again.

"No listen, I think..." Lady yawned. "I think I might-"

"Be quiet, please," he begged. To his surprise, she obeyed and didn't say anything else. With some difficulty, he managed to manoeuvre them back to what he thought was the exit, only to find that they had entered a circular clearing with paths in all directions. “Mary, can you hear me?” he asked, turning her around to face him.

“Why do you keep calling me that?” Lady asked angrily, her eyes now closed. Vergil gave her a light shake and she seemed to wake up a little. “Wait, what?”

“Do you realise where you are?” Vergil asked her, releasing her from his grip.

“This isn’t where we entered…” Lady stated, squinting slightly. She suddenly realised that she was wearing Vergil’s coat and quickly shook it off. “Sorry, I… Wait, did I steal that, or…”

“I put it over you, don’t worry,” Vergil said, bending down to pick it up. It was still far too hot to put it back on, so he draped it over his left arm. “This is getting more and more ridiculous,” he said, rubbing his temples.

“Where are we supposed to go now?” Lady asked, looking around the clearing. Her head was still spinning horribly, but at least Vergil had stopped glowing now.

“I’m getting tempted to just leave altogether and start again,” Vergil said. “We don’t have time to deal with the ‘wacky hijinks’ that a magical forest could devolve into.”

Just then, a shout echoed down one of the pathways before them. Vergil and Lady turned to face each other, confirming that they had both heard the noise. They listened further and heard another yell, quieter this time but definitely from the same direction. “That sounded like Trish,” Lady said.

“And the previous one sounded like Nero,” Vergil stated. The two of them gave a sharp nod and headed down yet another pathway, towards what they hoped were their associates.

Chapter End Notes
I'm sorry Marcel :(  
I debated various ways to deal with him, but unfortunately this was the way it ended up going...
RIP Marcel The Waiter, at least you can see your wife again!
Dante had wanted to ask his brother to join him on this job. He had hung up on Marcel, lifted the phone again, and was about to call Vergil when he felt Trish’s hand on his shoulder. “Wait a moment,” she said, taking Dante by surprise.

“What is it? This job seems pretty serious, I don’t think we have time to wait around,” Dante said impatiently.

Trish gave Dante a sympathetic look and took the phone from his hand, placing the receiver back down. “I don’t think we should invite Vergil to this,” she said, swatting Dante’s hand away as he tried to pick up the phone again.

“What? Why not?”

“Well, correct me if I’m wrong since I only managed to pick up a few snippets, but given the… nature of the incident - if you’ll excuse the pun - I don’t think dragging Vergil into the middle of it would be the best thing for his psyche right now,” Trish said.

“Yeah right,” Dante scoffed. “Vergil’s stronger than that, he’s not going to let emotions get in the way of a job.”

“Maybe not outwardly,” Trish stated. “Think about it, he just moved out seemingly randomly. According to you, there wasn’t even a hint that anything was wrong, but something must have been brewing behind that stoic expression of his.”

Dante rubbed his chin thoughtfully and stood up, shrugging on his coat. “Okay, maybe you have a point. Couldn’t hurt to ask though, right?”

“You know he’d probably just say yes anyway,” Trish replied. “I really think you should just let him sit this one out. Besides, it’s not like we can’t handle it alone.”

“What about Lady?” Dante asked, grabbing his guns and sword.

“She’s not been feeling too great lately,” Trish answered. “Granted she’s been feeling a bit better for the last couple of days, but I don’t think something this big would be the best idea for her right now.”

Dante let out an annoyed sigh. “Fine, but if we get there and this ends up being a big deal, I’m calling those guys.”

“...If you insist,” Trish said after a few seconds. “Guess I can’t really stop you either way.”

“Hey now, don’t get me wrong,” Dante said, heading for the doors. “I appreciate the advice. I just choose not to listen to it.”
Trish let out an amused chuckle and followed close behind him.

“This is crazy…” Nero said quietly. He was watching a news broadcast about a forest that seemed to be growing at an unprecedented rate. It had apparently been going on for a few days now, but seemed to all of a sudden be worsening. “Why did no-one tell me about this?” he angrily asked no-one in particular.

“Guess that’s what happens when you don’t watch TV for a few days,” Nico suddenly said behind him. She was cleaning a greasy looking piece of metal with a dirty rag. “You gon’ do somethin’ about it?”

“Hell yeah I’m gonna do something about it!” Nero said, standing up with enough force to make the van shake. “I can’t believe Dante hasn’t dealt with this yet,” he growled, turning the TV off.

“He could have somethin’ up his sleeve,” Nico said hesitantly. She had to admit that she was a little surprised herself at how far the forest had been allowed to expand.

“Nico, get the van ready,” Nero commanded. “I’m gonna go tell Kyrie we’re leaving for a job.”

“Man, she is not gonna like that,” Nico said, placing her hands on her hips. “Weren’t you guys plannin’ on havin’ a quiet Friday night in together?”

“She’ll understand…” Nero said, unable to hide the regret in his voice as he stepped out of the van.

Nero and Dante were equally surprised to see each other when they arrived at the location. Nico had parked the van a little further down the road and stated that she would wait there for Nero’s return. “Course if ya need anythin’ just call,” she shouted after Nero as he ran towards the restaurant.

“Nero? What are you doing here?” Dante had asked as he spotted the young devil hunter.

“I could ask you the same question,” Nero growled. “Why didn’t you let me know about this?”

“Hey, I only just found out myself,” Dante said, holding up his hands. “If I’d known about it sooner, it would’ve been dealt with by now.”

“And you just decided not to ask me along?” Nero asked, looking around distractedly. “Where’s Vergil?” For some reason, Nero still didn’t feel entirely comfortable referring to Vergil as his father when he wasn’t there.

“We didn’t ask him either,” Dante stated. “We got this Nero, you can just head home.”

“Yeah right,” Nero said, revving the Red Queen. “I didn’t come all this way just for you to tell me to get lost. I’m coming with.”

Dante was about to protest further when Trish stepped between them. “Just let him come, Dante,” she said. “You know he’s going to anyway, so we might as well go together.”

“Hmph, fine,” Dante said reluctantly. Just then, a bunch of reporters had descended upon them, thrusing cameras and microphones in their faces. All three had answered a few questions, and even made unsuccessful attempts to get into the restaurant through the thickening vines, before forcing
their way into the forest and heading towards what they had hoped was its core. Just five minutes after they had finally gained entry, Vergil and Lady arrived on scene.

“This heat is unbearable,” Lady panted, as they worked their way through what appeared to be a newly formed tunnel. They had been plunged into darkness once again, save for a few luminous mushrooms at random intervals, and were currently relying on what they believed to be the sounds of combat to guide them forward. Lady’s head was pounding, and she was having to put almost all of her concentration into making sure she didn’t succumb to any more strange hallucinations.

“I must agree that it is quite something,” Vergil said behind her. He had insisted on making Lady go first so that he could keep an eye on her. Unfortunately, it was also making Lady feel extremely self conscious, which wasn’t helping the situation.

“You know, it’s almost impossible to see anything, so there probably wouldn’t be any harm in removing a few layers—” Lady felt a light thwack to the back of her head before she could state that she was just kidding.

“Foolishness,” Vergil said bluntly. They walked in silence for a little while after that, until they came to what seemed to be another fork in the road, indicated by the fact that Lady had just walked face first into a tree.

“Whid way dis time?” Lady asked stuffily, rubbing her injured nose.

“Give me a moment,” Vergil said, straining his ears for any further sounds.

“Vergil…” A voice which sounded like a gust of wind reached his ears. “Come this way…” it whispered. Vergil felt a shiver run down his spine as the voice seemed to pass through him and tickle the back of his neck, before a cold breeze rushed past him down the right fork of the path.

“Did you hear that?” Vergil asked Lady, trying to hide the unease in his voice.

“Hear what?” Lady asked, answering his question.

Vergil looked into the darkness beyond, trying to make a decision. Following the voice was undoubtedly a very bad idea, but on the other hand it could lead them closer to whatever was behind this. Conversely, if they went left, they might find the others, which would make this whole ordeal a lot easier. Unless… Unless It wanted him to do that...

“Hello?” Lady said, waving her hand in front of Vergil’s face, which was pretty much pointless given that they could barely see anything.

“I need your opinion,” Vergil said. “I’m not going to waste time hiding things from you that could just lead to more trouble. I heard a strange voice calling my name. It went down the path to the right. Should we follow it, or carry on left?”

“Huh, that’s a tough one…” Lady admitted. “Props to you for talking it out instead of just making an uninformed decision though.”

“I am growing weary of this mission,” Vergil said. “I may take a break from such things once this is over with.”

“Can’t say I blame you,” Lady said. “I think you deserve a break.”
“Back to the matter at hand,” Vergil interrupted. “Left or right?”

“I say we go left,” Lady said confidently. “If that creepy voice wants to get you, it’ll probably follow us and make contact again anyway.”

“That seems like a smart choice,” Vergil nodded. He reached forward and started pushing Lady down the left path. “Let’s get moving before we change our minds.”

“Vergil! Where are you going?” Lady’s voice suddenly called out behind him. Vergil stopped and pulled Lady to a halt in front of him.

“Hey, what gives?” Lady asked, pushing Vergil’s hands off her shoulders. “That hurt!”

“It’s messing with me,” Vergil said quietly. He squinted in front of him, trying to look at the woman before him. “You must have heard that right?”

“Vergil! Don’t just randomly walk off mid-conversation!” Lady said behind him. “And there I was complimenting you for actually taking the time to talk to me.”

Vergil grabbed onto the shirt of the Lady who stood in front of him, before slowly turning around. He could just about make out the silhouette of a very annoyed looking Lady standing there. “You’re not real,” he stated.

“Who are you talking to?” Lady asked behind him, tugging on her shirt. “Will you let me go already?”

“Stay where you are,” Vergil said, turning to face what he hoped was actually Lady again. “Don’t move, understand?”

“Sure, but are you gonna tell me what’s going on?”

“Talk to me Vergil, you’re freaking me out!” Lady shouted behind him.

With some difficulty due to the small amount of space he had, Vergil suddenly withdrew Yamato and pointed it at the other Lady, who was currently still standing at the fork in the path. “Reveal yourself,” he said angrily, hoping the waver in his voice wasn’t obvious.

“Is there something there?” Lady asked behind Vergil.

“Be quiet,” Vergil said, raising the tip of his sword until it rested against the chin of the Lady that stood before him. “What are your intentions?” he asked her.

“Please don’t do this,” Lady begged. “It’s me, seriously. It must be messing with you.”

“Lies.”

“It’s true! Please, ask me anything!”

“Vergil, let me see,” Lady said behind him, trying to push her way past.

“Mary, just stay back already!” Vergil shouted, turning to face the Lady he had told to remain still.

“I thought I told you to stop calling me that already-” the Lady at the fork began, before Vergil quickly thrust Yamato’s blade through her chest without turning to face her. She let out a screeching wail before disappearing in a cloud of green flames, giving Vergil just enough time to see Lady’s terrified expression looking up at him. Vergil flicked what could either have been blood
or sap from his sword, before resheathing it and let out a relieved sigh.

“W-What the hell was that?” Lady asked, wobbling slightly and leaning against a tree for support.

“Don’t worry about it,” Vergil said, wiping some sweat from his forehead. For just the briefest of moments, he had been petrified that he had made the wrong decision, and he could feel his heart beating rapidly against his ribcage.

“Oh heck no, you’ve got some explaining to do,” Lady said, poking Vergil in the chest.

“Mary...” Vergil said after few seconds.

“Yeah?” Lady answered straight away, before pausing. “Wait a minute…"

“Seems like you’ve gotten used to that name again at last,” Vergil said. He smiled, thankful that Lady wouldn’t be able to see it. “Let’s go,” Vergil stated, turning Lady around and marching her forwards again. If the fake hadn’t complained at his use of the name, he wasn’t sure what he would have done.

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They weren’t sure how long they walked for after that. Lady kept trying to ask what had happened and what her name had to do with it, but Vergil just told her it was another annoying Dryad that he had had to deal with and nothing more. She also spent a good portion of the journey trying to convince him that she still didn’t like being called Mary, but just hadn’t wanted to protest when she could hear how serious he was. That and she had realised that correcting him was pointless.

“It just brings back bad memories, you know?” she huffed, adding another point to her argument.

“I appreciate that, but your new name just reminds me of Dante, which is not the person I want to be thinking of when talking to a woman,” Vergil retorted. “Besides, you should be happy that I’m calling you anything besides ‘woman’ at this point.”

“I mean, it’s nice that you actually refer to me as something now, I’ll admit that. But do you have to use that name?”

Another yell suddenly sounded throughout the forest, interrupting their trivial conversation. “We’re close,” Vergil said, quickening their pace slightly.

“That definitely sounded like Nero,” Lady said. The two of them broke into a light jog, ignoring the extra layer of sweat that this action added to their skin. “Can you keep talking to me?” Lady asked.

“What?”

“My head is starting to feel fuzzy again, I need a distraction incase I go all weird like last time.”

“I...” Vergil hesitated, wondering what he could say. Admittedly, his own head wasn’t feeling too great, but he was currently blaming that on the heat. “What... food would you like for tomorrow’s housewarming party?” Vergil asked awkwardly.

“We’re still doing that?” Lady asked. She was really starting to wish they had brought some water with them.

“It would seem a shame to cancel it...” Vergil said quietly.

“After what you’ve been through today, I’m sure the others would understand,” Lady said. They
were running almost at full speed now, doing their best to avoid low hanging branches and the various roots protruding from the ground.

“I dislike those who cancel plans,” Vergil stated. “I’ve always thought it to be quite selfish.”

“Well, maybe you need to be selfish once in a- whoa,” Lady said, coming to a sudden halt. Vergil managed to stop himself just before he crashed into her. They had come to yet another clearing, but this one was much larger than the last one and looked to be man-made. Hundreds of trees seemed to have been burnt or cut down, forming a widening circle that extended almost further than they could see. Above them, the branches had also been cleared, finally allowing them to see the darkening sky above them. It was still raining heavily, causing a wet pine-like smell to permeate the air. It could have been quite refreshing, if not for what appeared to be a giant, naked woman made from wood and leaves standing in the middle of said clearing, throwing punches at what appeared to be their friends.

“It seems we’ve found them,” Vergil stated obviously. They watched as thorned spikes seemed to burst out of the ground, only for Trish and Nero to cut them down as they tried to get closer to the monster.

“Where’s Dante?” Lady asked, suddenly realising that he was nowhere to be seen.

“I suspect he’s with the actual boss,” Vergil stated, enjoying the cool air that this open area offered.

“Say what?”

“This is nothing,” Vergil stated, indicating to the towering woman before them. “Look around us. These spirits clearly use the trees for power. I suspect they kept hiding in the trees every time the others tried to attack them, so they destroyed more and more until they were able to trap them all in one place.”

“Your point being?” Lady asked. The others were quite far away, and they were still mostly hidden in the shadows, but that didn’t stop her from being slightly worried that the demon would spot them.

“My point being that this ‘demon’ is a collection of minions, and nothing more. They have likely banded together into one form in an attempt to gain strength, but they’re no match for Nero and Trish. I suspect those two are keeping them distracted while Dante deals with the real threat.”

Vergil looked over at Nero slashing away at the Dryads and smiled slightly. He couldn’t help but feel slightly proud whenever he saw his son fighting, even if he was quite rough and clumsy in the way he did it.

“So what now?” Lady asked. “I mean, it kinda seems like they got this.”

“I propose we go and find Dante,” Vergil answered. “If we walk around the perimeter, we should be able to find the path he took.”

“We’re uh, just gonna ignore the others then, huh?” Lady asked, raising an eyebrow.

“No point in distracting them,” Vergil stated. “If we stick to the shadows, we should avoid getting spotted by that thing.”

Dante had been walking for a while since leaving the others behind, and was starting to wonder
whether he might be going in the wrong direction. Although they had managed to trap most of the Dryads in the clearing, a few strays still managed to surprise him by jumping out of the branches above, or suddenly transforming a tree into a sultry looking woman. Unsurprisingly, Dante didn’t mind the latter ones one bit. He was starting to run out of witty remarks however, and had given up on bantering with most of them. Instead, he just cut them in half as soon as they appeared, and cut down a few surrounding trees for good measure. He wasn’t exactly happy with the fact he was destroying the forest, but at this point he didn’t seem to have much of a choice. It was almost ironic, given that the Dryads had told them they were only doing this to protect the forest after humans had started cutting it down for building works. Dante suspected that a passing demon had taken advantage of their dissatisfaction and manipulated them into causing all of this.

Finally, after what felt like far too long, the path he was following seemed to enter a large cave like structure, built entirely of wood. Dante cast a quick glance around the area and headed inside. As he made his way further along, the branches and vines below his feet took on an unsettling red hue, which reminded him unpleasantly of a certain other plant based demon he had fought. He was suddenly glad that he had listened to Trish’s advice not to bring Vergil to this. At last, he reached what looked like a large plant bulb surrounded by various roots and thorns. It seemed to be embedded into the trees around it and towered towards the sky. Above it, the trees had parted just enough to let in some dingy light and allow the rain to fall through. The whole area had an eerie pink hue to it and looked like it was pulsing, almost like a heart.

Dante wasted no time in approaching the bulb. He lifted his sword and used its hilt to knock on the side of the organism. A deep echo reverberated within. “Anyone home?” he asked, waiting for a response. Receiving none, he drew back his sword and thrust it forward into the fleshy exterior. Almost instantly, a high pitched screech came from within, and the bulb split open like a pair of wet doors. Dante quickly withdrew his sword and jumped back, watching as the thing started to open. Along the split, he could see a set of jagged teeth on each side, which formed a gaping maw as the opening widened, like some kind of demonic venus fly trap. He stood with his arms folded, leaning on his sword for support while it finished its overly dramatic introduction. Finally, he could see into the centre of it. In the middle, high off the ground, sat yet another naked woman, this time completely covered in spikes and oozing a strange purple liquid which covered her skin. Her eyes were deep, black pits from which vines seemed to emerge, and her mouth was nothing but a jagged grin. The inside of the bulb was filled with what looked like veins, all of which seemed to originate from the demon and appeared to be holding her in place.

“All right, looks like I’ve finally managed to get to the root of the problem!” Dante grinned, raising his sword. “I think some in-tree-ductions are in order,” he called out, waving at the demon.

“Silence!” it screeched. “How dare you interrupt my slumber?!”

“I think you’ve slept long enough,” Dante stated, rushing forward.

“"If we get there and Dante has handled this, are you still going to talk to him?” Lady asked Vergil, as they slunk their way around the perimeter of the clearing.

“I’m not sure,” Vergil answered. “I planned to ask him why he didn’t contact us, but thinking about it, there isn’t really a benefit to doing so.”

“I still kinda want to know though,” Lady pouted. “I guess we could ask them over dinner tomorrow.”

“DIE!” the collection of Dryads screamed out behind them.
“I don’t think so!” Nero retorted, slashing through one of the creature’s outstretched fingers.

Finally, Vergil and Lady reached what looked like yet another path of destruction and started to head down it. “He’s close,” Vergil stated. “I can sense it.”

“Brotherly love, or demonic intuition?” Lady asked. Vergil didn’t answer and just continued forward. What little light they had gradually disappeared the deeper they went, but they moved quickly despite this. After a while, the trees above them started to let some light through again, but despite it being summer, it was now almost completely dark outside. The rain clouds also didn’t help, preventing any moonlight from reaching them. At last they reached the wooden cave. Sounds of fighting could be heard within, and it was obvious they had reached their target.

“Prepare yourself,” Vergil said, resting his hand on Yamato. It was the first time he has spoken in about half an hour. Fortunately for Lady, the air had been slightly cooler since they had emerged into the clearing, and she no longer felt that she might lose her mind. She wondered if Nero, Dante, and Trish had also went through a similar ordeal. Now was not the time to think about this however, and she hoisted the Kalina Ann into position.

“Let’s do this,” she nodded.

They made their way into the cave, treading carefully over what appeared to be blood filled vines. Lady noticed that Vergil seemed to be visibly uncomfortable as a result of his surroundings, but he said nothing. They kept going until they came across Dante, who was currently trying to hack his way through what appeared to be a giant, fleshy bulb. He had transitioned into his Devil Trigger form and was floating above the ground, using a variety of slashes to try and get to an unseen enemy. “Come out and play, babe,” Dante was yelling. “And don’t say I’m not your type, because you’re not exactly a looker yourself!”

Lady looked over at Vergil who seemed to be facepalming. “Should we do something?” she asked, smirking slightly.

“Let’s give it a moment,” Vergil answered. “I’d like to know what we’re up against here.” He shrugged his coat back on despite the heat, opting for protection over comfort.

The bulb suddenly opened, revealing a demonic looking woman hidden deep inside, connected to it by what looked like veins. As it did so, a pool of what Lady assumed to be blood poured out of the opening and splashed over the ground, which re-absorbed it. Lady hadn’t noticed before, but the ground below them was pulsing, and the movement seemed to quicken as it lapped up the red liquid. “Are you okay?” Lady asked Vergil, noticing that he had tensed up at the gory image before him.

“Its weak spot is inside,” Vergil said, his voice slightly strained. The demon sent some spikes from her body towards Dante, who managed to avoid them, but was unable to get in any hits of his own. Just as he got close, the bulb snapped shut again, almost trapping him in there with it. “We have the element of surprise,” Vergil continued. “Next time it opens up, fire your rocket launcher at it. When it’s stunned I’ll make my move.”

“Roger that,” Lady said, carefully positioning the Kalina Ann on her shoulder. She hoped it would be able to make the distance. They watched closely, waiting for their chance. It was almost amusing how often big demons like these would randomly reveal their weak points to their enemies. At least this one seemed to be attacking while it was doing so.

“Now!” Vergil cried as the bulb opened up again, flinging Dante back and forcing him out of his devil trigger form. Lady pulled the trigger and watched with satisfaction as the missile hit and
caused a spray of purple liquid to shoot out from the demon.

“I did it!” Lady said, turning to face Vergil, but he was already gone.

“Lady?” Dante called out, running over. “What the hell are you doing here?”

“Uh, it’s kind of a long story,” she said, before yelping as both she and Dante were suddenly raised into the air by vines wrapped around their ankles. She looked over at the bulb, just in time to see it close, with Vergil still inside. “Vergil!”

“Wait, my brother’s here too!?” Dante asked, trying to look around.

“Let’s talk about this later!” Lady yelled, shooting the vines that were holding them up and rolling out of the way of another one as she hit the ground. She quickly turned towards the bulb and fired a flurry of missiles at it, which seemed to do little damage.

Inside, the demon had pulled Vergil into a tight embrace, the spikes on her body piercing through him. “Mmm, delicious,” she hissed, as she started to drain Vergil of his blood.

“Unhand me, harlot!” Vergil yelled angrily, ignoring the pain that coursed through him. With just the slightest difficulty, Vergil managed to enter his own Devil Trigger form, something which he had admittedly not done for a while. It felt good to feel the power flowing through him once more. The demon shrieked and let him go, and Vergil made quick work of severing the veins that seemed to be holding her in place. Panicking, the demon opened up the bulb again and spat Vergil out, just as Lady fired yet another round of missiles. Some of them hit him, pulling him out of his demon form, and he tumbled painfully onto the ground. Above him, now no longer connected properly, the demon struggled to pull its walls closed and Dante quickly made his way towards it and engaged in further combat. Although no longer able to control the bulb however, the demon still had control over the forest, and it quickly surrounded itself with leaves and branches from the trees around it, creating an almost impenetrable wall.

“Hey, are you okay!?” Lady asked, running over to Vergil. “I didn’t mean to shoot you, I wasn’t expecting you to-”

“I’m fine,” Vergil said, sitting up and brushing his hair back. “I’m going to enjoy killing that wench.”

“I’ll do my best to help,” Lady said, watching as Dante slowly made his way through its new shield.

“The best thing you can do right now is stay back,” Vergil stated. As he got to his feet, Lady noticed a faint blue glow surrounding him.

“What? But-”

Vergil placed a hand on Lady’s shoulder. “Find a safe spot and just close your eyes. I don’t want you to see me like this.”

“I’m not just gonna stand around and be useless,” Lady protested. “Besides, I’ve seen Dante’s Devil Trigger loads of times, it’s cool.”

“Please?” Vergil asked, surprised at how much this was bothering him. He decided to convince himself that he just didn’t want her getting in the way. That made a lot more sense than not wanting her to see his demonic form.
Lady glared at him before throwing her hands up in frustration. “Fine,” she growled. “But if there’s any trouble, I’m jumping straight back in.”

“There won’t be,” Vergil said, guiding her towards the area where they had walked in and turning her away from the action. “I’ll be back soon.” Lady heard a whoosh behind her and felt a wave of heat as he presumably transformed before joining his brother. “Step aside, Dante,” she heard him growl, followed by a harsh crack as he slashed through the branches with ease.

“Damn, brother,” Dante called out, his voice distorting as he too transformed.

“Let’s finish this,” Vergil stated. The two of them rushed forward, impaling the demon from two directions. As Vergil’s sword sunk into the monster’s heart, he leaned in close and growled into its ear: “This is for Marcel.” He and Dante then sliced their swords through the demonic tree spirit, dividing it into bloodied chunks. Vergil landed on the ground in a crouch, exiting his Devil Trigger before slowly resheathing Yamato. As the sword clicked back into place, a flurry of blue slashes covered the now earthbound pieces of demon, until there was nothing left but a cloud of green and purple dust. Dante landed somewhere behind Vergil and let out a low whistle.

“Now that was awesome,” Dante said, walking over to his brother and giving him a hearty pat on the back. The two of them stood and watched as the bulb started to shrivel up, turning an ugly brown colour before dissolving into the ground. In its place lay what looked to be a whip of some sort, with an eerie green light surrounding it. “Oh sweet, a new devil arm!” Dante exclaimed, reaching for it.

“Don’t touch it,” Vergil growled, pushing his brother aside.

“Aww man…” Dante said, stepping back. “Well, I guess you do kinda deserve it- Hey what are you doing?!” Dante watched in horror as Vergil quickly swiped his blade through the whip, slashing it in half. The demonic weapon quivered for a moment before disappearing in a flash of light.

“No trace of that thing deserves to remain in the human world, enslaved or not,” Vergil said, resheathing his sword.

“What the heck bro, we could have sold that!” Dante whined, pawing at the ground where the weapon had disappeared.

“I’ll pay you the difference,” Vergil called over his shoulder as he made his way back over to Lady.

“I’m assuming I can look again?” Lady asked, feeling totally useless.

“I apologise if I made you feel like a burden,” Vergil replied.

“Oh yeah, Lady’s here too,” Dante said, wandering over. “You okay?” he asked as she turned to face them.

“Well apart from feeling completely pointless, yeah,” she pouted.

“Hey now, you helped,” Dante said encouragingly. “You stunned it enough for Vergil to get in there, remember?”

“He’d have probably found a way in there anyway,” Lady said before receiving a sudden smack to the back of the head from Vergil.

“You’re not useless,” Vergil said bluntly. “If you were I’d have left you behind at the start.”
“Speaking of which,” Dante butted in. “How the heck did you two end up here?”

“Coincidence,” Vergil and Lady both said in unison before glaring at each other.

“Uh huh…” Dante looked between them and scratched his head. “Guess Marcel called you guys too, huh?”

“Something like that,” Lady said, feeling a pang of sadness again when she thought of the waiter. “By the way, we have some bad news about Marcel…”

Nero was just about to deal the finishing blow when the creature before them suddenly exploded into a shower of leaves and splinters. He looked over at Trish, who just shrugged as the sky above them cleared, ending what must have been a least a week of non-stop rain. Around them, the trees began to creak as the forest seemed to start reforming itself. Not long after, they spotted Dante walking towards them, with Vergil and Lady in tow. All three of them had a sombre looking expression.

“Lady? Vergil? What are you guys doing here?” Trish asked as the others got closer.

“Coincidence,” all three of them said in response.

“Hey, who died?” Nero grinned, earning three very unhappy glares in his direction. “Yo wait, don’t tell me someone actually did…” he trailed off, looking at the ground. “Sorry…”

“Let’s just get outta here already,” Dante said. “I never want to see a tree again.”

“Yeah, good luck with that,” Trish said, earning a tired smile from Dante.

“I can get us out of here almost instantly,” Vergil stated, unsheathing Yamato slightly. “It tends to make Mary feel a little unwell, but as demons you should all be fine.”

“Wait, who’s Mary?” Nero asked.

“It doesn’t matter,” Lady piped up. “I’ll happily walk, but if the rest of you want to use his creepy method of transportation, go ahead.”

“We’re not just going to leave you here by yourself,” Trish said, placing a hand on her friend’s shoulder. “How are you feeling by the way?”

“After tonight? Not great,” Lady admitted, glancing at Vergil who frowned slightly at her response. “I’ll be fine after some rest though.”

“Nico!” Nero suddenly called out, to the others’ confusion. “I’ll just call her to come pick us up,” he clarified. “Hold on a sec.” With the sky above them now clear, he was able to get a signal on his phone, and within minutes of the call the familiar Devil May Cry van came crashing through the trees.

“Someone order a taxi?” Nico yelled out of the driver’s window. She came to a halt mere inches from where everyone stood. “Aww shoot, did I do that?” she asked, looking at the circle of dead trees surrounding them.

“Not even you could do that much damage,” Nero stated, walking around and yanking the side door open. “Let’s go guys!” The gaggle of devil hunters filed their way into the van, with Nico and
Vergil shooting a dirty look at each other as he boarded.

“What’s he doin’ here?” Nico asked, pointing at Vergil.

“Mind your own business, boor,” Vergil growled.

“Hey! Did y’all hear what he just called me? You heard that right?” Nico shouted.

“That’s enough you guys,” Nero stated. “Just get us out of here, we’ll deal with explanations later.”

“Whatever,” Nico huffed, shifting the van into gear.

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By the time they emerged outside, it was clear the demon’s influence over the forest had subsided. The vines which had encircled the restaurant now lay limply on the ground, and most of the trees seemed to have retreated back somehow. There would be a lot of cleanup work (and a lot of destroyed trees to explain), but it seemed, at least for now, that the ordeal was over.

Nico pulled up by the restaurant so that Dante could speak to the press - something which he did not enjoy, but had swiftly realised made things a lot easier in the long run. Paramedics had already rushed inside what was previously *Les Quinze Croissants* - but was now unfortunately more akin to an unstable pile of rubble - and were removing the unfortunate victims on stretchers. Vergil and Lady didn’t dare to try and see if any of them were Marcel.

“So you’re saying it’s the humans’ fault?” a journalist was asking Dante.

“I’m not saying that at all,” he replied. “All I’m saying is the Dryads blamed pollution and deforestation for going along with all this.”

“Are they still in there?” another journalist asked.

“I can’t say for sure,” Dante answered. “All I can say is that the issue has been resolved, and if I were to have a say in it, I’d be careful about how much we damage the forest in the future.”

“I’m leaving,” Vergil suddenly said to Lady. They had stepped out of the van for some fresh air and were currently standing at its rear, hiding in the shadows.

“Already?” Lady asked. “Don’t you want to talk to the others about what happened?”

“I don’t want to deal with all of this right now,” Vergil admitted. “Our job here is done. I need to be alone.”

“At least let me come with you,” Lady offered. “I know you want to be by yourself, but I really think you could use someone to keep you company right now.”

Vergil looked at her, mulling her suggestion over in his head. “You don’t like the portals,” he said at last.

“What about the other white haired gentleman?” a reporter suddenly asked in the distance. “The one that saved the people in the restaurant? Vergil right?”

“Yeah, where’s he?” someone else called out.

“We don’t need to take a portal,” Lady said quickly. “Wait here.” She disappeared for a moment before returning with her bike, which she silently wheeled towards an increasingly uncomfortable
Vergil. “Hop on,” she said, gesturing towards the passenger seat. “We’ll be out of here before they even notice we’re gone.”

“I… really think I’d be a lot happier just taking myself home,” Vergil said nervously.

“Just get on the bike, Vergil,” Lady demanded. “We did things your way earlier, now we’re doing it my way.”

“You can’t just command me like some sort of pet,” Vergil said angrily, stepping towards her. “Don’t get the wrong impression just because-”

“There he is!” someone suddenly called out.

“Vergil!” another person called.

Vergil looked between the approaching group of reporters, and the sleek looking bike, which Lady had now mounted. He let out an annoyed sigh and slid onto the passenger seat, only just having enough time to grab onto Lady before she kicked it into gear and sped off into the night.
The roads were still wet after the prolonged rainfall, and Lady had to make sure she was extra careful as she manoeuvred the variety of corners and sharp turns on the way to her place. They had decided that it would be easier to head there first since it was closer, and Vergil could make his own way home afterwards if he wished. Speaking of Vergil, the usually fearless half-demon was currently gripping onto Lady’s waist as if his life depended on it. At first he had tried holding onto Lady’s shoulders, but it hadn’t taken long for him to realise that his current position was much safer. Lady would have been secretly enjoying the embrace, were it not for the fact that his nails were digging painfully into her hips.

“You know, you can lighten up on the grip,” she yelled behind her.

“Only if you slow down,” Vergil said, his voice clearly strained.

“I’m not even going at max speed!” Lady called back cheerfully, revving the bike and speeding up even further. She almost jumped out of her skin as Vergil suddenly wrapped his arms completely around her and pushed himself as close to her as he could. “Damn, maybe I should take you on bike rides more often,” she added.

“This isn’t funny,” Vergilhissed. “Why do you people insist on riding these death machines?”

“Consider this revenge for the portals,” Lady said, chuckling evilly. Speaking from inside her helmet, she sounded more sinister than she had intended, and she couldn’t help but laugh even more when Vergil let out an annoyed grunt and lightly headbutted her helmet in retaliation.

After what could only have been twenty minutes or so, but felt much longer to Vergil, they pulled into Lady’s driveway. Vergil maintained his death grip even after she had turned the power off. “You know you can let go now,” she said, removing her helmet. When he didn’t respond, she slid her arms underneath Vergil’s and swiftly split them apart.

“Let’s never do that again,” Vergil said tensely. He appeared to be in some sort of shock, and Lady couldn’t help giggling again despite herself.

“I’m sorry,” she said at last. “This probably isn’t the time to be laughing at things, I’m just a little surprised that you handled that so badly.”

“I’ll be heading home now,” Vergil said, stifly dismounting the bike and starting to unsheath Yamato.

“Hey, hey, wait!” Lady called out. She placed her hands over Vergil’s and pushed Yamato back into its scabbard, earning a shocked glare from Vergil. “Oh shoot, sorry, I wasn’t thinking, uh-”

“You have been getting overly comfortable with touching me as of late,” Vergil said bluntly, but without making any further moves to unsheath his sword again.
“Says you, mister vice grip,” Lady retorted, stepping away from him slightly.

“That was for safety purposes only,” Vergil stated.

“And all the shoulder touching in the forest?”

“...Practicality,” Vergil said, avoiding her gaze.

“Is that what they call it these days?” Lady asked, grinning as he glanced in her direction again. “Come on, let’s go inside,” she said, attempting to diffuse the uncomfortable atmosphere. “Just for a little while.”

“Fine, but only for a few minutes,” Vergil agreed reluctantly. “I’ve had enough socialising for one day.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Lady said, opening her front door and flipping on the light. She waited for Vergil to step inside. As he passed her, she realised that he was still covered in blood stains - something which had been difficult to notice in the darkness of the forest. Vergil stood awkwardly by the door as she closed it behind him and dumped her weapons in the corner, before offering to take his coat.

“I’m fine, thank you. I won’t be staying long, remember?” Vergil said, holding Yamato close to him.

“Okay, well at least take a seat,” Lady said, gesturing to one of the sofas. He sat himself on the same one as last time, the one facing the open kitchen. “First things first,” Lady said, making her way over to a cupboard. Vergil watched with intrigue as she pulled a small can out and tipped some powder into a pair of mugs. She then walked over to the fridge and poured in some milk before adding a couple of sugars and sticking the whole thing into the microwave.

“What is this?” Vergil asked as one of the mugs was placed on the coffee table in front of him.

“Hot chocolate,” Lady answered, sitting on the other sofa which ran at a ninety degree angle to the other one, so that she was almost sitting opposite Vergil.

“Why?”

“Sugar is a good remedy for shock, and after the night we’ve had I think we could both use it, especially you,” Lady said, taking a sip from her own mug. She watched as Vergil nervously lifted the mug and gave it a light sniff before taking a quick gulp.

“Thank you,” he said, drinking a little more.

“You’re welcome,” Lady smiled. The atmosphere was still tense, but she could sense that he was starting to relax a little. *Kind of like trying to tame a stray cat,* she thought to herself, and had to stop herself giggling unnecessarily again. “Okay, next issue - have you seen the state of your clothing right now?”

Vergil looked down at his bloodied garments and shrugged. “I’ll wash them once I get home, it’s fine.”

“Well, I guess you could, or I could lend you some clean clothing,” Lady suggested.

Vergil looked her up and down and smirked slightly. “I don’t really think our styles are compatible,” he said.
“Not my clothing, dumbass,” Lady replied. “Dante keeps some spare clothes here in case of emergencies. They might be a little baggy on you, but they should do the job.” She couldn’t help but feel a little happy when she noticed Vergil tense up slightly at this revelation.

“Dante… Keeps his things here?” Vergil asked, taking another sip from his hot chocolate. “Isn’t that the kind of thing that couples do?”

“Well, that and long term friends and associates,” Lady answered. “Trish keeps some stuff around here too, so it’s not a big deal.”

“I see.”

“So, interested?” Lady asked. “You can borrow my shower too if you like.”

Vergil stood suddenly and slammed his mug down on the table. “I’m not quite sure what you’re up to, but this doesn’t seem conducive to ‘talking for a few minutes’, Vergil stated. “I told you I have no intention of staying here for longer than necessary. Thank you for the drink, but I think I’d best be leaving.”

“See, this is why we need to have a proper conversation, Vergil. You’re so quick to change moods - it’s like a light switch. A terrifying, yet somehow endearing light switch.”

Vergil glared at her for a moment and then sat back down. “…Endearing?” he asked quietly.

“That’s right,” Lady said. “A lot of people really care about you, you know. In fact, I’d wager there are a lot of people out there that would love to be your friend, but get scared away by your hot and cold attitude.”

“…I don’t need friends,” Vergil said, picking up the mug again.

“Well too bad, because you’ve got some,” Lady stated.

“Dante and Nero are family, they don’t count,” Vergil snapped.

“Uh, hello?” Lady said, gesturing to herself. “Trish? Nico?”

“Nico can’t stand the sight of me, and I feel the same. Trish… Is probably a nice person, but I can’t get past her appearance enough to spend more than a few minutes in the same room as her. And you…” Vergil took another sip. “You probably just feel sorry for me.”

“Wow, is that really what you think?” Lady asked, feeling slightly hurt. “Have the last couple of weeks meant nothing to you?”

“Before we went on that job together you couldn’t stand me,” Vergil said truthfully. “It was only after I told you what a tough time I was having at Dante’s place that you started to show any interest.”

“Yeah, well… Maybe that’s when I realised that you were actually capable of showing emotion,” Lady said defensively.

“You can’t just be nice to someone for a couple of weeks and suddenly call yourself their friend,” Vergil stated.

“You seem to be forgetting that we’ve known each other for a lot longer than that though,” Lady said. “It’s true that we’d get pissed off at each other, but I wouldn’t say that we ever really hated
each other. Well, maybe apart from when we first met, but that was over twenty years ago.”

“I’m a murderer, Mary,” Vergil said suddenly. “Why would anyone ever want to-”

“Damn it Vergil, so am I!” Lady yelled, slamming her own mug down. “I killed my own goddamn father in cold blood, how do you think that makes me feel, huh? We all have our regrets Vergil, but it’s how we deal with our past actions that defines us as a person. Dante and the others have accepted me, and now we’ve accepted you, so why is it that you continue to act this way?”

"It's not that simple," Vergil growled. "Accept me all you want, it's pointless if I can't accept myself."

"Just tell me what's bothering you so much!" Lady cried. "This will never be resolved if you refuse to explain!"

"I wish I’d never been foolish enough to try and split myself in half," Vergil said angrily. "I’ve thought back on it so many times, and I can’t for the life of me figure out why I thought it would be a good idea."

“Because you weren’t thinking clearly,” Lady said. “Think about it; think about all of the torture and pain you went through. No one would be in their right mind after that Vergil, you probably had no idea what you were doing.”

“But-”

“And let’s not forget that you literally ripped off Nero’s arm, and even he’s forgiven you,” Lady interrupted.

“All those lives were lost because of me,” Vergil said seriously. “For a long time, I tried to ignore the truth; I pushed it deep into the back of my mind. And then Marcel had to go and tell me about his damned wife... How I killed her in cold blood—"

“Vergil, listen to me. Those lives were lost because of an uninhibited demon that you ultimately helped to destroy,” Lady said. “Once you realised what you had done, you worked your hardest to reverse your actions. You even spent months in hell trying to fix the issue. I don't know the full story of what Marcel told you, but I can tell you that there is nothing more you could have, or can do, Vergil. You can’t undo the past, so now you need to focus on your future and do what you can to help those who are still here.”

“Forgiveness does not magically erase guilt,” Vergil said. “It doesn't matter how kind people are to me, or how much they tell me things weren’t my fault, the fact of the matter is that people have suffered because of me and my foolish ideals. I’m just disappointed in myself that it took becoming human to realise that.”

“Exactly, you became human,” Lady reiterated. “Urizen wasn’t you, V was you. The V who did his best to fix his mistakes and save the people who got left behind.”

“Don’t mention that name to me,” Vergil growled. “Up until recently I had also managed to suppress my memories of that time, but lately I’ve been feeling nothing but guilt because of that damned weakling.”

“And that’s okay,” Lady said calmly. “There’s nothing wrong with feeling guilty. If anything, it just emphasises your human side even more. The problem is when you let it consume you.”

“Do you guilty for killing your father?” Vergil asked, looking into Lady’s eyes.
“Of course I do, he was my father. But if I had the choice, I would do it again,” Lady said honestly. “I’ll admit it took me a while to get over it, and I’m not saying that you should suddenly stop caring and feel completely fine, but there are things you can do to help ease the pain, and talking to others is one of them.”

“I have already spoken to Nero about this,” Vergil said. “It’s why I moved out and agreed to work for his orphanage; I thought a fresh start would help me clear my head.”

“Well there you go,” Lady said. “You’ve only just got your new place, and you haven’t even started working yet… Maybe things will seem a little brighter once you do.”

“And if they don’t?”

“Then you keep trying different things until you find something that makes you happy,” Lady answered. “For me, I realised it was hunting demons. For you, it could be anything. I think you’re just so used to being alone that you don’t know how to reach out to others when you need help. But it doesn’t need to be that way any more Vergil; you have friends, you have an actual family, which is more than what some people have.”

“I’ve caused my own brother nothing but grief for most of our lives,” Vergil said quietly, remembering his conversation with the old man in the pub.

“But look where you are now!” Lady exclaimed. “For so long, he thought he’d killed you, and he almost did again, but now you’re going out on jobs together! Don’t you see? Situations change, people change. Instead of being sad about your past relationship with Dante, you should be happy that you can finally enjoy each other’s company again!”

“‘Enjoy’ is a strong word,” Vergil said, smiling slightly. What looked to be the beginning of tears threatened to escape from the corner of his eyes, and he quickly rubbed them before returning yet again to a more serious expression. “But you’re right. As much as he irritates me, I must admit that I’d never want to leave him behind again.”

“Well, except to move out,” Lady said, sticking her tongue out. “Although I guess it is possible to have too much of a good thing. Speaking of Dante, did I ever tell you that he went through a slight depressive stage like this himself at one point? It was after he thought he’d killed you.”

“I’ve picked up snippets here and there,” Vergil said.

“Well then you’ll probably know that he was a big ball of guilt for a good few years too,” Lady continued. “In fact, I might even go so far as to say he was more antisocial than you are now.”

“Hard to imagine such a thing,” Vergil said, picturing Dante’s dumb grin. He suddenly felt the need to see his brother again, and wondered if he would be able to bring tomorrow’s dinner forward by a few hours.

“Maybe you should try talking to him about it,” Lady suggested. “He might be able to give you some pointers on how he managed to get over it.”

“Perhaps.”

“See, things aren’t so bad, right?” Lady said. “How are you feeling now?”

“I’ve mostly just listened to you spewing optimistic statements at me, but I do feel a little less tense,” Vergil admitted.
“That’s great!” Lady exclaimed. “And hey, at least you didn’t shoot your own dad in the face, so there’s that,” she said, winking.

“I think I just need some time to think things over,” Vergil mumbled. He could feel his head spinning, and for a moment he thought he might get sick.

“Okay, but do something for me first,” Lady said, getting to her feet. “Stand up.”

“I was planning to anyway,” Vergil said, rising unsteadily. “What do you want?”

“I want to give you a hug.”

“…What?”

“Admittedly, it would have been nicer if you’d got changed first, but screw it. Vergil, I have never met anyone in my life that needed a hug more than you do. Raise your arms,” Lady commanded.

“This is ridiculous,” Vergil said. “I refuse.”

“Fine, then I’ll just have to do it by force,” Lady said, suddenly rushing towards him. Vergil raised his hands in an attempt to defend himself, which gave Lady the space she needed to wrap her arms around his midriff and pull him into an uncomfortable embrace. Vergil kept his arms hovering in the air on either side of Lady and stared into the distance, waiting for it to be over. “Damn, it’s like hugging a rock,” Lady said at last, resting her chin on his shoulder.

“Unhand me at once.”

“Come on, isn’t this making you feel at least a little bit better?” Lady asked, patting his back.

“We’ve just had a very serious conversation, I’m not in the mood for games right now.”

“Hey, I’m rubbing my face in dried blood for this, the least you could do is return the gesture.”

“If I do, will you release me?” Vergil asked irritatedly.

“Sure,” Lady agreed. She tensed up briefly as she felt Vergil’s arms encircle her shoulders.

“There,” he said coldly.

“It helps if you actually complete the hug,” Lady mumbled into his shoulder.

“Fine,” Vergil said, giving a light squeeze. She felt very soft, almost comfortingly so, and Vergil could feel himself start to relax a little despite himself.

“See, that wasn’t so bad was it?” Lady asked, trying to step back only to realise that she couldn’t. “Uh, Verg-” She felt the air get knocked out of her as the arms around her suddenly pulled tighter, crushing her into his chest.

“Maybe just a moment longer after all,” Vergil said quietly, burying his face in her hair. She smelled of sweat and tree sap, but for some reason he didn’t care. Vergil found himself wondering when he had last held someone like this and was mildly horrified when he realised that he couldn’t actually remember.

“There, see! I told you-”

“Please stop talking,” Vergil said, his voice cracking slightly. Lady remained quiet and wrapped
her arms around him again, trying not to gag at the smell of dried blood mixed with what she assumed to be demonic juices. If someone had told her a couple of weeks ago that she would be hugging Vergil in the middle of her living room, she would probably have thought them insane and, or, fired Kalina Ann at them. “Marcel is dead,” Vergil whispered after a minute or so.

“He is,” Lady agreed. “But it’s not your fault. It’s not anyone’s fault.”

“I tried my best, but I couldn’t save him,” Vergil said. “...But that’s not my fault, right?”

“It’s not.”

“It was already too late for him,” Vergil stated, replaying the events in his mind. “I tried to help and I failed. But it’s not my fault.”

“Now you’re getting it,” Lady said. “What happened to Marcel is awful, but there was nothing more you could have done.”

“...Thank you,” Vergil mumbled. After a while, Vergil’s embrace loosened and he quickly turned away from Lady, clearing his throat. He sounded like he was sniffling. He walked around the sofa and leaned against the back of it. “Will you allow me to leave yet?” he asked, still with his back to Lady.

“You’re not my prisoner, you know,” Lady said.

“Perhaps not, but if you refuse to let me go, then I’ll have an excuse to stay,” Vergil said quietly.

“Well now, that’s interesting…” Lady said, suddenly feeling a little nervous. She hadn’t really planned this far ahead. “Um…”

“Can we have some more of that chocolate drink?” Vergil asked, sniffing again.

“How about some tissue first?” Lady asked. She wanted to walk around and see if he was indeed crying, but she knew that she would probably end up with Yamato aimed at her again if she did so, and decided not to risk it.

“I don’t need it,” Vergil said, clearing his throat again. “Now hurry up before I change my mind.”

“You know, if you need to cry it’s fine,” Lady said, sitting on the sofa and leaning her head against Vergil’s back. “In fact it can often make people feel a lot better when they do.”

“Tears are a sign of weakness.”

“Dante cried over you, you know,” Lady said. “Where do you think the shop got its name?” She felt Vergil stiffen behind her.

“Where is your bathroom?” he asked suddenly.

“Through the bedroom, on the right,” Lady said. “It’s ensuite.”

“May I borrow it for a moment please?”

“Sure,” Lady answered. “You’re not planning on running away though are you?”

Vergil lifted Yamato and dumped it on the sofa behind him, next to Lady. “You can look after this for me if you’re concerned,” he said.
“Wow, okay,” Lady said, admiring the weapon before suddenly feeling a pang of concern. “Hey wait a sec, you’re not going to kill yourself or something are you?” she asked worriedly.

“I beg your pardon?” Vergil said, turning to face her at last. He stared down at her from behind the sofa, his eyes and nose obviously redder than usual.

“Well it’s just… We’ve had a pretty serious conversation and now you’re leaving your most prized possession with me… It’s a little concerning, you know?”

“No Mary, I am not about to kill myself,” Vergil stated. “In fact, I’m slightly disappointed that you would even think that.”

“I just thought I’d best make sure,” Lady said, feeling a little embarrassed.

“If everyone who felt sad killed themselves, the world would be empty,” Vergil said.

Lady was about to respond when there was a knock at the door. Vergil quickly grabbed his sword again as Lady snuck over to the window and peeked through the curtains. “It’s Dante,” she whispered, sneaking back over to Vergil.

“Lady, ya in there?” Dante called out.

“Uh yeah, hang on a sec!” she called back. She looked at Vergil who furrowed his brows and nervously looked around the room.

“I don’t want him to see me like this,” Vergil admitted.

“And I don’t want him to know we’ve been hanging out together, or I’ll never hear the end of it,” Lady said. “Go hide in the bedroom, I’ll come get you when it’s safe.”

“Go!” Lady hissed, pushing him into her room and yanking the door shut. She quickly ruffled her hair and pretended to be finishing a yawn as she opened the door to Dante. “’Sup Dante?” she asked tiredly.

“Is Vergil in there with you?” Dante asked, looking into the room behind her.

“Huh? No, why, is something wrong? I came back and just fell straight asleep…”

“Oh, so that’s why you weren’t answering,” Dante said, breathing a sigh of relief. “The two of you just disappeared and I was worried that something had happened, especially since neither of you were answering my calls.”

“Aww, sorry Dante,” Lady said, smiling. “I was feeling a bit rough so I decided to just head home. Probably should’ve told ya though, apologies.”

“It’s fine,” Dante said, still looking slightly concerned. “Did you happen to see where Vergil went? He seemed a bit off tonight, I want to make sure he’s okay.”

“He probably just went home right?” Lady asked, wondering if she should come clean.

“That’s probably going to be my next stop,” Dante said as his phone started to ring. “Or not… Hang on a sec. Vergil?” he answered, turning away from Lady.

“Dante…I apologise for missing your calls,” Vergil replied. Lady could hear his muffled voice
through her bedroom door and hoped Dante wouldn't notice.

"It's fine… I was just getting a little worried. Where are you?" Dante asked.

"I'm at home," Vergil lied. "I was having a shower so my phone wasn't with me."

"Oh, right... Hey, are you okay?"

"I'm a little tired, but apart from that, yes?"

"You sure? You seemed kinda down tonight after everything that happened…” Dante paused. “You know, if you ever wanna talk about anything, I'm here."

Vergil remained quiet for a moment before responding. "I'm fine, Dante. But… Thank you. I look forward to seeing you tomorrow."

"Okay, there is definitely something up," Dante said. "You're 'looking forward to seeing me'? The Vergil I know would never say that. What’s going on?"

“There is nothing wrong. I’ve had a long, and unexpectedly busy evening. I just need some rest.”

“Do you sound kinda strange though…” Dante responded.

“Dante-”

“Hey, you're not planning on killing yourself or something are you?” Dante asked semi-lightheartedly.

“Why on earth does everyone keep asking me that tonight?” Vergil grumbled. “No Dante, I am not about to kill myself.”

“You sure? ‘Cuz I’ll help if you like,.” Dante chuckled nervously. He was attempting to cheer up his strangely sad sounding brother, but was finding it surprisingly difficult when he realised that he was genuinely concerned that Vergil might actually do something to hurt himself.

“... Why don’t you come over early tomorrow?” Vergil suggested suddenly. “Perhaps we can spend some time…” Vergil paused, and it was clear he was struggling to admit that he actually wanted to see his brother for once. “...catching up,” he finished at last.

“Sure!” Dante answered a little too enthusiastically. “How does five sound?”

“In the afternoon, I hope,” Vergil said, unable to stop himself from smiling a little as he sat with his back leaning against Lady’s bedroom door.

“Well duh, it's already…” Dante looked over at Lady who had been awkwardly hovering in her doorway throughout the entire conversation, unsure if she should retreat back inside or not. “Lady what time is it?” he asked her.

“Uh, it’s…” Lady leaned behind her and looked at the clock on her wall. “Yikes… It’s 3am.”

“It’s 3am, Vergil,” Dante continued.

“Hence why I’d like some rest.”

“Of course, sorry for bothering you... See you in fourteen hours!” Dante concluded happily.
“Goodnight, Dante,” Vergil said, ending the call.

Dante looked over at Lady and grinned. “You hear that? Vergil actually wants to hang out for once!” His face took on a more serious expression. “Actually wait, that just makes me more worried…” he said.

“I’m sure he’s fine,” Lady said reassuringly.

“Hey, is it okay if I come in for a sec?” Dante asked. Lady glanced over at her bedroom door and hesitated for a moment before stepping aside. “I won’t stay long,” Dante said. “I’ve got Nico and the others waiting for me around the corner.”

“What’s up?” Lady asked, closing the front door and leaning against the wall.

“I’m probably just overthinking things,” Dante began, perching on the back of the nearest sofa. “But Trish said some stuff to me about Vergil this evening, and it’s made me feel a little concerned.”

“Go on…?”

“Well, it’s like…” Dante let out an exasperated sigh as he tried to articulate what he wanted to say. “Okay, so I don’t know if I’m just oblivious or what, but I didn’t realise that Vergil was having a tough time living with me until he suddenly left, you know? So it got me wondering - what if he’s going through some other issues and I’ve failed to notice? I mean, he’s been through a lot of crap, and I mean a lot and-”

In Lady’s bedroom, Vergil could hear every word as though he were sitting in the same room as them. For a while, he listened, and could feel a strange pain forming in his chest as he heard Dante question whether he was a bad brother, and if there was more he could have done. Eventually it became too much, and Vergil stood up and sat on Lady’s bed instead. Without really thinking, he grabbed one of Lady’s pillows and wrapped his arms around it before burying his face in it and letting out an unhappy sigh.

“… I mean, he was fine when we were in hell strangely enough, cheerful even,” Dante was saying. “But maybe that’s because he had something to distract him, you know? I know from experience that if left alone with your own thoughts, you can sometimes go a bit crazy, and now he’s living all alone in that strange town and-”

“Dante, enough,” Lady said, straightening up. “Stop beating yourself up over something you have no control over. If Vergil wanted to talk about his problems, he would have, there’s nothing more you could have done.”

“You really think that?” Dante asked uncertainly.

“You can’t force someone to talk,” she said. “Trish is a woman, she probably just picked up on some things you didn’t because of that.”

“That’s a little sexist coming from you, isn’t it?” Dante said, smiling slightly. “But hey, maybe you’re right. Guy probably just felt like a change, right?”

“I think anyone would feel like a change if they had to live in your dump,” Lady said, sticking her tongue out.

“Actually, now that you mention it, Trish also moved out…” Dante said, rubbing his chin. “Maybe I just need to be a better roommate.”
“It’d probably help,” Lady smiled. “Anyway, I’d like to get some sleep myself so…”

“Sure, sure, sorry,” Dante said, throwing his hands up. “I’ll try talking to Vergil in person later, see how he’s holding up.”

“Sounds like a plan to me,” Lady said, opening the door. “See you tomorrow?”

“Later today you mean,” Dante said, winking. “By the way…”

“What now?” Lady asked irritatedly.

“Couldn’t help but notice you have two mugs of hot chocolate on your coffee table.”

“Y-Yeah, what about it?” Lady asked, trying not to glance at her bedroom door again.

“Don’t you remember what you told me? It’s a lot easier to clean up if you re-use the same mug instead of getting a new one when you’re done,” Dante replied, examining Lady's expression closely. “You’ve drilled that into so many times that now I can’t help but notice when others do it.” He shrugged. “Just thought I’d say something.”

“Just get out of here, Dante,” Lady sighed.

“Later,” Dante said, giving her a small salute as he walked out. Lady slammed the door shut behind him and let out a deep breath she had been holding. She gave it a minute or so just to make sure, before walking over to her bedroom and opening the door.

“Hey, he’s gone now so…” Lady trailed off as she spotted Vergil curled up asleep on her bed, hugging one of her pillows. “Cute…” she mumbled under her breath. She hovered in the doorway, not sure whether she should attempt to wake him up or not. Yamato was lying on the floor next to him, and it was fifty-fifty as to whether the shock of suddenly being awoken would result in its cold tip being pointed at her throat. “Um… Vergil?” she asked, just above a whisper. When she got no response, she went over to her wardrobe and pulled out a spare blanket before carefully draping it over him. She then retrieved another one and some pillows, returning to the living room to sleep on the sofa.

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Outside, Dante had returned to Nico’s van with a thoughtful expression on his face. “Well, was he there?” Nero asked.

“He was at some point,” Dante said. “But I don’t think he’s there now.”

“So he did go back with Lady… Interestin’,” Nico said, scratching the back of her head.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter - Breakfast with Vergil!
(A.K.A some cute fluffy stuff to make up for this one XD)
A yelp of pain was what woke Vergil up eventually. He quickly sat up, surprised to find himself entangled in a blanket of some sort as he tried to get his bearings. He bent down to pick up Yamato and found a soft looking towel on top of a pile of clothing accompanied by a small note:

*Feel free to use whatever you want.*

- **Lady**

He disregarded the offer and yanked the bedroom door open, hoping to find out the source of the noise.

“Oh, you’re awake!” Lady called out behind her. She was running her finger under some cold water in the sink.

“You screamed,” Vergil stated, shocked at how dry his throat felt and sounded.

“Ah right... It’s okay, don’t worry,” Lady said cheerfully. “I was trying to make some pancakes and a bit of the oil splashed on me. It’s no big deal.”

“Why are you making pancakes?” Vergil asked, walking over to the kitchen.

“For breakfast, dummy,” Lady said, looking up at him and smiling. “Although I guess it’s more like brunch at this hour,” she added, nodding towards the clock which read 11:15am. Vergil watched the running water for a moment, trying to gather his thoughts.

"About last night…” he murmured.

"I'll change the sheets, it's cool," Lady said, purposefully misunderstanding his concerns. "Most of the blood was dry anyway, so it should be easy to get out."

Vergil leaned against the counter next to the sink and tried to catch her eye. A window in front of the sink allowed the first sunlight they had seen in days to shine through, illuminating Lady's face and making her look more youthful than usual. "I... showed a side of myself to you last night that I never intended to reveal to anyone," Vergil said quietly. "I'd appreciate it if you could refrain from telling anyone about what happened."

"Your secret is safe with me," Lady stated, bringing her finger up to inspect it. "Now, I really suggest you go shower before I pour a bucket of water over you."

"Is your finger alright?" Vergil asked, straightening up.

"I'll be fine," Lady said. "It'll take a while for breakfast to be ready, so take your time."

Vergil nodded and headed towards the bathroom. He emerged around fifteen minutes later wearing a baggy black polo-shirt and some dark coloured jeans. "Do you have a comb?" Vergil asked, desperately trying to push his hair back.

"Excellent timing!" Lady said, walking over with two plates of pancakes. Two mugs of coffee and a jar of syrup already sat on the coffee table. "Sorry, I live alone so I don't have a dining table or
anything." She put the plates down and cast her eyes over a rather dishevelled looking Vergil. "Huh… No offence, but I don't really think Dante's style suits you…"

"Comb?" Vergil asked again. For some reason Lady's shampoo had made his hair far too soft, and he was having difficulty keeping it in place.

"Come here," Lady said, walking over to him. Vergil unthinkingly let her pull his head down slightly and frowned as she ran her nails through his hair, slicking it back. "Hopefully that should hold for now."

"Thank you…" Vergil mumbled, hoping the slight heat he felt on his cheeks was just steam from the coffee and pancakes.

"I've always wondered how that hair of yours felt," Lady grinned.

Vergil grunted in response and sat down on the sofa. "This looks somewhat impressive," he admitted, gesturing to the spread on the table.

"Well, I figured we could do with a hearty meal after yesterday," Lady said, sitting on the other sofa. She didn't bother to hide the pleased smile that spread across her face at the compliment. For a brief moment a thought flashed through her mind, asking her why she was so keen for his approval, and reminding her that the entire reason she had been to visit him the night before was to try and clear her head of the strange affection she had begun to feel towards him recently. She quickly dismissed it.

"You didn't need to bother."

"Well I did, so enjoy it," Lady said, raising her mug.

"Are these blueberries?" Vergil asked, poking one of the pancakes with his fork.

"Fresh this morning," Lady replied, taking a gulp of coffee. "I snuck out to the corner shop while you were still asleep."

"I apologise for sleeping so late," Vergil said, glancing back over at Lady. "I’m usually awake a lot earlier than this."

"Hey, don’t worry about it. I think you needed the rest to be honest; you even managed to sleep through me showering and trying to find some clean clothes. Pretty impressive."

Vergil tried to avoid thinking about what he might have seen had he actually woken up, and took a bite of the food. There was far too much sugar in it for his taste, but he forced a slight smile and swallowed. “It’s good,” he said, truthfully. Just because he wasn’t a huge fan of the flavour, it didn’t necessarily mean it was badly done.

Lady let out a relieved sigh and shovelled a forkful from her own plate into her mouth. “I’m glad,” she replied with a mouthful of pancake. She quickly swallowed before continuing, not oblivious to Vergil’s disapproving glare at her lack of etiquette. “I was worried you wouldn’t like them. The blueberries were a complete gamble too.”

“I do like blueberries,” Vergil stated, carefully avoiding saying whether he actually liked the overall pancake or not. “…It’s been a long time since I had someone make breakfast for me,” he admitted.

“Well hey, maybe I’ll make it a habit!” Lady said happily, looking away when Vergil stared at her
with a shocked expression. “Um, if you ever stay over again, I mean… Just… Just eat the breakfast,” she added hastily, ramming some more food into her mouth. Vergil studied her for a few more seconds, his tired brain trying to process what it was she had been trying to imply, before deciding to ignore the statement. He went back to finishing the meal as quickly as he could without making it look rushed.

The two of them remained quiet as they made quick work of the breakfast. After a few minutes, Vergil placed his now empty coffee mug on the table and stood up. He'd started to pick up the dishes when he felt Lady’s hand on his wrist trying to stop him, causing him to jerk away in surprise and knock one of the mugs to the floor. Fortunately, he managed to catch it at the last moment and placed it back on the table. “Watch what you’re doing,” he said coldly, attempting to clear the dishes again.

“Let me,” Lady said, standing herself and grabbing one of the plates from Vergil. She carefully made sure she didn't touch him this time.

“I’m the guest and you made the food, so it’s only fair I do my share,” Vergil said, taking the plate back from her. Lady threw her hands up in defeat, letting him gather up the items from the coffee table and bring them over to the sink. She followed after him and leaned against the counter that he had been watching her from earlier. Now it was her turn to admire how the sun from the window lit up his face and illuminated his eyes. Instead of making Vergil look younger however, the extra lighting only served to emphasise how tired and worn out he looked. Lady observed the dark rings under his eyes, and the way his brow constantly furrowed. She couldn’t help but feel sorry for him. “What is it?” Vergil asked suddenly, not looking away from the running water as he tried to clean some stubbornly sticky syrup from one of the plates.

“Huh?” Lady responded dumbly.

“You keep staring at me. What is it?” Vergil repeated.

“...Nothing,” Lady said, straightening up slightly. “Do you want me to start drying things?” she asked, reaching for a tea towel.

Vergil turned the tap off and turned to face her, running a hand through his hair to push back a few stray strands that had come free. “What happened to direct communication?” he asked. Now that the window was only illuminating half of his face, he looked somewhat menacing again, and Lady stepped back slightly despite herself. She looked up at him and nervously fiddled with the towel she was holding.

“...Are you getting enough rest?” she asked at last, hating how much she sounded like a concerned mother. Vergil stared back at her and blinked a couple of times. It was clear he hadn’t been expecting the question.

“I get the amount I require,” he answered.

“That’s not really answering the question,” Lady said. “You know, if you’re going to be working around kids you should probably get your sleep schedule in order, otherwise you’ll quickly find yourself exhausted.”

“I don’t need much sleep,” Vergil stated, turning back towards the sink and starting to clean the dishes again.

Lady knew it would be pointless arguing with him, and she had a feeling she might end up accidentally insulting him if she did. She let out a thoughtful “Hmm,” before walking around to his
other side and starting to dry things as he placed them on the drainer. Between the two of them, they quickly finished the cleanup. When Lady checked the clock as she was putting things away, she saw that it was just after twelve in the afternoon. “Guess you’d better be heading home soon, huh?” she asked, closing the cupboard behind her.

Vergil looked up from where he had just taken a seat on one of the sofas. “I need to get some extra supplies,” he said. “Especially since I need to somehow entertain Dante for two hours before everyone else turns up.”

“Oh that’s right! I forgot you were planning to have some brotherly bonding,” Lady said, dodging as Vergil threw a cushion in her direction.

“Don’t phrase it as something so…”

“Cute?” Lady asked, dodging a coaster this time.

“Foolish woman,” Vergil said, standing up. He looked down at his clothing and sighed. “I can’t possibly go outside looking like this…”

“On the contrary,” Lady said, walking over and replacing the items Vergil had thrown at her. “Given how much you’ve been in the news recently, this seems like the perfect way to avoid attention, Jumping Man,” she grinned, referring to the shopping centre incident which, while interest in it had died down, still appeared on the news every now and then.

“We’re miles from that godforsaken place,” Vergil stated.

“Even so, you do realise that last night’s incident is all over the media right?” Lady asked. “Whether it’s as ‘Jumping Man’ or Vergil, people are going to recognise you if you’re not careful.”

“I hate this,” Vergil said angrily. “What happened to people just being allowed to live their lives in private?”

“That’s the modern world, I’m afraid,” Lady said somewhat sadly. “I won’t lie, it does make our job a lot more difficult.”

“Are there any places around here where I can obtain some food without too many people seeing me?” Vergil asked.

“There’s always the corner shop you went to that one time,” Lady suggested.

Vergil shook his head. “No, I need something slightly bigger. I plan to cook a meat dish tonight and I’d like an acceptable selection.”

“Picky, picky,” Lady joked, avoiding a swat to the back of the head. “Why didn’t you plan ahead and do all this beforehand?”

“I did,” Vergil said irritationally. “I already have everything else I need, but I wanted to buy the meat fresh. ...I also want to buy a few things for Dante,” he added, looking away.

“Okay fine,” Lady said. “If you don’t mind hanging out with me a bit longer I’ll take you to the slightly bigger supermarket round the corner.”

“I would be grateful,” Vergil said, bowing slightly.

“You’ll need to disguise that though,” Lady said, pointing at Yamato. “And we should probably do
more to make extra sure no-one pays any attention to you,” she continued, walking towards her bedroom. She returned a short while later carrying a baseball cap which she attempted to shove onto Vergil’s head.

“Get that thing away from me,” Vergil protested, vaulting over the back of the sofa to put some distance between them.

“Look Vergil, not many young men walk around with white hair in these parts,” Lady said, marching towards him, only for Vergil to move at the same time until they were almost comically chasing each other in small circles. “It’s sunny outside too, so it’s not like this’ll look out of place. I’ll even let you borrow a pair of my sunglasses.”

“This is ridiculous,” Vergil stated.

“It makes perfect sense though,” Lady said. “Unless you want a bunch of cameras shoved in your face again.”

“The probability of journalists being at a small town supermarket is very slim,” Vergil retorted. “I’ll take my chances.”

“I’m not talking about those cameras,” Lady said, holding up her phone. “If anything, these ones are more dangerous.” Vergil stared at her over the sofa for a few seconds before letting out an annoyed growl and grabbing the hat. “Good boy,” she said teasingly as he begrudgingly pulled it on. “Now give me a moment while I go change.”

To casual observers who didn’t know any better, the image of a slightly pasty looking man wearing a short sleeved shirt, a cap and a pair of sunglasses, walking next to a cheerful looking woman in a large sunhat, an even larger pair of sunglasses, and a flowing summer dress, wouldn’t look out of the ordinary. Perhaps one might question the long package tied to the man’s back wrapped in brown paper, but given the nice weather, it could easily by a stick for lacrosse or similar. If one got closer however, the outline of hidden gun holsters would soon be obvious below the hem of the dress whenever the wind blew a certain way, and it would soon become clear that the brown package was suspiciously sword shaped. Fortunately, there were not many people around on this warm summer’s day.

“You should try relaxing a little more,” Lady stated. Vergil was looking more than a little tense, and his steps were stiff and forced. He was already regretting not just going to Rashid’s. Sure his food wasn’t the best, but at least it was less embarrassing than this. “No one is even looking in our direction,” Lady said reassuringly.

“I feel so undignified,” Vergil said coldly, not for the first time since they had stepped outside.

“You just look like a regular dude enjoying the summer,” Lady said. “Nothing to worry about.”

“How far is this place again?” Vergil asked, again not the first time.

“We’re almost there,” Lady sighed. He hadn’t even mentioned the fact that she was wearing a dress again, seemingly focused too much on himself.

They soon came to a circular plaza with a few shops and cafes surrounding it on all sides. A large fountain decorated the middle of the plaza, in which small children splashed around while their parents were engaged in trivial conversation, seemingly oblivious to their spawn’s antics. “This is busier than you implied,” Vergil said, stopping suddenly.
“It’s fine, trust me,” Lady said, reaching for his shirt and pausing. When he didn’t react, she hesitantly grabbed hold and started to pull him forward. To her surprise, he didn’t swat her away as he usually would, and allowed himself to be dragged along. “The supermarket is straight ahead. We’ll go in, get what you need, then leave. Just act natural and you’ll be fine.” Once she was satisfied that he wasn’t going to run away, she let go of him and the two of them quickly walked towards the brightly coloured shop in front of them. Everything around here was bright and colourful, Vergil realised.

As they passed the fountain, one of the children tripped and hit their head on the hard stone edging. Vergil paused and observed the child as it started to cry. “Such an irritating sound,” Vergil said as Lady walked back over, having realised that he was no longer following her.

“You’re gonna have to get used to it if you’re planning on working in an orphanage,” Lady reminded him, looking around to see if she could locate the kid’s mother.

“Crying will be prohibited once I start,” Vergil said, approaching the child. The small boy paused his crying and looked up at Vergil as he drew near. As soon as Vergil opened his mouth to speak, the child burst into tears again, even louder this time. Vergil knelt down until he was level with the boy and removed his sunglasses. “Stop that at once,” he said flatly, staring into the child’s eyes. “No one is coming to help you.” The boy stopped mid-sob, the noise catching in his throat and making an unpleasant gasping sound.

“M-Mama…” the boy started to call out, unable to break the gaze between him and the terrifying man in front of him.

“The only one who can help you is yourself,” Vergil said. “If you want your mother, go and find her, only you can-”

“Vergil!” Lady called out behind him. “Stop terrifying this small child,” she said, slapping the back of his head. “Sorry about this ma’am. Looks like the situation seems to have resolved itself,” Lady said to what Vergil assumed to be the child’s mother, who rushed forward and pulled the boy into her arms. Vergil quickly replaced his sunglasses and stood up again, watching as the mother sat on the edge of the fountain and comforted her child, whispering re-assurances to him.

“Thank you for making sure he was okay,” the woman said, smiling up at Lady and Vergil. “I left him in the care of my sister while I went to buy some things. I’ll be having a few stern words with her!”

“Not a problem!” Lady said cheerfully. “Hope he feels better soon!” The small boy continued to stare at Vergil from his mother’s arms, not taking his eyes from him even as Lady started pushing Vergil towards the supermarket again. “What the hell was that?” Lady asked, once they were out of earshot.

“What?”

“Crying will be prohibited”, ‘Stop that at once’? Jesus Vergil, the kid was like, three.” Lady said.

“And what of it?” Vergil asked. “It’s never too early to teach children about responsibility and self-preservation.”

Lady hid her face in her hands and groaned. “Vergil, I really think you should reconsider this orphanage thing before you do any permanent damage.”

“Everything will be fine,” Vergil said, pushing past her and picking up a basket for the shopping.
“Nero trusts me.” Lady bit her tongue to prevent herself from arguing further as she remembered their conversation the night before. For a moment, it had slipped her mind that Vergil might actually be somewhat looking forward to starting his new job, as a distraction from everything. “Nothing further to say?” Vergil asked, turning to face her.

“You’re right, I’m sorry,” Lady said defeatedly. “I think you’ll make a… wonderful orphanage worker,” she lied.

“Your support means a lot to me,” Vergil said seriously after a brief pause, before clearing his throat. “Now, take me to the meat please.”

“Oh, right,” Lady said, somewhat taken aback at his honesty. “Is there anything else you need?” she asked.

“Alcohol,” Vergil said, after thinking for a moment. “You’ve known Dante for a long time, what does he like to drink?”

“He’s your brother,” Lady said. “Surely you know what kinda stuff he likes?” She felt a pang of guilt when Vergil didn’t respond and just looked down at his feet. When it was clear he wasn’t going to say anything else, Lady let out a sigh. “Let’s just head over there and see if you recognise anything; he usually leaves bottles lying all over the place.” Vergil nodded and the two of them headed deeper into the supermarket.

The inside of the store was refreshingly cool compared to the outside. Vergil had removed his sunglasses despite Lady’s protest, and she eventually did the same. As they passed through the dairy section Vergil paused, grabbing Lady’s hat to stop her too. “Dante likes these things, right?” he asked, pointing to a variety of creamy desserts.

“Yeah, he’s a big fan of strawberry sundaes,” Lady said, adjusting her hat. “You gonna get one?”

Vergil hesitated for a moment before loading a bunch of the desserts into his basket, along with a chocolate one for himself. “Next,” he said, ignoring Lady’s surprised expression.

Once they arrived at the alcohol section, Vergil started to inspect each and every bottle closely. There were large signs everywhere saying things like ‘White’, ‘Red’, ‘Rose’, ‘Spirits’, ‘Beer’, and Vergil quickly found himself overwhelmed.

“Don’t forget there are other people coming too,” Lady said, walking over with a bottle of red wine in her left hand and white in her right. She placed the bottles in the basket as Vergil continued to pick up and turn over a variety of drinks.

“Does Dante even like beer?” Vergil mumbled, more to himself than Lady.

After a few more minutes, Lady let out an impatient sigh. “Damn it Vergil, I’ll help already. Just stop being so…” Weird, she thought. “…Meticulous.”

“That’s a big word coming from you,” Vergil chuckled, replacing the bottle on the shelf. “Why not just help to begin with?”

“I didn’t want to make it seem like I knew more about Dante than his own brother,” Lady admitted. “But this is getting ridiculous.”

“Fine. It’s not like I care that much anyway,” Vergil said. “So what should I get?”

“He likes Jack Daniels and wine. Any kind,” Lady said matter-of-factly. Vergil looked around in
confusion before Lady sighed again, grabbed some bottles from the shelf, and threw them into the basket. “Next,” she said.

The trip to the meat section was a lot easier. “What meat do you like?” Vergil asked Lady.

“I don’t really mind.”

“Tell me your favourite.”

“I dunno… Steak I guess?” Lady suggested. She watched as Vergil quickly did a small count on his fingers before reaching forward and tossing five steaks into the basket. He hesitated a moment and then added another one.

“Invite Trish along this evening after all,” Vergil said; he had originally excluded her from his guest list. “Nico still isn’t coming though.”

“Huh, that’s surprisingly nice of you,” Lady admitted. “But sure, I’ll give her a call later and see if she can make it.”

Vergil nodded and quickly looked through the things in his basket. “Pizza,” he said suddenly. “I should probably get some pizza.”

“Hey now, I know Dante’s obsessed with the stuff, but I doubt even he can eat a whole pizza followed by a steak,” Lady said.

“I have two hours to kill with him, I may as well distract him with food,” Vergil responded.

“Or you could, I dunno, talk to him?” Lady suggested. “I know he acts like it sometimes, but he isn’t some puppy that you need to constantly keep busy. He is capable of having a normal conversation.”

Vergil looked down at his basket thoughtfully. “…Pizza,” he said again at last, wandering off despite Lady’s protests.

By the time they reached the checkout, two pizzas were balanced precariously on top of the basket. In addition to this, Vergil had also added a few soft drinks for Kyrie, and a large bag of sweets that he intended to bring to the orphanage in case he needed to find a way to get the children to leave him alone. Having learned from his previous encounter, Vergil placed the basket on the side and quickly began to empty its contents onto the conveyor belt. As the cashier started to scan the items, a cheerful jingle started to play in the plaza. “Hey, you’ve got this handled right?” Lady asked Vergil, pushing past him.

“I… Wait, where are you going?” he asked.

“I’ll meet you outside!” Lady called behind her as she ran towards the doors.

“Party tonight, huh?” the cashier asked, placing yet another steak into a carrier bag.

“…Something like that,” Vergil said, turning his attention back towards the woman in front of him.

“Lovely day for it,” she said.

“…Indeed,” Vergil agreed awkwardly.

Outside, Lady approached the ice cream truck that had pulled into the plaza. It was already surrounded by small children and their parents, and she hoped that she would be able to make her
order before Vergil re-joined her. Fortunately, she had just managed to obtain two ice cream cones when he emerged, a plastic bag in each hand. She was somewhat amused at how normal he looked for once as she made her way over. “I got us a little treat,” she said, brandishing the ice creams.

“I’m fine, thank you,” Vergil stated. “Feel free to enjoy them both.”

“Well that’s no fun,” Lady pouted. “Here, I’ll swap an ice cream for one of the bags you’re carrying.”

“No need,” Vergil said, walking past her. “I’d like to get home and into some proper clothing.”

“Not even a little bite?” she asked, jogging after him. She licked one of the ice creams as it threatened to drip onto her hand. “They’re super refreshing!”

Vergil stopped walking and turned to face her. He looked down at the ice cream she held in front of him, looked up at her expectant expression, and sighed. He leaned forward and took a small bite of the ice cream. “There,” he said, licking his lips clean and starting to walk away again. Lady stood frozen in place for a moment, hoping that the blush she felt forming on her cheeks could be excused as her being too warm due to the weather. She shook her head and followed after him, making quick work of her own ice cream in the process, in an attempt to cool herself down.

“What do you want me to do with this?” she asked, waving the other one in front of Vergil again.

“I don’t know, eat it?” Vergil said dismissively. He wanted to get back to Lady’s place as quickly as possible so that he could collect his belongings and leave. He needed to have at least a little bit of time to himself before he had to deal with even more people.

“I can’t do that, you bit it,” Lady said nervously.

“How then?” Vergil asked impatiently.

“...Give it here,” Vergil stated at last, holding out one of the shopping bags. Lady took it from him and exchanged it for the now rapidly melting cone of ice cream. She watched as he finished it in a few bites and wiped his mouth clean before grabbing the bag back from her, all while continuing to speed-walk back to her house. “Thank you,” he said at last.

“You could have just taken it to begin with...” Lady huffed.

Eventually Lady’s house was within their sights again, and Vergil quickened his pace even more. As they were about to open the front door, a friendly voice called out behind them. “Afternoon, Lady,” it said. Lady turned to find her elderly neighbour from upstairs crossing the road towards them.

“Mildred, hello!” Lady responded cheerfully. “I feel like I haven’t seen you in ages!”

“Oh well, you know how it is with my hip, dear,” Mildred said, approaching the pair. “Makes it hard to get outside.”

Vergil growled in frustration. “Just open the door,” he barked. “You can talk while I’m not here.”

“My, my, who is this angry sounding gentleman?” Mildred asked, squinting at Vergil. He still wore the hat and had replaced the sunglasses, making it difficult to see much of what he looked
like. “That’s not your friend, is it? What was it… David?”

“Dante,” Lady corrected her. “And no, this is… Another friend of mine that I just happened to run into. He’s a little overheated by the sun, I think he just wants to get inside where it’s nice and cool,” she said, quickly opening the door. Vergil nodded in thanks and pushed his way indoors.

“I do hope he’s not always that rude,” Mildred said. “You deserve friends a lot nicer than that…”

Inside, Vergil quickly gathered up his dirtied clothing, threw the hat and sunglasses onto the sofa, and ripped Yamato out of the brown paper they had encased it in. With two quick slashes, he had opened up a portal, and before Lady could even finish apologising to Mildred, he was gone.

By the time five o’clock came, Vergil had cleaned his clothes, tidied up the mess following last night’s meal, and prepared the ingredients for dinner. He had also had another shower to wash off the lingering sweet smell of Lady’s shower gel, and had finally managed to get his hair how he liked it. The clothing he’d borrowed had been washed, and was currently neatly folded up in the corner of a drawer, to be returned at a later time. Now that he was back in a formal blue shirt and black dress pants, Vergil could finally relax again a little. This unfortunately did not last long however, as he soon realised that Dante was late. At first he decided to remain calm about the matter - Dante wasn’t exactly known for his punctuality after all. As the clock started to approach 6pm however, Vergil could feel his anger rising, and was just about to call his brother when he heard Dante’s boisterous voice outside his front door.

Vergil stalked his way over the door and yanked it open, preparing to give his brother an earful. As he opened it, he caught sight of his neighbour’s door slamming shut and Dante, who had been facing away from Vergil, turned to look at him. “Hey brother!” Dante said cheerfully, giving a small wave. “Sorry I’m late, I-

“Dante, why are you covered in blood?” Vergil asked, his eye twitching slightly.

“Well, I was just about to explain-”

“And why do you have your sword on full display?” Vergil continued angrily. “What did you do to my neighbour?”

“What, that guy?” Dante asked, pointing behind him. “Man, what a wimp. He took one look at me and screamed before running back inside. Wouldn’t even give me a chance to say hi.”

“Dante…” Vergil said, rubbing his temples. “Just come in,” he commanded, standing back and gesturing for Dante to enter.

“You don’t need to tell me twice!” Dante said, pushing his way past Vergil. He smelled of blood, sweat, and…

“Did you get into a fight with some demons on the way here?” Vergil asked, closing the door behind them.

“Your observation skills are spot on as always,” Dante said, shooting his brother a cheeky grin. “You gonna let me explain myself now?”

“Go ahead,” Vergil sighed.

“Okay, so I was making my over here on the Cavaliere, right?”
“...That demonic motorbike of yours?” Vergil asked, leaning against the door and folding his arms.

“The one and only!” Dante said. “So, I was riding along and I passed by this alleyway which seemed a bit suspicious looking. I didn’t really think much of it, especially because I wanted to get here on time, but then I noticed that each alleyway I passed seemed to be getting darker and darker until, just as I was entering an underpass, the entire tunnel suddenly went black, and I realised that I had been followed by an increasingly growing horde of demonic bats.” Vergil stared at his brother in disbelief and nodded for him to continue. “Okay, so this underpass just so happened to lead towards this town where you’re living right? I remember Nero telling me that he was particularly happy at managing to get you a place here because it’s apparently demon free, so I knew I couldn’t just lead them here. Because of that, I had no choice but to engage in combat.”

“I wasn’t aware that this town had no demons in it,” Vergil said distractedly. “That’s interesting.”

“I guess it does explain your neighbour’s response,” Dante said thoughtfully. “Although it’s not exactly demon free any more, right?” he added, pointing at himself and Vergil.

“Just finish the excuse.”

“Story, you mean story,” Dante said. “Anyway, I had my sword hidden in a guitar case, but as I was beating the crap out of these things, they managed to get hold of the case and melted it.”

“They… melted it?” Vergil asked in mild surprise.

“Oh yeah, I forgot to mention that they had acid spit.”

“Right…”

“So anyway, I beat them up and won, but then I realised I was running late for our bro-date...” Vergil cringed at the term Dante had used. “...and decided to just come straight here, instead of going home for a replacement case and making you even more mad,” Dante finished. “I wasn’t expecting your neighbour to randomly come outside though.”

“An interesting tale,” Vergil said, straightening up. “And you’re sure you weren’t followed?”

“I made extra sure,” Dante said, giving his brother a thumbs up. “I actually got a taxi the rest of the way here so as not to draw attention to myself.”

“The taxi driver let you in looking like that?” Vergil asked in disbelief.

“People will do anything if you throw enough money at ‘em,” Dante said, finally turning around to look at Vergil’s apartment. “Speaking of money, this place is pretty impressive looking! Good job, bro!”

“Nero is paying for everything,” Vergil stated, walking over to his brother. “Although I hope to change that once I start earning a consistent salary.”

“Aww man, why bother? I’d just enjoy the extra cash.”

“I don’t like being in debt to anyone,” Vergil said. “You of all people should know how unpleasant that feels.”

Dante shrugged and removed his jacket, throwing it over the back of Vergil’s sofa. “Hey, where’s your bathroom at? I should probably try and get at least some of this blood off…” he trailed off when he saw the rage in Vergil’s expression as he glared at the discarded garment. “Oh crap…
Sorry—

“You’re going for a shower,” Vergil said. “I will not have your dirtying my dwelling like this.”

“I’m sorry bro,” Dante said, picking up the coat. “See, I’ve picked it up now, it’s all good—”


“Hey, no offence but I think I’m slightly—”

“Fatter?”

“...More muscular,” Dante protested. “Your clothes probably won’t fit me.”

“I have something that will fit,” Vergil said.

“This isn’t exactly the kind of thing I had in mind when you invited me over,” Dante said. “I thought we’d be having a nice heart-to-heart over cake or something.”

“When have we ever had ‘heart-to-hearts’, Dante?” Vergil asked, pushing his brother in the direction of the bedroom. “The bathroom is on the right through here. I’ll leave some clothes on the bed for you.”

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When Dante emerged a short while later, Vergil was in the kitchen starting to prepare the food for the evening. He didn’t notice his younger brother until he stuck his head through the small window from the living room, shouting “Hey Vergil, guess who I am?” Vergil looked over to see Dante with his hair slicked back and a pretend scowl on his face. “Show me your motivation, scum! Uh… don’t be dirtying my dwelling—” Dante’s taunts were cut off by the tip of Yamato being pointed at his forehead.

“Foolishness,” they both said at once, causing Vergil to lunge forward as Dante burst out laughing and jumped back.

“Come on Vergil, you don’t want me to have to shower again do you?” Dante asked, shaking his head until his hair fell back down into its usual style.

“Enough, Dante,” Vergil said, resheathing his sword and returning to seasoning the steaks.

“Remember when we used to do that as kids?” Dante asked, joining his brother in the kitchen and leaning against one of the counters. Vergil looked at him and raised an eyebrow, unsure what he meant. “You know, pretending to be each other? Mother could always tell though.”

“Of course. She wouldn’t mistake her favourite for second best,” Vergil stated. Dante was about to make a witty remark, when he realised from Vergil’s solemn expression that he had actually been referring to himself as second best.

“Hey now, don’t be like that,” Dante said. “You know she loved us equally, we’ve talked about this.” Vergil just grunted and said nothing further. This wasn’t how he had been planning to spend their time together either. Unfortunately, as he had suspected, having a serious talk wasn’t really on the cards when it came to Dante. “So, steak huh?” Dante asked, changing the topic. “Interesting choice.”

“I bought some other things too if you’re not interested,” Vergil said, shoving some roast potatoes
into the oven.

“No, no this is fine,” Dante said. “I didn’t realise you were so good at cooking.”

“Wait until you try it before you say that,” Vergil said, straightening up again. “...Can I get you something to drink?” he asked, glancing at the clock and realising he still had about forty minutes until the others started to show up.

“Sure, whatcha got?” Dante asked, starting to open some cupboards only to be swatted away by Vergil.

“I have wine, Jack Daniels-”

“I’ll take one of those please,” Dante said, his eyes lighting up. “So you did pay attention to what I like to drink,” he said happily.

“Of course, I lived with you for quite a while,” Vergil said, swallowing the lump that formed in his throat as he lied to his brother’s face. He quickly poured out a glass of whisky for Dante and a glass of lemonade for himself before guiding them both towards the dining table.

“Not joining me?” Dante asked, taking a large gulp of the amber coloured liquid.

“I’ve decided that drinking in your company is too risky after what happened last time,” Vergil stated, sitting opposite his brother.

“I’m sure we’ll be able to change that by the end of the evening,” Dante grinned. “Where’s everyone gonna sit by the way?” he asked.

“This table extends slightly,” Vergil said, pointing to an almost invisible seam that ran through the middle of the table. “There will be plenty of space.”

“Okay, but what about chairs though?” Dante asked. He watched as Vergil’s grip around his glass of lemonade tightened and the hand resting on the table formed into a fist.

“...Excuse me for a moment,” Vergil said, standing up. Dante watched with mild amusement as Vergil looked around for a large enough space before slashing Yamato through the air. “Don’t touch anything,” he called over his shoulder before stepping through.

When Vergil returned from Rashid’s - that shop really did seem to have almost everything - he was both annoyed and unsurprised to find Dante face down on the dining table surrounded by empty pots of what used to be strawberry sundaes. The bottle of Jack Daniels sat on the floor by Dante’s feet, half empty. Vergil cleared his throat and Dante groggily lifted his head and moaned something about a sugar overload.

“Dante, I have been gone for fifteen minutes; how is it even possible to end up in this state so quickly?”

“Never underestimate the power of desserts,” Dante yawned.

“Clean this mess up and help me get the table ready,” Vergil demanded. He had some foldable chairs slung over each shoulder, which he hoped wouldn’t just crumple the second someone sat on them.
“Hey, there’s no rush,” Dante said, stretching. Vergil lunged forward and grabbed the bottle of whisky as his brother almost kicked it over, sending chairs clattering to the floor in the process. He placed the bottle back on the table.

“The others will be here in twenty minutes-”

“Fear not brother, for I have gained you an extra half an hour,” Dante said, waggling a finger. “I told everyone you needed a bit more time to prepare, so they’re coming at seven-thirty now.”

“Why would you do that?” Vergil asked, picking up the chairs and leaning them against the sofa. “Now I just look unprepared.”

“Well I mean, you kinda were,” Dante said, gathering up the empty plastic pots. “Besides, I want to ask you about something before anyone else turns up.”

“What are you up to, Dante?” Vergil asked, eyeing his brother suspiciously as he went into the kitchen to throw away his rubbish.

“Don’t forget your potatoes,” Dante reminded him, causing Vergil to rush into the kitchen and quickly remove them. Fortunately, they were fine.

“Dante, what-”

“Lady,” Dante said bluntly. “I think it’s time we had a talk about Lady.”

“...What about her?” Vergil asked dismissively, turning down the heat on the oven and replacing the potatoes to keep them warm. He would start cooking the steaks once the others arrived, or just before. He started to boil a pot of water in preparation for some carrots.

“You tell me,” Dante said, dodging out of Vergil’s way as he opened a variety of cupboards and drawers.

“I have nothing to tell,” Vergil stated. “We happened to run into each other last night and decided to team up. It’s not unusual.”

“Don’t think I didn’t notice what you called her last night,” Dante said. “And how would you know that she gets sick going through portals unless-”

Vergil angrily slammed the vegetable peeler he was holding down on the counter and glared at his brother. “You don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said coldly. “Don’t make assumptions based on a single conversation.”

“I recognise these clothes, Vergil,” Dante said, tugging at the polo-shirt he was wearing. Vergil cursed internally - he’d thought he had gotten away with it. “They’re spares that I specifically left at Lady’s place because they don’t fit quite as well any more,” Dante continued. “Not only that, but I went to see her last night, and do you know what I saw? Two cups of hot chocolate-”

“Enough!” Vergil yelled, pinning Dante to the wall with a circle of summoned swords. “Why didn’t you invite us out on the job last night?” he asked, summoning another sword and pointing it between Dante’s eyes.

“Stop trying to change the topic,” Dante said, pulling himself free and ducking under Vergil’s swing at him to grab his own sword, which he had left leaning against a wall in the hallway. He managed to turn just quickly enough to counter Vergil’s blow before the spectral sword disappeared and Vergil teleported towards Yamato, which was propped against the back of the
sofa. The two brothers turned to face each other, each pointing their swords at the other. “If I win you have to tell me what’s going on,” Dante challenged.

“There is nothing going on,” Vergil growled. “But if I win, you drop this foolish topic completely.”

“Fine by me,” Dante grinned.

“Just watch the walls and furniture,” Vergil added before rushing forward.

Fighting inside the small apartment was not an easy feat. Straight away, their weapons clashed together, sending sparks flying which Vergil hastily blew out. Vergil dodged another blow from his brother, and Dante used the momentum to carry on forward and vault himself over the sofa. He hid behind it, using it as a shield against more of Vergil’s summoned swords, which the older twin quickly dematerialised before they could make contact with the expensive fabric. The two of them fought back and forth, each mostly dodging the other and catching any books which were blown from the shelves by the sheer amount of wind they were creating with each slash. Much to Vergil’s irritation, the room was too small for him to successfully send forth any judgement cuts, and he was having to rely on parrying and close range fighting, which was not his preferred style.

At some point during the fight, Vergil quickly finished peeling the carrots while Dante was pinned down by a summoned sword through the chest. Just as he’d finished filling the pot, Dante’s weapon came flying through the small window into the kitchen and Vergil had just enough time to deflect it before it impaled him. With nothing left to defend himself with, Dante grabbed one of the foldable chairs and ducked underneath it as Vergil somehow managed to jump back through the window into the living room. He brought Yamato down from above, stopping just short of stabbing Dante’s back through the flimsy plastic of the chair. “Surrender,” Vergil growled.

“Oh, okay,” Dante said, lifting his hands and dropping the chair. He was still crouching under the window, and as Vergil was resheathing his sword, Dante swung his leg out towards him, catching Vergil off balance and making him drop Yamato. He fell backwards and landed on the floor with a pained grunt. “You’re getting rusty in your old age,” Dante grinned, picking up Yamato and pointing it downwards at the chest of its usual wielder.

“I mean I can if you want, but I don’t think you’d like the stain it would leave on your carpet,” Dante said, bringing the tip closer to Vergil’s flesh. “Ready to give up yet?”

“Even if you ‘win’, I have nothing to tell you,” Vergil growled.

“Oh, but I think you do,” Dante said. “Otherwise you wouldn’t have agreed to this.”

“I agreed to this,” Vergil said, summoning a circle of glowing swords above his oblivious brother, “Because I knew I’d come out on top.” The swords suddenly descended, causing Dante to drop Yamato, and forcing him to stay in place. Vergil stood up and dusted himself off. He picked up Yamato and resheathed it before reaching forward and flicking Dante between the eyes. “Fool,” he stated, before going to check on the food.

“Now who’s playing dirty?” Dante huffed. “Fine, you win. I don’t really care what’s going on anyway, I just wanted to make sure nothing untowards happens towards one of my girls.”

“You don’t own them,” Vergil stated, finally dematerialising the swords. “And nothing is, or is going to happen to either of them. Now, get the table ready before our guests start turning up.”
Dante glared at his brother’s back through the window for a few seconds and stuck his tongue out at him, before walking over to the dining table and attempting to figure out how it extended. "How come you randomly decided to invite Trish, anyway?" Dante asked, fiddling with a small catch he’d managed to find.

"...I figured I should have someone present that can keep you under control," Vergil replied.

"You sure it's not just because you didn't want one of us to be a fifth wheel?" Dante teased, shaking the table. "Also, what the hell is the deal with this damn thing..."

"You still need to answer my question, Dante," Vergil said, adding some oil to a large pan.

"What, about not asking you to come with us last night? Fine," Dante said, giving up on the table. "You want the honest answer? Trish told me not to ask you along."

"Is that so?" Vergil asked calmly, a hint of surprise obvious in his tone.

"That's right. Believe it or not, she actually kinda cares about you. We all do."

"What was her reasoning?" Vergil queried.

"Well - and don't get all moody about this - she kinda figured that being around a plant based demon might not have been the best thing for you mentally. You know, after..." Dante trailed off.

"And the human?" Vergil asked.

"Lady? We just figured she was probably still too unwell for such a big job. Looks like we were right, given how tired she seemed afterwards."

"I see."

Dante shuffled nervously. "...So, was Trish right?" he asked when Vergil said nothing further.

Vergil turned to look at his brother across the room through the window. "I thought I told you to get the table ready."

"Vergil... I meant what I said last night you know. Yeah, we tease each other a heck of a lot, but if you ever need to talk about anything-"

"Stop sounding so serious Dante, it doesn't suit you," Vergil stated. He opened another cupboard and retrieved some placemats and cutlery. He walked over to Dante and shoved the items into his arms before pulling the table apart with ease, moving it towards the middle of the room. "There. Surely you can at least lay out some tableware."

"But-"

"And if you don't finish your meal because of all those desserts you ate earlier, the table won't be the only thing that gets split apart tonight," Vergil said sternly. Dante huffed in defeat and started laying things out, while Vergil finished up in the kitchen. He brought out a set of pretty looking wine glasses and placed them on the table.

“I wish people had reached out to me this much when I needed it...” Dante mumbled under his breath.

“What are you whining about now?” Vergil asked, setting the chairs up.
“Nothing,” Dante said, pulling a stupid face at his brother. “This is gonna be quite the bash, huh?”

“I intend to keep this evening restrained to a relaxing meal and a few drinks,” Vergil said, still feeling unusually exhausted after last night’s incident.

“Bo-ring,” Dante groaned, rolling his eyes. “Come on brother, we just defeated a high level demon and it’s your housewarming party, surely you can afford to let yourself go a little?”

“No.”

“Think about how much more confident you’ll feel around Lady if you get drunk though,” Dante said winking.

“Enough,” Vergil stated. “Besides, I thought you didn’t want me to have anything to do with her, make your mind up.”

“It’s not that,” Dante said, sounding slightly more serious again. “I just want to make sure you’re not messing with her head.”

“Why would I do such a thing?” Vergil asked, frowning slightly.

“Look… I don’t really know what’s changed since you guys went for that meal - especially since you two are keeping the details so damn vague for some reason - but something’s different,” Dante said. “I originally sent you on that mission to try and stop you from wanting to stab one of my best friends every time you saw her, but I think it went a little better than expected. At least in Lady’s eyes anyway.” He paused and chewed his lip slightly. "I just don't want her to end up getting hurt."

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Vergil said coldly. “On the other hand, if you hadn’t sent me out on that job, I probably wouldn’t have moved out so I suppose I have at least that to thank you for.”

“Wait, what?” Dante asked as there was a knock on the door.

“Coming,” Vergil called out, glancing at the clock. Whoever was outside was ten minutes early.

“We are so finishing this conversation once everyone leaves,” Dante called out behind Vergil as he prepared to greet his guests.

Chapter End Notes

I was originally going to include the dinner in this chapter too, but it was getting way too long lol
I did debate about it for a while, but I think it makes more sense to split it. Probably.
Chapter Twenty One

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Vergil opened the door to find Lady and Trish standing side by side. Lady’s grin was just slightly too wide as she took in Vergil’s outfit, but it quickly disappeared from her face when she saw Vergil’s annoyed expression.

“Hey, thanks for the invite,” Trish said casually, thrusting a box of chocolates and a bottle of wine into Vergil’s arms. “Here’s a gift from the two of us. This one was too nervous to hand it over herself,” she said, pointing at Lady.

“I was not!” Lady protested, punching her friend in the arm. Trish let out a smooth sounding laugh and flicked her hair back. As usual she was dressed in tight leather, and as usual Vergil couldn’t help but feel a slight revulsion at seeing the image of his mother in such provocative clothing.

“The two of you are early. Why?” Vergil asked bluntly.

“Hey cut them some slack, it’s only ten minutes!” Dante called out behind him. “At least they’re not late!”

Vergil looked over his shoulder at his brother and let out annoyed grunt. “Why don’t you come in?” Vergil said, gesturing for them to enter. He briefly turned his attention to Lady, admiring the short, dark purple dress she was wearing. “Interesting colour choice,” he whispered to her as she passed him.

“Well, I can’t be playing favourites now, can I?” she whispered back playfully, before running over to where Dante was awkwardly leaning against the sofa. “Hey Dante! Looking charming as ever,” she said, her eyes widening as she recognised the clothes he was wearing.

“You’re not looking too bad yourself,” Dante said, shooting a quick glance at Vergil before pulling both Lady and Trish into a tight hug.

“You only saw them yesterday Dante, at least try to restrain yourself,” Vergil said, ignoring his brother’s annoyed expression at the comment.

“Don’t be so serious,” Dante said, pulling back from the two women. “Come on, join us in a hug - you know you want to.”

“I have other things to attend to,” Vergil said dismissively, heading back towards the kitchen. All three of them knew better than to argue further, and instead decided to sit around the table.

“So, what’s for dinner?” Trish asked.

“Steak,” Lady and Vergil answered simultaneously.

“I-I saw it as I came in,” Lady added hastily when Trish raised an eyebrow. Lady glanced over at Dante who was staring back at her with a shit-eating grin plastered across his face. In the kitchen, Vergil tensed up slightly, but carried on as though nothing had happened. He hoped that no one would notice the fact he had almost dropped the jar of salt he was holding.

There was another knock at the door, and Vergil sighed in frustration before once again leaving the
food he was preparing to go and open it. “Hey pops,” Nero said happily as the door swung open. His arm was wrapped around that woman of his whose name Vergil could never pronounce.

“Nero,” Vergil said, smiling slightly. He looked over at Kyrie. “And… Nero’s woman. Welcome.”

“Hey, she has a name,” Nero started angrily before Kyrie placed a hand on his chest and gave him a reassuring smile. Nero quickly quelled his range and let out a small “Hmph,” earning a slight giggle from Kyrie.

“No gift for your old man?” Dante called out from within.

“Dude, this entire apartment is a gift,” Nero yelled back.

“Having said that,” Kyrie piped up, pulling her hand out from behind Nero’s back. “We did bring you some flowers.” Vergil took the bouquet of assorted blooms with thanks, trying desperately to ignore the fact that they perked up slightly when he touched them.

With everyone here, Vergil could finally get to work on finishing the meal. He placed the flowers in the middle of the table and asked everyone what they would like to drink. Once glasses were filled, he disappeared into the kitchen again briefly and returned with an assortment of breads and oils. He asked them all how they preferred their steak, before heading back to the kitchen once more, ignoring the idle chatter coming from the other room.

“It certainly is nice to have someone else do the cooking for once,” Kyrie said cheerfully as she took a sip of lemonade.

“Hey, I cook for you all the time!” Nero protested.

“I meant someone other than you or me,” Kyrie responded, smiling sweetly as usual.

“Oh… Right. Sorry,” Nero mumbled, quickly taking a swig of whisky. “I’m just happy to finally get a home-cooked meal from my own father. I never thought I’d see the day,” he continued when no-one said anything further.

“Never mind that, since when was Vergil a chef?” Dante asked, glancing over at his brother. “If I’d know he could cook, I’d have given up on ordering pizza ages ago!”

“We all know that’s a lie,” Trish laughed, avoiding the napkin that Dante threw in her direction. The smell of steak was starting to fill the small apartment now, and the group couldn’t stop their mouths from watering, Vergil included. “So, how is everyone after last night?” Dante asked, changing the topic. He picked up a piece of bread and squinted at it briefly, before drowning it in oil and shoving it in his mouth.

“I mean, we saw each other, what, sixteen hours ago?” Lady asked, nibbling a bread crust. “I doubt much has changed since then.”

“Hey now, a lot can happen in a few hours!” Dante protested. “People can lose a job, buy a house, fall in love-”

“Let’s not dwell on last night too much,” Trish butted in. “It was a pretty unpleasant situation for all of us. I say we just focus on enjoying this evening.”

“I’m with Trish,” Lady agreed. “Dwelling on the past for too long will just end up making you depressed.” She quickly looked over at Vergil, who caught her eye for the briefest of moments,
before returning to what he was doing.

“Ain’t that the truth,” Nero nodded. “If I thought about all the crap I’d been through on a regular basis, I probably wouldn’t be able to get outta bed in the morning.”

“I’ll drink to that,” Dante said, raising his glass and downing it in one gulp. “Hey Vergil! Can we get some more drinks over here?”

“Patience, Dante,” Vergil called back, finally starting to load up the plates with food. “Is everyone seated?”

“We have been for a while,” Trish said, stretching slightly. “I’m starting to think we should have turned up slightly late after all.”

Vergil said nothing further and walked through with the first two plates. Dante was sat at one end of the table, facing the kitchen. Kyrie was to his right and Trish was to his left. Naturally, Nero was sitting next to Kyrie, while Lady sat next to Trish, meaning that they would both be on either side of Vergil when he eventually took his own place at the other end of the table. Vergil walked over to Kyrie and Lady and placed their meals in front of them. He cleared away the remainders of the bread and oil and quickly returned with Trish and Dante’s meals, before finally coming back with Nero’s and his own.

Just as he was about to take a seat, Dante cleared his throat and made a drinking motion, pointing at his empty glass. Vergil let out yet another exasperated sigh before returning to the kitchen once again and coming back with a variety of bottles. “I hope this will keep you all satisfied until the end of the meal,” he said, putting them down a little too heavily on the table.

“Aren’t you joining us?” Nero asked, pointing at the glass of elderflower cordial next to Vergil’s plate.

“I am more than happy with this,” Vergil said, taking a seat at last.

“You sure? I heard wine goes great with steak,” Dante said, refilling his own glass.

“I have already explained my reasons to you, Dante. Don’t make me waste my breath by asking me to do so again.”

“See now, you could have just explained to everyone else instead of ‘wasting your breath’ on that sentence,” Dante retorted. “Oh by the way, could I have my napkin back please?” he asked Trish.

“Are you really not having any wine?” Lady asked, hoping to distract Vergil before he got even more annoyed at Dante’s blatant lack of respect for what appeared to be very expensive silk napkins.

“I do not feel the need to have alcohol to enjoy myself,” Vergil replied, his expression softening slightly as he turned to look at the woman next to him.

“Not even one glass? It seems a shame to miss out on the flavour combination, especially when this looks so good,” Lady said, enjoying just the mere aroma of the food before her. “We even went to the trouble of getting you an expensive wine too…”

Vergil hesitated for a moment as Lady looked into his eyes and raised her eyebrows. “…Just one,” he said at last, reaching for the bottle that Lady and Trish had brought with them. “This one right?”

“Hey, what the heck?” Dante said irritatedly. “You’ll do it when she asks you to, but not when-”
“Quiet, Dante,” Vergil said sternly, filling his glass. “Now then, is everyone settled?” he asked, facing the rest of the table again.

“Can we just eat already? I’m starved,” Nero said, eyeing his plate hungrily.

“I’d like to take a few moments before we begin,” Vergil said, stifling a slight chuckle as Kyrie slapped Nero’s hand away from his fork.

“Get on with it,” Dante called out.

Vergil shot his brother an annoyed glare and cleared his throat, before standing up. “I just want to thank you all for coming over this evening. I am not the best when it comes to dealing with large groups of people, and a few weeks ago the idea of doing this would have vexed me.” He quickly looked around at everyone. They were all staring back expectantly, waiting for him to carry on. “However…” he continued, trying to phrase things in a way that didn’t make him look too pathetic. “I… have decided to start a new chapter in my life. One where I will try to rely on the help of others more, and where I intend to better myself as a person.” He turned to Nero and raised his wine glass. “Nero... thank you for giving me this opportunity, and for not giving up on me despite my past actions.”

“Hey, it’s no big deal,” Nero said, looking away nervously. “You’re family and stuff. Families forgive each other; that’s what they’re for, right?”

“Are you sure you haven’t been drinking already?” Dante asked. “What’s with the heartfelt speech?”

“…” Vergil trailed off, suddenly feeling horribly embarrassed. “…Forget it,” he said, sitting back down and staring at his steak, avoiding eye contact with everyone.

“Hey wait, I didn’t mean to ruin the moment,” Dante said, frowning slightly. “If you want to carry on—”

“Forget it!” Vergil said irritatedly, slamming his fist on the table. “I hope everyone enjoys their meal.”

“Way to go, Dante,” Lady said.

“Aww come on,” Dante said pleadingly. “Finish what you were saying, I didn’t mean to insult you…”

Vergil sighed and lifted his head again. He took a deep breath and closed his eyes. “Just eat the food,” he said at last, opening his eyes but not looking at anyone in particular. Before anyone could protest further, he lifted his fork and stabbed it forcefully into his steak. The others quickly followed suit, and for a moment the air was filled with nothing but the sound of cutlery scraping along plates.

“This is really good,” Lady said after a few minutes, finally breaking the awkward silence.

“I must agree, this is rather impressive,” Kyrie chimed in. “Perhaps we should get you to cook for the orphans sometime!”

“…I’m glad you’re enjoying it,” Vergil said quietly. He had to admit, he was a little proud of himself for preparing something so delicious.

“Come on Vergil, cheer up,” Dante said through a mouthful of potato. “Don’t let my dumb mouth
ruin the evening for ya.”

“...I’m fine,” Vergil said, attempting to force a smile but quickly giving up on the idea when he saw everyone’s mildly terrified expressions. “I’m sorry for reacting the way I did. I…” He glanced over at Lady, who smiled back reassuringly. “I’ve been under a lot of stress lately,” he continued. “Unfortunately it can sometimes make me a little short-tempered-”

“Sometimes?” Dante asked, prompting Trish to kick him under the table.

“Yes,” Vergil said seriously. “But I’m trying to fix it.”

“Well, I’m proud of you,” Nero said, reaching over and patting his father on the shoulder. “You’ve come a long way.”

“Thank you, Nero,” Vergil responded, unable to stop himself from shrugging his son’s hand away.

“I’m just glad to have you back,” Dante admitted. “I know I can be a bit of a jerk to you occasionally, but I really am happy you’re not dead.”

“It’s a blunt way of putting it, but I’m also glad that you’re not dead,” Trish agreed. “I was getting pretty sick of having to deal with Dante moping around all the time.”

“I was not moping!” Dante protested.

“You were pretty depressed for a while,” Lady said.

“I wasn’t depressed, I was just bored,” Dante pouted. “When you can kill pretty much anything, it takes all the excitement out of doing jobs, you know?”

“Which is the real reason you’re happy to have me back, right?” Vergil asked, smirking slightly. “Because I’m the one enemy you can’t defeat.”

“That’s a bold statement, brother,” Dante said, rising from his seat slightly. “You know I’d have won that time if Nero hadn’t stepped in.”

“And all the other times?” Vergil asked, also standing a little.

“That’s enough you guys,” Nero said, standing up himself and shoving them both back into their seats. “I’m glad that fighting each other is something that makes you happy, but we’re in the middle of a meal here; you can argue later.”

“Perhaps we should take this outside,” Dante suggested.

“With pleasure,” Vergil agreed.

“Before dessert?”

“Before dessert.”

“You guys are just as bad as each other,” Lady sighed. “As soon as the conversation ends up getting serious, you’re back to trying to kill each other again.”

“It’s just our way of showing brotherly affection, right Vergil?” Dante grinned.

“I would not associate the word affection with you,” Vergil said, also smiling slightly. When it wasn’t forced, his smile actually looked somewhat wholesome, and the others couldn’t help but
feel relieved that he seemed to have relaxed again at last.

“Alright, let’s finish this, Vergil!” Dante challenged, pointing his fork at his brother.

“I am not about to let your foolish challenge spoil my enjoyment of this meal,” Vergil retorted, eating slightly quicker than he had been before, despite himself. The air was once again filled with nothing but the frantic sounds of metal against porcelain.

“Looks like I win,” Dante said proudly, wiping his mouth clean.

“Only because I have table manners,” Vergil said angrily, finishing the last of his vegetables. The two of them stood in sync, their chairs clattering the floor behind them. “Let’s go.”

“You guys are not seriously going to do this are you?” Lady groaned. “Can’t we just enjoy a nice meal for once?”

“Don’t worry, it won’t take me long to kick Vergil’s ass,” Dante said. “We’ll be back before you guys have even finished your food.”

“Isn’t it a bit rude for the host to leave before everyone is done?” Trish asked.

“Trish is right, give it a rest already,” Nero said, clearly annoyed. “You guys can do what you want when we’re all gone, but for now let’s at least pretend to be normal, huh?”

“The doppelganger does have a point,” Vergil nodded. “I almost let you sway me Dante, but I will not let our endless feud ruin this evening.”

“Once they’ve left though-”

“Then you will regret the day you let me escape Hell.”

“Thought so.”

“Will the two of you just sit down and stop arguing for once?!” Lady yelled, taking everyone by surprise. “Vergil, Dante, pick up your damn chairs and just shut up for a few minutes while the rest of us try to enjoy the food, okay?”

“He started it,” Dante said, immediately shutting up as Lady’s glare pierced his soul. The two brothers silently righted their chairs and slumped back into them, staring each other down while they waited for everyone else to finish.

“Well, disagreements aside, I have to say that was wonderful,” Kyrie said, placing her knife and fork down.

“Me too,” Lady agreed. “Well done, Vergil.”

“Thank you,” Vergil responded, finally looking away from Dante’s smug grin. “Would people like dessert straight away?”

“I think a short break would be nice,” Trish suggested, with the others nodding in agreement.

“In that case, I’ll get everything cleaned up,” Vergil said, starting to collect the dishes.

“I’ll help,” Lady volunteered. To her surprise, he didn’t protest, and she soon found herself alone with Vergil in the kitchen while the others went back to cracking jokes and discussing arbitrary topics. “So… Did you talk to him?” she whispered as she started to dry the dishes.
“What do you think?” Vergil hissed back. “I swear, that man is incapable of holding a meaningful conversation for more than a few seconds.”

“Only when he’s around you, it seems,” Lady said, reaching for a fork. “We’ve had plenty of serious talks over the years.”

“Somehow that just makes it worse,” Vergil replied.

“He probably doesn’t want to bring you down with his negativity,” Lady said. “He’s only just got you back, I wouldn’t be surprised if he was worried about scaring you away again.”

“Well, he’s already succeeded in doing that much,” Vergil said, gesturing to the apartment.

Lady sighed and shook her head. “Just give him time, I’m sure he’ll open up eventually.”

“Actually, we did discuss… something before you arrived,” Vergil said quietly, turning to face Lady, who shifted nervously under his intense gaze.

“Interesting... Care to share?” Lady asked, lowering her voice even further. “Only if you want to of course.”

Vergil cast his eyes up and down the woman before him, wondering if he should bring up what Dante had mentioned. “Well… He seems to think-”

“Hey, you two lovebirds done in there yet?” Dante called out suddenly. Lady turned quickly and angrily threw the fork she was holding through the opening in the wall. It stopped just short of the table, missing her target completely.

“Please refrain from throwing my cutlery around,” Vergil stated, walking into the living room to retrieve the implement.

“Sorry, reflex,” Lady huffed.

“If you wanted to impale my brother, you had only to ask,” Vergil continued, firing a summoned sword in Dante’s direction before dematerialising it milliseconds before it made contact. He felt a slight pang of guilt as Kyrie let out a small squeal, still not used to seeing the two of them fight each other.

“Man, you are in for a serious ass-whupping later on,” Dante grumbled.

“Guys, please?” Nero begged, draping his arm over Kyrie’s shoulders and giving her a comforting squeeze.

“Is everyone happy with what they have to drink?” Vergil asked, ignoring the protests. Once everyone had confirmed that they were satisfied, Vergil turned back towards Lady, who was still in the kitchen and leaning through the window. “Mar-” He stopped himself before he could finish saying her name, and tried to suppress the sudden heat he felt creeping up the back of his neck. “May I get you anything?” he quickly corrected himself.

“I’ll be fine,” Lady said, hoping no one would notice the slight waver in her voice. She took her place back at the table as Vergil returned to the kitchen to finish the dishes alone.

“So, uh, what’s for dessert?” Nero asked obliviously.

“Black forest gateau,” Vergil answered. “I made it myself.”
“You got any of those strawberry sundaes left?” Dante asked.

“Dante!” Lady said angrily. “Vergil went to a lot of effort to do all this, at least try the cake before complaining!”

“Huh? I’m not complaining - I was just wondering if there were any left so I could have some after the cake.” He leaned back in his chair with his arms behind his head. “What?” he asked, as the others stared at him in disbelief.

“How you’re not obese amazes me,” Trish said, shaking her head.

“It’s all that raw energy I exude being so badass,” Dante said, winking. “Burns a lotta calories.” The whole table groaned.

“Guess that explains why Vergil is slimmer than you,” Lady teased, earning an annoyed grunt from Dante. Nero leaned over the table and gave her a high five, making Dante pout even further.

“I’ll have a look for sundaes later,” Vergil finally answered from the kitchen, smiling slightly at the subtle compliment.

“So what’s the plan after dessert?” Nero asked. “Does anyone know any party games?”

“I don’t know about you guys, but I wouldn’t mind watching a movie on that massive TV,” Dante said, nodding towards the oversized device hanging on the wall. “I bet Vergil doesn’t even use it; I wouldn’t mind taking it off his hands.”

“It came with the apartment and can’t be removed,” Nero said, looking at his uncle with disapproval. “Besides, I never see you watching TV.”

“That’s because I don’t have one like this just sitting around,” Dante said, rising from his seat. He walked over to the television and inspected it closely, trying to find the on switch. Vergil stopped what he was doing and watched his brother out of the corner of his eye. It was true he didn’t use the television very often, but that didn’t mean he wasn’t worried about it getting damaged. Dante let out a low whistle. “Man, what do I have to do to get a free TV this good?”

“It’s not free,” Vergil said sternly, finally walking over to the small window and leaning through. “Nero worked very hard for this-”

“Uh actually, it is kinda free,” Nero piped up. “The rent is being covered by one of our suppliers, remember?”

Vergil furrowed his eyebrows and hummed thoughtfully. “That’s right, I do remember you mentioning something like that,” he said at last. “Why was it they agreed to do so again?”

Nero shrugged. “I’m not entirely sure, but it's probably tax related or something. He just said he felt like doing something nice for us when I told him your - heavily watered down - story, but I’m sure he had his reasons.”

“Who is this mysterious benefactor?” Dante asked, finally finding the remote and twirling it around. “Does he do two for one deals?”

“Look, I dunno man, he’s just some random dude we happen to work with, okay? He came by to check on things recently, we got talking, and he made the offer. Like I said, he’d just have offered it to someone else if we hadn’t taken him up on it,” Nero replied.
Isn’t it somewhat dangerous to make a contract with someone you are not fully familiar with?” Vergil asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Guys, I highly doubt he has sinister ulterior motives,” Nero sighed. “Can’t you just accept that some people are genuinely kind?”

“I heard this town is demon free,” Vergil stated. “Does he happen to know anything about that?”

“Come on pops, the guy hardly even knows what a demon is, never mind—”

“ALMOST TWENTY FOUR HOURS ON FROM THE DESTRUCTION OF THE PARASITIC FOREST, WE ARE STILL LEFT WONDERING - WHO IS THIS ‘VERGIL’?” the TV blared suddenly. Dante dropped the remote in surprise before quickly scrambling for it and lowering the volume.

“Sorry, didn’t realise Vergil was so deaf,” he said, trying to slow his rapid heartbeat.

“I use it to listen to classical music occasionally,” Vergil said. “It sounds better when it’s louder.”

“Forget all that, check it out!” Nero said, pointing at the screen. The display had been split in half, with one side showing Vergil jumping from the shopping centre balcony, while the other showed him ushering survivors through the portal next to the restaurant.

“Turn it off immediately,” Vergil said angrily as the screen dissolved into a side by side photo comparison of him and Dante, which then had the two images transpose over each other with the words ‘SECRET IDENTITY?’ flashing up at the bottom.

“Damn, looks like we’re becoming pretty famous, huh?” Dante said, raising the volume slightly.

“...I say move over Dante, this Vergil guy is the hero we all need,” a young woman standing in the street was saying in footage which had clearly been filmed earlier.

“Okay I’m turning it off,” Dante said coldly.

“Wait, I want to see what else they have to say!” Lady called out.

“We were… We were all huddled together, convinced we were about to die…” an old man said from a hospital bed. “And from out of nowhere he appeared, like a saviour sent from above, to rescue us all.”

“It was the most amazing thing I’ve ever experienced,” and old lady sitting by his bed said. “And such a beautiful name for such a beautiful man - Vergil. I couldn’t think of a more wonderful—”

“Enough!” Vergil said angrily, stalking over and ripping the plug out of the wall. “I do not wish to hear any more of these people’s spurious delusions.” The room fell silent as Vergil let the plug drop the floor and took a deep breath. “No more television tonight,” he said, grabbing the remote from Dante and throwing it onto the sofa.

“Shouldn’t you be happy that they’re seeing you as a hero?” Nero asked after a few moments, despite Kyrie frantically shaking her head at him in an attempt to tell him to keep quiet.

“I am not going to engage in this conversation right now,” Vergil said calmly, looking away when Lady caught his eye. “Now, who would like some cake?”

“I-I’ll take some,” Kyrie said nervously, raising her hand.
“Excellent,” Vergil said, attempting to smile at her and giving up again. “Anyone else?”

Dante, who had been standing in silence up until this point, cleared his throat and regarded his brother with a concerned expression. “Do you, uh, need a moment?” he asked, stepping back slightly when Vergil turned to glare at him.

“I’m fine.”

“No, I’m being serious,” Dante said worriedly. “If you want to go and take a quick walk or something, I’m sure none of us would mind. You seem kinda upset.”

Vergil sighed and ran a hand through his hair. “I’m sorry,” he said. “I don’t mean to cause any unnecessary bother. I’ll be alright.”

“Promise?” Dante asked.

Vergil stared at him in silence before turning his attention back towards the rest of his guests. “I think it’s time we had dessert,” he said. He walked over the table and downed the rest of his wine before heading back to the kitchen. Dante looked uneasily over at Lady, who looked back at him with an equally troubled expression.

“How ‘bout I give you a hand?” Dante asked, joining his brother in the other room.

Vergil opened his mouth to protest, but closed it again when he realised Dante would probably just start grabbing things anyway. He reluctantly nodded his head and handed some plates over. “Thank you…” he mumbled.

“I’m really looking forward to this,” Lady said as Vergil placed her portion down in front of her.

“Me too,” Kyrie agreed, eyeing the cake hungrily.

Vergil took his place at the end of the table again and refilled his wine glass, much to the surprise of the others. “It seems a shame to waste a gift,” he said quietly when they all continued to stare at him. Before anyone could even lift their fork, there was yet another knock at the door.

“Did you invite anyone else?” Nero asked, glancing behind his father.

“No…” Vergil said apprehensively. He grabbed Yamato and headed over to the front door, his hand hovering above the sword’s hilt in anticipation. “Who goes there?” he asked sternly.

“Hey, uh, did somebody in there order a pizza?” the person on the other side of the door called back. Vergil relaxed a little and turned to face his brother, who threw his hands up defensively.

“Hey, for once it wasn’t me!” Dante protested. “I swear!”

“Nobody here has ordered anything. Leave,” Vergil growled to their mystery guest through the thin wood.

“You sure? ‘Cus I really think you’d like what I have to offer,” the voice answered.

“Hang on a second…” Nero said, rising from his seat. “I recognise that voice.”

“You’re not welcome here,” Vergil continued as realisation started to sink in.

“Don’t say that when you haven’t even bothered to open the door yet- whoa!” The unwanted visitor’s objections were cut short as Vergil yanked the door open and used a collection of spectral
swords to pin them to the wall.

“Nico!” Nero called, pushing past Vergil into the small hallway. “What the hell are you doing here?”

“I’ll explain later,” Nico said, dangling a few inches off the ground. “First things first, how ‘bout you tell your trigger happy daddy to let me down?” Nero turned to Vergil and gave him a disapproving look, but the older man didn’t budge.

“Why are you here?” Vergil asked irritatedly.

“Well…” Nico said, nodding her head in the direction of a large bag slumped in the corner. Vergil furrowed his brow and kept his eyes trained on his hostage as he walked over and kicked the bag with his foot. It fell over and a collection of colourful boxes spilled out of it, with words like ‘Twister’ and ‘Uno’ written on them.

“Surprise...!” Nico said weakly.

“I think you’ve got some explaining to do,” Nero said, placing his hands on his hips. “Hey, wait a minute! If you’re here, who’s watching the orphans?”

“It’s fine, I called a babysitter,” Nico said nonchalantly.

“What? But-”

“I think it’s time you left,” Vergil said, still not releasing Nico from her supernatural prison.

“Wait, wait, at least hear me out,” Nico said. “I won’t stay if you don’t want me to, but I figured you guys could probably use some party games or somethin’ to improve the evenin’. Since, y’know, mister grumpy over there ain’t exactly known for havin’ fun.”

“The hell is going on out there?” Dante called from inside.

“Nothing, we’ll be back inside in a sec,” Nero shouted back before his father could answer. “Nico, this is a really dumb idea,” Nero said, turning his attention back towards his friend. “I mean, I can kinda see where you’re coming from, and if this was any other house party I’d probably totally appreciate it, but…” he glanced over at Vergil, who was leaning in the doorway, his eyes practically glowing with rage. “This was meant to be a special evening for my dad, you know? So it only seems fair that we do things the way he wants to.”

“Nero…” Vergil said, his expression softening slightly.

“I’m sorry, this is probably my fault,” Nero said quietly. “I told her I was expecting it to be a slow evening and cracked a few jokes about it. I shouldn’t have said anything.”

“Wow, look at you bein’ all responsible ‘n stuff,” Nico chimed in. She let out a small grunt as she was finally freed and fell to the floor.

Vergil stared off into the distance for a moment. “The redneck leaves now, but you should at least finish your dessert Nero,” he said at last, heading back inside. “…Bring the bag with you.”

“Wait are you serious?” Nico asked rubbing the back of her head where she had hit it. Nero picked up the bag and shrugged. “Don’t just shrug at me boy, you heard what he called me,” Nico said angrily. “I came all this way and that ungrateful son of a-”
“That’s enough,” Nero sighed. “I’ll see you at home, Nico.”

“You’re takin’ his side way too much recently,” Nico complained. “It’s really startin’ to piss me off.”

“We’ll talk about this later, okay? I promise. Now get home and make sure those orphans aren’t in any trouble.”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever,” Nico said, waving her hand dismissively before marching down the hallway towards the stairs.

“Is everything alright?” Kyrie asked as Nero returned. Back at the table, Vergil had finished his glass of wine and poured yet another one for himself.

“We’ll discuss it once we’re home,” Nero said, dumping the bag next to the sofa.

Dessert passed relatively quickly and was followed by a round of coffee and biscuits. Despite his earlier promises to himself, Vergil had now finished the bottle of wine completely and was halfway through his second. He was starting to wonder if he actually had a drinking problem, but his mind soon became too clouded for him to really think about it much further.

Lady had used the excuse of helping him make the coffee to get some time alone with him again, and asked him what the heck was going on. Vergil, in his increasingly tipsy stupor had asked her if she thought he was a boring person, to which she had replied that he just had ‘unique interests’. This had resulted in Vergil lamenting about what a bad host he must be, and apologising to everyone for making them uncomfortable. Dante, in his infinite wisdom, had pointed out that the random apologies were actually making things even more awkward, and Vergil ended up retreating to his bedroom, leaving the others to ponder what they should do next.

“Someone should go in there,” Trish said, rummaging through the bag Nico had left behind. She pulled out a Monopoly box and tossed it aside. “What a bunch of childish games…”

“I dunno,” Dante said, making his way through one of the leftover sundaes. “In my experience, if Vergil locks himself in his bedroom, you don’t bother him until he’s ready to come back out. Not unless you want a sword through your chest anyway.”

“I’m pretty sure that’s just you, Dante,” Lady said, walking over to Vergil’s door and knocking on it softly. “Hey, you okay in there?” she called out.

“I’m worried about him,” Kyrie said when he didn’t answer. “Especially since he said he wouldn’t drink but ended up doing so anyway…”

“He’s probably just stressed,” Nero said. “He’ll never admit it, but I’ve seen him drinking a bit more than usual when he’s under pressure a couple of times.”

Lady thought back to their dinner at the restaurant and nodded. She knocked on the door again, harder this time. “Can we get you anything?” she called out. Still nothing. She let out a sigh and turned to the others. “Now what?”

“He’ll come out eventually,” Dante said with the spoon still in his mouth. “We might as well get this party into full swing so he has something fun to do when he decides to join us again.”

“It seems a bit strange to have a party without the host,” Kyrie said nervously. “Plus I’m not really
a big drinker myself or anything, so…”

“Do you want to go home?” Nero asked gently, putting his arm around her. “I’m sure my father would understand if you want to leave.”

“I wouldn’t want to ruin things for you though,” Kyrie said. “I can go home by myself if you’d prefer to stay.”

Nero looked over at Trish, who had been joined by Dante, as they haphazardly rummaged through the bag and argued over whether *Twister* was an acceptable game for fully grown adults. Lady was now leaning against the sofa, watching the two of them with amusement as she drank directly from one of the whisky bottles that had been lying around. “...I think I’m good thanks,” Nero said. “I’ll call us a taxi.”

With Nero and Kyrie gone, the three senior devil hunters had resorted to sitting in a circle (or rather triangle) in the middle of the room playing drinking games. A half finished game of Monopoly sat on the table, while the twister mat lay scrunched up in a corner. “Never have I ever… found a demon attractive,” Dante said, causing everyone to take a drink. “Hey, half demons don’t count,” he said, winking at Lady.

“Don’t flatter yourself,” Lady said, sticking her tongue out. “I’ve seen plenty of good looking demons in my time.”

“Oh yeah? Name one,” Dante teased.

“Well, Trish for one,” Lady answered. “Plus your dad was pretty handsome.”

“So what you’re saying is, you find the appearance of the two people who helped create me to be appealing?” Dante asked. “I’ll take it! That can only mean I have double the attractiveness.”

“It’s such a shame when children don’t inherit their parents’ good looks…” Trish said, shaking her head.

“Hey!”

“I’m bored of this game now, let’s play something else,” Lady said, stretching.

“We’ve already played pretty much every drinking game going,” Trish noted. “What did you have in mind?”

“How about truth or dare?” Dante suggested.

“What are you, five?” Lady asked.

“Alright then, how about spin the bottle-”

“Dare,” Lady said bluntly.

“I dare you to come give me a kiss,” Dante teased, dodging Lady’s fist as it flew towards his face.

“Okay that’s it, you have had way too much to drink,” Lady said, grabbing the bottle Dante was holding from his hands and standing up. “By the way, has anyone noticed that it’s almost midnight and we still haven’t heard from Vergil?”
“You don’t need to remind me, I’ve been dying to use the bathroom for ages,” Dante said, pushing himself to his feet. He wandered over to Vergil’s door and pressed his ear against it. “Still pretty quiet.”

“Hey Dante, I dare you to go use the bathroom,” Lady said.

“Oh yeah? Well I dare you to tell the truth about your crush on Vergil,” Dante retorted.

“Hey, that's cheating!” Lady growled. “You can’t combine a truth and a dare, that's not how-”

“Interesting how it’s the rules she complains about and not the request, huh?” Dante said to Trish who chuckled lightly.

“Huh? Hey wait a minute, that’s not… You confused me! I didn’t realise what you were saying!” Lady protested, her face almost luminous from the blush spreading across her cheeks.

“Serious talk though, someone should go in there,” Trish said, joining the bickering pair. “He did drink quite a lot.”

“He’s probably just passed out,” Dante said. “He’s a real lightweight when it comes to alcohol.”

“Okay that’s it, I’m just opening the door,” Lady said, turning the handle suddenly and flinging the door open. To everyone’s surprise, the room was empty. They checked the bathroom and looked under the bed just in case, but found nothing.

“Okay, was not expecting that,” Dante admitted.

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys! I'm sorry this update took so long, I've been really busy with work lately and super tired for some strange reason. Thanks for bearing with me!

This chapter was getting annoyingly lengthy again and I didn't want it to end up going on too much, so I've cut it short slightly sooner than I'd planned again. I hope it's still okay though, and I'll try to update a bit sooner next time, work/life balance allowing!
Chapter Twenty-Two

The cool night air felt refreshing on Vergil's sweaty skin as he stepped out of the portal onto the familiar brickwork that made up Nero's driveway. His head was spinning, and he was worried that he might keel over if he wasn't careful, but he had to do this - if he didn't do it now, he was worried that he might never gather up the courage to attempt it again.

For a while after he had retreated to his bedroom, Vergil had sat leaning against his door, listening to the idle chatter from the other room. Once he had heard that Nero and Kyrie intended to leave, he planned to do the same, not wishing to face an increasingly drunken group of devil hunters just yet. It also meant that his target would be more likely to be back in the garage, where he could get her alone without the need to explain to anyone else why he was there.

He carefully made his way over to the garage and hid himself around a corner outside. The light from within spilled out into the garden and would almost seem welcoming, if not for the out of tune singing coming from the dirty room. Nero and Kyrie must have returned a short while earlier themselves, as the lights in the main house were also glowing softly.

Inside the garage, Nico was banging about as usual, tossing random components into metal buckets and making a godawful racket with no regard for the current time of night. "...and that's whyyy..." - another massive clang - "Even a devil... may cryyyy!" Nico belted out, waltzing around the room with a large spanner.

Even in his drunken state, Vergil watched the scene with intrigue, trying to calculate when he should make his presence known. He waited for Nico to finish another croaky chorus before he decided to finally step forward, offering a slow applause. "Very impressive," he said, disappointed at how slurred his voice sounded. "Did you write that yourself?"

"Jesus Christ, the hell're you doin’ here?" Nico demanded, spinning around and pointing the spanner in Vergil's direction. "Damn near gave me a heart attack!"

"I apologise... I did not mean to startle you," Vergil said hesitantly, keeping his distance.

"Oh yeah? Well ya did. Now get explainin’ ‘fore I shove this wrench up your-"

"Always so vulgar; how very unladylike," Vergil stated, leaning against the wall. He hoped it made him look more relaxed, but in reality he was using it for support as he started to lose his balance again.

"...Whatcha want you damn bastard?" Nico asked, finally lowering her makeshift weapon.

"I..." Vergil paused and gulped. He was suddenly regretting this whole idea. "...I merely wish to talk," he forced out at last.

"Uh huh. Is that before or after you decide to randomly impale me with a shitton of glowin’ swords again?" Nico asked, eyeing him suspiciously.

"I have no intentions of hurting you, vile woman," Vergil replied, before he suddenly corrected himself. "Apologies... It’s Nicolette right?"

"You know damn well it’s Nico," she huffed, tossing the spanner aside and placing her hands on her hips. "Now I’ll ask you again - what the heck do ya want?"
“I already told you, I wish to have a conversation. You really are quite dim aren’t you-”


“I’m afraid I won’t be doing that,” Vergil said, straightening up until he towered over the woman in front of him. Nico stepped back and looked at him with a raised eyebrow, seemingly analysing him.

“Hold up,” she said, rubbing her chin. “You been drinkin’?”

“I fail to see what that has to do with-”

“Hoo boy, wait ‘til Nero hears ‘bout this,” Nico grinned. “His daddy gets drunk and the first thing he does is come harass his son’s pretty female friend. I wonder what that means…”

“It doesn’t mean anything, I just have some things I need to say,” Vergil said, feeling his frustration slowly rising. If he hadn’t been worried that he’d aim incorrectly, he’d probably have pointed Yamato at her by now.

“Whoa, whoa, wait a sec,” Nico said, raising her hands defensively. “Please tell me you haven’t had a crush on me this whole time. I mean, I know I’m good lookin’ and all, but you’re old enough to be my dad and-”

“Quiet,” Vergil commanded angrily. “As if I’d ever have an interest in someone like you.”

“Wow, rude,” Nico said, crossing her arms. “How exactly was Nero conceived again?”

“Just stop talking for once and listen to me before I change my mind,” Vergil said, leaning against the wall again.

“Oh my gawd, Lady ain’t pregnant is she? Because that’s the sort of thing you should probably share with your son first-”

“Damn it woman, I came to apologise to you!” Vergil shouted angrily.

“Say what?” Nico asked dumbly, arms falling to her sides.

“You heard me, woma- ...Nico,” Vergil mumbled. “I have come to make amends.”

“For what?” Nico asked. “All the shitty names ya been callin’ me, or the fact you nearly killed me a couple hours ago just for sayin’ hi?”

“...Everything,” Vergil sighed. “Look, this isn’t easy for me. I won’t lie to you, Nico - I don’t like you. I can’t stand being around you. But, I’ve come to realise that my reasons for feeling that way are purely selfish, and I thought I should at least try to resolve my issues with you.”

“Jeez thanks, this apology is goin’ real well so far,” Nico said, crossing her arms again. “Man, you were a lot more bearable when you were all crumbly ‘n stuff.’”

“See, this is…” Vergil trailed off. He had a lot he wanted to say, but his embarrassment and alcohol clouded mind were making it difficult. The more time he spent outside however, the more sober he was starting to feel, which only made him want to flee even more. Nico looked at him expectantly, waiting for him to continue. After a moment, he cleared his throat and attempted to articulate his words in a manner that made sense. “There are… Two main reasons for why I dislike
you,” Vergil continued, starting to walk back and forth.

“Uh huh…”

“The first is related to what you said just now. You remind me too much of my weaknesses. I met you at one of the lowest points in my life, and I had to rely on you on more than one occasion. Whenever I see you, I am reminded of that time, and it… unsettles me,” Vergil said, ceasing his pacing and turning to face her. “Do you understand?”

“I guess?” Nico said, pulling out a packet of cigarettes and sticking one between her lips. “Seems like a pretty dumb reason to hate someone though.”

“Must you do that here?” Vergil asked as she lit the cigarette and blew a puff of smoke in his direction.

“It’s a comfort thing,” Nico said, taking another drag. “So go on, what’s the second reason? Not a fan of my fashion sense or somethin’?” she asked, pointing at him with the cigarette between her fingers.

“The second reason…” he trailed off again as he waved away a cloud of smoke.

“C’mon, out with it. I ain’t got all night.”

“Hey Nico, you busy?” Nero’s voice suddenly echoed through the garage as he made his way down the path towards them.

“Oh shoot! Uh, go hide in the van or somethin’, quick,” Nico said, throwing the keys at Vergil, who managed to catch them with ease despite the lack of warning. She quickly stubbed the cigarette out and tried to clear the air before Nero arrived. “Man, he hates me smokin’ in here…”

She turned to Vergil and waved her hands at him. “Go on, go!”

Vergil looked at the keys in his hand, his still slightly drunken mind trying to process what was going on, before nodding and quickly making his way inside the van. He managed to slam the door shut just as he heard Nero stepping into the garage. Vergil sat on the sofa, straining to hear what they were saying. He couldn’t turn the lights on, so he instead peered out of a gap in one of the curtains, watching the two of them as they spoke.

“Everything okay?” Nero asked, sniffing the air.

“Sure is, any reason it wouldn’t be?” Nico asked a little too cheerfully.

“I dunno, I could have sworn I heard you talking to someone just now,” Nero said. He glanced over at the van, causing Vergil to pull away from the window. Fortunately, it seemed his movements had gone unnoticed. “Have you been smoking in here again?” Nero asked.

“Nope,” Nico lied. “Anyway, whatcha want? I thought you and Kyrie were headin’ to bed?”

“We will be soon,” Nero said, looking for somewhere to sit. “I just wanted to come and talk to you first.”

“Sure, what’s up? Problems in the bedroom again?”

“Damn it Nico, be serious,” Nero said, smirking slightly. He found an overturned paint can and sat himself down on it.
“Okay, okay, fire away,” Nico said, opting to just sit on the floor.

“I just wanted to say sorry for what happened at Vergil’s place earlier,” Nero sighed. “I should have stood up for you more.”

“You know you can refer to him as your daddy around me, right? I ain’t gonna be weird about it,” Nico said.

“Nico-”

“But you’re right. I ain’t usually one to get upset or nothin’, but I’d be lying if I said it didn’t hurt just a little when you just dismissed me like that,” Nico said, surprising them both with her honesty.

“That’s what I thought,” Nero said. “We’re supposed to be partners, and usually I’d do more than what I did. I don’t know what I was thinking.”

“Well hey, don’t beat yourself up over it too much; he is your daddy after all. Sometimes family comes first, right?” Nico stood up and gave Nero a pat on the shoulder. “Just don’t do it again,” she grinned.

“He means well you know,” Nero said, slapping Nico’s teasing hand away as she kept patting him for far too long. “It might not seem like it when you talk to him, but I think he’s genuinely trying to change himself for the better. Maybe that’s why I’ve been trying to be a bit more supportive of him recently.”

“If by supportive you mean taking his side for almost everythin’, then you’re doin’ a great job,” Nico said. “Just remember - he’ll never change if you spoil him.”

“I’m not spoiling him!” Nero protested. “I’m just trying to give him the benefit of the doubt a bit more. I’d like to at least try and believe he’s not intentionally hurting people…”

“Some people just don’t change,” Nico said, glancing over at the van. “But I think it’s cute that you’re at least tryin’ to fix him.”

“Maybe you’re right,” Nero said, standing up. “But unless he does something unforgivable - again - then I’m gonna do my best to make sure I support him as much as I can. I got where I am thanks to the kindness of others, and if I can do the same for someone else, then I will.”

“Well, good luck I guess,” Nico shrugged. “Just make sure you don’t forget about everyone else in the process.”

“I’ll try not to,” Nero smiled. “That’s why I’m here apologising to you right now.”

“Well, consider your apology accepted... This time,” Nico said, winking.

“We cool?” Nero asked.

“We cool,” Nico said, holding her fist out. Nero returned the gesture with a light fist bump before stretching and letting out a loud yawn. “Get your ass to bed, boy,” Nico said, nodding towards the exit.

“Yeah, yeah, I’m going,” Nero said, starting to leave. “Don’t stay up too late yourself.”

“Whatever,” Nico said dismissively, wandering over to the van. Once she was sure Nero had left,
she yanked the door open and stuck her head inside. “Hey douchebag, ya still alive in here?”

“Keep your voice down,” Vergil said quietly. He was leaning back on the sofa with his arms folded across his chest, and at first Nico couldn’t spot him in the darkness. As he shifted position however, the light from outside caught his eyes, and Nico couldn’t help but jerk back slightly in surprise when she suddenly saw them looking down on her.

“It’s fine, he’s gone,” Nico said, stepping into the van. “Let’s get some light in here,” she continued, flicking a hidden switch somewhere. She felt a strange sense of satisfaction as she watched Vergil shield his eyes at the sudden change in brightness, letting out an annoyed grunt as he did so.

“You mean to stay in here?” Vergil asked, lowering his hand.

“Well, it’s more comfortable than standin’ out there, right?” Nico replied, dumping herself on one of the chairs opposite the sofa. The two of them regarded each other in silence for a short while, with Vergil trying to avoid looking at her too closely as she sat with her legs just slightly too wide. Nico seemed to sense his discomfort and readjusted her position before clearing her throat. “So, uh… Can I get you a drink or somethin’?”

Vergil hesitated, torn between wanting to get out of there as quickly as possible, and being slightly tempted by the idea of some liquid courage. He was almost completely sober at this point, and he could feel his ability to express his thoughts, especially to this woman, slowly closing down.

“…Maybe just a small glass of wine,” he said at last, looking away in embarrassment.


“…On second thought, I’ll just take a water.”

“Whisky it is,” Nico said, standing and making her way over to the kitchenette. Vergil remained silent, deciding that he may as well see if whisky had the same effect on him as wine. He realised that he had tried only a small selection of alcoholic beverages since his return, and whisky was not one of them, despite it being one of Dante’s favourite drinks. When Nico returned a short while later and thrust the glass into his hands, he regarded the liquid with some scepticism, almost immediately put off by its strong smell. “Drink up,” Nico said, taking a swig from her own glass before placing it on the small table next to her.

“…Thank you,” Vergil said, taking a small sip. Almost immediately he could feel his throat burning, and he decided that this was, in fact, probably a bad idea. He held the glass in both hands between his knees and looked up at Nico again.

“So, how ‘bout we get back to you tellin’ me how much you hate me?” Nico said bluntly.

“It’s not that I hate you in particular,” Vergil stated. “I just… I feel this irrational anger whenever I see you,” he continued. “No, that’s not it… I…”

“Why don’t you start by explainin’ why the heck you suddenly decided to come talk to me?” Nico butted in. “‘Cuz this is hella random, you do realise that, right?”

“It’s…” Vergil let out a deep sigh. He took a quick sip of his whisky. “I came here tonight because I felt sorry for Nero,” Vergil admitted.

“What.” Nico said coldly.
“I do still wish to speak with you,” Vergil said defensively. “But if you want the truth, the main reason I decided to do this was because I noticed how hurt Nero looked when we fought earlier.”

“Excuse me, I wasn’t doin’ any fightin’,” Nico said irritably.

“All the more reason for me to be here,” Vergil said. “What happened earlier was…” He took another, larger, sip of his drink. “I’ll only say this once - What happened earlier was my fault. All of the animosity between us is my fault. I’ve been turning a blind eye towards it up until now, but after tonight I realised that time and time again, I have been making Nero choose between one of his closest friends and his own father. I don’t want it to have to be that way any more.”

“...Wow, you must have been drinkin’ a lot, huh,” Nico responded, her eyes slightly wide in surprise.

“I won’t deny that alcohol has probably played a part in my inner reflection tonight,” Vergil agreed. “However, I have been trying to change my ways for a while now. As far as I’m concerned, you’re one of the only problems I haven’t resolved yet, hence my visit.”

“So let me get this straight - You were a jerk to me earlier, Nero got all sad about it, you got drunk, realised you messed up, and decided to come over here?”

“That is correct.”

“Damn, I wish everyone reacted this way when they got drunk,” Nico said, shaking her head. “Most people just end up makin’ *more* enemies.”

“Back to the topic at hand,” Vergil said seriously. He looked down at his glass of whisky before suddenly raising it and downing the rest of his drink in one gulp. “I envy you,” Vergil stated, wiping his mouth.

“Say what now?” Nico asked, fiddling with her own glass.

“My other reason for disliking you,” Vergil continued. “I envy you.”

“Oh, okay? Wanna go ahead and explain that a bit more?”

“You and Nero, you’re close,” Vergil said, looking down at his now empty glass. “You know him so much better than I do. You know all about his life, his likes, his dislikes... You even know his partner more than I do. The two of you share a bond that I can only dream of, and it angers me.”

“Wow, really?” Nico asked in disbelief. “So that’s what this is all about huh?”

“Seeing the two of you together...” Vergil said distantly. “The way you always seem to look after each other, and trust each other... It hurts. Whenever I’m with Nero, I always feel like there’s a distance between us that can never quite be eliminated.”

“Can I get you another drink?” Nico asked, reaching for Vergil’s glass to take it away from him, but thinking better of it.

“He always seems so tense around me,” Vergil growled, gripping his glass tightly. “I’ve never seen him smile when he’s with me the way he does when he’s with you.”

“Well duh, you’re his father,” Nico said. “He’s not tense, dumbass, he’s showin’ you respect.”

“...Do you really think so?” Vergil asked, finally looking up at Nico again.
“Of course, ya damn idiot,” Nico replied. “You’re the father he’s always wanted, finally comin’ back into his life after all these years. Kid’s just trying so damn hard to impress you, he can’t afford to fully relax around you. Plus, you know, he is your son, and you’re not exactly the most chilled out person yourself.”

“He’s… trying to impress me?”

“Let me get you another drink,” Nico said, standing up and making her way back to the kitchenette. She returned with a bottle of whisky and refilled her and Vergil’s glasses before placing the bottle on the table next to her. “And in answer to your question, yes he is. He doesn’t hate ya or nothin’. Not any more.”

“Wait, so he did hate me?” Vergil asked, finishing almost half of his glass with one gulp.

“Well duh, everyone did,” Nico said, taking a sip from her own glass. “You did destroy an entire city after all. Truth be told, I definitely liked you a lot more myself when you were V.”

“Nicolette-”

“Nico.”

“...Nico. I am sorry,” Vergil said honestly. “I really am sorry for everything. I’m sorry for the difficulties I have caused between you and Nero, and for my behaviour towards you. And most importantly, I’m sorry for the damage I caused-”

“Okay, okay, that’s enough,” Nico said. “I’m not used to seein’ you like this, you’re freakin’ me out.” Vergil stared at her expectantly, waiting for her to say something more. She quickly downed her own drink. “If it makes you feel any better, I don’t hate you,” she said finally.

“...Thank you,” Vergil said, finishing his whisky. "I think our conversation is done.” He stood up to leave, only to be overcome by a wave of dizziness yet again as the alcohol hit him.

“Hey, not so fast, mister,” Nico said, rising from her own seat. “We ain’t done talkin’ yet.”

“It doesn't matter, I’ve said what I needed to say,” Vergil said, trying to open the door and failing.

“At least stick around to hear what I have to say back,” Nico requested, stepping between Vergil and the door. “Also, there is no way I’m lettin’ you leave like this. You can barely even stand up.”

“I am perfectly capable of looking after myself,” Vergil stated, trying to reach for the door again.

“Nope. You’re stayin’,” Nico said, slapping his hand away and instantly regretting the action. She froze in place as he turned his glare towards her, and for a second she feared that this was where she would die - trapped between a dirty metal door and the deadbeat father of her best friend. She maintained eye contact with Vergil as he slowly seemed to loosen up a little before turning back towards the sofa and sitting down. A large sigh of relief escaped her lips as her legs gave way, and she slid to the floor.

“Fine, I’ll listen,” Vergil said, looking down at her. He felt a slight pang of guilt at having been the one to cause her to end up in such a sorry state. “But at least sit down again.”


“Enough,” Vergil said, rubbing his temples.
“How ‘bout some more to drink?” Nico suggested, standing up and bringing the bottle of whisky over at Vergil’s almost imperceptible nod. With their glasses refilled, the now somewhat stilted conversation continued.

“I apologise if I scared you.”

“And I’m sorry for tryin’ to stop ya from leaving,” Nico responded.

“Let’s make this quick,” Vergil said, almost finishing his glass again. He decided there and then that he definitely had a drinking problem of some sort, and had just been too ashamed to admit it to himself up until that point. Fortunately (or perhaps unfortunately?) it seemed his tolerance was laughably low, so he at least wouldn’t be likely to drink himself to death.

“...and Nero will probably appreciate it,” Nico finished in the distance somewhere.

“Hm?” Vergil asked in confusion, looking up from his glass again.

“...Did you hear anythin’ I was sayin’ just now?” Nico asked, raising an eyebrow.

“...Of course,” Vergil lied, looking over at one of the clocks and realising that he had been lost in his own thoughts for about five minutes.

“Okay, maybe havin’ more to drink was a bad idea,” Nico said, shaking her head. “I think maybe I should just go ahead and put this bottle back-”

“Does everyone still hate me?” Vergil asked, sadly.

“Wow, talk about a loaded question,” Nico answered. “Listen, I can’t speak for everyone, but Nero at least definitely doesn’t hate you. Or if he does, he does a good job of hidin’ it.”

“That’s the truth?” Vergil asked, hating how desperate he sounded.

“That’s why, as I was sayin’ earlier - I know you weren’t listenin’ by the way, so I’ll just repeat myself - I feel like he’ll really appreciate you and me callin’ a truce. I feel like it’ll take a whole lotta weight off his shoulders if he doesn't have to keep defendin’ your actions.”

“Wait a moment,” Vergil said, with slight panic in his voice. “You can’t tell him I came here tonight. Please.” He quickly explained how he had snuck out of his apartment without the others noticing.

“Well how else we gonna explain why we’re suddenly best buds?” Nico asked, crossing her arms. “That kinda thing doesn’t just randomly happen outta nowhere.”

“We don’t need to,” Vergil said. “I’ll just cease my usual negativity towards you and Nero will gradually notice. I have no intention of actually becoming your friend.”

“Wow,” Nico said, swirling her drink around in her glass. “So what you’re sayin’ is, pretend tonight never happened, but you’ll stop bein’ a jerk to me?”

“In simple terms, yes,” Vergil nodded. “I cannot promise that we will be allies going forward, but at the very least I will refrain from doing anything that could cause you upset.” He finished his drink. “However, If you tell anyone I was here tonight, then you can forget this entire conversation.”

“Somehow this doesn’t feel like a full apology…” Nico said hesitantly. “But whatever, I’ll take
“Then I shall take my leave,” Vergil said, standing up and bowing before falling rather ungracefully forward, hitting his head on the table.

“Hey, uh, you okay?” Nico asked, nudging what appeared to be a now unconscious Vergil with her foot, as he lay in a heap on the ground.

“Then I shall take my leave,” Vergil said, standing up and bowing before falling rather ungracefully forward, hitting his head on the table.

“Hey, uh, you okay?” Nico asked, nudging what appeared to be a now unconscious Vergil with her foot, as he lay in a heap on the ground.

“Where the heck could he have gone?” Lady asked worriedly as she and Dante frantically searched the streets around Vergil’s apartment. Trish had remained behind in case he returned in the meantime. Lady pulled out her phone and dialled Vergil’s number, not for the first time that night. To her surprise someone actually answered, however it was not Vergil that spoke, but a familiar sounding female voice.

“Aww damn, looks like y’all noticed he was missin’ after all. He is not gonna be happy.”

“Nico?!” Lady asked in disbelief. “What are you doing with Vergil’s phone?”

“Nico?” Dante asked in confusion, walking over.

“You want the long story or the short story?” Nico asked.

“Short it is I guess. Vergil’s here with me and he’s… Well, he’s passed out but he’s fine,” Nico said, slurring slightly herself.

“What? Why-”

“I don’t totally get it myself,” Nico yawned. “He suddenly turned up outta nowhere sayin’ he wanted to apologise for some reason. I told him to get lost, but we ended up talkin’ ‘bout some stuff and I offered him a drink. Turns out he doesn't handle his liquor too well,” Nico laughed. “I figured I’d save his dignity by wakin’ him up early in the mornin’ and getting him back home before anyone noticed he was gone. Wasn’t really expectin’ anyone to be brave enough to enter his bedroom.”

“So where are you now?” Lady asked, feeling strangely jealous for some reason.

“We’re in the van. Nero and Kyrie haven’t realised yet. Want me to bring him back?”

“Haven’t you been drinking?” Lady asked.

“Like that’s ever stopped me before,” Nico said, before quickly adding that she was just kidding.

“What’s going on?” Dante asked. Lady explained the situation and Dante scratched his chin thoughtfully. “Gotta say, that’s a pretty interesting development,” he said.

“You’re tellin’ me!” Nico said, now on loudspeaker. “Guy can hardly even stand lookin’ in my direction and now he’s suddenly passed out on my sofa!”

“He’s obviously not thinking clearly because of the alcohol,” Lady said impatiently.

“Maybe not, but it was nice hearing him apologise for bein’ such a jerk,” Nico said, praying that Vergil wouldn’t wake up and hear her talking about him.
“Did he give you a reason, out of interest?” Lady asked.

“Hey now, that’s confidential. I ain’t about to spill a drunken man’s secrets,” Nico answered.

“Well, whatever the reason or the outcome, we can’t just leave him there,” Dante said.

“Screw it, I’ll go get him,” Lady said. “I’m the one that convinced him to start drinking, so he’s my responsibility.”

“We might as well go with you,” Dante offered. “There's no way you’d be able to lug someone like him all the way back up here alone.”

“I don’t care who comes, but whoever does better hurry up, he’s startin’ to mumble,” Nico butted in. “I don’t think I can handle talkin’ with him any more tonight. I thought V had some issues, but this guy is somethin’ else…”

“We’ll be there soon,” Lady said, ending the call.

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Nico looked over at the unconscious man on her sofa and sighed. It had taken almost all of her strength to get him off the floor and into what she hoped was at least a semi-comfortable position. She winced as she noticed a small red bump starting to form on his forehead from where he had hit it on the edge of the table, and she hoped that his accelerated healing powers would mean it disappeared before the others got here. She decided that their conversation, while unexpected, had not been entirely unwelcome, and she realised that she actually felt kind of sorry for the usually stoic half-demon. Looking at him passed out, she realised that he and Nero really did look quite similar, and almost wished that he would relax a little more often, as he looked far less terrifying.

Once she was reasonably sure he wouldn’t be waking up, she snuck over to Yamato and carefully picked it up, admiring the excellent workmanship that had gone into just the mere hilt and scabbard alone. Glancing over at Vergil again, she slowly unsheathed the sword, admiring her reflection in its blade. “To think what I could make outta this…” she mumbled to herself as she observed how sharp its edge was. Vergil shifted beside her, and she quickly returned the sword to its sheath and leaned it against the wall again. She calculated that she had at least half an hour if not more before the others turned up, so she decided to spend the time tinkering in her workshop, listening for any sudden sounds of movement.

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“Do you think Vergil might have a drinking problem?” Dante asked as he and Lady jumped into the back of a taxi. They had asked Trish if she wanted to join them, but she had instead opted to head home, stating that she felt strangely tired.

“Says you,” Lady retorted. “Have you seen the amount of bottles around your office?”

“Yeah, yeah, I know,” Dante said dismissively. “But seriously though, this is not the first time I’ve seen him drink way too much once he gets started.”

“If he had a drinking problem, wouldn’t he be drinking all the time?” Lady suggested. “Seems to me like he’s just susceptible to peer pressure if anything.”

“He has been trying his hardest to fit in recently,” Dante admitted. “I feel like he’s been having a pretty tough time of it too.”
“He’s trying his best,” Lady said, perhaps a little too defensively. “He’s just not used to being around so many people I guess.”

“Ain’t that the truth,” Dante agreed. “By the way, now that I finally have you alone, can I ask you something?”

“You just did,” Lady said, sticking her tongue out.

“These clothes,” he continued, ignoring her remark and tugging on his polo-shirt. “Why did Vergil have them?”

“Beats me. Maybe he packed them by accident when he was moving out,” Lady shrugged.

“Except these are the ones I left at your place right?” Dante asked. “I remember because they’re slightly too tight.”

“All of your clothes look the same,” Lady said, looking out of the window. “Maybe you’re just mistaken.”

“You had two cups of hot chocolate on your table.”

“I’m lazy.”

“I’ve heard him call you Mary more than once,” Dante said, noticing Lady stiffen as he said the name.

“Don’t say that name around me-”

“And you turned up together at the forest,” Dante continued. “He agreed to drink wine because you asked him to. Plus,” Dante hesitated, staring at Lady’s back. “You guys still won’t tell me what happened during your dinner together.”

“Nothing happened,” Lady said, turning to face him. “Everything you’re talking about is just a coincidence. And he keeps calling me that name because he knows it pisses me off. Nothing more.”

“But during the truth or dare-”

“I got confused,” Lady said angrily. “Stop trying to make something of nothing.”

“Look, if you like my brother, it’s okay,” Dante said. “I get it, he’s mysterious, he’s got that whole dark past thing going on that chicks dig, I can’t blame you. Plus you know, he’s related to me, so of course he’s good looking,” he added, avoiding a swat from Lady. “But I just want to make sure you know what you’re getting into here.”

“I’m not getting into anything,” Lady huffed. “If anything, we’ve just become friends, okay? That I will admit. He was lonely and I was someone to talk to, so yeah; we’ve been talking a bit more, but it doesn’t mean anything.”

“You sure?” Dante asked, raising an eyebrow.

“I don’t see why it’s any of your business anyway,” Lady said, looking out of the window again.

“Because it involves two of the people I care about most in my life?” Dante answered. “I’m asking for his sake as much as yours.”
“Just stop talking about it,” Lady said. “If either of us have something to tell you, we will.”

“...Fine,” Dante said, turning to look out of his own window. The two of them remained in silence for the rest of the journey.

By the time the taxi pulled up on Nero’s driveway, Nico had headed outside and was halfway through her third cigarette. “Hey guys,” she called out, waving as Lady approached her.

“If you could just give us a few minutes, we’d really appreciate it,” Dante was saying to the taxi driver as he passed him some cash.

“Where is he?” Lady asked, readjusting the short dress she was wearing. She had not planned on running through streets and jumping into taxis when she had chosen tonight's outfit.

“Still in the van,” Nico said, pointing behind her. “Probably best you send Dante in there first though. Ain’t no tellin’ how he might react when he wakes up.”

“I got this,” Lady said, striding over confidently, only for Dante’s firm grip on her shoulder to stop her in her tracks.

“Nico’s right,” Dante said. “Vergil can get… Difficult when he’s like this. You girls just wait here and I’ll be right back.” Knowing it would be pointless to protest, Lady joined Nico who had now wandered back into the garage, and the two of them watched as Dante armed himself with his sword before yanking the door of the van open, closing it behind him.

“I swear to god, if they do anythin’ to my van-” Nico began, when there was suddenly a large bang, causing the entire vehicle to shake. She watched in horror as the tips of multiple summoned swords appeared on the outside, leaving jagged holes once they dematerialised. The two women watched in mortified silence for a while as the vehicle rocked back and forth, until the door finally swung open and Dante threw Vergil out onto the dirty floor of the garage. Yamato was currently sticking out Dante’s chest, while Vergil’s shirt had been almost torn apart by bullet holes. With one swift motion Dante yanked the sword out, before impaling his brother with his own weapon, eliciting a concerned scream from Lady, who ran over to the pair as Dante jumped out of the van.

“He’ll be fine,” Dante said, coughing up some blood and wiping it on his trousers.

“Oh my god, are you okay?” Lady asked, crouching down next to Vergil, who was looking up at everyone with a dazed expression.

“I’m good, by the way,” Dante said, sitting in the doorway of the van and wiping more blood from his mouth.

“M-Mary… What are you doing here?” Vergil wheezed.

“Never mind those idiots, what the hell happened to my van?” Nico cried, trying to push past Dante.

“Vergil will pay for it, don’t worry,” Dante said, earning a glare from his fallen brother.

“Dante… Remove this sword from my chest immediately,” he growled.

“Only if you promise not to attack me again,” Dante pouted. “I was just trying to help.”
“Stabbing someone is not the correct way to wake someone up!” Vergil yelled, his strength slowly returning.

“Okay guys, let me just clear this up - I didn't stab him, I just hit him with the hilt of my sword. He does it to me all the time-”

“You’re going down.” Vergil stated, starting to push his body up the length of his sword in an attempt to stand up.

“Enough!” Lady shouted. “Vergil, stop that, you’re just going to hurt yourself,” she said, standing up. “Here, I’ll pull it out for you.”

“Wait, I wouldn’t-” Dante began as Lady suddenly yanked the sword out of Vergil’s chest. On the far side of the garage, a line of shelves suddenly shattered and fell to the ground, seemingly slashed by an invisible force. “...do that,” Dante finished as Nico let out another unhappy yell and ran over to her broken tools.

“Whoa,” Lady said, dropping the sword at her feet.

“Yeah… Randomly slashing Yamato through the air is never a good idea,” Dante said, handing its scabbard to a now sitting up Vergil so that he could return his sword to its home.

“You three need to get the hell outta here right now, before I kill y'all!” Nico said angrily.

“You said you wouldn’t speak of this to anyone,” Vergil said, attempting to stand up, only to end up back on his knees again.

“Hey, don’t blame me! I was willing to keep this a secret until your girlfriend over there called your damn phone,” Nico said, pointing at Lady.

“Nico?” Nero’s voice called out from the house. “The hell is going on down there? Stay put, I’m coming!”

“Aww shoot,” Nico said, looking around frantically.

“I can’t let him see me,” Vergil stated, pushing himself up again using Yamato as support.

“We’ll never make it to the taxi in time,” Lady said worriedly.

“We don’t need to,” Vergil said, leaning against the van and unsheathing Yamato again.

“Wait a sec, how am I meant to explain all this?” Nico asked, surrounded by bits of broken wood and metal.

“Blame Dante,” Vergil responded, slashing the air in front of him and starting to walk through.

“Hey, wait! You can’t just run away again, you’re way too hungover!” Dante yelled after him as the portal started to close.

“God damn it…” Lady mumbled, taking a deep breath before jumping through the portal at the last second before it disappeared.

“What the hell is going on in here?” Nero demanded, appearing outside.
Without Vergil to guide her through, the portal was even worse than Lady remembered. It was hot and humid, and there seemed to be an endless cacophony of screams in the air. For a moment she started to regret her rash decision, wondering if by delaying it so long she had ended up in some sort of alternate dimension. Just as she was starting to feel a scream building in her throat, she found herself suddenly being pulled up into the air, seemingly out of nowhere. She squeezed her eyes shut, waiting for whatever vile creature had grabbed her to start ripping her to shreds. To her surprise, she instead found herself falling onto something soft, the air around her feeling cool and comforting in comparison.

“Open your eyes, Mary.”

Lady did as she was told and found herself face to face with Vergil. They were lying on the bed in his dark bedroom. She let out an embarrassed squeal and rolled away, falling off the foot of the bed onto the floor. As she sat up rubbing her head, she realised that they had been lying horizontally along the bed, the portal having obviously opened up next to it.

“Are you all right?” Vergil asked in concern, peering over the end of the bed at her.

“I-I’m fine,” she stammered nervously. “I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have followed you like that, I-” Her words were cut off as the usual wave of sickness that followed going through portals overcame her. She quickly scrambled to her feet and ran into the bathroom, only just managing to make it to the toilet before throwing up.

“That was a very foolish thing to do,” Vergil stated, leaning against the wall outside the bathroom and giving her some privacy, while still remaining close by in case he was needed.

“I-” she puked again. “I know, I’m sorry.”

“I could have been going anywhere.”

“I know.”

“Portals make you unwell enough as it is.”

“...I know.”

“Why did you do it then?” Vergil asked, his own head still pounding.

“Because I was worried about you,” Lady said, flushing the toilet. She rinsed her mouth out and washed her hands before walking back through to the bedroom, almost bumping into Vergil, whom she had assumed would still be lying down. “How about I get us both a glass of water?” she offered.

“Allow me,” Vergil said. He guided Lady back to the bed and sat her down, before disappearing into the other room briefly and returning with two glasses. He staggered his way over to the bed and sat down next to her, placing one of the cold drinks in her hands.

“S-Shouldn’t we turn the light on?” Lady asked, gulping down the water as if her life depended on it.

“I don’t think either of us could deal with bright lights right now,” Vergil answered, completely downing his own glass. He had already had two more in the kitchen.

“Yes, but isn’t this a bit… Um…”
“You’ve been in my room in the dark before,” Vergil said casually. “I don’t see why this should be any different.”

“Yeah, but there were candles last time,” Lady said. “And also Dante was nearby, so…”

“I have neighbours.”

“Maybe I should get us some more water?” Lady suggested, standing up. Vergil, who could see much better in the dark, observed her closely as she stood there, waiting for his answer.

“Sit down, Mary,” he commanded.

“I’m fine, really…” she said nervously.

“I’m not,” Vergil admitted.

“All the more reason for me to get some water then-”

“Mary, how do you feel-” Vergil began to interrupt before stopping himself. Even in his drunken state, he had realised that he was about to say something incredibly foolish, and the part of his brain that had managed to remain sober stopped him in his tracks. He couldn’t let himself do this, not here. Not like this.

“…Vergil?” Lady asked in confusion.

“…Nothing,” Vergil answered. “We should both get some rest. You can have the bed if you like, I don’t mind taking the sofa.”

“Whoa, wait a sec,” Lady said, sitting back down. “Are you asking me to stay over?”

“Is that a problem?” Vergil asked, thankful that she couldn’t see the redness creeping into his cheeks from both the embarrassment and the lingering effects of the alcohol.

“Um, well, that’s just a bit…”

“You don’t have your bag with you,” Vergil pointed out. “You couldn't go home even if you wanted to.”

“Oh damn,” Lady said, realising that he was right. She must have left it behind in the garage. She also realised that this meant she didn’t have her phone, and upon asking Vergil, he revealed that he did not have his either. “Dante must be worrying like crazy,” Lady sighed.

“He’ll probably come back here,” Vergil said, tilting backwards until he was lying across the bed again. “I suppose you could just sit up and wait for him instead,” he suggested, laying his arm across his eyes. He prayed that his headache would abate soon.

“What if we wait for him together?” Lady suggested. “Maybe we can have some coffee and watch some TV or something. It might make us feel better.”

“I am perfectly content with staying where I am,” Vergil mumbled.

“…How are your injuries?” Lady asked, laying down herself and propping herself up on her elbow, so she could attempt to look at him with what little light she had coming from the window.

“Almost non-existent,” Vergil said quietly. “My head hurts though,” he added, moving his arm so he could look up at her.
“You seem to have quite a nasty bump on your forehead,” Lady said, lightly tracing the mark with her fingers. As usual, she felt Vergil tense up at the unexpected contact, but he made no attempt to remove her hand. “Any idea what happened here?”

“I’m afraid I have no idea,” Vergil said, closing his eyes and leaning into her touch slightly. “All I know is that it’s painful.”

“Is there anything I can do?” Lady asked, suddenly feeling slightly braver and moving on to running her hand through his hair. Vergil shook his head, causing her to pull her hand away.

“Human medicine doesn’t work on us,” he said. “I’ll just have to endure it until it goes away.”

“That sounds like it must suck,” Lady said sadly.

“I’m used to it,” Vergil said, opening his eyes again. “If you want the bed you should probably decide soon, I fear I might be about to fall asleep.”

“It’s fine, you go ahead,” Lady said, sitting up again. “I’ll go wait for Dante.”

“Feel free to use whatever you wish from the kitchen,” Vergil offered. He let out a silent yawn.

“You sure I can’t get you anything else?” Lady asked.

“Your mere presence is all I need…” Vergil mumbled, before drifting off into unconsciousness.
Chapter Twenty-Three

Vergil was greeted by the sound of his shower going at full blast as he opened his eyes. The morning sun streaming through his window sent shocks of pain through his skull, and he let out a groan before suddenly jolting up in realisation. He lived alone. His shower should not be on if he wasn’t in it.

He took a moment to analyse his situation. It appeared he had been tucked up in bed with some sort of cold compress on his head, which was now lying next to him. His bullet torn shirt had been removed at some point, and he realised that he was currently shirtless. He glanced over nervously at the bathroom door, and pulled his quilt around himself in an attempt to maintain some dignity. His head spun as he tried to recall the events of the night before. Flashes of conversations came back to him, and he remembered getting into yet another fight with his brother, before… Vergil squeezed his eyes shut. Lady had been in his room. Alone. He wondered what he had said to her. He had the feeling he had said something he shouldn’t have. Wait a minute. His eyes shot open and he glanced at the bathroom door again. The last thing he remembered was falling asleep as she sat next to him. Surely not…

The sound of water stopped suddenly and Vergil started to panic, unsure where he should look. He wondered if he should pretend to be asleep; or perhaps he should escape into the kitchen. The door opened and Vergil quickly buried his face in one of his pillows. “I’m not looking,” he mumbled into it.

“Uh, okay? It’s not like it’s anything you haven’t seen before though,” Dante’s voice responded.

“…Dante?” Vergil asked angrily, lowering his makeshift blindfold. “What were you doing in my bathroom?”

Dante stood in the doorway dressed in nothing but a small towel, which he gestured to. “I mean… Do you want a rundown of my morning routine?” He ducked out of the way as Vergil threw the pillow at him.

“Why are you here?” Vergil growled, sliding out of bed and attempting to locate a shirt. Fortunately he was still clothed below the waist.

“I was looking after you, dumbass,” Dante stated. “I needed to make sure you didn’t run off somewhere again. Also, you know, hot water is pretty nice.”

Vergil grabbed a dark coloured vest and pulled it on. “Where’s…”

“Lady? She went home,” Dante said, walking over. “And before you ask, don’t worry. You guys didn’t get up to anything freaky last night as far as I’m aware.”

Vergil tried to hide the blush that suddenly crept up the back of his neck. “…Put some clothes on already,” he barked, yanking his bedroom door open. “And once you’re dressed, get out of…” he trailed off as he realised that his front door was currently being held together by various planks of wood.

“So, about that…” Dante said, appearing behind his brother.

“What did you do to my door?” Vergil yelled, spinning around and aiming a circle of swords at Dante. Unfortunately he was unable to maintain them for very long due to another shock of pain radiating through his head, and he let out another annoyed growl before stomping into the kitchen.
to get a glass of water.

“Okay, hear me out,” Dante said, joining him and leaning into the washing machine to retrieve his clothes.

“You’d better have a good explanation for this,” Vergil said in between gulps.

“I do, I do,” Dante said, walking back through to the living room to get dressed. Vergil turned away from the small window to give him some privacy. “So, it all began when I realised that Lady had left her bag behind…”

“I don’t need the full story,” Vergil said impatiently.

“Okay, fine. I busted your door down because I thought something bad might have happened to Lady,” Dante admitted.

“Dante,” Vergil said, sounding slightly hurt. “...I thought you’d know me better than that.”

“Okay, but try seeing it from my perspective - You were super out of it, she followed you through a portal to god knows where, and I wasn’t able to get a hold of either of you. Wouldn’t you be worried in the same position?”

“You could have at least tried knocking on the door,” Vergil stated, still facing away from his brother.

“Oh I did, trust me,” Dante said. “You can look again by the way,” he added, leaning through the window.

“You can’t have knocked that hard or she would have answered,” Vergil said, turning back around. Dante looked at him for a moment, chewing his lip nervously. “What is it?” Vergil asked coldly.

“Ah fine, I’ll just show you,” Dante said, retrieving his phone from the coffee table. “But you can’t tell Lady I have this photo or she’ll kill me. Maybe you will too, but I’ll risk it.”

“What are you talking about?” Vergil asked, before Dante shoved the device in his face. It took Vergil’s eyes a moment to adjust to what he was seeing, but when he realised what he was looking at, he grabbed the device and started frantically tapping the screen. “How do you delete these things? Tell me, now.”

“Hey, hey, come on!” Dante said, wrestling the phone back from him. “It’s cute, you don’t need to be embarrassed.”

“Get rid of it now!” Vergil demanded.

“But look at you guys!” Dante said, holding his phone up and grinning.

A few Hours Earlier

“Keep the change,” Dante yelled behind him at the taxi driver as he jumped out of the vehicle. By the time he had explained things to Nero (without revealing Vergil’s attendance of course), helped tidy the garage, and managed to obtain a new taxi at that time of morning (the previous one having left during the fighting), a good two hours or so had passed, if not more. Having been unable to get hold of neither Lady, nor his brother, the only thing he could think to do was return to Vergil’s
apartment and pray that the two of them hadn’t ended up lost somewhere.

After buzzing almost every apartment, someone had finally let him in, and he rushed up the stairs as fast as he could. As soon as he reached Vergil’s door, he banged on it with all his strength. After a few more hits, he heard what sounded like Lady’s voice coming from within, and when she didn’t come to the door, he decided he had to take action. “Stay back Lady, I’m coming in!” Dante shouted, stepping back before kicking the door open. He rushed over to the bedroom door and flung it open, fully prepared for a fight.

“Damn it Dante, will you keep it down?” Lady whispered angrily.

“What?” Dante asked, straining to see in the dark. As his eyes adjusted, his rage turned into concern, before finally turning into amusement. “Well, well,” Dante grinned. He pulled his phone out and quickly took a snap of the scene before Lady could stop him. “I feel like this could come in handy…”

“Delete that immediately,” Lady demanded, struggling to release herself from the arm that was currently encircling her midriff.

“Mhmm,” Dante said dismissively, placing the device back in his pocket. “What happened here?” he queried, crouching down at the foot of the bed.

“I’m not sure,” Lady groaned in embarrassment. “I think I accidentally fell asleep next to him, and the next thing I know I wake up like this, and you’re kicking the door down.”

“Are you hurt?” Dante asked, attempting to free Lady from his brother’s grasp.

“Not in the slightest,” Lady said, finally managing to wiggle herself free. “He passed out pretty much as soon as we got back and said I could wait here for you if I wanted.”

“And you chose to wait in his bedroom, in the dark?” Dante asked, raising an eyebrow.

“It wasn’t on purpose, okay?” Lady protested, leaving out the fact that she must have spent a good few minutes or so admiring Vergil as he slept, secretly hoping that he would wake up again so she could spend a bit more time with him in his drunken stupor. "I just… must've been sleepy."

"Uh huh…” Dante said sceptically as he stood up.

"Nothing happened, if that's what you're thinking," Lady huffed, sitting on the end of the bed.

"If you say so," Dante mused, looking at his brother's unconscious form. "Who woulda thought Vergil was a sleep hugger though? There's something strangely unnerving about that."

"I think it's kinda cute," Lady said, averting her gaze as Dante smirked at her.

"...Anyway, I brought your bag," Dante said, pointing to the handbag hanging from the hilt of the sword on his back.

"Thank you…” Lady mumbled as she reached for it, only for Dante to jokingly jump out of the way. "Hey come on, I'm too tired for this."

"Okay, okay," he said, holding it out to her.

Lady eyed him warily as she went to grab it again. He lifted it just slightly out of reach before laughing and tossing it to her. "Call yourself a ride home,” Dante said. "I'll deal with this one."
"Oh man, Vergil is gonna be pissed when he wakes up," Lady said as she stepped into the living room and turned on the light. The door was currently strewn throughout the apartment in hundreds of pieces.

“I’m sure he’ll understand…?” Dante said unconvincingly. He let out a defeated sigh as Lady turned to face him and just shook her head. “Okay, okay, I’ll find a way to fix it.”

“Yeah, good luck with that at…” Lady checked her phone. “…Almost 5am on a Sunday morning.”

“I got this,” Dante said confidently. “You just get yourself some rest.”

“Well, it’s been nice knowing ya, Dante,” Lady said, stepping through the hole he had made in the door. “I think I’ll wait outside.”

Now

“…And then I tucked you up and went to sleep on the sofa,” Dante finished.

“If you tell another soul about what you saw last night, I will kill you before you even sense my presence,” Vergil said darkly.

“Don’t worry lover boy, your secret’s safe with me,” Dante winked. “I’m keeping the photo though.”

“Wait a moment,” Vergil added, downing another glass of water. “You didn’t explain how you managed to board the door up.”

“I’ve got a present for you by the way,” Dante said, ignoring Vergil’s query. He reached into his coat pocket and held a folded up piece of paper through the kitchen opening.

“Answer my question,” Vergil said, angrily grabbing the document. He unfolded it and his expression darkened as he took in what he was reading. “What the hell is this?” he demanded.

“A bill for damages,” Dante replied, jumping back as Vergil looked up from the paper with an expression of pure hatred.

“Why-”

“Someone’s gotta pay for the damage to Nico’s van,” Dante shrugged. “Oh, and the garage too.” His eyes widened as he remembered something else. “Ah right, almost forgot.” He patted a few pockets in his jacket before pulling out another crumpled piece of paper. “Some guy’s coming to fix the door tomorrow morning. I told him you’d pay for it, but I’ll pay you back as soon as I get enough cash, I promise,” he said, handing the hastily handwritten note over to an increasingly frustrated Vergil.

“You know damn well I’m starting at the orphanage tomorrow,” Vergil growled. “How am I meant to be here for this?”

“One of the many problems with living in your own place, I guess,” Dante said. “Just be glad I managed to find someone at such short notice.” He watched Vergil’s jaw tighten slightly and stepped a little further back, just to be safe. “…Listen, to make it up to you, how ‘bout I come over and let him in?” Dante offered.
Vergil considered the proposal carefully before nodding. “Fine, but you are to leave immediately once he is done,” he said bluntly.

“Sure. I’ll drop by the orphanage to give you the new set of keys.”

“How exactly do we explain this to Nero?” Vergil asked.

“We can just say we broke it during a fight after he left or something,” Dante suggested. Vergil raised a sceptical eyebrow at him. “Hey, it’s us. He’ll believe it, trust me,” Dante grinned.

Vergil let out a sigh and couldn’t help but smile a little. As annoying and absurd as this was, the fact that he and Dante were working together to make up excuses for why something was broken reminded him of when they were children. It brought back happy memories, even if only for a moment. “Wait,” he said at last, returning to his his usual serious expression. “You still haven’t told me where you got the wood to board the door up.”

“Well, I guess I’ll be going,” Dante said, heading for the door in question. “I’d offer to take you out to breakfast, but I’m broke. Good luck with your new job tomorrow, I’ll wait around outside until you and Nero leave.”

“Dante.”

“Call me if you need anything-” Dante was cut off as Vergil appeared in front of him, blocking his escape.

“I won’t ask you again.”

“...Fine,” Dante pouted. “I got it from that Rashid guy’s place that you frequent so much. He really does seem to have everything, huh?”

“Why not just tell me this to begin with?” Vergil asked, relaxing slightly.

“You’re right, I probably should have. Don’t know why I didn’t really. Anyway, I’ll see you-”

“Just a moment...” Vergil said, narrowing his eyes.

“Uh oh.”

“There’s no way you would have been able to get there and back so quickly.”

“It’s not that far...” Dante said nervously.

Vergil lost himself in his thoughts briefly as he did some mental calculations. “It’s still quite early in the morning as it is... By the time you got there and back, boarded everything up...” His eyes darted around the room. “...Where’s the Yamato?”

“I only used it twice, I swear,” Dante said, holding his hands up. “...Okay, maybe a few more times while I tried to figure out how the portals worked, but once I got it figured out, I was good to go.”

“Where is it?” Vergil hissed.

“It’s fine, really,” Dante said, glancing over at Vergil’s bedroom. Vergil stomped his way back over to his room and let out an irritated roar when he couldn’t locate it.

“DANTE-”
“It’s in the bathroom!” Dante called back, slowly creeping over to the front door in the hope of escaping.

“WHAT IS IT DOING IN THE BATH?!” Vergil yelled as he frantically retrieved it from what appeared to be blood tinted water.

“I was trying to clean it,” Dante replied sheepishly as Vergil appeared in his bedroom doorway again, holding a dripping Yamato.

“Do I want to know how it ended up in this state?” Vergil asked, breathing heavily from the sheer anger that was currently radiating through him.

“...Probably not,” Dante replied.

“Just leave,” Vergil said coldly. “And stay out of my sight tomorrow.”

“You’re welcome, by the way,” Dante said, backing out of the front door.

Vergil let out a pained sigh and sat on the bed. After he had calmed himself down, he reached underneath and retrieved a small box containing a variety of cleaning and sharpening tools.

By the time Vergil had finished fixing his sword, the sun had moved quite a distance across the sky, and he calculated that it must be at least early afternoon by now. At some point during the process, he had made himself a coffee and some toast, but he still had a dull ache pulsing through his skull, despite the nourishment. He was surprised to see that he still had the remnants of a bruise on his forehead, presumably from the night before, which he would have expected to heal by now. He was just observing it in the bathroom mirror when his phone started to ring on his bedside table.

“Dad?” Nero’s hesitant voice asked, when Vergil picked up and said nothing.

“Nero.”

“Hey, how ya doing? I was a little worried about you after last night. Figured I’d give you some time to rest before I tried calling.”

“...What do you want?” Vergil asked, laying on the bed and closing his eyes as his headache increased slightly.

“I just wanted to make sure you were okay and check that you’re all prepared for tomorrow,” Nero said a little sadly. “I’m sorry if I caught you at a bad time. I’ll call back later.”

“It’s fine,” Vergil said quickly. “I apologise for my bluntness, I am not feeling my best at the moment.”

Nero let out a chuckle. “Hungover, huh? Never thought I’d see the day.”

“Hung… What?” Vergil asked, trying to find a comfortable position.

“I’ll explain it some other time,” Nero said. “Maybe go a bit easier on the wine in the future though, eh?”

“I don’t know how you can all drink so much,” Vergil grumbled.

“Forget about it for now,” Nero said, sounding more serious. “We need to discuss how tomorrow’s
gonna work.”

“Go on.”

“Okay, so - clothing. Do you think you could turn up in something… What’s a nice way to put this… Child friendly?” Nero asked.

“Meaning?”

“Meaning if you turn up in your full gear you might, uh… Scare the kids a bit.”

“I will dress how I wish,” Vergil said irritatedly. He was getting sick of wearing clothes he wasn’t used to. “Next point of discussion.”

“Dad, please?”

“Next.”

Nero let out a defeated sigh. “Okay. So I was thinking I’d be at your place for seven. That gives us time to-”

“I can just take a portal there, it’s not an issue,” Vergil stated.

“…discuss things before hand,” Nero finished. “I was kinda hoping we could spend some time together first, you know? It’s pretty rare we get a chance to do that, so…”

“Then I shall come to you,” Vergil offered, glancing through his open bedroom door at the mess of wood that was currently separating him from his neighbours.


“Nero?”

“Actually, how would you like to join us for breakfast tomorrow?” Nero suggested.

“…That could be pleasant,” Vergil replied.

“That’s great!” Nero said happily. “I’ll let Kyrie know to make extra. Since you’re coming here, we can even have it a bit later than we were planning. Think you could make it here for six-thirty?”

“I’ll try my best,” Vergil said, smiling to himself slightly. The sense of belonging he felt whenever Nero invited him to join them was always something that Vergil secretly enjoyed, although he’d never admit it.

“Awesome. Listen, I won’t bother you any more today, you’re clearly not up for lengthy discussions,” Nero said. “Just make sure you’re presentable tomorrow and we can talk protocols and all that over food - Deal?”

“Sounds good,” Vergil agreed.

“Cool. Catch ya later!” Nero said, ending the call.

Vergil’s arm flopped to his side and he took a deep breath. He had been planning to tidy the apartment following last night’s events, but the idea of a nap suddenly seemed much more appealing. He turned stiffly, intending to put his phone back on the bedside table, when he realised
that he had missed a message from Lady earlier that afternoon. He blinked a couple of times and tried to focus his tired eyes enough to read what it said.

“You doing ok?”

He hesitated for a moment, wondering how he should respond. After a few attempts at constructing a reasonable sounding message, he let out an annoyed grunt and decided to just call her instead. It would probably make his headache worse, he knew, but it had to be quicker than texting.

“Hello?” Lady’s voice sent an involuntary shiver down Vergil’s spine and he remained silent for a moment as he tried to compose his thoughts. “...Vergil?”

“Mary.”

“Hey,” Lady said somewhat flatly. “You know, you really should stop calling me that. Dante is getting weird ideas—”

“I apologise if I said anything strange last night,” Vergil said quickly. “I wasn’t myself.”

“It’s...fine?” Lady said, somewhat bemusedly. “You were actually pretty coherent for someone who was drunk enough to pass out.”

“Hmm,” Vergil said thoughtfully. Perhaps he had just imagined what he had said before falling asleep. That or she was politely trying to protect his dignity. “Either way, I’m fine,” he continued. “I just wanted to let you know that.”

“Cool. Well, I’m glad you’re okay. Looking forward to tomorrow?”

“I was thinking I might have a nap,” Vergil said, ignoring the question.

“Uh huh…”

“Please tell Dante to be here from six-thirty-am onwards,” Vergil stated.

“For the door?”

“For the door,” Vergil said. He wondered if she would bring up the reason why she had not been able to answer it, and tensed up slightly.

“Okie dokie, shall do,” Lady said cheerfully. “Have a nice rest!”

“...Thank you,” Vergil said, snapping the phone shut. He stared at the small device for a moment before tossing it onto the table and rolling onto his stomach. He buried his face in one of his pillows. Why, he thought angrily. Why did I want her to bring it up?

By the time Vergil woke up again, the last rays of sun were painting the sky in various shades of reds and oranges. He looked out of his bedroom window for a while, enjoying the sunset. His headache seemed to have finally abated, and he hummed a tuneless melody to himself as he got to work tidying up the apartment. He came across Nico’s bag of party games in the process and decided to just hide them in his wardrobe for the time being, unable to bring himself to throw them away. After he was finished, he rewarded himself with a simple dinner of steamed salmon, accompanied by some of the vegetables he hadn’t used yesterday. For dessert, he allowed himself to indulge in the chocolate sundae he had bought himself, deciding that when he next had an opportunity to do so, he would definitely be buying more.
After a short bath - now spotless after he had cleaned away the remnants of lord knows what - he spent the rest of the evening curled up in his armchair, reading through some more of the childcare books that Nero had left him. He remained sitting in his chair until he finally fell into a fitful slumber in the early hours of the morning. On the few occasions his stress-addled mind allowed him to dream, he saw Nero, Kyrie, Dante, and Lady, standing in a field with their arms outstretched. The sun was setting behind them as they smiled at him, beckoning for him to join them, to be part of their small family. Every time he approached them however, he always found himself pulled back by an unseen force, stopping him from reaching them. He would watch in despair as the sky darkened and their faces morphed into cackling masks, before he would inevitably jolt awake again, covered in a cold sweat.
Chapter Twenty-Four

Kyrie let out a small squeal as a portal suddenly opened up in the middle of her kitchen. Vergil stepped through, dressed in his usual attire, and was a little shocked when he came face to face with a knife. "Oh my goodness, I'm so sorry," Kyrie said, immediately lowering the weapon. "I wasn't quite sure what was going on…"

"...Karly," Vergil nodded in greeting. "Where is Nero?"

"It's Kyrie," Kyrie mumbled under her breath. "He's outside with Nico. Apparently something attacked her van the other night and they're working on fixing it."

"I see," Vergil stated, pulling out a chair and taking a seat. Kyrie hovered awkwardly by the counter as Vergil stared at her. The two of them never really talked much or spent any time in each other's company without Nero present, so neither was sure what to say.

"D-Do you want me to call him inside?" Kyrie asked finally. She found herself wondering how her kind and gentle Nero could have been fathered by such a terrifying man.

"Do you ever get envious of them?" Vergil asked unexpectedly.

"Come again?"

"Your man is spending so much time with another woman. Does it not upset you?"

"I… Well," Kyrie said, fiddling with her apron. "Th-They're more like siblings, so it's never really bothered me…"

"You and Nero were raised like siblings," Vergil pointed out. He decided to drop the subject when he saw how red Kyrie's face was becoming. "...I just thought I would ask. I apologise."

"I'll go get Nero," Kyrie stammered, running out of the room.

Vergil sighed and ran a hand through his hair. He had ended up getting there far too early, unable to sleep much following his nap yesterday afternoon. He could already tell today was going to be difficult.

"Dad?" Nero asked, stepping into the kitchen. He was covered in dust and smudges of oil. "Aren't you a little early?"

"I was unable to sleep."

"I mean… I guess that's all well and good, but…” Kyrie appeared behind Nero and he wrapped his arm around her. "I was kinda expecting you to turn up on the driveway like you normally do."

Vergil averted his gaze, not wanting to admit that he had been trying to avoid accidentally running into Nico. He wasn't quite sure if he could face her right now after their evening together. "I thought it would be nice to surprise you," Vergil lied. "I am sorry if I scared your woman."

"It's fine, I was just a bit surprised," Kyrie piped up. "I'll go back to preparing the breakfast now. Vergil, perhaps you would like to help?" she offered. Vergil nodded and stood up. He removed his
coat and draped it over the chair he had been sitting on. Kyrie mentally chastised herself as she found herself unconsciously admiring his bare arms.

"If it's okay with you, I think I'm gonna go back to helping Nico," Nero said, choosing not to comment on the fact that his father was wearing the very outfit he had told him not to turn up in.

"Sure," Kyrie said, giving Nero a light peck on the cheek and heading back over to the counter. Nero blushed slightly and scratched the back of his neck, before giving the pair a brief wave and disappearing outside. Vergil watched the interaction with a thoughtful expression, narrowing his eyes slightly. "Is there something wrong?" Kyrie queried once Nero had left.

Vergil shook his head and joined Kyrie at the counter. "What are you making?" he asked.

"Well, I was thinking either pancakes or full english breakfast; I hadn't really decided yet."

Vergil thought back to the pancakes that Lady had made him and felt a strange tingle run down his spine, almost making him shiver. "I think a full english breakfast would be pleasant," he stated.

"Okay. In that case, why don't we divide up the food we need to prepare and we'll be done in no time?" Kyrie suggested, smiling sweetly. "Perhaps you could start with those?"

Vergil made his way over to the fridge and retrieved the items. The two of them worked together in silence for a while, with Vergil occasionally glancing in Kyrie’s direction. After some time, Vergil cleared his throat and tried to strike up a conversation. "Carrie…"

"Kyrie… Yes?" Kyrie responded, attempting to hide her irritation at the mispronunciation.

"...Thank you for coming to the meal on Saturday," Vergil said quietly. "I am sorry that the evening ended somewhat abruptly."

"It’s fine," Kyrie said cheerfully. "I had a good time."

"Do you think Nero did as well?" Vergil asked.

"Absolutely," Kyrie said. "He couldn’t stop talking about how good the food was! He even mentioned you to the cooks at the orphanage. I heard that everyone there is very excited to meet you."

"That’s good," Vergil said, looking down at the mushrooms he was currently slicing and smiling slightly. "...You don’t think the children will be scared of me, do you?"

Kyrie remained silent for a moment and adjusted the heat on the stove. "...I think as long as you remember to smile, you’ll be fine," she said at last. "Besides, you’ll mainly be working an admin role for the time being; you’ll only really need to interact with the children in your spare time."

"I see."

"Hey Kyrie, mind if I grab me an’ Nero a couple coffees?" Nico’s boisterous voice echoed down the hallway as she sauntered through the front door and into the kitchen. "Oh hey, Vergie, what’s up?"

Vergil turned to face her, his eyebrow twitching slightly. "How dare you address me in such a casual manner," he said coldly. "At least bother to get my name right-"
“Everythin’ going okay in here, Karly? Or was it Kylie… Maybe Cory…” Nico looked over at Vergil and stuck her tongue out at him as he realised what she was getting at.

“Enough with the teasing,” Kyrie said, giving Nico a light flick on the ear. “Are you planning on joining us for breakfast?”

“Naw, I don’t want to interrupt family time,” Nico said, walking over to the coffee machine next to Vergil. “Just toss me some leftovers and I’ll be happy.”

“How’s your van?” Kyrie asked as Vergil continued to glare at Nico.

“Gettin’ there, gettin’ there,” Nico said, gulping down half a cup of coffee in one go. “Gon’ take a while before I can call it home again though.”

“I’m just glad you weren’t hurt,” Kyrie said. “It’s a good thing Dante turned up when he did.”

“Yeah…” Nico said, looking Vergil up and down. “You uh, plannin’ on wearin’ that to the orphanage?” she asked him.

“Do you have a problem with my current attire?” Vergil asked, folding his arms.

“Nope, but the kids might,” Nico said, refilling her mug and filling a second one for Nero. “But hey, who am I to judge right?” She headed for the door again, trying not to spill any coffee. “Just holler when you’re ready and I’ll send him in,” she said to Kyrie before heading outside.

“...Is there an issue with the way I am dressed?” Vergil asked Kyrie once he was sure Nico was out of earshot.

Kyrie looked at him sympathetically. “It’s a... unique style,” she said. “As long as you’re happy and comfortable, then that’s all that matters.”

Vergil looked down at his outfit and sighed. “I’ll wear something different tomorrow if it they don’t like it,” he mumbled.

“I’m sure it’ll be fine,” Kyrie said, reaching out to pat Vergil on the shoulder but stopping herself just short of doing so. He looked at her outstretched hand with a slightly pained expression.

“Am I really that intimidating?” he asked as she lowered it.

“N-No, of course not,” Kyrie said nervously. “I-I just heard that you weren’t too fond of unwanted contact so…”

“...Forget it,” Vergil said, turning back to the counter and picking up the knife again. It wasn’t like she was entirely wrong, afterall. He disliked people touching him, especially without warning. Unless of course, the person doing it was… He shook his head. “Let’s get this over with. I believe Nero wishes to talk me through a few things.”

“Of course…” Kyrie said. The two of them worked together in silence once again, managing to finish preparing the food just as the clock hit six-thirty.

Breakfast itself passed relatively uneventfully. Nero explained how the three orphans that usually lived in the house with them had agreed to stay at the orphanage the night before, to give Vergil a chance to spend some time with Nero without interruption. He tended to send them out with Nico or a babysitter whenever Vergil came over and, as far as he could recall, the four of them had only
met on one occasion. “Maybe once you finally get to know them a bit better we can all have dinner together sometime,” Nero said.

Nero explained how Vergil would mostly be responsible for managing their accounts and chasing up their contractors to make sure they delivered certain goods on time. He also added that the cooks were interested in Vergil’s skills and suggested that if he wasn’t a fan of the admin side, he could always move to the kitchen. “Of course, a lot of your time will also be spent entertaining the children,” Nero said, which was in contrast to what Kyrie had implied.

“I read all of the books you gave me,” Vergil stated.

“Excellent,” Nero replied, finishing off his breakfast. “In that case, I bet you’ll do just fine.”

“What if they dislike me?” Vergil asked.

“Don’t worry, the kids are always excited by new visitors. Just don’t go waving your sword around and you should be good to go,” Nero said, eyeing Yamato. “Actually-”

“I am not leaving it behind,” Vergil said firmly. “I will conceal it beneath my coat if needed, but it remains with me.”

“Okay, okay,” Nero said, holding his hands up.

“Can I get anyone any more food?” Kyrie asked, standing up.

“I’m good, thanks,” Nero said. “It tasted amazing as always though, thanks babe.”

“Your father actually made the majority of it,” Kyrie said, smiling.

“Huh. Well, thanks to you too, I guess,” Nero said, giving Vergil a thumbs up.

“It was nothing,” Vergil said, secretly feeling slightly proud of himself.

“If no-one wants anything else, then I’ll take the rest out to Nico,” Kyrie said, starting to pile the leftovers onto a plate.

“I too am satisfied for now,” Vergil nodded.

“Great. In that case, what say we head over to the orphanage?” Nero suggested. “I’d like to give you a tour of the place before you’re due to start, if you’re up for it.”

“I’d like that,” Vergil said, rising from his seat.

The ride to the orphanage was short and mostly silent. At some point, Vergil had received a message from Dante stating that he was ready and waiting at the apartment for the repairman, and apologising for pissing him off. Vergil simply sent a short ‘thank you’ in response. He also received a brief message from Lady wishing him luck for the day ahead, and decided that he would try to call her again when he could, rather than attempt to reply through text.

The orphanage itself was a fairly upmarket looking stately home, surrounded on all sides by tall iron railings. There was a large garden at the front of the property with a fountain in the middle, and various swings, slides and roundabouts for the children to play on. The building was surrounded by greenery and in all honesty, looked like quite a pleasant place to both live and work.

“Well, here we are,” Nero said, jumping out of the taxi. Vergil followed close behind him and
looked on in awe as he took in the sight of various children running around the garden playing with each other. The air was filled with the sounds of laughter. “Is it what you expected?” Nero asked his slightly shocked looking father.

“You… built this?” Vergil asked.

“Well, the house was already standing,” Nero said. “But we renovated it all and made it what it is today,” he explained proudly.

“This is… very impressive,” Vergil said, taken aback by the sheer amount of pride he was feeling for his son in this moment.

“Hey, it didn’t happen overnight or anything…” Nero said, blushing slightly.

“You have done well, Nero,” Vergil said, looking his son in the eye. “...I am proud of you.”

“Aww, come on pops,” Nero said, blushing even more. “It’s not like I did it all by myself or anything…”

“You have achieved something good,” Vergil stated. “Accept the compliment.”

“At least wait until you’ve seen the inside before you say that,” Nero said, starting to walk over to the gates. “Come on, let’s go.”

As Vergil made his way through the garden and headed towards the offices at the back of the property, various children stopped what they were doing and looked up at him in confusion. Some looked scared, but mostly they just seemed excited to have a new visitor to the house. “I’ll introduce everyone properly soon,” Nero said as they passed them. The inside of the orphanage was just impressive as the outside. The rooms were large and well decorated, and there were a variety of toys strewn throughout. There was even a TV room containing various video game consoles.

Vergil could feel himself tensing up as he realised just how many children were actually present at the property, but he clenched his jaw and forced himself to carry on. He had come this far - there was no backing out now.

“You doing okay?” Nero asked when he noticed the stiffness in his father’s steps.

“I’ll survive,” Vergil mumbled.

“Okay… Then I guess we’ll start with the kitchen.”

The kitchen was relatively smaller than Vergil had been expecting, but was well stocked. There were two cooks in the room when they entered, and both of them greeted the pair cheerfully as they walked in. They introduced themselves as Francesco and Alessandro, a pair of Italian brothers that Nero had happened to meet while taking Kyrie out to dinner. They had apparently just been turned down by the restaurant because they insisted on working together, but they were only hiring for one role. “We have heard great things about your cooking, Mr Vergil,” they said. “We look forward to working with you in the near future.”

“We have other cooks too,” Nero said. “Those two just happen to be on duty today.”

“They seem pleasant,” Vergil said as Nero lead him through a side door. It seemed the back of the house was mostly admin offices, while the front half was where the children had free reign to play.
The upstairs apparently contained the children’s bedrooms, and there was a dining hall somewhere near the kitchen that Nero advised they would look at during lunch time.

Nero gave him a quick tour of the various offices, most of which were empty due to the early hour. Vergil made a mental note of each location they visited, trying to form a map in his mind for easier navigation later on.

“Uh so, this next office is our adoption department,” Nero said, standing outside a swanky looking door. “They oversee all the paperwork when it comes to prospective parents, foster care, all that kinda stuff.”

“I see,” Vergil nodded. “They must be very respectable people.”

“Yeah… Very busy too, so let’s make this quick,” Nero said, cracking the door open. “Hey, is it okay-”

“Nero, darling!” an excited voice shouted from within. “Of course, of course, come in!”

Nero turned to Vergil and gestured for him to follow. The older man stood frozen in place and shook his head. “They’re obviously busy. Perhaps we should-”

“Just for a moment,” Nero said. “Please?”

Vergil sighed and followed his son into a surprisingly posh looking office. There were two lines of desks opposite each other, each desk separated by an opaque glass wall. At the back of an office was another door leading to a ‘consultation room’, and there were a couple of sofas on either side of this door. Various potted plants decorated the room, and the whole place had a very relaxed atmosphere. There were currently three middle-aged women all sitting around one of the desks closest to the door. It seemed they were mid-way through a morning gossip over coffee.

“Oh my, what a cutie!” one of the women said, eyeing Vergil as he walked in.

“This is the new employee I told you all about,” Nero said hesitantly. “Everyone, this is Vergil.”

“Hey Vergil, you single?” a different woman asked. They were all dressed extremely smartly, but all three of them had heavily manicured nails and just slightly too much makeup.

“Guys come on, this is my dad. Don’t be weird,” Nero said, glancing at Vergil out of the corner of his eye.

“Wait he’s your father?”

“I can see where our little Nero gets his good looks from!”

“...Is this what they call sexual harassment?” Vergil whispered to Nero, remembering a chapter from one of the workplace books he had read.

“They’re just messing with ya,” Nero responded. “...Probably.”

"I'm Cassidy," the woman behind the desk said, rising to shake Vergil's hand. She was the one that had referred to him as a 'cutie'. Vergil stared down at her outstretched hand, unmoving.

"You're meant to return the gesture, hon," one of the women said.

"These women unnerve me," Vergil stated.
"O-kay, moving on," Nero said quickly, dragging Vergil towards the back of the room past Cassidy's slowly lowering hand. "This is the consultation room. This is where we actually talk to and interview prospective parents. These three just do the paperwork," he said, nodding in the women's direction.

"That makes a lot more sense," Vergil said, eliciting annoyed gasps and tuts from the group.

"We've not been as busy lately, so we just have these guys working for us at the moment," Nero said, ignoring the glares as he turned and headed for the exit. "Lotsa spare desks if you're ever interested in joining them."

"I'll pass," Vergil said, yanking the office door open.

"Jerk or not, feel free to come back any time handsome!" one of the women shouted as the door closed behind the pair.

"Okay, I think that's pretty much it," Nero said proudly. "Most of the admin guys start around 9am because that's when our suppliers are usually open for business. Those guys and the others you saw earlier tend to turn up early in the morning so they can leave sooner. They can do that since they don't need to rely on other people to complete their tasks."

Vergil nodded in understanding. "And what time should I prepare to arrive?" he asked.

"Well, since you'll be chasing up suppliers and stuff, just before 9 I guess?" Nero said, scratching the back of his head. "Though to be honest…" Vergil looked at him, waiting for him to continue. "Well, don't let me put you off before you've even started, but I kinda feel like admin work isn't really gonna be your thing."

"I have excellent attention to detail," Vergil said defensively. "If you are concerned about mistakes, there will be none."

"Well yeah, which is why Kyrie chose this role for you I guess, but I feel like you'd enjoy yourself a lot more in the kitchen, or entertaining the kids full time."

"That sounds less than ideal," Vergil said, feeling a sense of panic slowly rising within him as he remembered the sheer amount of children he had seen.

"Yeah, but I think it would do you some good," Nero said. "You were trying to get better at socialising right…?" He trailed off as he noticed his father's concerned expression. "...Whatever. Let's just give things a go and take it nice and slow huh? Come on, let's go meet the kids."

Introducing Vergil to the children went a lot more smoothly than Nero had expected. Nero explained that there would usually be a lot less children around, but that they were currently on their summer holidays away from school. He introduced his father slowly and subtly, approaching small groups of children first so as not to overwhelm him. For most of them, it was just a case of them excitedly running over before stopping in their tracks once they noticed Vergil's stony stare. Some said hello while others just looked at him nervously. Vergil merely grunted or offered a simple "greetings" to those who dared speak to him.

"You've already met Julio, Kyle, and Carlo," Nero said as the three orphans spotted the pair and ran towards him, tackling Nero to the ground.

"Briefly," Vergil nodded as he watched the four of them roll around playfully.
"Nero, Nero, I finally beat Julio at Maria Kars!" Carlo shouted happily.

"Nuh uh!" Julio protested. "I came out first overall!"

"Only cuz you cheated when I went to the bathroom!" Carlo retorted.

“No way! Kyle, you saw what happened right-”

“Guys, that’s enough,” Nero scolded, standing up and dusting himself off. “You guys remember Vergil right?”

The three children stopped bickering and stared up at Vergil in confusion. “Wait…” Julio said, walking over to Vergil. “Ah! You guys, it’s the scary sword man!”

“No way!” the other two said, stepping closer.

“We thought we’d just dreamt about you!” Kyle said.

“Can we play with your sword?” Carlo asked excitedly.

“No,” Vergil said bluntly, glaring down at them.

“Can we at least see it?” Julio asked.

Vergil glanced over at Nero who shook his head. “...No,” Vergil reiterated.

“Aww, but-”

“No more talk of swords,” Nero said. “The other kids haven’t seen the kind of stuff you guys have, remember?”

“S’not our fault everyone else is lame,” Julio pouted.

“Drop it,” Nero said. “Go play with your friends, I’m gonna go introduce Vergil to a few of the others, okay?”

“Whatever,” the three of them said, running off to play a game of tag.

“It is strange to see you acting so fatherly,” Vergil said as Nero lead him across the playground.

“Yeah, you’re gonna have to get used to that I’m afraid,” Nero said, chuckling slightly. They walked over to a small group of young children playing in a sandpit. Just as they were approaching, one of the kids threw a handful of sand into another child’s face, prompting them to burst into tears.

“Hey, stop that!” Nero said, running over. “You guys should be playing nice, what’s going on here?”

“H-He was angry at me cos I wouldn’t let him b-borrow the shovel,” the crying boy moaned, sniffling.

“Marcus! You know violence doesn’t get results,” Nero said, grabbing the offending child as he tried to run away.
Vergil looked down at the crying boy, who was currently trying to rub sand out of his eyes. “...Are you just going to let him get away with that?” Vergil asked him.

“H-Huh?” the boy asked, looking up as Vergil leant down next to him.

“If you accept ill treatment from others, you can never expect anything more,” Vergil said, picking up a small stone. “Here. Return the gesture and teach him a lesson,” he continued, scooping up some sand and dumping it in the boy’s hand along with the stone.

“B-But Nero says-”

“Wait until he turns to face you,” Vergil said. “A dishonourable attack deserves a dishonourable retaliation. He deserves no warning.”

“...Now go apologise to Edward right now,” Nero said, shoving Marcus towards the boy in front of Vergil. As he begrudgingly approached, the young boy called Edward drew his arm back and threw the weighted pile of sand at his aggressor. The stone hit Marcus square in the forehead and a small cut opened up, which immediately began to pour blood. “Edward!” Nero yelled angrily, scooping Marcus into his arms. “You come with me-”

“He made me do it!” Edward cried, pointing at Vergil and bursting into a set of fresh tears.

Nero looked at his father with a horrified expression. “Why would you suggest something like this?!” he asked angrily, trying to reassure a now also crying Marcus.

“How else is the boy to learn?” Vergil asked, gesturing at the child in Nero’s arms.

“Not like this,” Nero hissed. “We don’t use fighting to resolve our issues here, understand? Not everyone is a descendant of Sparda.” He started to head toward the house. “Come with me,” he commanded. “Edward, I’ll deal with you later.”

“What’s a Sparda?” Edward asked in between sobs.

“Not like this,” Nero hissed. “We don’t use fighting to resolve our issues here, understand? Not everyone is a descendant of Sparda.” He started to head toward the house. “Come with me,” he commanded. “Edward, I’ll deal with you later.”

Nero marched to the medical room with Vergil in tow. After spending a few minutes cleaning and dressing Marcus’ wound, he turned to his father and shook his head. “Listen-”

“Have you learnt your lesson?” Vergil asked the boy, who was currently sitting in a chair looking between the two of them with tears in his eyes.

“W-What do you mean?” he asked.

“Will you ever attack someone unprovoked again?” Vergil asked.

“What does... un...pre... what does that word mean?” Marcus asked, starting to snuffle again.

“What Vergil is trying to say is that fighting is wrong, and you won’t do it again, will you?” Nero said.

Marcus looked over at Vergil and slowly shook his head. “Nuh uh. I won’t do it ever again...”

“Good, now go play,” Nero said, pushing the boy out of the door. He shut the door and turned to face Vergil. “You’re lucky this wasn’t worse,” he said, trying to keep his voice even. “I’d like to imagine that you just weren’t thinking clearly, so on this occasion I won’t tell Kyrie. If you ever do
something like this again though, I swear to god—"

“I will try to avoid such incidents in the future,” Vergil said calmly. “I would however like to point out how effective—”

“Stop,” Nero said. “Just stop.”

Vergil ceased talking and let out a sigh. “...I’m sorry,” he said eventually. “I was merely drawing from my own experiences as a child... I will be more careful going forward.”

“You’d better be,” Nero said. “This place has got enough issues to worry about without the kids all trying to kill each other.” Just what kind of childhood did you have exactly?! he found himself wondering.

“Shall we carry on with introductions?” Vergil asked when Nero said nothing further.

“...No,” Nero said after some thought. “No, I think for now I’d like you to get to grips with using our computer system. In the office. Away from the children.”

Vergil nodded in understanding and followed Nero back through to the rear of the house. As Nero sat him down in front of an unfamiliar looking machine, Vergil let out a pained sigh and ran a hand through his hair again. It seemed that today was going to be more than just ‘difficult’.

Chapter End Notes

Hey everyone! Just wanted to apologise for the delays between chapters and inconsistent upload times - I work very demanding shiftwork with fairly unpredictable hours, which means I'm often too tired or busy to finish chapters quickly.

Super appreciate everyone's patience though and happy that so many people are still enjoying this! Thanks for the support ^_^
“I just don’t understand why we can’t use paper,” Vergil grumbled for what felt like the billionth time (Nero had stopped counting a while ago).

“I told you,” Nero said, slamming the computer mouse down on the desk in frustration. “It’s just not efficient these days. The world has moved on.”

“Dante gets by just fine using paper,” Vergil huffed.

“He’s also in the red by thousands,” Nero said, turning to face his father and crossing his arms. “Now come on, let’s practice this again.”

“What if I just write everything down and one of your other minions can transpose it onto this device?” Vergil suggested.

“Your colleagues are not slaves,” Nero sighed. “Look, you need to get to grips with this, otherwise I just don’t see this working out. At least try, please?”

Vergil let out an annoyed grunt and turned to face the monitor. It was currently displaying two small boxes, prefaced by the words ‘username’ and ‘password’. He hesitantly grabbed the mouse and moved the cursor over the ‘username’ box like Nero had shown him. “What do I do now?” he asked.

“Have you even been listening to me?” Nero asked exasperatedly.

“Of course,” Vergil said unconvincingly.

Nero ran a hand through his hair - a gesture which he had undoubtedly copied from his father after spending so much time with him recently - and took a deep breath. “Okay. So, you move it over the box and click the left button on the mouse.”

“I still don’t understand the naming process for these things.”

“Just click the button,” Nero hissed. Vergil did as he was told and watched as a blinking line appeared in the box. “Okay, now remember what we talked about,” Nero said. “It’s just like the password on your phone - you enter in a special combination of characters and you gain access.”

“My phone does not require a password,” Vergil stated.

“Just type what you wrote down on the note in front of you,” Nero said bluntly. He watched as Vergil slowly entered his username one key at a time, jabbing each letter with his right index finger. After what felt like forever, he was done. “Right. Now, move the mouse to the next box and click it again.” Vergil did so then looked over at Nero expectantly. “...Enter the second word,” Nero said.

“This is the one I am not to show anyone, correct?” Vergil asked as he entered the password.

“I’m glad you remember at least that much,” Nero said, stretching. Once Vergil had finished, his hand hovered over the mouse, awaiting further instructions. “You can click the button that says
‘sign in’, or you can press that big button on the keyboard,” Nero explained, pointing to the enter key.

Vergil looked down at the mass of buttons before him and poked the enter key. He watched on in slight awe as the screen faded to black before reappearing as the desktop. “Interesting...” he mumbled.

“Well done,” Nero said, letting out a yawn. They had been talking about computers for what must have been at least an hour, if not more. “Listen, can I get you something to drink? I feel like we could do with a break.”

“I would like that,” Vergil nodded. “I’ll have an Earl Grey tea.”

Nero looked at his father and shook his head, smirking slightly. “Sorry, we can’t afford to be that fancy,” he said. “You get coffee or regular tea, that’s all.”

“...I see,” Vergil said, sounding somewhat disappointed. He made a mental note to try and order some more varied beverages for the orphanage once he knew what he was doing.

Nero looked at Vergil's crestfallen expression and sighed. "Give me some time," he said, standing up. "I'll see what I can do."

"You needn't inconvenience yourself," Vergil stated. "I'll just take whatever is available."

"Just... Wait here," Nero said. "Try not to press too many buttons while I'm gone." He stepped out of the office and quietly closed the door behind him, leaning his back against it and closing his eyes. He found himself in the strange emotional state of being both pissed at, and feeling sorry for his technologically illiterate father, and for some reason had decided he wanted to try and do something nice for him. The question now was where to find Earl Grey tea at such short notice.

Back in the office, Vergil drummed his fingers on the desk impatiently. He hated looking incompetent, and right now the device in front of him was making him look more foolish than ever. "I will tame you," he growled at it, slamming his fist on the keyboard. The computer made a strange noise and a few windows popped up on the screen. He hit it again, causing even more things to open, before huffing in frustration and pushing himself to his feet.

He walked over to the side of the room that had floor to ceiling windows - right as you entered - and looked outside. Being at the back of the house, the view was barely more than a cluster of trees, although it appeared that a small rope swing had been tied to one of the branches overhanging the fence. Vergil watched as it swayed back and forth in the light breeze, and felt a strange wave of nostalgia. He wondered if Dante had dealt with the repairman yet.

Canned laughter blared out of the television, which was soon joined by Dante's own chuckles as he shoved another slice of pizza into his mouth. He had been surprised, but not displeased to find the greasy snack hidden away in Vergil's freezer, before he remembered that Vergil had mentioned buying it for the get together a few nights before.

He was just about to take a swig of whisky from the glass he was precariously balancing on Vergil's beloved sofa, when he suddenly heard the door - or rather, what was left of it - swing open unexpectedly. Dante jumped to his feet, a hand instantly darting to one of the guns hidden beneath his shirt.

"Oh! Do excuse me," a shocked sounding voice exclaimed, as a man stepped through the opening and came face to face with a rather intimidating looking Dante blocking the hallway.
"...You here about the door?" Dante asked. He could feel the hairs on the back of his neck standing up as the man looked at him, and he tensed his muscles in preparation for diving for his sword if needed. The man before him was nothing remarkable - he was fairly short and very skinny, with slick dark brown hair, and striking green eyes hidden behind a pair of glasses. He was wearing a black pinstriped suit and looked like he had just stepped out of the office.

"The door?" he asked in a nasally, yet smooth sounding voice. He looked down at the briefcase he was holding, over at the mess of wood holding the remnants of door together, and then back at Dante. "...I am afraid not," he said at last. "Although I am curious to know what happened here."

"Forget that," Dante said, feeling even more uncomfortable now that the male's intentions were unknown. "If you're not here for repairs, what do you want?"

"Why I came to see you, of course," the man stated, holding out a hand. "My name is Christian. You can call me Chris. I'm the landlord here."

Dante stared at the outstretched hand but did not return the gesture. "You're the guy that gave this place to Nero?"

"Not to Nero, to you," Chris smiled. "You must be Nero's father Vergil, correct?"

"What do you want?" Dante asked, ignoring the question.

"My, my," Chris hummed, shaking his head. "He did warn me that you weren't good at speaking with others. I can see he was right." Chris looked past Dante towards the litter strewn dining table (Dante's jacket was also slung rather ungraciously over the back of one of the dining chairs) and took note of the loud television that was still projecting laughter in the background. "Though, I thought you'd be a little more..." he trailed off as he looked Dante up and down. "Never mind," he added. "To answer your question, I came to give you a little housewarming gift. It's strange though, I thought you started at the orphanage today..."

"If you thought that, then why come here when you weren't expecting me to be in?" Dante asked, eyeing the man suspiciously.

"I wanted it to be a surprise of course!" Chris grinned. "Nero said you don't like unexpected visitors, so I didn't wish to bother you. Again though, I'm a little surprised to see such damage to my door after you have only been here for a few days..."

"...My brother did it," Dante said, deciding to play along. "And he's making me pay, can you believe that?"

"Oh, is he now? Well, that won't do," Chris said, casting an eye over Dante again, who continued to block the hallway but had now removed his hand from his gun. "You tell that brother of yours that I'll pay for this," Chris said. "No cost to you or Nero."

"And why would you do something like that?" Dante asked.

Chris smiled back at him. "Call it a gesture of goodwill," he said. Before Dante could question him further, Chris made a show of checking his watch and holding a hand to his forehead. "Goodness, would you look at that? I'm afraid I've got a train to catch. I'll come back another time-"

"What about the gift?" Dante asked, crossing his arms.

"Oh... Right," Chris said hesitantly. He opened his briefcase and retrieved a small brown vase, which appeared to have a variety of runes etched into it. "Here you are," he said holding it out for
Dante to take. Dante grabbed the object, which was small enough to fit into his palm, and turned it over in his hands a few times. "It's for incense," Chris stated before Dante could ask.


"Yes… Here, take my card and get the door repairman to forward the bill to me," he said, shoving a card into Dante's free hand. "I'll be seeing you," he said, leaving almost as quietly as he had approached.

"Thanks, I guess," Dante shouted down the hall after him. Once he was sure the mysterious man had left, he headed back inside and inspected the artefact more closely. "...Yeah, I don't think so," he mumbled to himself. He rummaged around in Vergil's kitchen until he managed to find a plastic container. He filled the box with various herbs (Vergil appeared to have a surprising amount of these) and threw both the vase and the man's card inside before sealing it shut. He went over to his coat and shove the package into one of his pockets, retrieving his phone in the process. It only took a few rings before Trish answered.

"Hey Dante. What's up?"

"Reckon you could check out a potentially cursed object for me?" Dante asked, keeping an eye on the door.

"Haven't had a request like that in a while," Trish stated. "Whatcha got?"

"I'm not sure yet, that's why I want you to research it for me," Dante replied, smirking slightly when Trish let out an annoyed grunt.

"Just meet me at the shop in a few hours," Trish said bluntly.

"You can't come pick it up?" Dante asked, wanting to get this looked at sooner rather than later.

"I have a life too, you know," Trish said. "I'm on a job at the moment, you're lucky I answered."

"Fine, fine," Dante said defeatedly. "I'll head back after the repair guy is done. I'll let you know when I'm towards."

"Sounds like a plan," Trish said, ending the call. It seemed like no one ever bothered to say goodbye these days, Dante realised.

Nero had left the office to get the drinks some twenty minutes ago, if not more, and Vergil could feel his frustration rising further. Nero had been acting snappy towards him ever since the incident with the children, and part of Vergil was convinced that Nero was trying to avoid him. He couldn’t blame him of course - he himself had gone on many a walk when he needed to clear his thoughts and prevent himself from cutting Dante into millions of tiny pieces.

He did yet another lap around the small office, already hating how claustrophobic it made him feel. That and the constant thrum of computers was starting to give him a headache. He passed by the window for the umpteenth time, pausing on this occasion as he noticed a small girl making her way over to the swing. She was dressed in a pair of dungarees with light blonde hair tied up in two small pigtails. The girl stopped walking as she noticed Vergil, and turned to face the window. The two of them stared at each other for a moment, before she suddenly started to jog over. As she reached the glass, she looked up at Vergil and smiled. It seemed she was trying to say something, but Vergil was unable to hear her clearly through the barrier between them.
“I can’t hear you,” he stated, shaking his head and pointing to his ear. The little girl pouted and pointed at the handle halfway up the glass. She stood there with her hands on her hips until Vergil was finally able to manoeuvre the upper window open. “...What do you want, brat?” Vergil asked.

“Why do you look so sad?” the girl demanded, not even bothering with introductions.

“I beg your pardon?” Vergil asked, somewhat taken aback. He had not expected such a response from a child so young.

“You heard me, old man. What’s with the sad face?” she asked again.

“I am not sad,” Vergil growled. What a tremendously rude child, he thought.

“You are too,” the girl argued. “Most people I see in there are always sad, but they tell me it’s ‘cuz they hate being in an office all day. I’ve never seen you before though, so you must be sad for a different reason.”

“How I feel is none of your business,” Vergil said coldly. “Don’t you have other things to do than annoy people trying to do their jobs?”

“Nope!” the girl said a little too cheerfully. “I always come and play on the swing here. Apparently it cheers people up for some reason. Plus, I usually get some free sweets out of it.”

“And thus your true intentions are revealed,” Vergil said, smirking slightly. “Sorry child, I have no such things about my person.”

“You speak funny,” the girl said, frowning slightly.

“And you look funny,” Vergil retorted, earning a slight giggle from the girl.

“I like you already,” she said, grinning. “My name’s Alisa and I’m seven. What’s your name?”


“Wait here, Vergil,” Alisa said, running off out of sight. Vergil craned his neck trying to see where she had gone with no luck. After a few minutes she returned, holding a vibrant blue flower in her clenched fist. “Tadaa!” she said happily, holding the flower up to the open window.

“...I have no need for such things,” Vergil said, watching in amusement as Alisa stood on her tiptoes and tried to drop the flower inside the room.

“J-Just take it!” she said, struggling to breathe from the exertion.

“If I take it, will you leave me alone?” Vergil asked, starting to reach out of the window.

“Of course not,” Alisa replied as he finally took the flower from her grass stained fingertips. “I don’t like people being sad,” she said, sitting down on the grass. “I’m gonna stay here until you tell me what’s up.”

“You’ll be here a long time in that case,” Vergil said, opening the window slightly wider so that he could lean out and look down at her. Alisa’s eyes widened in surprise as she finally managed to get a good look at the man she had been talking to in the daylight.

“Whoa, you look just like Nero!” she exclaimed, gazing up at him. “Are you related?”

“...Nero is my son,” Vergil said, looking away awkwardly. It still felt strange for him to admit that
to people.

“Wait, really? I thought he was an orphan like the rest of us…” Alisa said thoughtfully, trying to remember if she had heard mention of Vergil before.

“…It’s complicated,” Vergil sighed, retreating back inside.

“Hey, don’t hide again!” Alisa said, standing up. “I’m sorry if I said something weird, I was just surprised is all!”

“You should go and play with the others,” Vergil said, slipping the flower into one of his buttonholes. “If Nero finds me talking to you he’ll probably get upset again.”

“No way,” Alisa said, folding her arms. “Half the fun of working at an orphanage is talking to the kids. We can talk all day if you want-”

“Just go!” Vergil said frustratedly. At that moment, the office door opened and a nervous looking man in a suit walked in.

"Um. H-Hi," he stammered as Vergil suddenly turned to face him.

"Who are you?" Vergil demanded.

"I-I'm Phil… One of your new colleagues? W-We've all been waiting outside because we didn't want to bother you, but um… Well, we were meant to start work quite a while ago and-"

"Stop blabbering and just go in," a stern sounding female voice shouted.

"Why don't you do it if you're so brave?" a deep male voice asked.

"If I'd realised Phil was gonna take so long-"

"Hey guys, what's going on?" Nero's voice suddenly cut through the others, and Vergil instantly felt himself relax a little. Angry at him or not, Nero was at least a familiar voice amongst this new crowd of strangers.

“I’ll be back for you, Vergil,” Alisa whispered somewhat menacingly through the window, before running off. Vergil turned just in time to see her pull a face at him, before his attention was drawn back to the discussion going on in the doorway of the office.

"Oh Nero, thank goodness," Phil said, looking far too relieved for someone whose boss had just turned up. "We were waiting for you to come back, but you were taking a while, so we decided to just-

"You do know you guys don't need to wait for me before you start working right…?" Nero said, pushing his way past them. "You’re over an hour late."

"Well yes, but…” Phil trailed off, nodding in Vergil's direction. The man in question was still standing by the window, his hand resting casually on Yamato's hilt.

"What about him?" Nero asked, walking into the room holding a takeaway cup of tea and a muffin. "You've had plenty of new colleagues before."

"Nero, he's got a…” Phil let out an annoyed sigh and pulled Nero to one side. "Listen, I know you said he's your father and all, but look at him! He's got a goddamn sword! I thought he was gonna kill me just for saying hello!"
"I'll talk to him about it," Nero said, pulling himself free from Phil's weak grasp. "Trust me, he looks scary, but he's a nice guy once you get to know him - right dad?" he called over his shoulder. It was almost a complete lie of course, but he had to at least try to get the others to accept Vergil. Nero had pulled a lot of strings to get him employed there, and he wasn't about to let him quit on the first day because he felt ostracised.

"Where have you been?" Vergil demanded, stalking over and grabbing the cup from Nero's hand.

"You're welcome," Nero said sarcastically, holding out the muffin for him as well.

"Why are you giving me this?" Vergil asked as he inspected the sweet treat. It was blueberry flavoured.

"Seems like a real nice guy to me," the female voice said as a punkish looking woman and a heavy-set dark skinned gentleman entered the room.

"He's just tired," Nero said defensively. "How about we go for a quick walk?" he asked his father, grabbing Vergil's shoulder.

"Do not touch me so casually, you know this."

"We'll be back soon," Nero said, marching Vergil out of the room. He dragged the protesting man through a side door and out into the courtyard. They stood at the side of the house, hidden in the shadows.

"What is the meaning of this?" Vergil asked, finally taking a sip of the tea he was holding. The container gave it a slightly cardboardy aftertaste, but it was better than nothing.

"We talked about this," Nero sighed, leaning against the wall. "You keep the sword hidden and you offer polite greetings to everyone, it's not hard."

"Why did you take so long?" Vergil queried again.

"If I answer your question, will you start listening to me and take this seriously?" Nero asked. Vergil nodded in response. "Okay, so if you must know, it's because I had to search all over the place to find somewhere that does Earl Grey tea," Nero explained. "In case you hadn't noticed, we're kinda in the middle of nowhere here."

"I saw various buildings on the way over," Vergil said sceptically.

"Yeah, while we were in the taxi," Nero retorted. "I had to walk pretty damn far for that tea of yours, so you'd better enjoy it as if it's the last cup of tea you'll ever drink in your life."

"...and the muffin?" Vergil asked.

"They had a deal on where you get a free muffin if you buy two drinks. I already finished mine."

"Another lie. Nero had bought Vergil the muffin because he'd felt sorry for him, but he'd be damned if he would admit something like that to his overly proud father.

"I see," Vergil said bluntly, taking a bite of the treat.

Nero watched as Vergil made quick work of the muffin and tea, staring daggers at his son the entire time. After a minute or so of squirming under his father's glare, Nero let out yet another sigh. "You thought I was trying to avoid you, didn't you?" he asked matter-of-factly.
“As if I would think something so foolish,” Vergil said, finishing the last drops of his tea. “I was merely curious as to why you were wasting so much time.”

“Uh huh…” Nero said doubtfully, squinting slightly. “Your phone’s been ringing by the way.” Vergil looked around for somewhere to toss the rubbish so he could answer it, eventually opting to pass the now empty cup and wrapper to Nero. “Make it quick, you’re using work hours now,” Nero said, wandering off to find a bin and give Vergil some space.

“What do you want?” Vergil asked, answering the call just before it went to answer phone.

“Good morning to you too, brother,” Dante said dryly.

“Is the door fixed?”

“I’m watching him do it right now,” Dante said, giving the repairman a small wave.

“If it’s not done then why are you calling me?” Vergil asked dismissively.

“Because, my dearest twin, I have some information for you.”

“Spit it out,” Vergil commanded.

“Jeez, calm down will ya? Listen, I got good news and bad news,” Dante said, walking through to Vergil’s bedroom so that the repairman wouldn’t hear him. When Vergil didn’t respond, Dante continued. “Good news is your landlord had kindly offered to pay for the door.”

“Interesting…”

“Bad news is…” Dante trailed off. He hadn’t yet received any actual confirmation that there was anything suspicious about the artefact that ‘Chris’ had intended to give Vergil. Dante certainly hadn’t detected anything demonic from the man, he was just… strange. He heard the laughter of children in the background of the call and realised that the last thing he wanted to do was stress Vergil out unnecessarily during his first day at work.

“Dante?”

“Right. Bad news is something’s come up and I won’t be able to drop the keys off - that orphanage is actually pretty far from me, ya know? Reckon you could come by the shop after work?”

“If I must,” Vergil sighed.

“Sweet, I’ll see you later then,” Dante said. “Plus, you know, it avoids having to explain anything to Nero.”

“Until the landlord mentions it to him.”

“Well… We’ll cross that bridge when we come to it,” Dante said dismissively. “Anyway, I gotta go. Talk soon!”

Vergil let out a simple grunt and hung up just as Nero returned. “All done?” Nero asked, forcing a smile.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” Vergil asked bluntly.

Nero quickly dropped the facade and returned to the tense expression he had been wearing all morning. “Kyrie is here,” Nero said. “She asked me how you were doing, and I told her you were
finding it a little hard to adjust. We've both decided that it might be a little kinder on you if we just let you settle in for the first week, rather than try to get you talking to our business partners straight away.”

“Meaning?”

“Meaning a couple of hours of computer training each day, and the rest of the time is yours to spend as you please, as long as it’s orphanage related...” Nero buried his hands in his pockets and looked down at his feet nervously. “...She wants you to spend time with the kids,” he said at last, looking up at his father. “I didn’t tell her what happened earlier, so I need you to swear to me that you won’t mess this up.”

“I already told you that I would not allow such things to happen again,” Vergil said, unsure whether to feel relieved or more stressed at his sudden change of role.

“Yeah, well I need you to promise,” Nero said sternly. “Most people go through a ridiculous amount of checks before working with children. I had to work really hard to get you in here since, you know, you don’t exactly have a job history. Or... any sort of history for that matter, at least not for the last twenty years or so. If you do something wrong-”

“Cease your fretting,” Vergil said, holding a hand up. “Your concern for my well being is appreciated, but you needn’t concern yourself. I have read the books provided to me and shall act accordingly.”

“Yeah, ‘cuz that went really well earlier...” Nero grumbled.

“Look at this,” Vergil said, pointing to the flower in his buttonhole. “I have already befriended one of them. I shall endeavour to do the same with more of them over the following week.”

“Huh, would you look at that...” Nero said, nodding in approval. “Okay fine. But just remember, I will be watching you very closely.”

The repairman had finished the job surprisingly quickly, and even by the time Dante had finished cleaning up, it was still before noon. He had expected to be waiting around until at least mid-afternoon and wasn’t really sure what to do with himself. Part of him was more than tempted to stay at Vergil’s place and take advantage of the large television, but he figured he should probably get a head start on working out what the deal with the vase was. Speaking of which, it suddenly hit Dante that there might be more to this apartment than meets the eye. He decided to make another quick call to his brother.

“What do you want this time?” Vergil’s irritated voice asked.

“Just a real quick question,” Dante said casually, slowly walking around each room.

“No, you can’t stay there once the repairman is done,” Vergil said immediately.

“...Not that,” Dante said feeling slightly hurt. “Listen, I’m not doubting you or anything, but you did check the apartment for any weird markings orhexes when you moved in, right?”

“Of course I did,” Vergil stated. “Numerous times. It’s perfectly fine, why are you asking me this?”

“No reason,” Dante said, checking under Vergil’s mattress. “Any, uh, strange feelings? Healthwise, emotionally...”
“Dante, tell me what this is about right now before I come over there myself.”

“Just come to the shop after work, there’s no rush,” Dante said. “Door’s fixed by the way, I’ll be heading home shortly.”

“Did something happen?” Vergil whispered, conscious of the fact that Nero was watching him from across the room. He had decided to spend some time exploring the rest of the house (after introducing himself properly to his new colleagues, of course). This included the upstairs where the children’s bedrooms were. A few of the kids were playing in their rooms, and Vergil had been going around carefully introducing himself to everyone. He was currently being shown around the room of the boy that had had his head cut by the stone earlier - Marcus if Vergil recalled correctly - after they had come to apologise to him.

“Nothing that you need to be concerned about right now,” Dante said. “Go have fun, I’ll explain later.”

“Fun is not the word-” Vergil stopped talking as he heard the distinctive sound of the call being ended. He looked over at Marcus who was currently jumping up and down on his bed. For a boy with a bandage on his head, he certainly didn’t seem any worse for wear.

“You wanna come play some video games with me?” Marcus asked breathlessly as he continued to bounce up and down.

“I’m still looking around, I’m afraid,” Vergil replied.

Marcus stopped bouncing and scowled at Vergil. “If you don’t play with me, I’ll tell Miss Kyrie what you did to me.”

“Marcus, that’s enough,” Nero said, walking over to the boy and making him sit down next to him on the bed. “You know we don’t use threats around here.”

“I don’t care,” Marcus said. “I’ll tell her that you lied to her and then she’ll be mad at you too.”

“I didn’t lie to her,” Nero said. “I just chose not to tell her what happened, it’s different.”

“Play with me!” Marcus commanded angrily.

“Be silent, you awful child,” Vergil said, towering over the small boy.

“Dad-”

“Do you see this?” Vergil asked, moving his coat aside slightly to reveal Yamato. “This is what I use to punish bad children who don’t do what they’re told.” He used his thumb to unsheathe it slightly. “It can open portals to hell,” he growled, bending close to the child’s ear.

“Vergil!” Nero shouted.

“I-I’m sorry,” Marcus said quickly, bursting into tears. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry! I won’t tell anyone anything, I swear!” He buried his face in Nero’s chest and continued to sob uncontrollably.

“As we were,” Vergil said, straightening up. Nero stared at him and shook his head.

“Hey boys, how is everything going? I thought I heard a bit of a commotion…” Kyrie’s calming voice instantly broke the tension in the room as she suddenly appeared, seemingly out of nowhere. “Goodness, what’s wrong?” she asked, running over to Marcus. She eyed Vergil suspiciously as
she sat down on the bed and pulled the tearful boy onto her lap.

“She’s scary!” Marcus said, pointing at Vergil. “Make him go away!”

“Now now, that’s not a very nice thing to say about someone,” Kyrie said, stroking his hair. “I know he looks a little intimidating, but he only wants to be your friend.”

“B-But he…” Marcus looked over at Vergil who adjusted his coat just enough to make Yamato visible again without being obvious.

“Nero? Is there something I should know?” Kyrie asked. “You know what we discussed…”

“Kyrie…”

“I found you, Vergil!” an excited voice cried before a small pair or arms wrapped themselves around Vergil’s waist. He instantly felt himself tense up at the unexpected contact, but he remained still. “I’ve been looking for you everywhere,” Alisa said, walking around to stand next to him. “Marcus is just a liar,” she said to Kyrie. “He was being mean to someone earlier and Vergil told him off, so now he has a grudge against him. Don’t listen to anything he says.”

“Is this true?” Kyrie asked Nero.

“It’s true!” a small voice piped up. It was the boy that Vergil had passed the rock to earlier - Edward was it? He quickly pushed his way inside and stood on the other side of Vergil. “He saved me earlier when Marcus was being a bully. He hasn’t done anything wrong!”

Nero looked over at Kyrie and shrugged. “That’s two against one. Marcus was just upset because Vergil didn’t want to play with him.”

“I see…” Kyrie said hesitantly. “I’m… happy to see that you’re making friends already,” she said to Vergil, who continued to stand in silence, lest he say anything that incriminate himself.

“Well, I’m glad we got that settled,” Nero said hastily, pushing himself to his feet. “Say, isn’t this room getting a little crowded? How about we all go play outside or something?”

“I think I’ll stay here with Marcus a little longer if that’s okay,” Kyrie said.

“Sure,” Nero said, pushing the rest of the group outside. “Kids, is it okay if I talk with Vergil alone for a bit?”

“No way, I spent ages trying to find him!” Alisa said. “You can talk to him later!”

Nero looked at Vergil and chewed his lip nervously. “Okay. But we’re having another talk soon,” he said to his father as Vergil let himself be led away by the small girl and boy either side of him.

Alisa and Edward dragged Vergil downstairs and into the garden. Once they were certain there were no adults around, Edward turned to Alisa and held his hand out. “Sweets please,” he said.

“Oh, okay,” she said, reaching into a pocket and grabbing a handful of boiled sweets. “Just make sure you don’t choke this time,” she said, dumping them in Edward’s outstretched palm. “Now scram.”

“…How curious,” Vergil said as he watched Edward run off and disappear amongst the gaggle of children near the fountain. “Care to explain?” he asked, turning to face his small saviour.
“I saw everything,” Alisa stated.

“Everything?”

“I can’t believe you have a sword! That’s so cool!” Alisa said excitedly. “Can I see it? Please?”

“Finish talking first,” Vergil said, feeling strangely self-conscious.

“Okay, okay,” Alisa said, rolling her eyes. “Basically, I saw you helping Edward out earlier, yeah? Then after I found you in the office again, I decided I just had to talk to you more, so I asked all over the place until I figured out where you were. Once I realised Kyrie was coming and you’d probably get in trouble, I quickly bribed Edward to help me out. That’s all really.”

“Why are you so interested in me?” Vergil asked. “It’s… unnerving.”

“I already told you, I don’t like people being sad,” Alisa said, looking up at him. “And you are one of the saddest people I have ever seen. Considering I live in an orphanage, that’s pretty impressive.”

“Why do you care so much?” Vergil queried. “You’re just a child, shouldn’t you be off playing and only caring about yourself?”

“What a stereotypical opinion,” Alisa pouted. Vergil raised an eyebrow at her and she threw her hands up in frustration. “Okay fine. I can sense people’s auras all right? Not full on psychic or anything, but I can feel strong emotions. When I’m around sad people, I feel sad too.”

“Leave me alone then,” Vergil suggested. “Then you won’t have to worry.”

“Yeah right, ‘cuz I can totally go on as normal now that I know there’s a big ball of sadness floating around,” Alisa huffed.

“You are surprisingly articulate for a child,” Vergil observed.

“I read a lot,” Alisa said. “No one really hangs out with me, so I have plenty of time to myself. I actually prefer it that way, ‘cuz then I don’t need to worry too much about how people are feeling.”

“And you go to cheer up the office workers because it makes you feel happy in return,” Vergil guessed.

“You got me!” Alisa said, winking. “Plus, you know, sweets.”

“Does Nero know about this?” Vergil asked.

“Probably not. I don’t tell many people about it ‘cuz it tends to freak them out. You seem cool though.”

“I see… Well, thank you for telling me,” Vergil said. “It’s not often people tell me their secrets.”

“Speaking of secrets…” Alisa said, waggling her eyebrows. “How about that sword of yours, huh?”

“Vergil, if that sword makes one more appearance today, I will personally get it melted down,” Nero said, angrily walking over to them. “Alisa, what’s this about you bribing people with sweets.”
“Oh shoot, gotta run!” Alisa said, jumping out of the way of Nero’s grasp as he reached for her. “See you soon!” she said, offering a small salute before fleeing.

“You know running only prolongs the punishment!” Nero yelled after her.

“Nero,” Vergil nodded.

“Father,” Nero stated. The two of them stared each other down for a moment before Nero spoke. “I think you know what I’m going to say.”

“And yet once again, the punishment worked.”

“That’s not the point!” Nero said exasperatedly. “That’s two strikes now. One more and I’m sending you home.”

“I shall bear that in mind.”

Nero let out an irritated growl before closing his eyes and taking a deep breath. “Okay. Remember, I’m trusting you.”

“Of course.”

“…It’s getting close to lunch time,” Nero said, kicking a random nearby stone. “How about I show you the dining hall?”

“…Why is it covered in herbs?” Trish asked, turning the trinket over in her hands. “Were you planning on cooking the damn thing?”

“It was meant to be a curse repellent,” Dante said, shrugging. “I didn’t know what I was dealing with, so I didn’t want to take any chances.”

The two of them were currently leaning over Dante’s desk in the middle of the Devil May Cry office. Trish had brought over a variety of ancient texts and reference books, and the two of them were preparing for an afternoon of intense reading. Trish looked closely at the small vase, making noncommittal noises as she wrote down a few notes. Dante made his way over to his chair and watched in silence as she continued to analyse it.

“Completely harmless,” she said at last, tossing the object over to Dante, who caught it mid-air.

“Wait, seriously?” Dante asked in disbelief. “Maybe the herbs were more effective than I thought…”

“It was never cursed to begin with, dumbass,” Trish said. “I can’t believe you called me all the way over here for this.”

“And the card?”

“It’s a piece of paper, Dante,” Trish said. “Burn it if you’re worried, but I certainly can’t detect anything from either of these objects.”

“Then… What do all these etchings mean?” Dante asked.

“Complete nonsense,” Trish said. “It’s like those mistranslated Chinese tattoos you get, it means absolutely nothing.”
“You’re sure?” Dante asked. Something still didn’t feel right about all of this.

“I think the question you need to be asking, is why that guy turned up when he wasn’t expecting Vergil to be there,” Trish stated. “Not only that, but by agreeing to pay for the costs, he’s likely nabbed himself a copy of the new key.”

“Aww crap, you’re right!” Dante said, unable to hide the slight panic in his voice.

“If I were you I’d tell Vergil about this sooner rather than later,” Trish suggested. “Who knows what that guy’s up to.”

“Soon,” Dante said, glancing at the clock. Vergil was due to finish at 5pm and it was now approaching midday. “In the meantime, find me a number for a locksmith, would ya?”

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Chapter End Notes

Ah, so late again... Thanks for being so patient everyone ^^;
Also no Lady in this chapter... She was gonna be, but I just couldn't fit her in. I'll try to update a bit quicker next time! Hoping to kick off the final arc soon unfortunately...
"I made a mistake." Vergil stared at the message he had sent roughly twenty minutes ago, still regretting his decision to do so. He had texted Lady as he and Nero made their way inside for lunch. The dining hall in the orphanage was surprisingly more modern than Vergil had been expecting, with lots of smaller tables rather than one large one as anticipated. He felt that it looked closer to a school cafeteria than a dining room, but the tall ceiling, ornate wallpaper, and overall gothic look to it easily revealed its true origins as part of a stately home.

Nero had taken the opportunity of having all the children in one place to finally introduce Vergil properly. Much to his father's objection, Nero had dragged him to the front of the room and presented him like some sort of trophy, encouraging the residents to try and make sure they said hello to him at least once before the end of the day. "He's not as scary as he looks, I promise!" Nero had said, grinning. Once the ordeal was finally over, Vergil had slunk his way over to an empty table in one of the back corners (Nero had refused to let him go outside in order to give people a chance to socialise with him). So far the table had remained empty, save for himself.

It wasn't like the children hadn't tried. A few of them wandered over and offered a hesitant greeting to the sullen looking man, but as soon as he turned his gaze to face them, they instantly seemed to freeze up. Some just turned around and ran away, while a few of the more mature ones gave a quick bow before re-joining their friends at another table. Vergil had tried smiling back as Kyrie advised, but this only seemed to scare them away even faster. Nero watched all of this from across the room, shaking his head in pity. "Someone should go over there," he mumbled to Kyrie. The two of them were standing by the back entrance to the kitchen which lead into the dining room, helping wherever they could with bringing out plates of food.

"Just… give him time," Kyrie said, watching as Vergil slowly slumped lower and lower in his seat before leaning forward and burying his face in his arms on top of the table.

"I can't stand seeing him like this," Nero said, starting to head over.

"Wait a moment," Kyrie said, placing a hand on Nero's shoulder. "Look." Nero paused as he saw Vergil's head suddenly shoot up. He seemed to be staring at the small phone in his hands, which Nero had only just realised he was holding.

Vergil squinted his eyes slightly as he read the message in front of him. "Already?" it asked. He glanced over at Nero, who was carefully watching him with his arms folded. After a moment's thought, he typed out a response.

"I think Nero is angry with me."

Lady - who was currently halfway through hunting down what a local farmer suspected to be a horde of demon cattle - looked at her phone and sighed. "...What did you do?"

Vergil hesitated, casting his eyes over the room full of chattering children as their laughter echoed around the hall. "...I don't know," he lied.

"Do you want me to just call?" Lady's response read.

"You seem happier!" a cheerful voice suddenly exclaimed next to Vergil, causing him to drop the
device he was holding in surprise. He straightened up and turned to his right to see Alisa beaming up at him with a plateful of jacket potato and beans in front of her. Vergil internally cursed himself for being so oblivious to her approach; it was very unlike him. He picked up his phone and let out an annoyed grunt.

"What do you want?"

"Who's Lady?" Alisa asked, shovelling some beans into her mouth.

"I beg your pardon?"

"You seem happier when you're talking to her," Alisa said, grinning.

"She's just a friend of my brother's," Vergil said dismissively. "We work together sometimes, that's all."

"Hmm..." Alisa said thoughtfully. "I bet she wouldn't be too happy if she knew you just had her saved as 'Lady' on your phone," she said. "You ought to show women some more respect," she added, pointing a potato covered fork at Vergil.

"I am not the one that did this," Vergil protested, pointing at the contact name. "Trust me, I'd change it if I could."

"Want me to do it for ya?" Alisa asked, holding out her hand.

"...You can do such things?" Vergil asked, slightly impressed.

"Well yeah, unlike you old people I've actually grown up with technology," she said, sticking out her tongue. "That phone looks pretty ancient though, it might take me a minute..."

"Just fix it," Vergil growled, thrusting the phone at her. Alisa fiddled with the device for a while, tapping away at various buttons as Vergil glared down at her.

"So, um... What's her actual name?" she asked. Vergil looked away nervously as he quietly mumbled something. "Huh? Speak up, it's loud in here!"

"...Mary," he forced out. "Her name is Mary."

"Nice name!" Alisa said, tapping a few more buttons. "Okay, just a sec and... There ya go!" she said, sliding the phone back across the table to Vergil. "Sorry, but I just remembered I have to be somewhere; excuse me," she said, picking up her plate and disappearing amongst the crowd. Vergil was almost tempted to follow her, but ignored the thought when his phone vibrated again, drawing his attention back to the table in front of him. He flipped it open and stared in confusion at the most recent message.

"Wow, that was surprisingly forward of you."

He scrolled up slightly, his eyes narrowing in anger as he saw what was written above it - "How about you go to dinner with me instead?" He hastily typed out an explanation and was about to send it when another message from Lady came through.

"But sure, why not. When were you thinking?"

Vergil stared at her response and instantly felt his face heat up. He was suddenly gladder than ever that he was sitting alone at the table. His hands trembled slightly as he deleted what he had written
and retyped his answer. *“Tomorrow. Before I change my mind.”* As soon as the message sent, Vergil slammed the device down on the table and buried his face in his hands.

Nero and Kyrie continued to watch this saga unfold, none the wiser as to what was going on. As far as they could tell it looked like Vergil was having some sort of mental breakdown, interrupted briefly by a small girl who had only served to somehow make it worse. "Okay that's it, I'm going over," Nero said. This time Kyrie let him go. He made his way to the opposite side of the room, noticing how his father instantly tensed up again when he sensed his presence. Strangely enough, it seemed that Alisa had managed to take him by surprise, Nero observed. "Hey uh, you okay?" Nero asked, taking the seat opposite Vergil.

"Perfectly fine," Vergil stated without bothering to look up.

"...You want me to bring you some food?" Nero offered.

"No thank you."

"Maybe something to drink?" Nero suggested. "You're looking a little flushed there, stress getting to ya?"

"I'm all right," Vergil said, standing up suddenly. "I'd like to go outside for a moment though, if I may. It is far too stifling in here."

"Maybe I'll join you," Nero said, rising from own his seat despite his father's disapproving glare.

The two of them made their way out to the courtyard, which looked remarkably different minus all the children. Vergil could feel his phone vibrating in his pocket but chose to ignore it. Once they arrived at the fountain, the pair sat down, facing the house. "I don't need you to babysit me," Vergil stated without turning to face Nero.

"I know that," Nero said, actually bothering to look at the man next to him. "I just…" Nero let out a sigh. "Look, you're clearly struggling. Would you like to take the rest of the day off? I should have figured it would all be a bit full on for you; it was dumb of me to expect you to handle a whole day."

"Perhaps a little unwise," Vergil agreed, glancing at Nero. "But I am not one to easily give up. I will stay."

"Okay, different approach," Nero said, standing up. He stood in front of his father and looked him in the eye. "Go home, Vergil. Your services are no longer required for the rest of today."

"Are you… dismissing me?" Vergil asked, narrowing his eyes.

"If it stops you from feeling like you just gave up, then yeah. Go home, think about what we discussed today, and let's start afresh tomorrow."

"Did Kyrie ask you to do this?" Vergil asked, looking back towards the house. "I knew she had a secret disinclining for me-"

"Kyrie said nothing of the sort," Nero said defensively, jabbing an angry finger at his father. "How dare you assume she would think negatively of others, Kyrie is-"

"...Perfect in every way," Vergil said, somewhat sarcastically. "That woman deserves so much more than this family, I don't know why she puts up with everything."
“Enough,” Nero said dismissively, dragging Vergil to his feet. “You can join us for breakfast again tomorrow, but for now just get outta here.”

“Perhaps I shall if I feel like it,” Vergil said, glaring down at him. “You’re lucky I don’t slice you in two where you stand, impudent boy.”

“We both know if you tried anything I’d just win,” Nero said confidently.

“Is that a challenge?” Vergil asked, reaching for Yamato.

“Maybe it is, but not here,” Nero said, looking around as children started to come back outside. “One of these days though, I’ll take you on in a proper rematch.”

“Perhaps once you have finally married Kyrie,” Vergil said, much to Nero’s confusion. “That way, she will inherit what little belongings you have when you inevitably perish,” he explained, smiling smugly.

“Damn it, just go already,” Nero said, shaking his head and grinning a little.

“Until tomorrow,” Vergil said, bowing slightly. Nero watched as he walked across the courtyard and through the gates. He would have offered to call his father a taxi, but he knew that Vergil would likely just teleport anyway. His theory was proven correct as two large slashes suddenly appeared in the air. Vergil turned back towards the orphanage and gave Nero a quick wave before stepping through.

Vergil took a moment to check his phone once he arrived outside the Devil May Cry office, and was surprised to see that he had a missed call from Dante. He also appeared to have another message from Lady, which he hesitantly opened.

“I’ll have to move some things around, but okay. Let me know where and when and we’ll work something out x”

Vergil stared at the last letter of the text for an inordinately long time, trying to figure out if it meant what he thought it meant, or if it was some sort of error. His thoughts were interrupted when the doors of the office suddenly slammed open to reveal Trish standing in the entrance. “Are you coming in, or were you planning on standing outside all day?” Trish asked, placing her hands on her hips.

“I was reading something,” Vergil huffed, shoving his phone in his pocket. “Where’s Dante?”

“He said he’d call you,” Trish said, tapping her foot impatiently. “Did he forget as usual?”

“It seems I just failed to answer,” Vergil said, looking past Trish into the dark office behind her. “He isn’t here?”

“Why aren’t you at work?” Trish queried. “We weren’t expecting you to turn up until after five.”

“Nero decided to let me go home early,” Vergil said bluntly, pushing his way inside. “When is Dante due back? I can wait.”

“Not for a while, I believe,” Trish said, following Vergil and closing the doors behind them. “You’d probably be better off entertaining yourself elsewhere until he’s back.”

“Why are you here?” Vergil asked somewhat rudely, sitting down on the sofa.
"Research," Trish said, nodding to a pile of books on Dante's desk. "I'm reading about that town you're living in, actually. Trying to figure out the whole lack of demons thing."

"...Any interesting findings?" Vergil asked, curiosity getting the better of him.

"Nothing yet," Trish replied, walking over to the desk and leaning against its edge. "I'll let you know if I learn anything useful though."

The two of them regarded each other in awkward silence for a while. Vergil wondered if he should try to ask Trish for some inside information on Lady, but decided against it. Eventually, he cleared his throat and stood up again. "Very well then, I shall return later. Tell Dante to let me know when he is back." Without saying anything else, he started to head for the exit.

"Vergil," Trish called out behind him as he was about to leave. Vergil kept his hand on the door and waited for her to continue, keeping his back towards her. "...Be careful," she said. Vergil gave a slight nod in acknowledgement and stepped outside.

The upside to Vergil being let go early was that it meant that he had some extra time to try and work out what on earth he was planning to do about tomorrow. He had no idea what he'd been thinking making such a spontaneous decision like that. He decided to spend most of the early afternoon wandering around various towns that wouldn't be too difficult for Lady to get to without needing to use a portal. He wanted to make sure he found a restaurant somewhere they wouldn't be recognised, but wasn't so obscure that it could be unsafe. At a few of the locations, people ran up to him asking for his autograph, and he quickly dismissed those places as an option.

On more than one occasion, he found himself wondering what exactly his intentions were by agreeing to this (or rather, by not denying that he had suggested it). If there wasn't a job involved this time, then what exactly would they be doing? Just sitting together and talking? He had done enough of that recently. Was it to establish their connection as actual friends instead of just work partners then? Surely they had done that already via the sheer amount of time they had been spending together in the last couple of weeks. Maybe he just wanted to see her in a pretty dress again… Vergil smiled to himself at that thought. She did have a rather good figure… He caught sight of himself in a shop window and instantly reverted to a more serious expression. He had looked a complete fool walking along and grinning like a madman.

Vergil ran a hand through his hair and looked up at the sky as it suddenly got a little darker. It seemed it was going to rain again for the first time in a while. He quickly ducked for cover as the first drops started to fall and considered his options. He had been walking around for quite a while now, and still hadn't found anything suitable. Not only that, but he realised that he didn't even know what kind of food she particularly enjoyed. He let out a defeated sigh and decided he may as well just head back home for now; there was nothing stopping him from just teleporting inside after all, key or no key. He made his way along the street - taking shelter under various awnings as he did so - until he managed to find a secluded area large enough to open a path home. He stepped through, only to find himself face to face with a surprised looking Dante, and an even more surprised looking locksmith standing in an open doorway.

"Oh… Hey!" Dante said hesitantly, glancing over at the locksmith. "What, uh, what are you doing here?" he asked.

"I should be the one asking that question," Vergil saidcoldly. "I thought you told me this was done?"

"Hey, I called you," Dante protested. "It's not my fault you didn't answer!"
"I'm sorry, but did he just appear from mid-air?" the locksmith asked, backing out of the apartment nervously. "You told me this would be a quick and simple job, I don't have time to be dealing with any weird shit."

"It's fine," Dante said dismissively. "He's been here the whole time, it was just a trick of the light."

"Why are you still in my apartment?" Vergil demanded angrily.

"Wait a second, he told me he lives here," the locksmith said, pointing at Dante. "Please don't tell me I've been used to break into another building..."

Vergil and Dante shared a slightly bemused glance between them, before Dante stepped forward and offered the increasingly confused gentleman a reassuring smile. "Don't worry, I just have another thing to get to after this and he's worried I'll be late. It's no big deal," he lied. He glared over his shoulder at Vergil and indicated that he would explain later. Vergil, for once, kept his mouth shut and nodded in understanding. Once the locksmith had finished his work - albeit slightly more shakily that he had been before - the two brothers saw him off and slammed the newly fitted door behind him.

"Start talking," Vergil commanded, standing in the hallway between Dante and the rest of the apartment.

"I had a visit from your landlord earlier," Dante said, deciding that he may as well get straight the point. "He left you a gift." Dante reached into his pocket and threw the strange looking vase at Vergil, who caught it with ease despite the lack of warning.

"...What is this?" Vergil asked, turning the small object over in his hands.

"Apparently it's nothing," Dante explained. "Nothing sinister anyway." Vergil raised a confused eyebrow at his brother, who proceeded to tell him what had happened earlier that morning.

"I can see why you decided to change the locks," Vergil said, taking a sip of coffee. The two of them had since moved over to the sofa, with Dante offering to make them both drinks, much to Vergil's surprise. He'd done a pretty good job of it too, but Vergil would never tell him that. "What are we going to do about this?"

"I'm not sure there's much we can do," Dante said, finishing the last dregs from his own mug. "I mean, he hasn't actually done anything specifically wrong per se, he was just kinda... weird."

"I told Nero it was a bad idea to form contracts with people you don't know," Vergil said shaking his head. "Who knows what this man's intentions could be."

"I've got Trish conducting research into this place," Dante added. "Maybe she'll find something useful."

"And what do you propose I do until then?" Vergil asked. "Just sit here and wait for him to return?"

"You could always move back in with me for a while if you're scared," Dante suggested, avoiding a swat to the back of the head from his brother.

"As if I would ever be afraid of a mere minion," Vergil said, scowling. "I propose we find this man and dispose of him before the situation escalates."

"Whoa, wait a second," Dante said, holding his hands up. "You can't just go around killing
potentially innocent people - you've moved past that kinda thing, remember?"

"He is clearly not innocent, otherwise we would not be having this conversation," Vergil said. "His actions and demeanour have concerned you enough to tell me what happened, therefore I suggest we deal with the issue while it appears to still be in the early stages."

"Speaking of early stages, how'd the whole orphanage thing go?" Dante asked, trying to change the subject. "You're here a bit earlier than I was expecting."

"Hmm… Perhaps the orphanage would have contact details for this man," Vergil said distractedly. "I should head back there before Nero goes home."

"Which again leads me to ask why you're not there right now," Dante said, waving a hand in front of Vergil's face as he stared off into the distance, lost in thought.

"That is not important," Vergil stated, standing up. "Check the apartment again for anything strange, I shall return shortly."

"Go on, how many kids did you accidentally maim?" Dante asked.

"Damn it, take this seriously!" Vergil growled. "Why are we wasting time sitting around doing nothing when there is still so much that can be looked into?"

Dante looked up at his brother for a moment, before letting out a sigh and glancing away. "Nero called me," he admitted. "Apparently things didn't go too well for you today."

"...That's not true," Vergil said, pointing to the small blue flower that was currently still stuck in his buttonhole. "I made plenty of new acquaintances."

"That's not what I heard-"

"Enough talk of such trivial things," Vergil said, walking behind the sofa and unsheathing Yamato in preparation. "We don't have time to talk about my day."

Dante leaned over the back of the sofa and punched Vergil on the arm. "Nero told me he dismissed you just after lunch - where have you been?"

Vergil froze mid-slash and glared at his brother. "...What does it matter to you?" he asked harshly.

"Just tryna make sure you're okay," Dante said. "Don't want you accidentally going off the rails again and raising another tower-like structure in the middle of town. If we weren't twins, I'd say you were trying to compensate for something…"

"Am I not allowed to spend some time by myself without being interrogated?" Vergil asked, resheathing his sword.

"It was just a question," Dante said shrugging. "You don't have to tell me if you don't want to."

"Well, I'm fine," Vergil said. "Now are you going to help me or not? Why would you tell me about this if you didn't intend to act on it?"

"I just wanted you to be aware that there's some suspicious stuff going on," Dante said, standing up himself and stretching. "Trish and I are still looking into it and I didn't want you to be left in the dark."

"I still think we should make some further enquiries with the orphanage," Vergil said, maintaining
eye contact with Dante as he walked over.

"I'll handle it," Dante said, patting Vergil on the shoulder. "You've had a stressful day as it is, get some rest."

"The day is still young, and I am not a child," Vergil protested, slapping Dante's hand away. "I can conduct my own investigations."

"I'm aware," Dante said. "But something tells me Nero wouldn't be too happy about you turning up at the orphanage again after being sent home just a few hours ago."

"It'll take you too long to get there-"

"There's this thing called a phone," Dante said, pulling out his mobile. "I'll put in a couple of calls and let you know what I find out." After a few minutes of arguing back and forth, Vergil reluctantly agreed and told Dante to contact him straight away if he found out where the landlord was staying. "Last chance to come stay with me again for a while," Dante said as he headed for the door.

"I'd rather face an unknown assailant than spend another night in that hovel," Vergil said coldly, shoving Dante outside.

"Okay but the offer is always there!" Dante shouted as Vergil slammed the door in his face.

Despite agreeing to let Dante make enquiries in his place, it didn't take long for Vergil to sneak out of his apartment again as soon as he was sure that Dante had left. He decided he would speak to his neighbours and see if they knew anything about this 'Christian'. His first stop was at the apartment directly opposite his. It took a moment for Ronald to answer, but once he did the colour instantly drained from his face.

"V-Vergil..." he stammered, starting to sweat nervously. "B-Been a while, huh? How ya... How ya doin'?"

"Ronald, wasn't it?" Vergil asked bluntly. "Do you know anything about the landlord here?"

"Thanks, I'm good too," Ronald said somewhat sarcastically. He instantly regretted this move when Vergil's icy eyes bore into his own, causing Ronald to start shaking slightly.

"Answer the question."

"We don't have a landlord," Ronald said at last. "Most of us here own our apartments - only a few are rented."

"There must be someone in charge?" Vergil queried.

Ronald shook his head. "There's an overall agency that looks after the communal areas, but they're a group, not a person. Your best bet would probably be askin' around to see if anyone else rentin' knows anythin'..."

"Do you know anything about the person that owns my apartment?" Vergil asked, still glaring down at Ronald.

"All I know is some old lady was livin' there that died recently. Next thing I know you turn up - I didn't see anyone there in between."
Vergil nodded thoughtfully and stepped back slightly. "That's all you know?"

"I swear," Ronald said, holding his hands up.

"Thank you for your help," Vergil said, bowing. Even when trying to be polite, Ronald thought Vergil looked terrifying.

"Y-You're welco-"

"You have a wife, don't you?" Vergil asked suddenly.

"I do but she's not in right now..." Ronald said, visibly confused.

"Where do you take her for dinner?" Vergil asked.

"I... What?"

"I need somewhere low-key. Somewhere where I wouldn't be bothered too much if I took someone there," Vergil stated, shifting nervously. He hadn't planned on asking his neighbour for advice on the topic, but he had realised while talking to Dante that he didn't know who else he could ask without causing embarrassment to both himself and Lady.

"Oh my, ya got a date?" Ronald asked, relaxing only slightly at the change of topic.

"I am taking a work colleague out for dinner," Vergil replied, somewhat truthfully.

"Is it that pretty missy with the dark hair I've seen here occasionally?" Ronald asked, shrinking back a little as Vergil narrowed his eyes at him. "T-The tough lookin' one, not the southern soundin' one..."

"That does not concern you," Vergil said. "Do you know anywhere we can go or not?"

"Well, it depends... What kinda food does she like?"

Vergil paused, realising that he still hadn't figured out the answer. "...Black forest gateau," he said at last.

"And?" Ronald asked, waiting for him to continue.

"And... meat? Perhaps sushi," Vergil guessed.

"You have no idea, do you?" Ronald asked, chuckling slightly. "Tell you what, how about I give you a few suggestions, and you can pick one when you find out more about her?"

Fifteen minutes and one awkward farewell later, Vergil found himself outside the remaining door on his floor, listening for any sounds of movement inside. A list of places to eat was neatly folded up in an inside pocket, with Vergil's intention being to give Lady a quick call once he was done making enquiries with the other residents. With no answer at the current door, he swiftly made his way down to the floor below. By now the rain outside had turned into a full-blown thunderstorm, and given the time of day, he hoped that most people would be home by now and unlikely to go out again given the weather.

Of the ten or so apartments Vergil tried (excluding his and Ronald's), only six actually answered, and none of them knew about this so called 'Christian'. A few residents asked if Vergil was the 'guy from the TV', but he quickly dismissed such questions and said they must be mistaken. It was clear
most of them were not buying his answer, however.

Once he was satisfied that he had done all he could, Vergil retreated to his own flat and pulled out the list of restaurants. Given how Ronald's last suggestion of somewhere to go had turned out, Vergil decided it would probably be wise to at least check the outside of each location before committing. All he had to do now was narrow down which ones he should look at… He sat on the sofa, fiddling with his phone and wondering whether he should actually call her, or just send a message. The decision was soon made for him when the phone started to ring, making him jump. He quickly answered it without bothering to check who was calling.

"What did you find out?" Vergil asked, expecting Dante on the other end.

"Uh, that I'm getting weaker in my old age?" Lady's voice answered, followed by light laughter.

"Mary?" Vergil asked in surprise. He sat up little straighter. "I was expecting a call from Dante, I apologise-"

"Yeah yeah, it's cool," Lady said. Her voice sounded slightly strained.

"Is there something wrong?" Vergil asked, detecting a hint of pain in her voice.

"Listen, I'll just get straight to the point," Lady replied. "I might have to cancel our dinner tomorrow."

"What happened?"

"I kinda, maybe, sorta… Broke my arm…" Lady said hesitantly.

"Who did this to you?" Vergil demanded. "Do you need help?"

"It's okay, it's all dealt with," Lady said. "There was an issue with some demonic animals on a farm and I got rushed by this bull-like thing. I put up the Kalina-Ann as a shield, but it started raining so the damn thing slipped and one of the demon's horns went straight through my arm. Fortunately, that gave me enough time to hold it in place and shoot it dead. Luckily it was the last one."

"Where are you right now?" Vergil asked, standing up and fully prepared to make his way over if needed.

"I'm with a friend," Lady answered. "Try explaining a wound like this to the hospital! Anyway, I can't exactly drive home so I'll probably have to stay with her for a while, which means I can't be back for dinner, sorry…"

"In that case, I can come to you," Vergil suggested. "Just tell me where you are."

"Hey, I appreciate the offer, but I'd rather you don't see me like this," Lady said. "I can't stand the thought of looking weak in front of you."

"That's all right, you always look weak anyway," Vergil teased, smiling to himself a little as he heard a short laugh on the other end of the phone.

"Wow, so funny - haven't heard that one before," Lady said sarcastically. "I mean it though. I feel stupidly vulnerable right now and the last thing I need is for any of you guys to see me like this."

Vergil was about to protest further when he realised that he understood exactly where she was coming from. He knew that were he in her position, he likely wouldn't even have bothered calling
due to the sheer shame he would have felt at having lost such a trivial battle. "...I understand," he said reluctantly. "I wish you a quick recovery."

"Thank you. And hey, nothing to stop us hanging out once I'm back!"

"Of course. Let me know if there is anything I can do before then."

"Ah Vergil, I'm not used to you being so caring," Lady laughed. "It's kinda sweet in an uncanny sort of way."

"If that's the case, I shall make it my personal goal to be less caring going forward. Just for you," Vergil said smugly.

"Well hey, I never said I hated it or anything," Lady replied. "Anyway, have a good time at the orphanage; we can talk about it when we next see each other!"

"Until then," Vergil agreed, ending the call after they had both said their farewells. He sat down heavily on the sofa and let out an irritated sigh. It was only as he looked over at the piece of paper containing the list of various restaurants that he realised he still hadn't asked Lady what she actually liked.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry this has taken so long! I've had a lot of things taking my time up with work and personal life recently, so I just haven't had the time to write ;__; Apologies it's a little shorter given the time frame too, but I hope to have the next part up a little quicker... Thanks for sticking with it though!
"You seem even sadder than you did yesterday." Alisa's continual analysis of his emotional state brought Vergil back to his senses, and he blinked in shock a couple of times as he realised that she was currently sitting in front of him, staring at him far too closely.

He was seated in the orphanage's dining room once more, this time for breakfast. It hadn't been what he had planned to do when he left the house that morning, but when he had turned up at Nero's house and found his son sitting in a taxi, he had felt compelled to join him, lest he anger him even further following yesterday's events. "Why aren't you eating with your friends?" Vergil asked, glancing around the room. He had once again found himself sitting in the corner by himself.

"Did she say no?" Alisa asked, ignoring his question.

"...Not quite," Vergil replied reluctantly. "She just had a few things come up that require her to be away for a little while."

"Did you offer to go to her instead?"

"I-" Vergil paused as he felt his level of frustration rising. "...It's not that simple," he huffed, desperately hoping that Nero or Kyrie would join them so that he wouldn't have to explain himself any further.

The rest of yesterday evening had not been pleasant for Vergil. It had taken Dante a long time to call him back, and when he did, it seemed that they had made no progress at all. The orphanage had apparently been unable to disclose anything about 'Christian' due to a thing that Dante referred to as 'Data Protection'. The younger twin stated that he had even tried flirting with the woman on the phone, still with no luck. Dante had also tried talking to Nero about the issue, who just apologised quoted the same thing.

"Not even if your own father's life is at risk?" Dante had asked, to which Nero pointed out, just as Dante had to Vergil, that Christian hadn't actually done anything yet that was worth risking a potential lawsuit for.

What had irritated Vergil even more however, was when Dante had mentioned offhand what had happened to Lady and asked if Vergil had heard from her recently. Vergil had casually tried to ask if Dante knew where she was, to which Dante had just burst out laughing and said "Nice try," before changing the topic. And now, Vergil had found himself whisked away to the orphanage at an ungodly hour for 'socialisation training'. They didn't even have any decent tasting coffee at the facility.

"You've been staring into the distance for like, twenty minutes," Alisa mused.

"You seem like a smart child," Vergil said, not wishing to dwell on the topic of Lady any further. "What do you know about 'data protection'?"

"Absolutely nothing," Alisa admitted truthfully. "But I can probably ask one of the grown-ups for you if you like?"

"Forget it," Vergil said, shaking his head. "Do you happen to know who deals with the employee
and supplier records for this establishment?"

"Um..." Alisa tapped her foot thoughtfully as she rubbed her chin. "Maybe you can talk to the adoption ladies about it? I think they do other stuff when they don't have any potential parents to deal with - they might know?"

Vergil shuddered as he remembered the three women he had become acquainted with the day before. "...Perhaps I shall make some enquiries with them later today," Vergil said reluctantly.

"Hey guys, how are things?" Nero asked suddenly, walking over. "Nice to see you've made a friend Vergil, good job."

"How long must I remain in this stuffy dining room?" Vergil asked, looking over Alisa's head at his son. "The ventilation in here is less than optimal."

"No-one's forcing you to stay in here," Nero said, crossing his arms. "In fact, most of the kids have gone back to the playrooms already."

Vergil looked around and discovered that the room was, in fact, mostly empty now. It seemed he had been lost in thought for longer than he'd believed. "Has it stopped raining yet?" he enquired.

"Briefly," Nero replied. "It's kind of on and off though, so I think most of the kids are choosing to stay inside."

"That's great!" Alisa exclaimed, much to Nero and Vergil's confusion. "That means we can try playing some video games together," she said, grinning mischievously at Vergil.

"I... What?" Vergil asked, glancing nervously at Nero.

“I wanted to play with you yesterday, but you randomly disappeared for some reason,” Alisa pouted. “I figured you’d gone off to meet your lady friend.”

“Lady friend?” Nero asked, raising an eyebrow. “Something you need to tell me?”

“Nothing that need concern you,” Vergil said, standing up. “Very well, child. Take me to these ‘video games’ of which you speak; anything is better than sitting in this room any longer.” Alisa let out an excited squeal and jumped out of her seat. She grabbed Vergil’s sleeve and started dragging him towards the games room.

“Uh, I really don’t think this is a good idea...” Nero said hesitantly, following behind them. “Those things are pretty expensive to replace and...”

“How rude of you to assume I will damage them,” Vergil said with a slight smirk, which did nothing to alleviate Nero’s concerns.

“No, seriously,” Nero said, jogging ahead and blocking the exit. “Besides, Vergil has to do some computer lessons Alisa, he doesn't have time to be playing silly games.”

“That’s okay, this can be part of his learning!” Alisa said as Vergil pushed his way past. Nero let out a defeated sigh and followed the pair into the gaming room. He observed them closely as Alisa showed off the various systems plugged into televisions dotted around the room.

“What is this?” Vergil asked, stopping behind a slightly older boy and squinting at the screen.

“Huh? I dunno, I don’t really play action games,” Alisa said, also pausing to watch the game.
“It’s called Angels Can Weep,” the boy said, looking over his shoulder briefly. “It’s about these two angel sisters that were separated as children, who found each other by accident while trying to save the Earth.”

“Interesting…” Vergil said, watching intently as a white-haired woman clad in red impaled what appeared to be a row of grotesque looking beasts with an oversized spear of some sort.

“That’s Delilah,” the boy said absently as he continued to mash the buttons on his controller. “The things she’s killing are actually angels, they just look like demons.”

“And the sister?” Vergil asked.

“You’ll see her any second now…” the boy replied as the last angel disintegrated. “I’ve played this a billion times. This next cut scene is great.”

Vergil watched as the scene faded to black before showing a shot of ‘Delilah’ walking up a set of stairs. At the top was a white-haired figure clad in blue with her back to the camera. “Verity,” Delilah growled. “I finally found you.”

“Took you long enough,” ‘Verity’ said, turning to face her sister. “Though given we’ve been apart for twenty years, I suppose another few hours don’t really make much of a difference.”

“Why did you run?!” Delilah demanded. “If you’d stayed… If we’d worked together… This would have been over with by now…”

“I work best alone,” Verity said coldly, as a set of twin blades appeared in her hands. “A weakling like you would only slow me down.”

“Why Verity?! We’re sisters! Why do you continue to run? What do you want that I can’t give you?!”

“I want power!” Verity yelled, rushing forward.

Vergil let out a surprised gasp as the scene suddenly transitioned back into gameplay and the two sisters started to fight.

“You uh, doing okay there pops?” Nero asked as Vergil continued to stare at the screen, clearly entranced.

“This Verity woman,” Vergil said absently as he observed her jumping back and forth, evading Delilah’s blows. “Where can I find her?”

“You… do realise she’s not real right?” Nero asked as Alisa let out a giggle.

“What?” Vergil asked angrily, turning to face the two of them. “But look at her, she’s right there! They can’t have just got her image from nowhere!”

“She’s computer generated,” Nero said, stifling his laughter. “She looks real, but that’s just because game graphics are so good these days. I guess it can be hard to tell the difference, especially for someone like you who’s probably never seen anything like this before.”

“Why would someone go to such efforts create something like this if it’s all fake?” Vergil asked, looking slightly crestfallen.

“Because it’s fun,” the boy said as Delilah’s spear impaled Verity’s chest. The blue angel coughed
up some blood as she fell to the ground.

“Now I’m inspired!” Verity grinned. The screen flashed a luminescent blue, before revealing a more majestic looking version of the angels Delilah had been fighting earlier standing in Verity’s place.

“Aww shoot, she entered her Angel Provocation before I could get her health down low enough!” the boy yelled frustratedly. He pressed a button on his own controller and Delilah did the same, this time with a flash of red.

“I’m getting bored,” Alisa said, tugging on Vergil’s coat. “Come on, I didn’t finish showing you around.”

“Good idea,” Nero agreed. “Besides, Alisa’s not old enough to be playing this game, so she shouldn’t be watching it either. Only the older kids are allowed in this corner.”

Vergil let out a reluctant sigh as he allowed himself to be dragged away, the sounds of clanging metal and angelic screeches still ringing in his ears. Eventually they ended up at the more ‘child friendly’ end of the room, where Julio, Kyle and Carlo were huddled over a small box, all staring intently at the screen above them. The screen appeared to be split into three this time, with each one containing what seemed to be a small car of some sort.

“Quit cheating!” Kyle yelled.

“It’s not cheating if I’m using stuff from the game!” Julio shouted back.

“Guys!” Nero called, walking over to them. “First of all, what have I told you about sitting so close to the screen? Use the seats already!” He stood with his hands on his hips as the three boys let out annoyed grumbles and paused the game, before standing up and moving over to the sofa in front of the TV. “Much better. Now remember, play nice okay?”

“Whatever,” Julio said, unpausing the game.

“This seems less interesting,” Vergil stated.

“Maria Kars can actually be quite fun if you know what you’re doing,” Alisa shrugged. “What I really wanted to show you though was Yuu Sports.”

“Okay, I might have to draw the line here,” Nero said. “If he ends up throwing the controller at the TV-“

“He won’t!” Alisa protested. “...Probably.”

“Let’s just get this over with,” Vergil said, rubbing his temples. He was starting to get a slight headache.

“Okay, let’s go!” Alisa said excitedly, pushing Vergil over to a slightly larger television with a lot more space around it. There was currently a small group of kids in front of the TV waving what seemed to be small white sticks around. As they did so, what looked to Vergil to be strange malformed blobs hit a tennis ball back and forth between them on the screen.

“What madness is this?” Vergil asked as the kids jumped back and forth, as though they were playing a real game of tennis.

“Isn’t it amazing?” Alisa asked excitedly.
“How does it work?” Vergil queried as a scoreboard suddenly appeared on screen.

“That’s not important,” Alisa said, walking over to the other kids and asking if they could have a turn. Once the children had agreed (albeit with some protest), Alisa walked over to Nero and Vergil and thrust some controllers into their hands. “You might as well join us Nero, it’ll be more fun that way!” She looked up at Nero pleadingly, sensing his hesitation.

“...All right fine, but only for a little while,” Nero sighed. “Then I really need to take Vergil back to the office-”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever,” Alisa said, going back to the title screen. “I made a character for you last night Vergil, I hope you don’t mind,” she added, selecting a blob on the screen that - to her credit - looked remarkably like Vergil.

“This is meant to be me?” the real-life version asked. “He looks…”

“He looks just like you,” Nero laughed, selecting his own avatar. “Right down to the constant scowl, good job Alisa.”

“I don’t really look this angry… Do I?” Vergil asked. He looked around for reassurance and let out annoyed grunt when Alisa and Nero both averted their gaze. “... Just hurry up and do what you need to do already.”

“Okay, first of all, tie the strap around your wrist - I can’t stress how important that is,” Nero said, trying the controller to his father.

“Pick a sport,” Alisa offered. “Is there one you particularly like?”

“...I don’t see anything relating to swordsmanship here, so not really,” Vergil grumbled after looking through the options.

“Oh actually, the sequel has a sword game I think. Right, Nero?”

“I’m not sure, but we don’t really have time to try and find it. Maybe later, but for now let’s just choose something,” Nero said, keeping an eye on the clock. The rest of the workers would be in soon, and he wanted to get some training in while he and Vergil still had the office to themselves.

“Okay then, bowling,” Alisa decided. “That’s a nice starter game for someone who has never played.” She quickly explained the controls to Vergil who just nodded and watched in mild bemusement as the other two took their turns.

“Such foolishness,” he muttered as they swung their arms back and forth. When it came to his turn, he ended up dropping the ball behind his character more times than he could count. When he finally managed to throw it forward, his action was so weak that the ball just rolled off to the side without hitting anything. “My one seems to be broken,” he stated as the same thing happened a second time.

“Nah, you just need to practice!” Alisa said. “Watch, like this.” Vergil watched them closely but found himself still unable to throw the ball correctly, no matter how many times he tried. After multiple attempts and increasing levels of anger starting to radiate from Vergil, they decided to try a different sport. Baseball and golf didn’t go much better, with Vergil continually misjudging his swings and missing pretty much everything he tried to hit. Tennis was somehow even worse, with Vergil finding himself paired up with an AI character as there were only three of them playing.

“This man is an imbecile!” he yelled as the character next to him missed yet another hit and started
running around in circles. By now he had removed his coat and was starting to sweat slightly from all the movement. On more than one occasion the controller had been thrown, thankfully saved from smashing through the television by the small strap tied around Vergil’s wrist. “If I ever find out who he is I am going to-”

“Hey calm down, you’re not much better yourself,” Nero said, earning a terrifying glare from Vergil.

“M-Maybe we should finish this by trying out boxing…” Alisa suggested. “You two can face each other, it should be fun!”

“I’ve had enough of this,” Vergil said, trying to untangle himself from the controller. “This is a pathetic pastime for-” he trailed off as he caught Alisa staring up at him sadly.

“I’m sorry…” she mumbled. “I just thought it would cheer you up a little, I didn’t mean to make you mad…”

Vergil let out an irritated sigh. “…What do I need to do for this one?” he asked curtly. He tightened the strap again and turned to face the screen.

Alisa’s face instantly lit up, and she handed each of the pair an add-on for their controller. “This one is a lot easier,” she said. “You just have to move the controllers as if you were punching each other.”

“I don’t see why I should need a computer device for that,” Vergil said, glancing at Nero out of the corner of his eye.

“Just follow the instructions,” Nero said, kicking Vergil lightly on the leg.

Surprisingly Alisa had been right, and Vergil found this one a lot easier. She watched in awe as he continually beat Nero into oblivion on the screen, until Nero couldn’t take it anymore and slumped into the sofa. “All right, all right, you win,” Nero said, waving a hand in the air. He looked around and realised that a small group of children had gathered, impressed by Vergil’s skills.

“You do not wish to try again?” Vergil asked smugly, panting slightly from the exertion.

“We don’t have time,” Nero groaned, leaning his head on the back of the sofa. “Man, Kyrie is gonna kill me when she finds out how much of the morning we wasted on this…”

“Does anybody else dare challenge the blue devil?” Alisa asked the group of children. “Anyone who wins gets a sweet from me, but lose and-”

“Alisa!” Nero called over. “What have I told you about bribing people?”

“It’s not bribery, it’s betting,” Alisa said, crossing her arms.

“That’s not much better,” Nero said, pushing himself to his feet. “Grab your coat and let’s go,” he said to Vergil. “And make sure the Yamato doesn’t fall out when you pick it up,” he whispered to him angrily. Despite Nero’s protests the day before and the somewhat unfavourable reaction Vergil had gotten from the children, he had still insisted on wearing his usual outfit and bringing his sword along today.

“Perhaps I shall return here at some point,” Vergil said to Alisa and the other children, bowing slightly. “Thank you for introducing me to such an odd activity.” He joined Nero as they headed to the rear of the building where the offices were.
“Okay, be honest - how much do you remember from yesterday?” Nero asked as Vergil stared blankly at the computer in front of him.

“I wonder if I could track down the person Dante sold Beowulf to…” Vergil pondered, not really listening.

“Dad!” Nero’s yell pulled Vergil out of his train of thought. He looked up and saw Nero shaking his head in disappointment. “You need to focus. Please?”

Vergil let out a thoughtful hum. “If I do as you say, will you help me in return?” he asked.

“If this is about your landlord, then no,” Nero said. ‘I’d love to help, really, but there’s nothing I can do right now unless I have a reasonable cause to break the rules. Turning up and handing over some weird jar isn’t exactly enough of a reason to go snooping around classified documents.”

“What about this then - You must have met him at some point. Did anything seem strange about him to you?”

Nero considered the question for a moment before shrugging. “It’s like I said at the dinner, he just came by one day to see how things were going and we got talking. I didn’t sense anything odd from him. As far as I can tell he just came into possession of this apartment and needed to use it somehow, so he decided to give it to you. It only came up by accident when I mentioned that Nico was mostly living in her van these days; he didn’t even start the conversation about it.”

“Why were you talking about Nico?” Vergil asked.

“Huh? I dunno man, it was ages ago. Look, maybe this is all just-”

“Did he ever actually state which supplier he was from?” Vergil pressed further.

“Duh, of course he did. He had ID and everything, we don’t just let random people in. He was… uh…” Nero trailed off. “Coffee!” he said at last. “Yeah, I think he supplies us with our coffee. And maybe the tea, I’m not sure.”

Vergil looked down at the steaming mug of coffee in front of him and pushed it away slightly. “Why would a coffee supplier come to check on the orphanage?” he asked. “Doesn’t that seem a little odd to you?”

“A lot of our suppliers come and say hi,” Nero said defensively. “Wouldn’t you want to know where your products were going?”

“Not as long as I got paid,” Vergil answered. “I just don’t understand why he would give a complete stranger that he’s never met a free apartment. It doesn’t make sense.”

“Well, he said it was because he felt sorry for you,” Nero said. “He said he’d been in a similar situation before and wanted to help you out.”

“And you were talking about me why?” Vergil asked, somewhat irritated. “You know I don’t like people knowing my private business.”

“Well now that one was his fault,” Nero said. “Apparently word got around that I’d found my birth father and he was curious about it. No idea how though.”

“What did you tell him about me?”
“The same lie I’ve been telling everyone,” Nero sighed. “I said you abandoned me at birth to go and fight in the army, and that everyone assumed you were dead until you suddenly turned up a while back. I said you were ‘too traumatised’ to explain where you had been and left it at that.”

“...First of all, that is a pathetic lie,” Vergil said coldly. “I hope you haven’t told that to too many people.”

“...Only those who have asked, which isn’t many,” Nero said, blushing slightly in embarrassment. “I didn’t know what else to say, okay?”

“Well, I wish you had consulted with me first; I probably could have come up with something much better. Second of all, how can he possibly have been in a ‘similar situation’ to that?”

“Not the army bit, the living arrangements bit. He said he rented a room in an awful place once and would have done anything to get out as long as it didn’t result in homelessness,” Nero clarified.

Vergil let out a sigh. “You disappoint me, Nero,” he said sadly. “I would have expected my son to be more intelligent than this.”

“Hey! What gives? Everything I’ve told you sounds perfectly reasonable to me!”

“I don’t want you to talk about me to anyone else, do you understand?”

“Yeah sure, whatever,” Nero huffed.

“If you’ll excuse me for a moment, I need to make a phone call,” Vergil stated, rising from his seat. Nero just nodded and let him go, suddenly feeling rather self-conscious. Vergil stepped outside and dialled Dante’s number, praying that he would be awake this early. After a few rings, there was a muffled rustling noise before a slurred voice answered.

“Dante’s closed, please call between the hours of-”

“Dante, it’s me.”

“Oh... Hey Vergil. Gimme a sec, I’m lying face down in my own drool...” Vergil waited impatiently as he heard Dante push himself up from his pillow, yawn far too loudly, and presumably move to sit on the edge of the bed. “‘Sup?”

“There is definitely something strange about the man that came to my apartment,” Vergil said quickly.

“Well no shit. We’ve already talked about this remember? Is that really the reason you decided to wake me up at...” Dante paused. “Huh, it’s almost nine. Thought it would be earlier. Guess that’s what I get for helping Trish with her research all night.”

“Did you find anything useful?”

“Did you? You called me, remember?”

“I’ve been speaking with Nero,” Vergil said, leaning against the wall outside the office. “He told me some things which may be of interest. Are you free at the moment? I can come over.”

“...Don’t you have a job to do?” Dante asked, yawning again.

“This is more important than some job I didn’t even want to begin with,” Vergil said angrily.
“Ouch, don’t let Nero hear you say that,” Dante said, chuckling slightly.

“Look, are you available or not?”

“No, I’m not actually. I’m not even dressed for crying out loud. Gimme a call on your lunch break or something and we’ll see then,” Dante said irritatedly.

“All right, fine,” Vergil agreed. “That should give me some time to make some further enquiries as well.”

“Awesome. Can I go back to bed now?”

“...Have you heard any further from her?” Vergil asked quietly.

“Lady? Not since last night. You know, you can call her if you want; you don’t need anyone’s permission.”

“I know that,” Vergil snapped. “I was just wondering if she’d spoken with you.”

“She barely ever speaks to me these days,” Dante said. “It actually kinda hurts, not gonna lie.”

“You can call her too, you know,” Vergil replied.

“I think she’d rather hear from you,” Dante mumbled. “Now leave me alone so I can get my beauty sleep.”

“I fear if it is beauty you are after, you will have to sleep for an eternity,” Vergil smirked.

“Catch you later, ya bastard,” Dante said, hanging up.

Vergil took a deep breath and gave himself a moment to try and clear his thoughts before heading back inside the office. “Ya done?” Nero asked, tapping away at the keyboard.

“For now,” Vergil stated, taking a seat again as Nero stood up.

“I’ve decided to just go straight into teaching you how to use our system,” Nero said, pointing at the screen. “We can talk about how I got here another time.”

“As you wish.”

The rest of the morning went about as well as one would expect when it came to anything involving Vergil and computers. At some point the rest of the office turned up for work, and Vergil gave them nothing more than a slight nod in greeting, doing his best to focus on what Nero was telling him. By the time lunch came around, they had made almost no progress, but they both felt satisfied that they had at least tried.

“Hey, I was wondering if you maybe wanted to get lunch together somewhere in town today?” Nero asked as they stepped out of the office.

“Just the two of us?”

“Yeah, I thought it might be nice,” Nero said, nervously biting one of his nails. “Kind of as an apology for being so harsh yesterday.”

Vergil looked Nero up and down and sighed. He had planned to use part of his lunch break to go
and talk to the adoption management women, and the rest to go and visit Dante. A large part of him was still tempted to do so, but he knew deep down that it would probably be wiser to go along with Nero’s wishes, especially if he wanted his help with solving this case. “What sort of thing did you have in mind?” Vergil asked, hoping to calculate if he would have enough time left over to complete at least one of the tasks he had intended to carry out.

“Oh I dunno, nothing too fancy I guess. Maybe just one of those little cafes you see dotted about. Coffee and a sandwich or something?” Nero suggested.

“Didn’t you tell me that all of the nearby facilities are quite a distance away?”

“It’s cool, I can call us a cab.”

Vergil cursed internally. He definitely wouldn’t have time to do anything else at this rate. “What are the plans for after lunch?” he asked. He supposed he could always delay things by a couple of hours.

“Nothing in particular,” Nero replied. “Your computer training is done for today, so I thought you might want to spend some more time with the kids. Or maybe you could hang out with Francesco and Alessandro in the kitchen - they’re still desperate to see your rumoured cooking skills in action.”

“That could be a pleasant way to spend the afternoon,” Vergil nodded, intending to sneak away the moment Nero took his eyes off him.

“Great! Okay then, gimme a few minutes to arrange some transport for us and we can be on our way.”

Vergil cleared his throat and pulled his coat back slightly, revealing the Yamato. “You know, I could just…”

“Honestly? I’d rather not. That whole portal thing still kinda freaks me out,” Nero said. “Go wait outside, I’ll be with you soon.”

Vergil took the opportunity to give Dante a quick call to let him know that he wouldn’t be coming over until later that afternoon after all. He was surprised when Dante actually sounded unhappy about this, advising that Trish had turned up just a few minutes ago with yet another pile of books to look through. “Seems like I’m gonna be busy for a while…” Dante groaned, sounding just as tired as he had that morning. “You’d better be grateful for this, I tell ya.”

“No one is asking you to do all of this,” Vergil stated, fiddling with the flower in his buttonhole that had remained there since yesterday. It seemed to perk up a little every time he touched it, continuing to look almost as fresh as it had when it was picked. “I am perfectly capable of handling this on my own.”

“Yeah but I’d never forgive myself if I let something happen to you after all the progress we’ve made,” Dante said, surprisingly earnestly. “I want to figure this out just as much as you do.”

“Indeed… Well, do let me know if you find out anything of use, and I shall do the same. I’ll divulge what Nero told me when we meet later on; I am not sure who I can trust around here.”

“Sure.” Dante paused. “I, uh, spoke with Lady by the way.”

“Is that so?” Vergil asked, trying to sound disinterested and failing.
“Yeah. Trish called her so I joined in on loudspeaker. She’s recovering pretty quickly it seems, but then I’d expect nothing less from her. I asked if she wanted anyone to visit yet, but it’s still a no I’m afraid,” Dante explained.

“I see. I am glad she’s well.”

“I was thinking it might be nice to pay her a surprise visit if she’s not home in the next couple of days or so,” Dante suggested. “I know she said she doesn’t want anyone to see her, but Trish told me she’s probably just trying to act tough.”

“So you do know where she is then?”

“Trish does, and she says she’ll tell me if she needs to. I’ll let you know if we decide to go ahead with the visit.”

“You assume such things are of any interest to me,” Vergil said coldly. “I have more important things to be dealing with than checking in on her. She can look after herself.”

“Uh huh… You just keep telling yourself that. I’ll catch you later, brother.”

Vergil let out an annoyed grunt and ended the call just as Nero joined him outside. “Ride should be here any minute,” Nero said. “Everything okay?”

“Everything is fine,” Vergil stated. The two of them made their way over to the gates in silence. Dante’s words repeated in Vergil’s mind as he considered their meaning. *Just trying to act tough…* He wanted to see her, part of him knew that. But part of him was also reminded of the conversation he had engaged in with Lady herself. She had specifically told him she didn’t want anyone to visit her, could it really just be an act? She had certainly sounded sincere…

“...Dad?”

“Hm?”

“I’ve been talking to you for ages, have you even been listening?” Nero asked, tapping his foot impatiently.

“Of course I have,” Vergil lied.

“I’m worried about you,” Nero said. “You’ve been staring off into the distance a lot today and you seem super distracted. Plus…” Nero hesitated. “Apparently you disappeared for a few hours yesterday after I told you to go home. Is there something going on?”

“Not you as well,” Vergil grumbled. “Am I not allowed to go for a simple wander without everyone demanding to know where I’ve been?”

“Hey, no need to get angry,” Nero said, raising his hands. “It’s just… ya know, you have kind of an… unstable track record.”

“I can assure you that I am not up to anything sinister,” Vergil said. “We will speak no further of this matter.”

“Are you seeing someone?” Nero asked bluntly.

“I beg your pardon?”

“It’s cool if you are. I mean, it’s kinda weird from my perspective I guess, but I’m a grown man so
“What a preposterous accusation,” Vergil said calmly. “I barely have the confidence to manage my own existence, let alone deal with someone else’s.”

“You’re telling the truth?”

“Completely.”

Nero let out a sigh of relief, followed by a light chuckle. “Okay good. I know I said I was cool with it, but I’d still feel weird gaining a random step-mother outta nowhere - I’m still getting used to having a father!”

“Please never ask me anything like that ever again,” Vergil said, turning away from Nero to look down the road. “It looks like our taxi is here.”

The lunch between father and son was awkward, but not unpleasant. They had managed to find a small cafe tucked away on the corner of an alleyway. They got themselves some seats by a window and enjoyed a simple but delicious meal of sandwiches, followed by tea and muffins, much as they had done yesterday. Nero asked Vergil how things were going now that he was living alone, to which Vergil gave short, but polite answers. In return, Vergil asked if Nero had any interesting news, to which Nero replied that the only exciting thing to happen recently was that Nico had finally managed to get her van running again. It was clear that both of them were trying to avoid discussing anything too serious following their conversation earlier.

It was as they were finishing off the last of their tea that Vergil decided to ask a somewhat risky question. “Nero… If you had an acquaintance that got into some trouble and told you they didn’t want to see you, but you had a feeling that they actually did wish to see you, how would you proceed?”

Nero paused in the process of taking a sip from his cup, his arm half raised. “This is about Lady, isn’t it?” he asked matter-of-factly.

“…Not necessarily,” Vergil replied, swirling the last of the tea around in his cup before finishing it in one gulp.

“Dante told me what happened,” Nero said. “I was pretty surprised actually, it’s not like her to get injured like that. We figured something might have distracted her.”

“Apparently it was just an accident,” Vergil said, giving up on his attempts to hide who he was talking about.

“Hmm, maybe,” Nero said absently, finishing his own drink. “Anyway, I say if she doesn’t want anyone to visit, then leave her be. She knows what she wants.”

“I heard Trish thinks she was just putting up a brave front,” Vergil said, painfully aware that he should probably change the topic before Nero started to become suspicious.

“Yeah well, I guess it’s not really any of our business,” Nero said, checking the clock behind the counter. “Come on, we should probably head back.”

“Of course.”

As soon as they were back, Vergil made his excuses and stated that he planned to head for the
kitchen as discussed. When Nero offered to take him, Vergil quickly shook his head and advised
that Nero should probably check on the children and catch up with Kyrie. He walked towards the
kitchen and took a right just before entering, once he was sure that Nero wasn’t looking. He
quickly made his way over to the posh looking office he had been shown the day before. Taking a
deep breath, he raised his fist and lightly knocked on the door.

“Come in!” an overly enthusiastic voice called from within. Vergil slowly opened the door and
stepped inside. There was just one woman present today, and it seemed to be the one that had
introduced herself to Vergil yesterday. Perhaps he was in luck...

“Cassandra wasn’t it?” Vergil asked, forcing a smile. “How are you today?”

“It’s Cassidy,” the woman replied, her eyes widening as she saw who her unexpected guest was.
“Can I help you?”

“I was wondering if you could…” Vergil said, a plan quickly forming in his mind. He walked over
and sat on the edge of her desk. “I missed a visit from my landlord yesterday and he left a note
asking me to call him, but the number doesn’t seem to work. Apparently, he’s a supplier here, so I
was wondering if you might have any details for him, or know someone who would?” He looked
into her eyes, noting the blush that formed on her cheeks as he did so.

“T-That’s not something I could help with,” Cassidy stammered nervously.

“Can’t, or won’t?” Vergil asked, leaning a little closer. “I would really appreciate it if you could
help me,” he added, tracing his fingers lightly over her desk, only just avoiding her hands. He felt
like a complete and utter fool and had no idea what he was thinking, but he figured this method
was at least worth a shot in the limited time he had before anyone else showed up.

“C-Can’t…” Cassidy said, her eyes following his movements. “We… Um, we don’t have access to
those records.”

“Do you know who does?” Vergil asked, sitting up straight again and returning to a more neutral
tone now that he knew this woman would be of no use to him.

“HR probably does,” Cassidy said. “Though I’m not sure if they’ll be able to tell you anything…”

“Could you remind me where they work?” Vergil asked, forcing another smile.

“Just down the hall,” Cassidy replied, looking up at Vergil with a genuine grin plastered across her
face.

“Thank you,” Vergil said, standing up and bowing. “Much appreciated.”

“I-I can take you there if you like?” Cassidy offered.

“That’s quite alright, I wouldn’t want to distract you from your work,” Vergil said, yanking the
door open perhaps a little too forcefully.

“Honestly, it’s not a problem-”

“Have a good afternoon,” Vergil said cordially, slamming the door shut behind him. Now to see if
the HR department would be willing to tell him anything...

He hastily made his way over to the offices a few doors down, fully prepared to do whatever it
would take to obtain the information he needed. Vergil was not one to bow to the will of others;
while Dante had failed, Vergil did not plan to give up so easily. If he could get them to divulge anything, even just the smallest detail, he would likely have this issue resolved in no time. He checked to make sure there was no one else around. Once he was certain that he was in the clear, he pulled his coat back slightly to reveal the Yamato and lightly rested a hand on its hilt. Also in contrast to Dante’s attempts, Vergil had the advantage of being able to physically engage with the person that stood between them and answers. If all else failed…

He knocked lightly on the frosted glass.

Chapter End Notes

Hey everyone!

I'm going to be away for a little while on a much needed holiday from next week, so there may be a slight delay before the next update, apologies! Thank you for your patience though, and I hope you'll all continue to enjoy the story when it eventually updates~
“No.”

“Excuse me?”

“I will not be giving you access to those records,” the man behind the desk stated, drumming his fingers impatiently. “And if you think you can intimidate me with that sword of yours, you are sorely mistaken.”

“I think you misunderstand the situation,” Vergil growled. “This is not some mere prop, this is—”

“I said it to your dumbass brother yesterday, and I’ll say it again to you today, since the pair of you seem to be too thick-skulled to understand - Supplier and employee records are confidential information. You’ll just have to wait for this ‘landlord’ of yours to come by again in person.”

Vergil looked around the small office, painfully aware that everyone’s eyes were currently trained on him. He had not counted on this happening. His expectation had been that one glimpse of Yamato would be enough to scare whoever he spoke with into telling him whatever he wanted. Instead, he had six pairs of eyes staring at him as everyone shook their heads in disapproval. He cursed internally to himself as he weighed up his options. It would be so easy to just teleport into the office once it was closed, but he knew he would be hopeless when it came to actually navigating the computer system. He once again found himself angrily wondering why businesses didn’t just store things on paper like they used to. It would also be easy to cut down everyone in the room save for one, and demand that they assist him, but even he knew that wouldn’t end well. It seemed he would have to try other means to obtain the information at a different time, which meant that he would have to reluctantly retreat for now, despite his prior intentions.

“...You have made a very powerful enemy today,” Vergil hissed, backing towards the door. He glanced around the room briefly, causing everyone to avert their gaze, before he let out an irritated grunt and stormed outside.

“Vergil?” Nero’s voice called out from down the hall. “What are you doing here? We’ve been looking all over for you.”

Vergil looked up to see Nero walking towards him with an extremely unhappy expression on his face. Vergil let out a sigh, wondering what sort of lie he could come up with at such short notice. Fortunately, it seemed he wouldn’t need to.

“This is about that guy again isn’t it?” Nero asked, coming to a halt in front of his father. “You need to give this a rest already - No one is gonna tell you anything, you know this.”

“Sometimes you just have to ask,” Vergil said, looking away. “It’s important to cover all potential leads.”

“I can’t believe you stood up the cooks for this,” Nero said sadly. “Do you have any idea how disappointed they were when they found out that you were meant to be spending the afternoon with them?”

“Why should I care?” Vergil asked, finally facing Nero. “I met them for mere minutes; they mean
nothing to me.” Nero’s fist collided with Vergil’s jaw suddenly, taking him completely off guard and causing him to stagger slightly. “What—”

“That’s enough!” Nero shouted angrily. “The whole point of you being here is to try and fix that shitty attitude of yours, but so far all it’s done is make me realise what a damn asshole you are!” Nero started to pace up and down the small hallway. “It’s barely even been two days, and already you’ve managed to threaten or piss off over half my staff, not to mention the emotional and physical trauma you caused poor Marcus.” Nero pointed at his forehead when Vergil raised an inquisitive eyebrow at him, reminding his father who he was referring to. “I’m trying to help you, really I am. But it’s impossible to do that if you refuse to help yourself.”

“I’ll have you know that I’ve been trying my best to fit in here,” Vergil said calmly. “I have done everything you asked me to, and I’ve even made an effort to talk to more people than I would usually be comfortable with. I fail to see what your issue is.”

“See, that’s exactly it,” Nero said, coming to a halt and jabbing a finger in Vergil’s face. “You don’t even realise what you’re doing!” He let out an exasperated sigh. “Look, I know it’s been hard for you,” Nero said, starting to pace again. “Maybe you really do have some form of PTSD, I dunno. But…” He struggled to organise his thoughts. “I… I can’t help you to become a better person if you insist on only doing things your way. You need to actually listen to what people tell you for a change.”

“As I say, I have done everything you’ve asked of me,” Vergil said, following Nero’s movements with his eyes.

“Then what are we doing standing outside the HR office?” Nero asked.

“I merely took a slight detour for personal reasons,” Vergil replied. “You must understand I have a rather pressing issue which I am currently looking into.”

“And again, I appreciate that,” Nero said. “But I already told you so many times that they wouldn’t be able to tell you anything, so why even bother?”

“Well, it’s not as if you’re doing anything to help,” Vergil said. “Honestly, I would expect more from you, Nero. Have you no interest in this case at all?”

“Of course I do, but there’s nothing further I can do within the orphanage—” He cut himself off and scowled at Vergil. “Wait a second, stop trying to throw me off topic,” he said irritably. “The point is, you lied to me about where you were going. And not only that, you dismissed Francesco and Alessandro as if they were nothing - That’s not how you’re meant to treat people! Remember, others have feelings, not everyone you encounter is just some demon for you to—”

“Is this conversation going anywhere or are you just going to keep shouting at me?” Vergil asked.

“What?”

“I am not a child, Nero. I will not stand here and allow someone to lecture me on social etiquette,” Vergil stated. “If you have nothing further to say then I shall be taking my leave.”

“You can’t just walk away from things you don’t like,” Nero said, following Vergil as he started to head down the hall. “That’s… That’s pathetic!”

Vergil stopped suddenly, causing Nero to almost slam into his back. “The only pathetic thing here,” Vergil said coldly, his whole body tensing. “Is how a descendant of Sparda ended up so weak.” He spun quickly, thrusting Yamato’s hilt into Nero’s sternum. A sharp crack filled the air.
as Nero fell to the ground, clutching his chest and wheezing. “Foolish boy,” Vergil growled, glaring down at his son. “Learn some respect for your elders.”

Before Nero could protest further, a portal opened up in the hallway. Vergil walked through it and disappeared, the last remnants of glowing light fading away just as Kyrie turned the corner.

The rain had started again as Vergil appeared in front of Lady’s apartment. He wasn’t entirely sure why he had decided to come here, especially since he knew she wouldn’t be inside. He supposed he just needed somewhere to escape to quickly, and neither home nor Dante’s place seemed particularly appealing at the moment. He closed his eyes and turned towards the sky, letting the water run over his face. He could feel both frustration and regret coursing through him, and the cool rain felt good on his hot skin. After a while, he let out a sigh and went to sit on the step outside Lady’s front door, burying his face in his knees. This would be difficult to come back from.

He wasn’t sure how long he sat there for, but he realised that he must have fallen asleep briefly when his phone started to ring, rousing him from his slumber. He pulled the device out of his pocket and saw that it was Dante calling. Nero had no doubt told him what happened, and Vergil didn’t much feel like talking about it right now. He cut the air in front of him again and threw the phone through the portal, hoping that it would land somewhere in his apartment. The rain was getting heavier again and Vergil stood up, intending to follow the discarded phone.

As he was about to step forward however, he paused and turned to face the door behind him. He wondered briefly whether it would count as trespass or burglary if he were to enter Lady’s dwelling without her permission. He hesitated, forming what even he realised was likely a terrible plan in his mind. He was considering going inside briefly to search for any clues which might indicate where Lady was staying, so that (as he was trying to convince himself) he would have the option of going to see her in an emergency. He told himself that he would not be going to see her today, as per her wishes. Instead he would just find out where she was, and return home before finally going to face Dante. He took a deep breath and turned to the side, slashing Yamato’s blade through the raindrops in front of him and stepping through.

What he had not expected was to bump straight into a pyjama wearing Lady, who let out a shrill scream and threw a bowl of boiling soup at his head, before backflipping into the corner of the living room and taking up a defensive stance. “Mary?” Vergil asked incredulously, flicking soup out of his eyes. “What are you doing here?”

“What am I doing here?!” Lady asked, straightening up when she realised who her unexpected visitor was. “I should be the one asking that, what the heck are you doing in my house?!”

“I…” Vergil trailed off, fully aware that he had no explanation for this that didn’t make it sound like he was stalking her. He stood silently in the doorway, dripping with both rainwater and soup. He could feel his face starting to heat up again, horrified that he had ruined his relationship with both Lady and his son in a matter of hours. “I should leave,” he said at last, fumbling for the door handle behind him.

“Just stay where you are,” Lady sighed. She grabbed some paper towels from the kitchen and started to walk over. Vergil continued to press himself against the door, preparing to flee as soon as he got the chance. He noted that Lady’s right forearm was in a cast, so at least she hadn’t been lying about being injured, even if she had been untruthful about where she was staying. “I’m sorry for covering you in soup,” she said, standing in front of him.

“...I am sorry for breaking into your house,” Vergil said, looking down at her. Fortunately it seemed he hadn’t been burnt, but he could feel his eyes starting to sting slightly as the liquid
continued to run down his face.

“Use these,” she said, thrusting the paper towels in Vergil’s direction.

“...Thank you,” he said, cautiously taking them and starting to pat himself dry.

“Lemme guess, you came here so you could try to figure out where I was right?” Lady asked, attempting to cross her arms and giving up once she remembered she had the cast on. “At least, I hope it was for that reason, otherwise we might have a problem.”

“Implying this isn’t a problem?” Vergil asked, finally relaxing a little. Surprisingly, she didn’t seem too mad at him, much to his relief.

“Well okay, this is still pretty weird,” Lady admitted. “But I did lie to you about where I was, so I guess we’re both in the wrong.”

“Somehow I feel like entering someone’s property uninvited is a little worse than lying,” Vergil said, looking for somewhere to dispose of the dirty towels. Lady let out a light snort and took them from him, walking back to the kitchen to throw them away.

“Well, I randomly barge into Dante’s place unannounced all the time, so I guess this isn’t that much different,” she said.

“I wasn’t thinking clearly, I apologise,” Vergil continued. “I’ve not had the best afternoon. Or the last couple of days for that matter…”

“Enough excuses,” Lady said, leaning against the kitchen counter and facing him. “You’re here now, lame explanations aren’t gonna fix that.” She grinned at him to let him know she was just kidding around when she noticed his expression darken slightly. “Can I get you something to drink?”

“You’re injured,” Vergil stated. “I shan’t inconvenience you.”

“Hey, I’m not gonna let some stupid hunk of plaster get in the way of things,” Lady said, waving her arm around. “I’ve been managing just fine. Why don’t you take a seat and I’ll make us both some coffee?”

“Why aren’t you with your friend?” Vergil asked, staying where he was.

“There…” Lady cleared her throat. “Look, there was no friend, okay? I managed to take care of things myself as always; I just didn’t want everyone turning up and seeing me like this.”

“You look perfectly fine to me,” Vergil said. “I see no cause to be embarrassed.”

“Yeah, well I was a lot worse yesterday,” Lady said. “Luckily for me, I heal pretty quickly.”

“Impressive,” Vergil admitted.

“Thanks,” Lady said, smiling slightly. “Not gonna lie though, it still hurts a lot. I was planning to just lie low for a while until I was completely better.”

“I am sorry for ruining said plans,” Vergil stated. “I am glad to see that you are still capable of defending yourself, however.”

“You know it!” Lady said proudly. “I could still take you on in a fight right now, no problem. So don’t try anything funny.”
“I wouldn’t dream of it,” Vergil said, watching her movements as she started to prepare coffee for the two of them. Her pyjamas comprised of shorts and a vest top, and he was trying his hardest not to think anything too inappropriate. He was both confused and annoyed at the fact that he had wanted to see her so badly, yet now he was here all he could think about was leaving. Perhaps this indecisiveness was one of the things that had caused Nero to be so displeased with him, he thought. He wondered what he had told Dante. Did this mean he would be fired? Perhaps that was a good thing… What if he lost the apartment? But then he wouldn’t have to worry about Christian as much...

A sharp flick to the middle of the forehead brought Vergil to his senses. “Hey, you okay?” Lady asked, preparing to flick him again if he didn’t answer.

“What was that for?” he grumbled, rubbing the spot she had hit.

“You were totally spaced out, I didn’t know what else to do,” Lady shrugged. She pointed towards the sofas again, where two mugs of coffee were sitting on the table in front of them. “You wanna actually sit down now?”

“I’m a terrible father,” Vergil said absently, walking over and taking a seat.

“Well yeah, what else is new?” Lady laughed. She cut her laughter short when she noticed how serious Vergil’s expression was. “Hey, did something happen?” she asked, sitting down next to him. Vergil glanced at her without turning to face her, unused to her sitting to close - they usually sat on different sofas whenever he visited.

“Nothing I wish to talk about right now,” Vergil stated.

“...Did you walk here?” Lady asked, watching a dark shape form around Vergil as the sofa started to absorb the moisture from his coat.

“I should just leave before I cause you more trouble,” he said. He started to stand up, only for Lady to pull him back down again.

“Well you’ve already ruined the sofa, might as well make it worth it,” she said, once again surprised at how brave she was becoming when it came to touching Vergil without warning. Just mere weeks ago, a similar action would likely have resulted in her having a blade to her throat right about now.

Vergil let out a sigh and picked up one of the mugs, wrapping his hands around it for warmth. It shouldn’t be him here, he thought. They had hated each other up until recently. Dante should be here, or Trish. Her real friends. “Why are you so nice to someone you’re meant to hate?” he asked.

“Who says I’m meant to hate you?” Lady asked, picking up the other mug.

“Common sense.”

“Hey now, let’s not start all that again,” Lady said. “We’re friends now, remember? I’m… not quite sure how it happened, but it did, so relax.”


“Hey, how’s the orphanage going?” Lady asked, hoping to lighten the mood. Vergil’s grip tightened on the mug he was holding, causing it to crack slightly. “Um, how about I just take that,” Lady said, prising the cup from his fingers. “You can have mine, I’ll just make a new one...” Silence hung in the air, interrupted only by the sound of boiling water and teaspoons clinking
against porcelain. Within a few minutes Lady was back by Vergil’s side. “...You just want this one?” she offered, when she noticed that Vergil had made no move to pick up the mother mug.

“I wish, just for once, that I could be happy and have nothing to worry about,” Vergil stated, taking the mug that Lady was holding out.

“Well hey, that shouldn’t be so hard,” Lady said, optimistic as always. “You’ve reconnected with your family, you’ve got a nice place to stay and an interesting job, what’s worrying you?”

“I’m constantly making mistakes,” Vergil said. “Nothing I do seems to be the right decision, and now…” He took a sip of coffee and sighed. “Now I think I’ve lost all of those things you just mentioned.”

“Nero’s pissed at you again, huh?” Lady asked, shaking her head. “You shouldn’t feel so bad you know, he’s the one in the wrong here. He needs to understand that you’re still trying to get used to things. He’s just being insensitive.”

“...I think I may have broken one of his ribs earlier,” Vergil mumbled into his cup.

“Oh,” Lady said bluntly. “Okay I guess I can see why he might be mad…”

“It was his fault,” Vergil said coldly. “Although I admit I may have overreacted.”

“You, uh, wanna talk about it?”

“If I do, I'll have to tell you the whole story, which will just cause you unnecessary stress,” Vergil said, glancing at her again. He again found himself questioning his behaviour. It would make far more sense to tell her about Christian; that way she could maybe do some research while she was recovering. She might even know something. But for some reason he didn’t want to bother her with all of this.

“Is this about the thing Dante and Trish are investigating?” Lady asked obliviously.

“They told you?”

“Of course! We always keep each other in the loop,” Lady explained. She looked at him for a moment and grinned mischievously. “Aww, were you all worried about getting me involved while I’m still injured?” she asked teasingly. “Well isn’t that just adorable.”

“Silence, foolish woman,” Vergil said, looking away and drinking from his mug again. “I just thought that you would be useless in your current state and did not wish to waste time explaining.”

“You’re allowed to care about people, you know,” Lady said, standing up. “No need to be embarrassed.”

“Where are you going?”

“I’m going to put on something warmer,” Lady said. And a little less revealing, she thought. “As soon as I’m back though, you’re telling me everything. I want to see if there’s anything I can do to help.”

Lady returned a short while later dressed in a tracksuit and wrapped in a large fluffy dressing gown. She’d brought one of her spare blankets with her, which she threw at Vergil, suggesting that they move over to the dry sofa so they’d be less cold. Vergil nodded and stood up, removing his coat in the process since that seemed to be the source of most of the dampness. He hung it over the back of
the sofa and moved over to the other one, where he was soon joined by Lady. He pulled the blanket around himself - albeit somewhat reluctantly - and proceeded to tell her everything he knew so far.

“...and I’m still not entirely sure why I decided to come here,” Vergil finished. He closed his eyes and laid his head on the back of the sofa, waiting for Lady to say something. She had remained silent throughout most of his story, merely offering the occasional nod and ‘hmm’.

“If this is what happens when I don’t see you for a few days, it’s no wonder you ended up in hell so many times,” Lady said at last. “I’m almost scared to blink in case a demon crashes through the wall to attack you or something.”

“It’s like I told you, misfortune just follows me everywhere,” Vergil said, mildly irritated that she wasn’t taking this seriously. “Besides, you managed to break your arm just a day after I saw you.”

“First of all, it was two days,” Lady corrected him. “I didn’t have the displeasure of seeing you on Sunday morning.” At this, Vergil opened his eyes and turned his head to glare at her, but said nothing. “Second of all, it seems like most of the stuff that happened was just because of a bit of bad luck and an insensitive son. I wouldn’t exactly say that was misfortune following you around.”

“You can’t blame Nero for all of this,” Vergil said, sitting up straight again. “I should have been less stubborn.”

“Okay, well maybe some of it is your fault…” Lady agreed. “And the whole rib breaking thing was probably a bit uncalled for.”

“Dante would have just walked it off,” Vergil sighed. “I need to remember that Nero isn’t as strong as we are. I forget that sometimes.”

“Speaking of Dante, you should probably talk to him,” Lady said. “He’s going to get suspicious otherwise.”

“You’re not wrong,” Vergil agreed. “But I’d like to stay here just a little longer, if I may.”

“That’s sweet of you and all, but Nero was right,” Lady said. “You can’t just keep avoiding your problems. Besides, you’ll never get anywhere with this Christian guy if you don’t go over there.”

“What if they ask where I’ve been?” Vergil asked. He knew he would have to go sooner or later, but the longer he could draw this out the better.

“Just tell them you fell asleep,” Lady suggested.

“That’s…”

“Partly true,” Lady pointed out. “Listen, how about this - go and talk to those guys and if you like, you can come back here afterwards and we’ll order some fast food or something.”

“That is not quite what I had in mind when I asked you to have dinner with me,” Vergil said, embarrassment creeping in when he remembered that he had done so. “Speaking of which, I believe I interrupted your lunch when I barged in unannounced. I hope you have not been suffering in silence this whole time.”

“Hey, don’t worry about it,” Lady said, also feeling somewhat self-conscious at the reminder that he had asked her to join him for a meal. “L-Listen… If you do decide to come back, we’ll just call it a late lunch, okay? Then your dinner plans won’t be ruined.”
“And if I don’t?”

“And at least let me know. I’m fine either way.”

“All right then,” Vergil agreed, standing up and stretching. His bones were getting stiffer in his old age, it seemed. “Thank you for your time,” he said, bowing.

“No problem. Maybe knock next time though, okay? Don’t forget your coat.”

“...I’ll call you,” Vergil said quietly, retrieving his coat and heading for the front door.

“And I’ll have a look into this Christian guy while you’re gone,” Lady added. “At least, as much as I can from my sofa,” she said, holding up her arm.

Vergil gave another slight bow and stepped outside.

“Brother, where have you been?!” Dante called over as Vergil stepped through the doors into Devil May Cry.

“I-"

“I tried calling you but you didn’t answer - I was starting to think about sending out a search party,” Dante said, walking over.

“I apologise, I was-"

Dante gave Vergil a light punch on the shoulder. “I’m glad you’re okay,” he said. “I was beginning to worry that the demon got you too.”

“...Demon?” Vergil asked, trying to hide the waver in his voice. He looked around the dingy room, which was currently scattered with multiple tomes and papers.

“Yeah, the one that attacked Nero?” Dante said, raising an eyebrow. “You must have heard, since it happened in the orphanage?”

“I...” Vergil trailed off. This was unexpected. “Nero sent me home early again,” he lied. “I was asleep and seem to have misplaced my phone, I apologise for any concern caused... Is Nero all right?”

“Well, he’s got a couple of cracked ribs, but I reckon he’ll live. The hospital fixed him up pretty quickly and sent him back home to rest. It’s probably best you go to see him, I bet he’d appreciate that,” Dante said, looking at Vergil with a hint of scepticism. “You should be proud of that son of yours, defending all those children like that.”

“I thought the orphanage was warded against low level demons?” Vergil asked, feeling both relieved and guilty as he realised what was going on.

“Yeah, it’s normally fine, but I guess one or two always slip through...” Dante said, rubbing his chin thoughtfully. “Anyway, how ’bout you spill the beans on what Nero told you so that you can get over there and visit him?”

“Right... Well-"

“Hold up,” Dante interrupted, stepping closer to Vergil and receiving a swat to the head in return. “Why do you smell of tomatoes?” Dante asked, rubbing the area where he had been struck.
“I had soup for lunch.”

“Does lunch involve showering in the stuff?” Dante chuckled. “Look at that, you even got some on your coat.”

“That’s not important right now, is it?” Vergil hissed angrily. He cursed himself for not returning to his apartment first.

“Well hey, maybe not to you, but Nero probably won’t appreciate you turning up smelling like a bottle of ketchup.”

“I’ll deal with it later,” Vergil growled, running a hand through his hair and noting how unpleasantly sticky it felt. “Anyway, about the information I have-”

“You wanna sit down?” Dante offered. They were currently still standing by the doors.

“This won’t take long,” Vergil stated, making no attempts to move.

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Vergil had been correct. Unlike when Nero was explaining, the information that Vergil divulged was brief and to the point. The whole explanation and discussion took no more than around five to ten minutes. Dante and Trish had learned little from their reading throughout the day.

“Wow, talk about a bunch of lies,” Dante said as they were finishing up.

“Is it any wonder that I was disappointed in Nero for believing such drivel?” Vergil asked.

“So I guess the key points are - why was he asking about Nico, and if he really did have some weird living situation, is there a way for us to find out more about that,” Dante said, thoughtfully, ignoring Vergil’s statement. “Oh by the way, we tried actually calling the number on his business card.”

“…You mean to say that that wasn’t one of the first things you did?” Vergil asked in disbelief.

“Well, we didn’t want to make it obvious that we knew something was off!” Dante said defensively. “Anyway, it actually does connect to some coffee place, but none of them had actually heard of this Christian guy, so I have no idea what’s up with that. Guess it makes a bit more sense after what you told me though.”

“A cover-up perhaps?” Vergil speculated.

“Who knows? Trish is looking into it as we speak,” Dante said.

“Ah, I had wondered where the doppelganger was…”

“You really ought to be nicer to her you know,” Dante huffed. “She’s doing a lot for this case just to make sure you’re safe.”

“She probably just sees it as any other job,” Vergil said dismissively. “If there is nothing further to discuss, then I shall be going.”

“Normally I’d ask you to stay for a drink, but I appreciate if you want to go and check in on Nero,” Dante said. “We should definitely hang out again sometime though. I might have some separate jobs coming up if you’re interested.”

“Keep me updated,” Vergil said, turning to leave. “I’ll let you know if I find my phone.”
Fortunately - or perhaps unfortunately - Vergil found his phone almost straight away when he entered his apartment. Once he saw the amount of calls and messages however, he found himself wishing he had accidentally thrown it into another realm. The majority seemed to be a series of voicemails from Nero, which Vergil only thought to check after a string of increasingly frustrated texts from his son. He dialled in the code as he has been shown before and listened.

“Call me back as soon as you get this!”

Click.

“Why the hell aren’t you answering?”

Click.

“Listen you asshole, you better appreciate what I’m doing for you-” The message was cut off by a series of painful sounding coughs. “Damn it…”

Click.

“Okay listen, and listen good. Anyone asks, I found you and sent you home early, ya hear? While you were gone, I found a demon trying to sneak its way in and fought with it, but it was a tough one and hit me pretty damn good.” A further series of coughs. “Luckily I-”

Click.

“Stupid time limits… Anyway, I beat it and it disintegrated but not before doing some damage. I’m not sure how much of this Kyrie buys, but it’s what we’re going with okay? You’re probably wondering why I’d go this far… Well, the truth is I-”

There were no more voicemails after this one, much to Vergil’s relief. He threw the phone onto his sofa and headed to the bathroom, wishing to shower as soon as possible. When he emerged a short while later, the device was ringing again, and he managed to answer just before it cut off.

“…Hello?”

“Finally!” Nero’s voice yelled on the other end. “Did you get my messages?”

“I did… The last one seemed to end somewhat abruptly though.”

“Forget that, listen up before Kyrie comes back,” Nero said quickly. “Don’t even think about coming to see me right now, okay? I don’t think I could handle seeing your face.”

“Noted.”

“Right. In case you’re worried, I’m fine. It’s just a couple of broken ribs and I’ll be back to normal in no time. I heal a lot faster now that I’ve got my arm back. As for your status right now… You’re not fired. You get to keep the apartment. No one needs to know what happened,” Nero explained.

“Why would you-”

“Because you’re my father,” Nero growled. “You’re some of the only family I have, and - despite your actions - I still care about you. I should have known better than to push you that far, so I can’t fully blame you for what happened.”

“I should not have acted so impulsively,” Vergil stated.
“Yeah well, maybe we both shouldn’t have done a few things,” Nero said. “Listen, I still had to tell people about you threatening the HR staff, so I think it’s best you have a couple of days off to let everything settle down. Like I said, you’re not fired, but you should wait until you hear further from me, okay?”

“…Is this what they call a suspension?” Vergil asked, once again remembering some of the workplace books he had read in preparation.

“Try not to think of it so negatively,” Nero said. “Why not use the time to hang out with Dante or work on this case a bit more?” Nero coughed before letting out a gasp. “Aw shoot, Kyrie is coming back. I’ll be in contact okay?”

“Nero…”

“Yeah?”

“…Thank you,” Vergil said quietly.

“It’s cool I guess. Catch you later, dad.”

Vergil stared at the darkened screen, his hand shaking slightly. Perhaps he wasn’t so misfortunate after all.

Chapter End Notes

I'm back! Thank you for waiting so long, and if you're still reading I really appreciate it, and hope you'll continue to enjoy it~
Thanks for the support :D
“I’m coming over,” Vergil stated, wondering if adding a spray of cologne to his current ensemble would be too much. He had spent a long time after ending his call with Nero sitting on the sofa, staring into nothing. He had spent perhaps an even longer time deliberating about whether going to see Lady was the best decision, and what exactly his intentions were if he did plan to go. A slight hunger pang was what had eventually convinced him, and he figured that eating with a companion would probably be better than doing so alone.

“You’ve been gone for quite a while - Did everything go okay?” Lady asked. It sounded like she was eating something in the background.

“In a manner of speaking,” Vergil replied, deciding to opt for a quick spritz after all.

“They weren’t too mad?”

“I’ll explain what I get there,” Vergil said, adjusting his hair in the mirror. He’d changed into a dark blue dress shirt and a pair of the more casual trousers he had bought during his shopping trip a while back. If it weren’t for his crippling self-loathing, he’d almost be willing to say that he looked rather handsome this evening. “Are you decent?” he asked.

“I’m dressed if that’s what you mean,” Lady said dryly. “Nothing especially fancy though.”

“A woman should feel comfortable in her own home,” Vergil said, casting an eye over his still damp coat. He had managed to wash away the soup stains, but vowed to himself that he would get it properly dry cleaned at some point. “Do you know what kind of food you would like?”

“I thought I’d leave that up to you,” Lady said yawning. “I kinda cheated a little and made some instant noodles, sorry…”

“We can skip the meal if you wish-”

“No, no!” Lady blurted out. “I just figured you weren’t coming back, and I was getting hungry is all - I’ll throw the rest away and we can still have food!”

“I wouldn’t want you to waste things on my behalf,” Vergil said, oblivious to her desperation as always. “It is getting late after all.”

“Just get over here,” Lady huffed.

“...As you wish,” Vergil said, a slight smile tugging at the corner of his lips. It still felt nice whenever someone actually wanted his company. He ended the call and checked himself in the mirror one last time before opening a portal to the road just outside Lady’s apartment. He took a deep breath and stepped through, a part of his brain chastising him for wasting time doing this instead of looking into his mysterious benefactor.

As he walked towards Lady’s front door the sound of a motorcycle suddenly filled the air, and he quickly hid himself around the side of the building. He watched as Trish pulled into Lady’s driveway. The blonde demon fixed her windswept hair with a quick shake of her head, and started to approach the entrance.
What is she doing here? Vergil thought angrily as he watched Trish lift her fist to knock on the door. Her knuckles were just inches away when she paused. She lowered her arm and cocked her head, as though she were listening for something. Without warning, she whipped her head in Vergil’s direction, causing a shiver to run down his spine. He felt like a teenager who had been caught sneaking out at night by his mother.

“...Vergil?” she called out, starting to walk over.

Vergil slunk further back into the shadows, hoping naively that he might be able to sneak away unnoticed.

“Don’t try hiding from me dumbass, I know you’re there,” Trish said rudely.

“Okay, you got me,” Vergil said, trying his hardest to sound like his idiot twin. “You should really work on your detective skills, it’s Dante not Vergil,” he added, trying to remain hidden.

“Is that so, Dante not Vergil?” Trish asked mockingly.

“...That’s right.”

“Give it up Vergil,” Trish said, firing a lightning bolt towards him. Vergil let out a muffled curse before stepping forward into the light. The bolt had missed him, but only just, and the right cuff of his shirt was now slightly singed.

“Demon,” he hissed.

“Jackass,” Trish said, bursting into laughter. Vergil stood stock-still, waiting for her to finish. Eventually she straightened up and wiped some tears from her eyes, before clearing her throat. “I can’t believe this,” she said, suppressing a further giggle.

“What?” Vergil asked coldly.

“You. Here,” Trish said, nodding towards Lady’s house. “Looks like I accidentally interrupted date night, huh?”

“You speak nonsense,” Vergil stated.

“I knew she was just putting up a front,” Trish said, shaking her head.

“I just happened to be going for a walk,” Vergil said unconvincingly.

“Now look who’s speaking nonsense,” Trish responded, looking him up and down. “You look good though, great job. I forgot how well you scrub up when you want to.”

“I-”

“Enough with the excuses,” Trish said, grinning. “I know my place. I just felt like coming to check on her, but I can see that’s not necessary.”

“I thought you were out investigating the coffee suppliers?” Vergil queried.

“Oh, I did.”

“And?”

“And I found out some pretty interesting stuff,” Trish said, leaning against the wall. “Is this really
what you want to discuss while she’s in there waiting for you though?”

“...She can wait,” Vergil said, almost reluctantly.

“This isn’t the place to talk about this,” Trish said, straightening up again. “If you want to talk work, meet me at Devil May Cry tomorrow morning. I have some notes I need to sort through first anyway.”

“Tell me now,” Vergil demanded. “Mary can- I mean-”

“Just get in there, Romeo,” Trish said, crossing her arms. “You probably won’t get a chance like this again for a while.”

“...What time tomorrow?” Vergil asked quietly, at last.

“As early as you like, I’ll be staying over,” Trish replied, walking back to her bike. “...Look after her,” she added seriously. “I heard about Nero; if anything happens to her, it won’t just be that landlord of yours you need to worry about.”

“We are merely having lunch,” Vergil said, his eyes boring into Trish as she mounted her bike.

“Lunch at 10pm? That’s a new one for me,” Trish said, grinning again. She revved her engine and backed out of the drive. “I want full details tomorrow.” She winked at Vergil then sped off into the distance, disappearing before he could even register what she had said.

He let out an annoyed grunt and turned back towards Lady’s house. He was considering heading home to change his shirt when the front door swung wide open, illuminating Lady’s silhouette as she stood in the entrance.

“Okay, what’s going on out here?” she asked. She stepped outside and looked around the now deserted street, confusion etched into her features. “I definitely heard a motorbike just now.”

“Perhaps it was just your imagination,” Vergil said, suddenly feeling incredibly self-conscious. What exactly had Trish thought his intentions were? Did he even know himself?

“Hey, don’t gaslight me, that’s creepy,” Lady said, walking over to the road and looking up and down it. She had changed into a light-coloured blouse and a darker coloured pair of slacks. Despite this however, she was currently wearing a pair of fluffy pink slippers. “Who were you talking to?” she queried.

“...Trish came to visit,” Vergil confessed. “But she decided to leave when she saw that I was here.”

“Man, what is it with you guys turning up unannounced today?” Lady said. She turned to face Vergil, a small smile creeping across her face as she did so. “Hey, lookin’ good! Soup look wasn’t doing it for ya, huh?”

“I thought it only made sense to change,” Vergil said, his cheeks heating up slightly. He was grateful for the darkness.

“What did Trish have to say?” Lady asked, heading back inside. She happened to inhale at just the right moment as she walked past Vergil, and was pleasantly surprised by the smell of cologne radiating from him.

“She wanted to check on you,” Vergil said, following her. “She also found out some things about that landlord, which she refuses to tell me until tomorrow morning for some reason.”
“I’ll have to thank her later,” Lady mumbled to herself.

“Sorry?”

“Nothing!” Lady grinned, turning to face him again. “Come on in! Did you decide on what food you would like?”

“I thought I should discuss it with you first,” Vergil replied, casting his mind back to the list of potential restaurants that he still hadn’t managed to sort through. “What…” He cleared his throat. “What kind of food do you like?”

“All sorts really,” Lady said, walking around him and closing the door. “Though thanks to Dante, I usually gravitate towards pizza more than anything else.”

“I see…” Vergil said, shuddering at the memory of having to live off cold pizza slices when he’d still lived with Dante. “Might I suggest something slightly more…”

“Upper class?” Lady asked, brushing past him to go and lean against the back of the sofa. “I mean, it’s just a takeaway. We’re treating this as lunch remember? You can take me somewhere fancier if you still enjoy my company after this evening,” she said, winking.

“What exactly are your plans for this evening?” Vergil asked dubiously, narrowing his eyes at her.

“I’d say that depends on you,” Lady said, shooting him a cheeky grin. “I’m not the one wearing perfume.”

“It’s cologne,” Vergil corrected her. He let out a tense sounding sigh and folded his arms. “I merely wish for some company while I dine,” he stated. “That and I thought it would be rude to reject your offer.”

“Is that so?” Lady asked, rubbing her chin - a habit she had undoubtedly picked up from hanging around Dante so much. “Well, I appreciate the effort. The old Vergil would never have done something like this.”

“‘Old Vergil’?” Vergil asked in surprise, finally deciding to leave the door and walk over to face Lady. “Explain.”

“Well, you know…” Lady said, rolling her eyes. “Let’s just say you probably wouldn’t be here if I’d invited you say, a month ago.”

“I’d have done anything to spend some time away from that place,” Vergil stated.

“Maybe, but you’d probably be trying to kill me right about now.”

“That can still be an option,” Vergil said, lifting Yamato and pressing its hilt gently underneath Lady’s chin, tilting her face towards his. “Don’t think I’ll go easy on you just because of a mere broken arm.”

“I wouldn’t expect you to,” she replied, looking into his eyes. She smiled mischievously when she noticed how uncomfortable such a simple gesture made him. Vergil let out an annoyed grunt and withdrew the weapon.

“Get to the point,” he grumbled, taking a few steps back from her again.

“Okay, I’ll spell it out for you - You seem to care about other people a lot more lately. I know you
try to hide it behind that cold exterior of yours, but I’m not the only one that’s noticed.”

“Foolishness,” Vergil said, glaring at her again.

“Hey, it’s not a bad thing!” Lady pointed out. “It’s actually kinda nice not having to constantly be on my guard around you in case you try to slice me in half.”

“Letting your guard down around me is a dangerous move,” Vergil stated. “Or did you forget that-”

“You’re a son of Sparda, yeah yeah, I get it,” Lady said, waving her uninjured hand in the air dismissively. “So’s Dante, but you don’t see him going around boasting about it all the time.”

“That’s because he is an imbecile who doesn’t realise his true potential,” Vergil said. “He can’t even locate a simple human.”

Lady marched over to Vergil and flicked him square between the eyes. “That’s enough of that,” she said angrily. “In case you forgot, Dante is actually my friend. I’m not gonna stand here and listen to you insult him. Besides, it’s not like you’ve had much luck finding the guy either.”

“How dare you flick me as if I were some mere animal,” Vergil growled.

“It’s no worse than the kind of things you used to do to me,” Lady retorted, sticking her tongue out. “Look, I’m trying to pay you a compliment here, quit ruining it.”

“Implying weakness is not a compliment,” Vergil said coldly, although he made no move to unsheathe Yamato. Perhaps Lady was right; if this had been just a few weeks ago, she would likely have been pinned to the wall before she even had the chance to touch him.

“Emotions are not weaknesses, no matter what you may still pretend to think,” Lady said, placing her hands on her hips. “Besides, you were the one trying to work on your personality, remember? You said as much at the meal you prepared.”

“That doesn’t give you the right to act so casually around me,” Vergil mumbled, looking away for her judging stare and crossing his arms. He had unconsciously retreated towards the door again, and now leaned against the wall next to it.

“And I probably wouldn’t if you didn’t clearly enjoy it so much,” Lady said. “Admit it, you like having someone you can relax around. Otherwise you wouldn’t be here.”

“My presence here means nothing of the sort,” Vergil said, glancing over at her. He was starting to wonder if he should have just stayed at home after all.

“Vergil, you tried sneaking into my house when you thought I wasn’t here for the sole purpose of trying to locate me,” Lady stated. “I think it’s safe to say you enjoy my company.”

“And what if I do?” Vergil asked angrily, instantly wanting to kick himself for admitting it. “You’re the only person other than Dante that I’ve known this long, it’s not that unusual that I should wish to talk with you sometimes. It doesn’t mean that I have a particular fondness for you over anyone else.”

“What’s your point?” Lady shrugged. “Hey, remember when you used to aim those spectral sword things at me for even looking in your direction?”

“What’s your point?”
“Whatever you want it to be,” Lady said, grinning at him again. They stared at each other in silence for a few seconds, with Vergil clearly trying to work out how to respond. “Hey, how about we actually order some food?” Lady said at last, walking over to a small table near the front door and pulling some flyers out of its drawer.

“You…” Vergil trailed off. He remained silent as Lady re-joined him and held some of the papers out to him. He took a variety of menus and advertisements and started to idly flick through them. When it was clear that he was struggling to concentrate on what was in front of him, he gave up and sighed deeply.

“Nothing you like?” Lady asked, trying her best to look through things with one hand while balancing them on her knee.

“What about you?” Vergil asked, reaching over and taking the rest of the flyers from Lady. “You couldn’t stand being around me; why have you suddenly started to be so kind towards me?”

“Because you started it,” Lady said, straightening up.

“What?”

“You know, the way you rescued me from that incubus thing,” she said. “You could easily have just left me there after killing it, but you actually bothered to bring me back home, and you even lied to Dante for me.”

“I had to,” Vergil said. “Otherwise I’d never hear the end of it from Dante.”

“Maybe that’s true, but you fixed my bag too,” Lady pointed out. “Not to mention the energy snacks and drinks you left me.”

“All part of ensuring a full recovery so as not to let Dante know what happened,” Vergil said.

“Well, forgive me for mistaking it for a kind gesture,” Lady said sarcastically.

“Your mobile device,” Vergil said, scanning the room for it.

“What of it?” Lady asked, taking it out of her pocket.

“It has my photo on it. You never did explain why this was.”

“I did too,” Lady said quickly. “You’re Dante’s brother, how could I?”

“You certainly did a good job of acting like you did,” Vergil said, stepping a little closer. “How was I to know it was all a facade?”

“Because it wasn’t,” Lady replied, looking up at him angrily as he approached. “I didn’t hate you, but I certainly didn’t like you.”

“So why have this?” Vergil asked, tapping her phone.

“Why do people do anything?” Lady asked. “Not everything has to have a meaning.”
“Why did you invite me here tonight, Mary?” Vergil asked, looking down at her. Lady was now pressed fully back against the couch, with him mere inches away. Were he so inclined, Vergil could easily slice her to pieces. “Was it just to make a mockery of me?”

“Why did you invite me to dinner?” Lady retorted.

“It wasn’t even my idea,” Vergil answered, instantly regretting the statement.

“...What?” Lady asked, a wave of sadness starting to spread over her features.

“Forget it,” he stated, turning away and running a hand through his hair.

“Hey, you can’t just say something like that with no explanation!” Lady called out behind him.

“Coming here was a bad idea,” Vergil sighed, heading for the door. “I should have just minded my own business and left you to recover.” A pair of arms suddenly encircled his midriff, and Vergil’s entire body stiffened as he felt Lady’s face press into his back.

“You’re running away from your problems again,” she mumbled into his shirt.

“What on earth are you doing?” Vergil asked, his voice clearly strained.

“I’m holding you hostage until you explain,” Lady grumbled. “You don’t get to escape that easily.”

“You really don’t value your life, do you?” Vergil asked, lightly squeezing Lady’s cast and causing her to retreat her arm with a yelp of pain.

“You jerk!” she shouted, headbutting him between the shoulder blades.

“This is ridiculous,” Vergil said, staring at the door and concentrating on stopping himself from violently impaling her with a variety of summoned swords. “Unhand me.”

“Get talking and maybe I will.”

“I could snap your bones in two before you even realised what was happening.”

“But you won’t though,” Lady said confidently. She wrapped both arms around him again, even tighter this time.

“You place far too much trust in a monster such as myself,” Vergil stated. He wondered if there was something wrong with the fact that he was actually starting to enjoy this a little.

“This isn’t a hug a by the way,” Lady said. “This is for restraint purposes only.”

“Is that how it is?” Vergil asked. “I’m curious to see what your next move is in that case.”

“Well, I obviously use my upper body strength to flip you backwards over the sofa, following which you will hit your head on the coffee table, rendering you unconscious.”

“I fail to see how that would get any answers out of me,” Vergil said, hoping she couldn’t hear the bemusement in his voice.

“Well see, then I tie you up so that when you wake up you can’t just run away,” Lady said, trying to suppress her own laughter.

“I did not realise you were into such things,” Vergil replied. “Should I be concerned?”
“Only if you keep trying to escape,” Lady stated.

“I’d like to see you try this plan of yours,” Vergil said, easily breaking free of Lady’s grip. “But you have amused me in such a manner that it would be a shame to see you get hurt even further.” He turned to face her and shook his head in disbelief. For once he had what appeared to be a genuine smile on his face, although he quickly reverted to a more serious expression when he saw Lady’s own grin. “I shall begrudgingly stay a little longer, if that is what you wish.”

“That depends on if this is all some sort of elaborate prank or something,” Lady said, angrily prodding his chest. “Did someone tell you to send that message just to mess with me?”

“A child sent it,” Vergil said bluntly. “I asked her to change your name on my phone and she said that to you without my knowledge. I merely decided to follow through out of… curiosity,” he said hesitantly.

“Well what do ya know,” Lady said. “I also decided to say yes out of curiosity.”

“Regretting your decision?” Vergil asked.

“Are you?”

“I turned up tonight,” Vergil said, his jaw tightening slightly. He needed to stop talking before he said something he couldn’t take back.

“And I invited you,” Lady said, squaring up to him.

“It seems we both enjoy being miserable in that case,” Vergil said, his expression unreadable.

“I guess that’s one way of putting it,” Lady said, a faint rosiness still present on her cheeks.

The two of them stared each other down for a moment before Vergil spoke. “Mary…”

“…Yeah?”

“…If you’re going to hold me hostage, you should at least bother to make sure you keep me fed,” he said unexpectedly, breaking the tension between them.

“Oh right, the food…” Lady said, relaxing a little. Had Vergil imagined it or was there also a sigh of relief? “Just pick something already, jeeze,” she said, pointing at the flyers that he hadn’t even realised he was still holding.

The doors of Devil May Cry slammed open with an unnecessary amount of force, awakening Dante from his slumber. “We’re closed…” he mumbled, sitting up in his chair and peeling off a sheet of paper that was stuck to his face with drool. “Man, I hope those notes weren’t important…”

“Dante,” Trish said sternly, walking over and throwing a folder onto the desk in front of him. “I found something.”

“Thanks, but I already have enough ways to store my paperwork,” Dante said dazedly.

“It’s about that Christian guy, dumbass,” Trish said, perching herself on the corner of the desk.

“Well don’t just stand there, spit it out,” Dante yawned. He stretched his arms and let out a satisfied sigh as his spine cracked all the way up and down.
“Have you been sleeping all day?” Trish asked irritatedly.

“Hey, I’ve only been sleeping for…” he checked the clock above the door. “Okay, maybe for like two or three hours but still…”

“Whatever,” Trish sighed, shaking her head. “Anyway, listen to this - a Christian does exist at that coffee supplier, but he’s been dead for around five or six years. I made some enquiries as a ‘concerned next of kin’ and managed to get a photo.” She pulled a photograph out of her pocket and slid it across the desk to Dante.

“Wow, good job,” Dante said, squinting at the image in front of him. “Huh. That’s…”

“A completely different person, right?” Trish said, tapping the photo which depicted a middle aged, blond-haired, blue-eyed man. “But get this, Christian had a son,” she continued. “Apparently the two of them became estranged after this son of his started getting heavily into the occult. The company didn’t even know he existed until he turned up around a year ago asking if his father still worked there.”

“We got a name for this kid?” Dante asked, scratching the back of his head.

“Afraid not,” Trish said unhappily. “Seems he wasn’t too popular. I only found out because someone walking by overheard me asking questions.”

Dante picked up the photo and looked at it more closely. “They don’t really look like father and son…”

“There’s more,” Trish continued. “Once he found out his old man was dead, he asked if he could work at the company himself. It was shortly after that when they noticed money seemed to be going missing, and there had been an extra ID pass printout which was unaccounted for. They eventually figured out it was his doing and fired him on the spot. They haven’t heard from him for about ten months.”

“Why would he need an extra ID card?” Dante asked.

“Well, to fool Nero for one thing,” Trish pointed out. Dante looked at her quizzically and she let out an annoyed sigh. “Turns out his dad was actually pretty high up in the company, whereas he was nothing but an intern.”

“Wait, he’s pretending to be his own father?”

“That’s my theory,” Trish said thoughtfully. “I’m not sure how much it holds up though.”

“Pretty dumb of him to give me his old business card then, huh?” Dante said. “He just outed himself without even realising.”

“No-one said he was smart,” Trish said. “Unless of course he wants us to find him.”

“Well, he’s done a pretty good job of evading us so far, so I’m doubtful,” Dante said sceptically.

“Something just doesn’t add up about all of this,” Trish said, drumming her fingers on the hard wood of the desk.

“I can’t believe they just gave you this,” Dante said, holding up the folder. “So much for ‘data protection’.”
“Uh yeah, about that…” Trish mumbled. “I may have to change my look for a little while.”

“Well, well,” Dante said, nodding in approval. “I’m sure they won’t miss it; he is dead after all.”

“We’ll see,” Trish said, standing up. “I drove by the address listed in his file by the way, but the house was in darkness. I suggest we try again when it’s light.”

“Hey, speaking of darkness, we should probably tell Vergil about this,” Dante suddenly remembered. “He’s got to be done visiting Nero by now right?”

“It’s pretty late,” Trish said, feigning a yawn. “There’s no benefit to telling him now compared to tomorrow.”

“Are you kidding? Dude hardly ever sleeps, it’ll be good to let him think it over so we can discuss it tomorrow,” Dante said, picking up the receiver on his desk phone.

Trish remained silent for a moment before shrugging. “Whatever, I’m gonna head to bed. Just don’t blame me if he tries to stab you through the phone.”

“I cannot believe that they all stop serving food at 10pm,” Vergil grumbled as Lady poured boiling water into two cups of instant noodles.

“And I can’t believe I threw one of these away for nothing, but here we are,” Lady said, covering the tops and setting a timer on the worktop. The pair of them had finally moved over to the sofa following their exchange to look through some of the menus while Vergil explained Nero’s cover story. Unfortunately, they had got quite the unpleasant surprise when everywhere they called was either closed or no longer accepting orders. After arguing back and forth about ordering from Dante’s usual 24 hour pizza place, Lady had stood up and angrily marched over to the kitchen before slamming a pair of cup noodles onto one of the freestanding worktops facing the sofas. She was now standing in the kitchen waiting for the noodles to finish softening, while Vergil perched awkwardly on the arm of the sofa, watching her. “You know, if you’d just get over your issue with pizza—”

“All of them,” Vergil interrupted. “Unbelievable.”

“You’re unbelievable,” Lady said, rinsing out a glass and flicking the remaining water droplets in his direction. She barely even registered the flash of blue light that shot through the air, deflecting the drops before they could even reach him. Vergil remained seemingly in place with his arms folded. “You know artificial noodles are way worse for you than pizza, right?” Lady asked.

“You didn’t suffer the way I did,” Vergil said. “Try clawing your way out of the depths of hell, only to live on leftover pizza slices for months. It’s a wonder I’m not either obese or malnourished.”

“Dante manages just fine,” Lady said, taking a moment to mix some seasoning into the noodles.

“Why don’t you spend your evening with him instead then?” Vergil asked, perhaps a little too harshly.

“Cuz you’re more fun to annoy,” Lady said, winking at him.

“I’m honoured,” Vergil said dryly. He pushed himself to his feet and walked over, leaning across the counter to look down at their last resort ‘lunch’. “I’ve eaten these before,” he said, picking up a fork and swirl ing it around in one of the cups. “I’ve had a lot worse.”
“Hold up,” Lady said, stopping the timer just before it sounded. “You’ve eaten instant ramen? You?”

“I have eaten a lot of things one might not expect,” Vergil stated, pulling the cup towards him without looking up. “It was one of many unfortunate consequences of living with a fully-grown man who can’t even afford hot water.”

“There must have been some benefits to living with him, right?” Lady asked, trying to hold her cup steady with her broken arm while twirling her fork around inside.

“Let’s see…” Vergil said thoughtfully. “A small room with no light, an uncomfortable bed, constantly being cold, and worst of all…” he glanced up at her. “…Unwanted visitors. I honestly can’t think of anywhere I would rather not be.”

“You know, it was actually really nice of Dante to give you a roof over your head after everything that happened,” Lady said, finally managing a mouthful of food.

“I am not denying that,” Vergil said, managing his own surprisingly graceful forkful of noodles. “But just because it was kind, doesn’t mean I have to pretend it was perfect.”

“And your new place is?”

“I’m not saying that either,” Vergil said. “The truth is, I don’t think I’ll ever be happy anywhere. Not truly.”

“You seem pretty happy to turn up here whenever you feel like it,” Lady teased.

“The company can also make a difference,” Vergil said absently, swirling his fork around again and staring at the small whirlpool he had created.

“I wonder if that’s why Dante got so sad when Trish moved out a while back?” Lady pondered. “Maybe he hates being lonely too.”

“I do not dislike being alone,” Vergil said defensively. “In fact, I prefer it. I merely meant to say-”

“What would you like to drink?” Lady asked loudly over him before he could come up with any more excuses.

“Just water please,” he grumbled. “I find these things to be incredibly salty.”

“They’re not the only salty thing here…”

“Pardon?”

“Nothing,” Lady said, returning from the sink and slamming a glass of water down in front of him. “So, do you have anything else you would like to do this evening?”

“It’s your house,” Vergil said, taking a few gulps. “Far be it from me to dictate how you should entertain yourself in your own home.”

“Yes, but you’re also the guest,” Lady said, sipping from her own glass. “You’ve had a pretty rough couple of days right? Is there anything that would cheer you up?”

“Going home?” Vergil suggested.

“Very funny,” Lady said sarcastically. “Look, if you want to leave, feel free. You are no longer my
hostage.”

“What would you like to do?” Vergil asked.

“Honestly? I kinda wanna go hunt some demons together, but…” She held up her injured arm.

“You could always join me and just watch?” Vergil suggested. “I could use the catharsis.”

“Nah, I’d just get in the way,” Lady said sadly.

"Nonsense - You can serve as bait."

"Hey!"

“Besides, I thought you said you could still best me in a fight?” Vergil smirked. “Do you mean to tell me that you are afraid of some mere lesser demons?”

“Of course not!” Lady protested. “I just don’t want you to end up getting injured because I can’t fully defend you,” she said, grinning.

“My, my, aren’t we in a reckless mood tonight?” Vergil asked. “Could it be that you actually do want to die?”

“I’d like to see you try,” Lady said, reaching under the counter.

“Looking for something?” Vergil asked smugly as he watched her increasingly frantic movements.

“What have you done with it?!” Lady asked angrily.

“I took it while you were getting us some water,” Vergil replied, placing a small black handgun on the worktop between them. “You really should learn to pay more attention.”

“I’m not the only one!” Lady said, pulling up her left trouser leg only to find an empty holster.

“How-”

“You are no match for me Mary, just face it,” Vergil said.

“Oh yeah?” Lady asked. She leaned over the worktop suddenly and flicked Vergil between the eyes again. “Ha!”

“Would you stop doing that?” Vergil asked, rubbing his forehead.

“Make me,” Lady taunted, reaching for him again. She had barely managed to raise her arm before her wrist was caught in Vergil’s grip, holding her in place.

“Don’t make me break the other arm too,” he said coldly, squeezing tighter.

“Guess I’ll just have to use the one that’s already damaged then,” she said, swinging her other arm towards him. Vergil quickly caught that one too and pulled her closer, until she had to stand on her tiptoes as she tried to avoid toppling over to his side of the kitchen counter.

“Are you quite done?” Vergil asked, glaring down at her.

“I still have my legs,” Lady said, her voice slightly strained from both the effort of holding herself steady and the slight ache caused by Vergil’s grip. “And you only have two hands.”
“I also have a sword that can cut through anything in mere seconds,” Vergil stated. He bent forward slightly until the tops of their foreheads were touching and he could stare into her mismatched eyes. “I’m sure I could arrange it so that the number of limbs you have remaining can be restrained by my two hands alone.”

“Then I’ll just have to bite you to death,” Lady said, sticking her tongue out at him.

“Now that’s something I’d like to see you attempt,” Vergil said, loosening his grip slightly and allowing Lady to lower herself back to the floor whilst maintaining eye contact.

“How about I start with that smartass mouth of yours,” Lady said cockily, using the hold he had on her to pull him slightly closer again. “Then you won’t be able to complain when I inevitably win.”

“Unless I silence you first, of course,” Vergil murmured, moving closer still.

The sound of heavy rock music blasting through the air caused them both to jump back suddenly, with Vergil instantly releasing his grip on Lady’s wrists.

“I-I thought you changed your ring-tone?” Lady stammered, turning away from Vergil in an attempt to hide the redness that was steadily spreading across her entire face.

“I never figured out how to,” Vergil said tensely, flipping the phone open.

“Heyyy bro,” Dante said cheerfully. “Hope I didn’t wake ya.”

“Dante,” Vergil growled, his voice dripping with animosity.

“Whoopsie. I’ll take that as a ‘I finally managed to get to sleep and you’ve just woken me up’ kinda tone… Uh listen, we can talk tomorrow.”

“You may as well say what you have to say,” Vergil snapped. “Might as well make the inconvenience worth it.”

“I don’t really like telling you things when you’re mad cuz you tend to not really take it in, so…” Dante trailed off and prepared himself for whatever barrage of abuse was to follow.

Vergil looked over at Lady who just glanced at him over her shoulder before hiding her face in her hands. “…I’ll just come over,” Vergil said, his tone a lot more even now.

“Huh? But-”

Vergil ended the call and cleared his throat. “…I have some business to attend to.”

“You should go deal with that,” Lady quickly blurted out, still facing away from him. “I’ll um… I’ll be in contact.” She felt the air behind her turn cold as Vergil made his escape. After a few seconds, an embarrassed groan escaped her lips as she sank down onto the floor and buried her face in her knees.

Chapter End Notes
Hey! Sorry for delays again, work has been tough :( 
Also shipping chapter, yay haha... This was so embarassing to write lol. I hope it doesn't sound too dumb, I'm not used to writing such things XD
"Dante."

Vergil's appearance in the shop was so sudden that Dante was worried for a moment that he had dozed off again. One minute he was looking at the phone receiver he still held in his hand, the next his brother stood towering over his desk, glaring down at him with an expression of pure rage.

"Hey!" Dante said cheerfully as an arc of glowing swords appeared above his head.

"This had better be important."

"But of course," Dante said, casually throwing the handset back into place. He reached for the folder on his desk and slid it towards Vergil. “Check out what Trish managed to get hold of.”

Vergil crouched down slightly and started to silently flick through the paperwork in front of him, still maintaining the spectral swords in the air. “And?” he said at last, straightening up again.

“What do you mean, ‘and’?” Dante asked in disbelief. “This is more information than we’ve managed to get in days! Did you even read it?”

“This file appears to relate to a completely different person than the one we’re looking for.”

Dante stood up quickly, causing his chair to clatter to the floor. “Hey, we’re doing what we can here!” he said angrily, slamming his hands on the desk. “Trish managed to get more information in a couple of hours that both of us combined over several days.”

“And yet we still don’t seem to be any closer to finding this so called ‘landlord’,” Vergil said calmly.

“Damn it Vergil,” Dante huffed, flipping his chair back up with the heel of his boot. “This is why I avoid talking to you when you’re angry; you’re hopeless.”

“Is that why you guys hardly ever talk?” a sultry sounding voice asked as a shadow appeared at the bottom of the stairs. Dante’s eyes widened slightly, while Vergil’s only narrowed further as Trish started to walk towards them, flaunting her new look. Dante let out a low whistle as he took in her slightly bronzed skin and platinum coloured hair.

“Damn, I should get you to steal classified documents more often,” he grinned, nodding in approval.

“What madness is this?” Vergil asked as Trish approached him, only stopping once she was far too close for comfort.

“See something you like?” she asked teasingly, placing her hands on her hips.

“Another harlot of yours?” Vergil asked Dante, his eyebrow twitching slightly as he kept his eyes trained on the woman in front of him.

“I wish,” Dante said, walking around his desk so that he could look Trish up and down fully. “I thought you said you weren’t gonna use this look again?”
“What can I say, I’m not very creative,” Trish said, brushing past Dante and perching herself on the edge of his desk. She reached behind her and grabbed one of the swords that still hung in the air, startling Vergil into dissolving them last. “So, care to explain this ungrateful attitude of yours?” she asked him, shifting slightly further along the desk as Dante tried to sit next to her.

“I am merely being practical,” Vergil stated. “At the very least we should act on the data we do have, instead of sitting around exchanging pleasantries.”

“And what exactly do you propose we do this late into the evening?” Trish asked, crossing her arms.

“We have an address,” Vergil pointed out. “Granted it’s not for our target, but it’s something. Why has no one demanded answers from its residents?”

“Trish went there earlier and it was empty,” Dante butted in. “It’s not like we’ve just sat here doing nothing.”

Trish glanced at Dante and raised an eyebrow. “Well, I haven’t at least.”

“Who is this woman, exactly?” Vergil asked tensely. He was so sure that he’d met all of Dante’s associates at this point, and this newcomer seemed uncomfortably close with his brother. It bothered him to consider the possibility that he had missed one.

Trish sighed and ran a hand through her recoloured hair. Vergil watched in disbelief as the disguise seemed to melt away with a slight shimmer, leaving a much more familiar face in its place. “Surprise,” she said giving Vergil a mischievous wink.

“How curious…” he said with genuine interest, tilting his head slightly.

“Impressive right?” Dante said proudly, earning a playful shove from Trish.

Vergil was tempted to ask further questions, but shook his head, bringing his train of thought back to the topic at hand. “Did you enter the property?” he asked.

“Not all of us have fancy portal powers,” Trish said dryly.

“In that case, allow me,” Vergil said, lifting his sword.

“Hey, wait a sec!” Dante protested, stepping forward and pushing Vergil’s hand back down. “You can’t just break into some random person’s house; we don’t even know if this guy’s family still lives there. Besides, what if it’s a trap?”

“What if it is?” Vergil asked calmly.

“Look, I want to solve this just as much as you do, but something stinks about this whole situation. We gotta be careful,” Dante replied.

“Dante, how many adversaries have we overcome? Do you really mean to tell me that you fear a mere human?”

“Of course not,” Dante said, punching Vergil’s arm as he started to unsheathe Yamato again. “But we don’t know for certain that this guy is a mere human, do we?”

“You detected no demonic presence from him, and the trinket he gave you was mere tat,” Vergil pointed out. “Unless you wish to tell me that you were deceived?”
“Vergil’s got a point,” Trish said, taking both brothers by surprise. “From what we know about this guy I doubt he’d be a match for the two of you. Might as well get the ball rolling.”

“Your support is appreciated as always,” Dante said sarcastically, shaking his head at Trish.

“Then it’s decided,” Vergil nodded. “Will you be joining us?”

“Nah, one of us has to stay behind in case the worst happens,” Trish said, giving Dante a sly grin as he looked at her in disbelief.

“...Let’s at least bother to make sure we’re equipped for this,” Dante said, walking behind the desk to retrieve his weapons.

“I am more than happy to deal with this on my own if need be,” Vergil said, watching as his brother holstered his guns and picked up his own sword.

“Yeah, ‘cause that’s been working out real well for you so far,” Dante said dryly. He paused his movements briefly and raised an eyebrow as he finally noticed Vergil’s current attire. “Also, what’s with the get-up? That dinner with Lady back then give you a preference for fighting in dress-shirts?”

“Your call surprised me; I didn’t have time to change.”

“That’s the most uncomfortable set of pyjamas I’ve ever seen,” Dante said, patting himself down and nodding to himself, satisfied that he was now fully equipped.

“I don’t recall ever stating that I was asleep,” Vergil said, catching Trish’s eye and trying to suppress the slight warmth creeping up the back of his neck as she gave him a knowing smile.

“Well gosh, what were you doing, Vergil?” Trish asked coyly.

“I don’t see that my activities in my free time are any of your business,” Vergil said sternly.

“Wait, I think I got it,” Dante said, snapping his fingers. “You dressed up to go visit Nero, right? There’s no need to be embarrassed—”

“Let’s go,” Vergil said dismissively, a portal opening in the middle of the office before anyone could even register the Yamato’s movements. “After you,” he said to Dante, nodding towards the shimmering tear in the air.

“Okay, but if I end up getting lost again you’re coming to find me,” Dante said, stepping through.

Vergil started to follow, but not before turning to Trish and clearing his throat. “Nothing happened,” he stated matter-of-factly.

“That’s a real shame,” Trish said, leaning back on the desk and crossing her legs. “We’ll have to work on fixing that.”

Vergil glared at her in silence for a moment before turning back towards the portal and following Dante.

It was a good twenty minutes or so before Lady finally felt that she had enough strength to push herself back to her feet. She used the kitchen counter for support as she wobbled in place briefly, before taking a deep breath and shaking her head to clear her thoughts. Nothing happened, she told herself. It was all just a misunderstanding. She walked over to the sink and splashed her face with
cold water. She chanced a glance at the clock as she buried her face in a towel and sighed. It was late. Very late. She would go to bed, get some rest, and when she woke up, she would just carry on as normal. Nothing had changed.

She took a few minutes to finish off some lukewarm cup noodles and started to tidy up. Her hand hovered briefly over Vergil’s half-eaten pot as she reached for it, and she cursed internally before angrily picking it up and throwing it in the bin. She decided that next time she saw him, she would shoot him right in the middle of his smug face. *That’ll show him*, she thought, yelling in frustration as she felt her cheeks warming up again at the memory of him standing over her, touching his forehead against hers. “Damn bastard!” she yelled to no one in particular.

The small hallway at the entrance of the house was dark, as expected. What Vergil was not expecting was to step through and immediately trip over his incompetent twin, who was lying on the floor hissing in pain. “What-”

“Damn side tables,” Dante growled. “I walked right into it, tripped over, and pulled an entire coat rack on top of me.”

Vergil, who had fortunately managed to maintain his footing, looked down at Dante and sighed. “Pathetic,” he said quietly. “Let’s just hope your stupidity hasn’t woken up the entire household.”

“It’s okay, I managed to keep it all fairly quiet,” Dante whispered, standing up and immediately reaching out to steady a vase he had knocked into in the process.

“This is why I dislike working with you,” Vergil tutted, lifting the coat rack with ease and placing it back in the corner. “Let’s just get this over with.”

“So, what exactly is your plan again?” Dante asked, looking around the small lobby.

“We look through their possessions for clues,” Vergil said, opening a door to their left. “Failing that, we question the occupants directly.”

“Yeah, I can see that going well…” Dante sighed, starting to follow Vergil as he entered what appeared to be a living room of some sort.

“What are you doing?” Vergil asked, stopping in his tracks and turning to face his brother.

“Helping you search?”

“We’ll be quicker if we split up,” Vergil said, nodding towards the staircase opposite the front door. “I’ll take the downstairs.”

“I still don’t think I’m entirely comfortable with this,” Dante said hesitantly. “This house probably belongs to the guy’s widow or something, the last thing I want to do it give the lady a heart attack.”

“Then make sure you stay quiet,” Vergil said bluntly, walking into the living room and softly closing the door behind him. Dante muttered a few quiet curses under his breath before sighing and sneaking upstairs.

The living room was simply decorated and very tidy. It was obvious at a glance that no children lived at the address. The curtains were open, and the moonlight shining through the window provided enough illumination for Vergil to be able to avoid having to turn on the light. He
immediately made his way over to a desk in the corner of the room and started to search through
the drawers. Empty. He let out an annoyed grunt and cast his eye around the room more closely.

There appeared to be pictures hanging on the walls, and he noticed that a few framed photos were
also neatly placed on top of the desk he had been rifling through. He picked one up and looked at it
in more detail. It depicted a smiling couple standing in front of a waterfall somewhere. They
looked young. He picked up another one which showed a somewhat handsome looking man
dressed in a graduation gown. On closer inspection, it appeared that this male was different to the
one in the previous photo, but there was no denying that they looked similar. A sudden thought
struck Vergil and he quickly undid the back of the frame, carefully sliding the photo out until he
could read its back. Scrawled on its rear in neat, fading strokes was ‘Christian Jr. - Graduation,
2008.’ Vergil turned the photo back over and stared at it for a few moments, his mind recalling
Dante’s description of the man that had attended his apartment. He walked over to the window so
he could see the image more clearly, repeating his brother’s words in his mind. Short and skinny,
slick dark brown hair, green eyes and glasses. Certainly not blond haired, blue-eyed and slightly
chubby like the man in the photo.

The upstairs appeared to consist of two bedrooms and a bathroom. After listening outside the doors
for a few minutes, Dante quickly concluded that only one of the rooms was occupied, and by a
single person at that. With this in mind, he headed towards what he presumed to be the smaller of
the bedrooms, which was to the right of the staircase next to the bathroom. Dante held his breath
for a few seconds more just to be sure, before cracking the door open and slipping inside.

A strange sensation immediately swept over Dante as he entered, and he found himself feeling as
though his whole body was suddenly very heavy. He fumbled around for a light switch and
immediately regretted his actions when he managed to turn the overhead light on. The walls and
ceiling all appeared to have been painted black, while the overhead light cast a blood tinged glow
over everything. “Never thought a red light in a bedroom could be a bad thing…” Dante mumbled.

Even at a quick glance, it was clear that whoever this room belonged to - or used to belong to,
based on the thin layer of dust that covered everything - was not exactly of sound mind. A giant
pentagram covered the wall to the right, with what seemed to be iron nails impaled into it at even
points. From some of the nails hung various herbs, while what looked like matted fur seemed to
hang from the rest. Dante looked at the floor below the drawing and was unsurprised to see the
remnants of animal bones and dried blood collected underneath. Various melted candles adorned
every surface in the room, with some even fused to the walls themselves, and there was the thick
smell of expired incense in the air. He looked up and saw even more scrawls on the ceiling, drawn
in either blood or wax. “Guess we found the right place,” Dante said quietly to himself.

The strange feeling continued to grow as he forced himself forward with the intention of searching
for clues. Every part of him wanted to leave such a bizarre room, but he knew that Vergil would
probably kill him if he didn’t at least try to look around. A double bed was pressed up against the
middle of the left wall, facing the pentagram opposite. It too was all black, and was unmade, as
though the owner had suddenly left in a hurry. Dante opened a drawer in one of the bedside tables,
finding nothing but more bones and candle wax inside. As he closed it again, he noticed a loose
photo lying face down on the table and attempted to flip it over. Perhaps as expected, it was stuck
to the table, encrusted in an unidentified brown liquid. After a substantial amount of effort, it
finally came free, and Dante’s eyes widened slightly as he saw what it depicted. Three people were
in the photo of what appeared to be a snap from a family holiday of some sort. At least, he assumed
they were a family based on the similar hair colour; the eyes of all the people appeared to have
been stabbed out, with red marker pen (or something else?) being used to make it look as though
blood was pouring from their mouths. The word ‘DEMONS’ had been angrily scrawled through
A quick search of the other bedside table revealed similarly mutilated photographs, however these ones only seemed to depict what he assumed to be the parents with no eyes and bloodied lips. It didn’t take long for Dante to work out that whoever did this must have believed that the adults had been possessed or similar. Whether they actually had been or not was hard to say. He brought one of the images over to the window, hoping to use some more natural lighting from outside to get a better look at the teenager in the photographs where he had remained intact. He let out a thoughtful hum as he saw that he looked similar to the man in the folder that Trish had managed to steal. At the very least, it was obvious that he looked nothing like the man he had met at Vergil’s place. He chose one of the least damaged photos he could find and slipped it into a pocket, suspecting that it could come in useful later.

Another look around the room revealed nothing but more of the same as before. Satisfied that he was done there, Dante finally allowed himself to leave. He would have to convince Trish to come here if Vergil would allow it, to see if she could figure out what was causing the unpleasant feeling to seep through him while he was in the room. The writing on the walls and ceiling meant nothing to him, but he suspected they were most likely responsible. With one final glance, he turned off the light and stepped outside, instantly feeling much lighter.

“Who are you?” a voice demanded angrily.

Dante froze in place, his vision adjusting to the darkness and revealing a stern looking woman standing in front of him wearing a nightgown. Her greying hair was pinned up on top of her head and she was currently holding a large knife about an inch away from Dante’s chest.

“I’ve already called the police,” she said, her voice wavering slightly. “If you try anything, I won’t hesitate to hurt you.”

“It’s okay, we’re not here to cause any trouble,” Dante said, holding his hands up.

“We?” she shrieked shrilly. “How many of you are there?!?”

“Just the two of us,” Vergil suddenly said from behind her. Before she could turn to face him, he quickly struck the back of her head and she slumped to the floor, unconscious.

“Hey, what the hell are you doing?” Dante asked, crouching down to check for a pulse.

“She’ll be fine,” Vergil said calmly. “I didn’t hit anything that will cause any permanent damage.”

“You can’t just go around knocking old ladies unconscious!” Dante said disapprovingly.

“Did you find anything?” Vergil asked, stepping over the woman and pushing open the door to the bedroom behind Dante.

“I wouldn’t go in there,” Dante said. “There’s something not quite right about it.”

Vergil blinked in surprise briefly as red light flooded the room and hallway. “I can’t see what you mean, this looks perfectly fine to me,” Vergil said. When Dante stood up to protest, Vergil turned and gave him what almost looked like an imperceptible smile.

“Wait… Did you actually just make a joke for once?” Dante asked, unable to stop the corners of his own mouth from turning up slightly.

“From a quick glance, this room appears to be full of amateur strength sapping spells,” Vergil
stated, stepping inside and closing his eyes. “Unfortunately, it seems that while it was most likely intended to ward off demons, these ones seem to affect humans in particular.” He opened his eyes and glanced around briefly. “ Whoever set this up clearly had no idea what they were doing.”

“But when I went in there—”

“Yet more proof that you are too human for your own good,” Vergil stated, trying to hide the slight strain in his own voice. “It’s probably also why this room hasn’t been cleaned out since its occupant left.”

“Man, this just keeps getting weirder and weirder…” Dante said.

Vergil took a few moments to look around, making note of the symbols he saw in case they meant anything further that what he thought. Yet more research to be completed. “We should retreat for now,” he said at last. “I don’t believe that this woman has called the authorities, but I would rather we don’t risk it.”

“What are we going to do about her?” Dante asked, pointing to the woman who was still lying unconscious on the floor.

“She will need to be questioned,” Vergil said thoughtfully. “But that can be arranged for another time.”

“I mean right now, jackass,” Dante grumbled. “We can’t just leave her like that.”

“Place her back in her bed; she will likely think this a dream in the morning.”

“...Should we check her room too?” Dante suggested.

“I think we have enough for now,” Vergil said after thinking for a moment. “We can always come back on another occasion.”

“Did you manage to find anything useful?” Dante asked, scooping the woman into his arms. She was surprisingly heavy given how thin she looked.

“Potentially,” Vergil said, nodding. He turned off the light and closed the bedroom door, then followed Dante as they made their way back to the master bedroom. “I searched all of the rooms downstairs,” he began to explain. “It’s clear even from a quick glance that this woman lives alone.”

He held the door open as Dante stepped inside, being careful not to hit the woman’s head on the doorframe. “Given the number of photographs I saw in the living room, I expected the rest of the house to be the same, however it seems that only that room—” He paused as they stepped into the bedroom. Rows and rows of photographs adorned the walls, with framed photos also standing on every flat surface. They were all arranged very neatly in a grid pattern, and each one had its own thin glass frame. It seemed then that this was not the frantic work of an unstable mind, but rather someone…

“Wow, she really must be lonely,” Dante said somewhat sadly as he tucked the woman back into bed.

“She’s grieving,” Vergil stated, walking over to some of the photos and squinting at them as he tried to make out details in the dark room.

“Even after all this time?” Dante asked. “ Didn’t her husband die six years ago?”

“Grief affects people differently,” Vergil mumbled. He lifted one of the frames down and nodded
as though he had suddenly finished working something out in his mind. “I don’t think her husband
is the one she is grieving for,” he said, holding up a photo of a young smiling boy, who must have
been no more than around four years old. “Look around,” he said, opening the curtains slightly.
“Look at what these photos actually show.”

With the new illumination from outside, Dante did a slow circle of the room, rubbing his chin
thoughtfully. The photographs seemed to be ordered chronologically, showing a small boy growing
from infancy to young adulthood. There seemed to be a gap of about seven or eight years, and then
the photos resumed. In these photos however, the boy – or rather, man, by that point - looked far
more sullen and agitated. The photos finally stopped at a one of him standing over a grave and
placing flowers on it - presumably his father’s. Dante reached into his pocket and pulled out the
photograph he had taken. He held it up to one of the others, confirming that it was the same
person. “I don’t get it,” Dante said, pocketing the photo again. “This guy looks nothing like the
one I spoke to.”

“That’s because they’re not the same person,” Vergil said matter-of-factly.

“But the father in the background of these clearly looks like the dead dude in that file Trish took,”
Dante said in confusion.

“Must I explain everything to you?” Vergil asked exasperatedly.

“No,” Dante said haughtily. “...But you should tell me your thoughts to make sure we’re on the
same page,” he added after a brief pause.

“Let’s get back to the shop first,” Vergil said. “There is no point in having to explain this twice.”

“Sure,” Dante agreed. Just then the room became flooded with blue light as the sound of sirens
approaching sounded from outside. “Looks like that’s our cue to leave,” he said as Vergil hummed
in surprise.

“Well, what do you know…” Vergil said quietly, before stepping away from the window and
opening a path home.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry it's been so long since the last update! And now quite a short chapter after
such a wait too...

I had the start of this written *ages* ago, but then I was really busy with work and
other commitments, then when I finally had some time off I got a lame 2 week long flu
and... gah :_;

Anyway, I hope this chapter is okay after such a long wait! I'll try to update again a lot
sooner!
"You sure you don’t want Nero to get in on this?" Dante asked Vergil as Trish walked over and placed three mugs of weak looking coffee down between them. They were all huddled around Dante’s desk, with Dante in his usual chair while Vergil and Trish perched somewhat uncomfortably on the edge of the desk either side of him.

“I have already angered the boy enough today,” Vergil said, picking up one of the mugs and sniffing it tentatively. “The hour is growing increasingly late; I believe the last thing he would want is a call from me interrupting his slumber.” He took a small sip and almost immediately spat it back out again. “What is this… dishwater?” he growled.

“Sorry, there wasn’t much coffee left,” Trish shrugged. “Had to make do with what we had.”

“I should probably restock that at some point,” Dante said absently, downing half of his mug in one gulp. “Anyway, let’s get back to business,” he continued, sounding surprisingly serious for once.

“Indeed,” Vergil agreed, pushing his cup away from him with a look of disgust. Dante hesitated for a moment before reaching for it and tipping the contents into his own.

“Well, it all sounds pretty obvious from what you’ve told me,” Trish said, her own coffee still untouched. “The guy has clearly sent you on a wild goose chase to throw you off his trail.”

“Yes, but why?” Dante asked, scratching his cheek thoughtfully. “What’s his…” he glanced at Vergil and grinned mischievously. “Motivation?”

Vergil let out a sigh and shook his head. “One thing is obvious, and that is that he has used this ‘Christian’ as a pawn of some sort. The reason why is as yet unclear to me, but I also have no doubt in my mind that Christian - the real one that is - is dead.”

“We can’t prove that,” Dante said. “How do we know he didn’t just dye his hair and put in contact lenses?”

Vergil stared at his brother in silence, his jaw twitching slightly as he tried to suppress the urge to call him out on his stupidity. “A valid point,” he forced out at last, his voice clearly strained from his frustration. Trish placed a hand over her mouth and tried to suppress a giggle, earning a cold stare from both brothers. “However, you have already confirmed to me that the man in the photographs and the man you met are undeniably different people,” Vergil continued. “Unless you wish to suggest that you were wrong?”

“I mean, without a photo of the guy I met, it’s impossible to be one hundred percent certain right?” Dante said hesitantly. “Maybe I forgot something.”

“I admit that without any of us having seen this mysterious visitor apart from you, it does make things a little more difficult,” Vergil agreed. “Let us consider then, for a moment, that your theory is correct. It would match up with the fact that the vase he gave you contained nothing but nonsense runes. As evidenced by the human-repelling wards we saw in that bedroom, the person who resided there was likely clueless when it came to the casting of spells and similar. It could be that he had planned to plant some sort of spying device on me but failed.”

“There’s a problem with that theory though,” Trish began. “First of all, he would surely have made further attempts at contact after realising that it hadn’t worked, right? Not only that,” she turned to look at Dante. “You told me that he almost left without handing it over at all once he found the
apartment occupied. It's almost like the vase was an after-thought; a back-up plan, in case things went wrong.”

“That’s right,” Dante agreed. “I do remember finding that a bit weird at the time - in addition to everything else of course.”

“In that case, let’s assume that the functionless vase and the drawings in the room are not connected,” Vergil said, tapping his fingers on the desk thoughtfully. “And that my theory of the real Christian being dead is correct. If this is indeed the situation, then what we have is a mysterious man, who we shall call ‘X’, who has-”

“Isn’t ‘X’ a really generic name for this kinda thing?” Dante butted in. “Can’t we come up with something more relevant?”

“Like what?” Vergil hissed, glancing at the clock and trying to ignore the fatigue that was slowly creeping up on him. It had been a long day.


“Creepy Landlord?” Trish chimed in.

“Creepy Christian!” Dante said enthusiastically.

“We will refer to him as ‘FL’,” Vergil sighed. “…Fake Landlord,” he clarified when the other two looked at him in confusion. “Since we can’t confirm that he is actually called Christian.”

“Sounds good to me,” Dante nodded.

“Anyway,” Vergil continued in exasperation. “What we have here, is this person, FL, who has - for reasons unknown to us - used this young male, Christian, to gain Nero’s trust for the sole purpose of renting me an apartment.” He paused. “…This sounds more and more ridiculous the further I think about it,” he said, closing his eyes and massaging his temples.

“Hey, when did it say that kid turned up at his father’s workplace?” Dante asked Trish, looking around for the folder she had ‘borrowed’.

“About a year ago, I think?” she replied.

“About when we came back, right?” Dante said. “I remember because it was one of the hottest summers I’d ever seen. I even joked about hell being cooler, remember?”

“And now here we are in late summer again,” Trish said, fanning herself lightly.

“How long has the town I reside in been demon free?” Vergil asked, feeling increasingly uneasy.

“Still not clear I’m afraid,” Trish replied. “I can’t find any official sources on it.”

“How did you find out?” he asked Dante.

“Nero told me…”

“And who told him?” Vergil asked, sliding off the desk and starting to pace up and down.

“The landlord, I guess?” Dante said quietly.
Vergil’s eyes grew dark and he crossed his arms, continuing to walk up and down in a short line from the desk to the wall and back. After a few minutes he paused and glanced up at Trish. “Did you ever feel any adverse effects when visiting?” he asked her bluntly.

“Nothing I can immediately think of,” Trish said, after a moment’s thought. “Although I do remember being quite tired after the dinner you made, but that could have just been the alcohol.”

“Tired…” Vergil mumbled. He had been sleeping more than usual lately, he realised. That could of course be down to the amount of stress he had been under recently, and the fact that he actually had a comfortable bed to sleep on for once. His body might just be making up for years of restless nights.

“I always felt fine when I was there,” Dante offered.

“I think we should speak to Nero about this after all,” Vergil said at last. “We need to know exactly what was said to him.”

“Want me to call him?” Dante asked.

Vergil glanced up at the clock. It was approaching five in the morning. “Not yet,” he said, leaning against the desk again. “We need him to want to help as much as possible. He’s not very happy with me at the moment, and I’d rather not make it any worse.”

“In that case, how about we finally get some rest?” Dante suggested, stretching his arms above his head. “I’m beat.”

“Didn’t you sleep most of the day?” Trish asked disapprovingly.

“I’ve been up for almost twenty-four hours,” Vergil noted. *Minus a small nap in the rain,* he thought regretfully. “Perhaps getting some rest is not the worst idea.”

“Hey, you wanna stay here?” Dante asked, almost too enthusiastically. “I kept your room for ya!”

“…I think I would rather risk whatever FL has in mind for me than sleep in that box again,” Vergil said coldly, feeling a small pang of guilt when he saw a look of disappointment flash across Dante’s face.

“In that case, how about I come with you?” Dante offered.

“I appreciate the thought, but I think I can look after myself,” Vergil said, brushing a loose strand of hair out of his eyes. “I’ve been sleeping there just fine for a few weeks now.”

“Yeah, but we hadn’t broken into that dude’s house before,” Dante said huffily.

“Dante,” Vergil said sternly. “I don’t need you to look after me.”

Dante opened his mouth to protest but shut it again when Vergil’s hand moved towards the Yamato. “Okay,” he said reluctantly. “But if you get into any trouble - any - you call me straight away, ya hear?”

“We shall see,” Vergil said, heading towards the doors. He paused and looked over his shoulder at the pair. “…Same to you of course,” he added before yanking the doors open and disappearing outside.

The apartment felt strangely cold and empty now that its integrity had been called into question.
Vergil took a few minutes to check for the umpteenth time that there were no hidden runes or summoning circles that he had missed, before letting out an exhausted sigh and sitting down heavily on the sofa. He closed his eyes for a few moments, trying to make sense of everything that had happened in the last twenty-four hours. Despite his best attempts at trying to focus on the information they had gathered however, he found that his thoughts continued to drift back to visions of mis-matched eyes staring into his own, and the feeling of soft, dark hair brushing against his forehead; he pondered briefly what might have happened if Dante’s call had not interrupted…

The knock that awoke him started off as a distant thump in the depths of his subconscious somewhere, before seemingly increasing in volume until it felt like his skull was going to split apart. With a pained groan, he pushed himself up from the sofa - where it seemed that he had accidentally fallen asleep, much to his irritation - and buried his face in his hands, trying to resist the temptation of falling back asleep. With a sudden moment of clarity, he realised that the knocking had stopped, and he wondered if he might have just dreamt it after all. After a few more seconds of silence, he made his way over to the front door, cautiously gripping Yamato at his side. “Who is it?” he called out, annoyed at the slurred remnants of sleep that were still obvious in his voice.

“Open the door and find out,” a young sounding voice called out.

Vergil yanked the door open with such force that he had to catch it to stop it from smashing a hole in the wall. “What are you doing here?” he demanded, looking down at the small girl in front of him.

“I was worried about you,” Alisa replied, grinning slightly at his dishevelled appearance.

“How did you get here?” he asked, making no move to step to the side and allow her entry.

“I snuck out,” Alisa said proudly. “I waited here all night for you, but I didn’t notice you coming back. I guess I must have fell asleep.”

“I didn’t see-” Vergil began. Of course he hadn’t seen her, he had teleported directly into the apartment without needing to use the front door. “How did you know I was in here?” he asked, feeling slightly guilty.

“I could hear you talking in your sleep,” Alisa said, giggling slightly.

“What’s so funny?” Vergil queried. He could remember nothing of his dreams that morning. In fact, it felt like he hadn’t really been asleep long enough to dream.

“Oh, nothin’…” Alisa said, pushing her way inside. “Just be glad it was me who knocked on your door and not that Mary lady…”

“What-”

“Nice place!” Alisa said, walking through to the living room and placing her hands on her hips. “You really got lucky, huh!”

“I will ask you again,” Vergil said, closing the door softly and hoping that the redness in his cheeks would be attributed to his just having woken up rather than embarrassment, “How did you get here?”

“Magic,” Alisa said teasingly, turning to face him and wiggling her fingers in the air.

“I’m not in the mood for jokes,” Vergil said coldly. He glanced at the clock and realised that he
had only been asleep for about two hours. “If the orphanage finds out you’re here, I’ll be in a lot of trouble. I’m taking you back.”

“Wait, wait!” Alisa said, holding her hands up defensively. “I... I have to tell you something.” Her expression became serious, and it seemed that her entire demeanor had changed in a matter of seconds.

“Out with it then.”

Alisa stood there silently, chewing her lip. “I...” she began, before pausing.

“My patience is wearing thin.”

“I-I need you to promise not to take me back there first,” she stammered. “If he finds out I spoke to you about this, I’ll get in big trouble!”

“What are you talking about?” Vergil asked, a feeling of uneasiness starting to creep in.

“I think I might know something about the guy you’re looking for,” Alisa said, looking down at her feet.

“Well don’t just stand there, tell me!” Vergil yelled.

“I-I was approached by someone yesterday, n-not long after you left,” she began. “I was playing by the swing like I always do, when I heard this voice calling to me from the trees—”

“Did you see what the person looked like?”

Alisa shook her head violently. “All I saw was their arm.”

“Their arm?”

“Let me finish explaining!” Alisa shouted, looking up at Vergil with tears in her eyes. “He asked me if I was friends with the ‘big scary blue guy’ and I told him that I was. I asked him why and he said he wanted me to do a favour for him that would help you feel less sad all the time.”

“And you agreed?”

“I was worried!” Alisa said. “I was scared that if I didn’t help him, he might get someone stupid to do it, someone that would actually end up hurting you!”

“What was the favour?” Vergil asked. They were still standing in the living room facing each other, as though neither dared to move.

“This,” Alisa said, pulling out a small phial containing a brown liquid of some sort. “He asked me to pour it into your drink the next time I saw you.”

“Give that to me,” Vergil demanded, grabbing it from her small hand with perhaps a little too much force. He held it up to the light coming from the kitchen window and shook it slightly. It just looked like brown water. “What did he offer you in return?”

“He said if I helped him out, he would guarantee my adoption. Said he had a nice family with a great home and lots of pets all lined up - and all I had to do was complete a few tasks.”

“What were the other tasks?” Vergil asked, looking back down at her.
“I don’t know about the rest ‘cause we got interrupted. He’d already given me the thing you’re holding by then, and told me to meet him there again tomorrow - today now I guess.”

“Did he give you a time?” Vergil asked sharply. He realised that this could finally be their chance to apprehend this person - perhaps their only chance.

Alisa shook her head again. “I don’t think he’ll turn up anyway. Not once he realises I’m gone.”

Vergil turned the phial over thoughtfully in his palm, staring off into the distance briefly while he formulated a plan. “It’s worth a shot,” he said, more to himself than Alisa. “Is there anything else you can tell me about him?” he pushed.

“All I can say is that his aura made me feel sick,” Alisa said, shuddering in remembrance. “He was obviously a liar, but there was something else there too that I couldn’t figure out. It didn’t feel nice being near him.”

“Thank you,” Vergil said, pocketing the phial. Then, “It’s still early, perhaps he has not yet noticed your absence?”

“He told me he’s been watching me,” Alisa said. “It’s how he knew we were friends. He probably noticed me leaving too.”

“...How did you leave?” Vergil asked suspiciously. “It wouldn't be a very good orphanage if children could just walk out.”

“You’re right,” Alisa said, fidgeting nervously. “So it’s probably a good thing I didn’t do that.”

“Well then?”

Alisa remained silent.

“Answer me, child.”

“I’m sorry,” she said at last, starting to cry.

Vergil’s hand slowly moved towards the Yamato. “...What for?”

Alisa moved towards him suddenly, as though to pull him into a hug. It was only at the last moment that Vergil noticed the small syringe in her hand and hastily stepped to the side, sweeping her legs out from under her in the process. Before she had even finished crying out in pain, he had disarmed her. He now stood above the snivelling child with Yamato’s tip aimed directly at the centre of her chest. “P-Please-” she begged.

“I knew I disliked children for a reason,” Vergil growled angrily. “Explain yourself immediately before I end you where you lie.”

“He threatened to hurt the other children!” Alisa called out. “He said that without Nero there to protect them, they were easy targets… It’s all your fault for hurting Nero in the first place!”

“You're quite the actor for one so young,” Vergil said, moving the sword closer. "And here I thought we were 'friends'."

“It’s true!” Alisa said, tears pouring from her eyes. “He sent me here to hurt you, but I had no choice! I didn’t want to, but I didn’t want my friends to die.” She started sobbing uncontrollably, seemingly unable to catch her breath. Vergil hesitated for a moment before withdrawing his
weapon and pulling Alisa roughly to her feet by the front of her shirt.

“You speak the truth this time?” Vergil demanded, shaking her. Alisa could only nod. “Did you arrange a time and place to meet him again?” Alisa shook her head, still trying to catch her breath. “Don’t lie to me,” he hissed, gripping the fabric even tighter. “What did he tell you would happen if you succeeded?”

“H-He just told me to wait here,” she choked out, frantically wiping her eyes.

“He said he would come here?”

“I don’t know!” Alisa wailed. “I’m just a kid, what more do you want from me?!” She burst into a fresh set of tears and tried desperately to dry her face with her sleeves.

Vergil tutted in disgust before finally loosening his grip on Alisa a little. In one swift movement, he slung her over his shoulder and unsheathed Yamato. “Hold on tight child. I won’t be responsible if you get lost in the demon realm.”

In the few seconds it had taken to arrive at Dante’s place, Alisa had passed out. Whether this was due to stress or from passing through a portal was unclear. Vergil was more than a little surprised to see that Dante was still sitting at his desk, watching TV.

“Whoa, talk about Déjà vu,” Dante said, not bothering to look away from the screen. “Missed me that much huh? Good thing I couldn’t sleep.”

“Look after this,” Vergil said, carefully laying Alisa down on the couch in the corner.

“Trusting me with your belongings? That’s - Hey what the heck?” Dante suddenly called out after finally looking over. “What’s with the kid?!”

“I have no time to explain. She’ll be safest with you. Where’s the woman?”

“Like hell you don’t have time to explain!” Dante said, angrily marching over. “You can’t just dump some random brat on me! Jeez, you’ve only been gone for like two hours, what happened?!”

“Tell the doppelganger to make her way to the orphanage immediately. I need to talk to Nero-”

“Stop ignoring me, damn it!” Dante said, taking a swing for his brother, only for Vergil to step smoothly to one side.

“The orphanage may be in danger, and our ‘landlord’ may be paying a home visit,” Vergil said quickly. “I don’t have time to waste. Find the demon and tell her to go to the orphanage. I’ll handle the apartment.”

“Whoa, hang on a sec,” Dante said, grabbing Vergil’s arm as he tried to leave. “You’re telling me we might have a chance to catch the guy we’ve been looking for, and you want me to sit here babysitting instead of helping out? I don’t think so.”

“He may try to target the small one,” Vergil stated. “I need to guarantee her protection.”

“Get Trish to do it,” Dante suggested.

“I want you to do it,” Vergil replied, pulling himself free. “Besides, you have experience with children.”
“Yeah, and I hated every second of it,” Dante grumbled. “Just bring her back to the orphanage or something-”

“Just do what I ask of you for once,” Vergil said, almost pleadingly. “Every second we argue leads us closer to losing our target.”

“But why me? I can totally help out at-”

“Because I trust you,” Vergil growled. “You’re…” he swallowed and looked away in embarrassment. “Just be quiet and do it,” he said dismissively before storming outside.

Dante let out a defeated sigh and turned to look at Alisa. He failed to see what was so special about some random kid. He looked back towards the still closing doors and smiled to himself slightly. Vergil would definitely owe him big time for this one. And that comment about trusting him? He grinned. Teasing fodder for weeks.
Kyrie let out a small squeal as Vergil suddenly appeared at the foot her and Nero’s bed.

“Where is Nero?” Vergil demanded.

“H-He’s in the bathroom,” Kyrie replied timidly, pulling the duvet closer around her. Vergil took note of her bare shoulders and looked away with an expression of what could have been either embarrassment or disgust.

“He’s moving around freely then?” Vergil asked, still averting his gaze.

“He’s a fast healer, but not that fast,” Kyrie said a little sharply. “If you intend to ask him to accompany you somewhere, I’m afraid I will have to decline on his behalf.”

“I assure you that you won’t feel that way once I explain the situation,” Vergil said, equally harshly.

“It doesn’t matter,” Kyrie said, her voice rising angrily above her usually calm tone. “He’s in no state to be doing anything strenuous after what you did to him!”

“It was a mere tap,” Vergil growled, finally meeting her eyes again. “He’s suffered a lot worse.”

“Yeah, like when you ripped my entire arm off?” Nero suddenly asked. Vergil turned to find his son standing with nothing but a towel wrapped around his midriff. A nasty bruise spread across his entire chest, and it was clear that he was straining to stand up as straight as he was.

“Nero-”

“What the hell are you doing here?” Nero asked angrily, jabbing a finger into Vergil’s own chest. “I told you I didn’t want to see you.”

“The situation has escalated,” Vergil replied calmly. “I don’t have time to explain it fully, but what I can tell you is that your orphanage may be in danger.”

“What?” Kyrie yelled shrilly behind them.

“What have you done this time?!” Nero shouted, hastily looking around for some clothes. “I swear to god-”

“Stop blaming me for everything and just get yourself over there,” Vergil retorted, his eyebrow twitching slightly. “The doppelganger should already be on her way.”

“Trish?” Nero paused and glanced at Kyrie. “Wait… This is serious isn’t it?”

“I have received information suggesting that there may be an attack on the orphanage,” Vergil explained quickly. “How reliable that information is I cannot say, however I thought it best that we take the necessary precautions all the same.”

“What about Dante?” Nero asked, pulling on a t-shirt.
“Dante is handling something else at the moment-”

“Something more important than the lives of multiple children?!!”

“I told you, I don’t have time to explain this. There is also the possibility that the attacker will come to my apartment, so I need to leave now in order to prepare for such a situation.”

“Who is this person?” Kyrie queried. “Why would he want to do this?”

“If only we knew,” Vergil said, shaking his head. “Do you want me to take you there?” he asked, indicating towards the Yamato.

“I guess you’d better,” Nero said hesitantly. “Just lemme get dressed.”

“I’m coming too,” Kyrie said, also looking around for something to wear.

“I can’t let you come to something like this,” Nero said softly.

“Let her,” Vergil said bluntly. “She’ll be safer with you. It’s not yet clear how much he knows about our associates-” He paused as a sudden realisation struck him. “Get Nico to take you instead,” he said hurriedly.

“Huh?! But-”

“Contact me if you have any trouble,” Vergil said, disappearing into a portal before either could stop him.

“Hey, kid…” Dante poked Alisa’s cheek and stifled a chuckle as her head wobbled slightly. He stood up from his crouching position next to the sofa and made his way over to the kitchen. After a bit of searching, he managed to find a (relatively) clean rag and ran it under the tap for a few seconds. He was both surprised and relieved to discover that the water actually seemed to be working for once. After squeezing the rag out, he folded it over a few times and returned to the sofa. He brushed some of Alisa’s hair away and placed the cloth on her head, hoping it might soothe her a little.

He stepped back and crossed his arms, looking down at her with an eyebrow raised. “What’s so special about you, huh?” he asked. He of course received no reply, and opted to just head back to his desk and wait to see what would happen. “I wish I was sleeping as soundly as you right now-” he began, before freezing mid-stride. He had completely forgotten to pass Vergil’s message on to Trish! He hovered between Alisa and the staircase, not wanting to leave her alone, but also not wishing to disturb her. He eventually opted for just yelling up the stairs and hoping that Trish would hear him.

“What do you want?” came her frustrated reply after a few attempts.

“Get down here!” Dante demanded.

In less than a minute, Trish’s disguised form was leaning against the bannister at the bottom of the staircase. “This had better be good-”

“The guy we’re hunting for might be headed towards the orphanage,” Dante said desperately. “I’d be making my over there myself, but…” He nodded his head in Alisa’s direction.

“What-- Where did this kid come from?” Trish asked, walking over and looking down at Alisa in
disbelief.

“I don’t entirely get it myself,” Dante shrugged. “All I know is Vergil needs you at the orphanage as soon as possible.”

“Since when did we take orders from him?” Trish asked, already preparing to leave.

“Since he actually decided to trust me with something for once!” Dante grinned. “Seems only fair we should do the same for him.”

“...Are you sure it was actually Vergil you spoke to?” Trish asked, laughing lightly.

“Just get outta here already,” Dante said, pointing at the door. “Call me if you get into any trouble.”

“Mary-” Vergil’s greeting was swiftly halted by a shampoo bottle to the face.

“What the hell are you doing here?!” Lady shrieked, desperately trying to cover herself up with her flimsy shower curtain.

“I apologise, I-” Vergil heard a series of rapid clicks before suddenly finding himself staring down the barrel of the Kalina Ann, its bayonet mere inches from his forehead.

“Get out, or the next one will be a rocket!!” she yelled, adjusting the still dripping weapon.

Vergil made a hasty retreat towards the adjoining bedroom and sank down on the bed, hiding his face in his hands. The portals, while convenient, were far from perfect. In his panicked state, he had simply instructed it: “Take me to Mary.” In hindsight, he should probably have been more specific.

He sat there trying to suppress the heat that spread across his cheeks for a few minutes until he finally heard the sound of water stop. A few moments later, a very unhappy Lady emerged from the bathroom, wrapped in various towels. Vergil hastily got to his feet and tried to explain. “I didn’t see-”

“Quiet,” Lady pouted, marching past him. Vergil forced himself to look away as she started rummaging through her drawers to find something more presentable than her current attire. He noted before doing so however that she had wrapped her cast in a plastic bag of some sort to keep it dry.

“Your arm is still giving you trouble?” Vergil ventured, staring at a small fleck on the carpet with intense concentration.

“Look away and close your eyes,” Lady demanded. “If I catch you looking, you’ll never see again.”

Vergil did as he was told and cleared his throat. “Listen, I’m not here for pleasure this time,” he began.

Lady let out a scoff behind him. “When you say it like that, it makes your previous visits sound seedy,” she said.

“I’m serious,” he said firmly. “I need you to come with me as soon as you’re ready - you may not be safe here.”
“You really need to work on your pick-up lines,” Lady said. “Okay, you can turn around now.” Vergil did so and saw that she was dressed in her usual hunting gear, consisting of a white blouse and jacket, and tight black shorts. She was already loading various guns and ammo into the multitude of holsters she had wrapped around her legs. “Don’t look so surprised,” she said as Vergil stared at her in stunned silence, his jaw twitching slightly. “I had a feeling something must be up when you just appeared like that - it’s not like you to make mistakes.”

“Your observation skills are as sharp as ever,” Vergil said at last.

“I wouldn’t have gotten this far if they weren’t,” Lady said. She caught sight of her wounded arm and winced slightly. “Well, most of the time anyway.”

“We don’t have a lot of time,” Vergil said, catching a falling clip of ammo as she fumbled with another one. She let out a quiet curse under her breath. “You are not entirely fit to fight,” he stated matter-of-factly. “I actually came here to bring you to safety rather than-”

“I don’t need you to protect me!” Lady shouted angrily. She raised one of her guns and aimed it between Vergil’s eyes. “Don’t start thinking you can boss me around just ‘cause… ‘cause…” She trailed off and stood there glaring at him. After a while, she slowly lowered the gun and snatched the ammo from Vergil’s still outstretched hand, thrusting it into a pocket with a disgruntled huff.

“Are you quite done?” Vergil asked, a small smile playing at the corner of his lips.

“Whatever’s going on, I can look after myself,” Lady said haughtily.

“I am well aware of that,” Vergil said, pointing to a small red mark on his forehead where the shampoo bottle had hit him. “But was it not you that sung praises on the advantages of working with, and relying on, the help of others? Surely you do not mean to tell me that it was all a lie?”

Lady opened her mouth to retort, and then closed it again. She let out a short sigh and stomped over to him. “I’m sorry about your face,” she said, looking closely at the mark and finding herself relieved that it seemed superficial only.

“And I’m sorry for unexpectedly appearing next to your shower,” Vergil said, trying to suppress a chuckle and only just managing to succeed.

“Yeah, well, I guess we’re even now,” Lady said, turning slightly red at the memory of seeing Vergil walk out of Dante’s bathroom all those weeks ago.

“Somehow I feel like I got the better end of the deal here,” Vergil said. He bent forward slightly and murmured into her ear, “Perhaps we shall have to fix that at some point.”

Lady let out a sound that was a combination between a gasp and laughter and shoved him away. “S-So what’s the situation?” she asked, focussed solely on business again.

Vergil’s slightly bemused expression returned to its usual serious look and he quickly ran a hand through his hair. “I’ll explain once we’re away from here,” he stated. “Grab anything you think you’ll need and let’s go.”

“Lemme go get the Kalina Ann,” Lady said, disappearing into the bathroom.

“Should I be concerned that you shower with your weapons?” Vergil called after her. He caught a quick glimpse of himself in the mirror on Lady’s dresser. He looked awful. His hair was greasy and limp, and dark rings were forming under his eyes. He was still wearing the outfit he had changed into last night too. He made a promise to himself that as soon as this was all over, he
would have a long bath and sleep until he couldn’t take it any more.

“You ready?” Lady asked, returning with her favourite weapon slung over her shoulder.

Vergil cast his eyes up and down her, his gaze once again settling on the cast covering her right arm. “Will you be able to use such a weapon with your current handicap?” he asked.

“I think I’ve already demonstrated that I’m more than capable,” Lady said, winking.

“...Then let us go,” Vergil said, unsheathing Yamato.

Trish and Nero arrived at the orphanage at almost the same time. As soon as he saw her, Nero ran over and grabbed her arm, turning her to face him. “What the hell is going on?” he demanded angrily. “And why do you look like that?”

“Oh, you recognised me? Well done,” Trish said, pulling her arm free and flicking her shortened hair. “I was wondering which of you would be joining me.”

“Enough small talk,” Nero growled.

“You’re right. We should get moving,” Trish said, starting to walk towards the gates.

Behind them, Nico let out a low wolf whistle. “Hey Nero, who’s the pretty lady?” she called out.

“Did Vergil explain anything to you?” Nero asked, matching Trish’s stride and ignoring the comment.

“Probably only as much as he did to you,” Trish answered. “I didn’t even speak to him directly, Dante just passed on a message.”

“Speaking of which, why isn’t Dante here?” Nero looked around. “Of all the times to slack off, this really isn’t it.”

“He’s... otherwise occupied,” Trish said as Nero started to walk up the steps to the main entrance.

Nero stumbled slightly and let out a muffled groan. “I can barely even move and I’m here,” he said, pointing at his chest.

“Let’s just focus on our own tasks,” Trish said. “I’m happy to keep watch around the perimeter of the building if you’re willing to keep an eye on things inside.”

“What do we do if either of us encounters trouble?”

Trish looked over her bronzed shoulder towards the van where Nico and Kyrie still remained. “What about those two?” she suggested. “They can keep watch with us and alert the other group if there’s a problem.”

“I don’t want to do anything that will put Kyrie in danger,” Nero said defensively. “I was planning to just lock Kyrie in a room with the children and the rest of the staff so nothing could get to them.”

“In other words, the worst possible plan,” Trish said, shaking her head. “If you do something like that, they’ll just be sitting ducks. Keep them all close together, sure, but putting them all in one room? You might as well serve them up on a platter.”

“Do you have a better suggestion?” Nero asked frustratedly. “If we just let everyone wander
around, anything could happen.”

“I’ll be watching the outside.”

“And he could already be inside,” Nero stressed. “I don’t care what you do, but I’m sticking to my plan.”

“Fine, fine,” Trish said dismissively. “Just be sure to call me when it all goes wrong.”

Nero glared at her angrily for a moment, desperately trying to stop himself from biting back. Eventually he turned back towards the van and called out to Kyrie and Nico, who quickly came running. “Kyrie, you’re coming inside with me-”

“Does that mean I get to hang out with the bronzed babe?” Nico asked excitedly.

“Nico - This is Trish,” Nero explained bluntly.

Nico looked Trish and down and shrugged. “I’ll take what I can get,” she grinned.

Trish sighed and grabbed Nico’s shoulder, shoving her ahead of her. “Guess I’ll take this one then,” she said. “You armed?”

“I got two of ‘em!” Nico said, holding up her hands.

“Nico, this is serious,” Nero groaned.

“Okay, okay, lemme see what I got in the van,” Nico replied. “Oh, that reminds me! Wait here a sec.” She took off towards the van, leaving the others staring after her in bemusement. A short while later she returned holding what looked like a catcher’s mitt attached to a robotic forearm.

“What’s this…?” Nero asked as she thrust it into his hands.

“I call it ‘Field Day,’” Nico said proudly. “You get it? Cuz you play baseball on a field? ...It’s a name in progress,” she added when Nero raised an eyebrow at her. “Anyway, what happens is, you catch whatever your enemy throws at ya, then return the projectile with ten times the force - BAM!” she said, punching the air in front of her. “Trust me, you’ll have a real field day usin’ it!”

“Okay, that’s actually pretty cool,” Nero admitted, smiling slightly. “I’ll take it, why not.” He clipped the devil breaker onto his belt and crossed his arms. “What about you though?”

“Don’t worry ‘bout me,” Nico said, pulling a pair of slick looking pistols out from the rear waistband of her shorts. “I got this covered.”

“All right then, let’s do this,” Nero said, putting a protective arm around Kyrie and nodding at Trish. “Any issues, come find us.”

“I still can’t believe you did this to me,” Lady groaned, bending her head over Vergil’s toilet to puke into it for the third time in as many minutes.

“I had no choice,” Vergil said from his position just outside the bathroom door. “It would have taken far too long to get here via conventional means.”

“Some warning would have been nice!” Lady yelled, finally getting to her feet. She flushed the toilet and washed both her hands and face before staggering into the bedroom.
“Feeling better?” Vergil asked, holding out a glass of water.

“No thanks to you,” Lady replied, angrily grabbing the glass.

“I couldn’t risk leaving you alone,” Vergil stated, watching the rest of the apartment closely through the open bedroom door.

“At least I didn’t have any breakfast to throw up,” Lady sighed, sipping the water tentatively. She walked over to the bed and sat down heavily on it. “You know this guy probably isn’t even gonna show up right?”

“We must cover every possibility,” Vergil said, walking over to the doorway and leaning against its frame. “If he really is watching us like Alisa said, he probably won’t turn up at the orphanage either, but we can’t afford to take any risks.”

“Well from what you’ve told me, he doesn’t exactly sound like the sharpest tool in the shed. Maybe he’ll take a chance and reveal himself after all…” Lady let out a yawn and fell backwards onto the mattress. “Man, those portals kill me…”

Vergil turned his head sharply as he noticed her movements and quickly walked over with a concerned expression on his face. “Mary-”

“It’s all right, I’ll be fine in a sec,” Lady said, waving him away.

“Where’s the glass?” Vergil asked bluntly, surveying the bed covers for damage.

“…Don’t worry, I finished the water first,” Lady said dryly, holding up the now empty glass. Vergil quickly took it from her and walked through to the kitchen.

“Please refrain from doing anything that could cause damage to my furnishings,” he said when he returned.

“Are you serious?” Lady asked, propping herself up on her good elbow. “You’re not actually planning to keep this place, are you? Who knows what kind of freaky hexes could have been put on it!”

“I rather like this apartment, thank you very much,” Vergil said seriously. “I am growing quite accustomed to having my own accommodation.”

“You’re hardly ever here,” Lady pointed out. “Besides, you can find another apartment. One that wasn’t handed to you by some weird Satanist.”

“We’ll see,” Vergil said dismissively. He stood in the bedroom doorway again, idly fiddling with the Yamato as he listened out for any unexpected sounds. Lady watched him in silence for a while, gently tapping her fingers on the bedcovers as she tried to think of something to talk about. Vergil had explained the situation to her as quickly as he could while she was retching in the bathroom, and they had discussed matters briefly during the small breaks in which she was not puking.

“…Are those the same clothes from yesterday?” she asked at last, sitting up fully again.

“What if they are?” Vergil asked, his eyes scanning the living room carefully.

“Have you even slept since I last saw you?”

“Briefly.”
“How long is ‘briefly’?”

Vergil turned to face her and scowled slightly. “Why should it bother you?”

“I need to make sure you’re in top form,” Lady said, somewhat sarcastically. “You won’t be very good at fending off danger if you’re too tired to stand up.”

“An ironic statement for one in such a state as yourself,” Vergil said, gesturing towards her cast. “I could be fully asleep and still be able to fight better than you.”

“Let’s not start this again,” Lady said, standing up and walking over. “We both know I’d win every ti-” her words were cut off as she suddenly found herself flying through the air, before landing roughly on the mattress.

“I’m not in the mood to be tested right now,” Vergil growled, lowering the still sheathed Yamato. “Don’t worry, I made sure to avoid breaking anything else.”

“You bastard!” Lady said, coughing slightly. She checked herself over for any injuries and was surprised to find that she had none. “How did you-”

“A true swordsman never reveals his techniques,” Vergil said, turning towards the living room again.

“I’m pretty sure you just made that up.”

“Do you want me to throw you even further this time?” Vergil asked, looking over his shoulder at her.

“Just try it,” Lady said, aiming a gun in his direction. There was an almost imperceptible flash of blue, and then the gun was lying on the floor.

“We shouldn’t be trying to fight each other,” Vergil said calmly. “We need to conserve our energy for the real threat.”

“Why are we stuck in your bedroom anyway?” Lady pouted as she reached for her weapon. “It’s not like I’m feeling sick any more. In fact, I’m getting pretty hungry.”

“More coverage,” Vergil said. “By standing here I can observe the entire apartment, including all potential entry points.”

“Okay, but I can move around right?” Lady asked, trying to push past him. “At least let me make some breakfast or something.”

“The food could be poisoned,” Vergil said, refusing to move.

“You can’t expect me to just sit here and starve to death,” Lady protested. “I’ll order something instead.”

“He could intercept the delivery,” Vergil stated.

“Come on already!” Lady said, rolling her eyes. “Stop being so paranoid and let me eat something!” She thumped her fists against his back without so much as even a flinch in response.

Vergil continued to block the doorway as he tried to think things over. He hadn’t realised it earlier, but he was hungry too. In fact, he could sense that his thoughts were slightly more jumbled than usual, caused by what he assumed was a combination of both lack of sleep and not having eaten
anything substantial for a number of hours. He had required neither rest nor sustenance while in the underworld, and he frequently found that he was still getting used to having human needs again, often leaving it until the last possible moment before tending to them. If he didn’t act soon, his ability to fight may be hindered after all.

“Eggs,” he said at last.

“...What?”

“He probably wouldn’t be able to poison the eggs, right? Or at least if he tried, it would be with some difficulty and would likely be obvious.”

“Oh, sure...” Lady said hesitantly. “You want me to fry us some?”

“I’ll do it,” Vergil said, finally stepping forward.

“I guess I’ll keep watch then,” Lady said, taking his place. She watched as he made his way over to the kitchen and rummaged around in the fridge. “How long are we going to keep this up, anyway?”

“What do you mean?” Vergil asked, placing a box of eggs on the counter. He opened the lid and began to pick up each one individually, inspecting it closely and then returning it.

“Well, suppose he really doesn’t turn up today - then what? We can’t stay trapped in here forever, and I’m sure Trish has other business to attend to.”

Vergil looked up from the current egg he was holding, a small crease forming between his eyebrows. “We’ll give him twenty-four hours,” he explained after a brief pause. “If he fails to appear, we will re-group at Dante’s office and discuss our next steps.” He paused again before continuing. “In the worst-case scenario, we could always use that child as bait-”

“Vergil!” Lady cried out, horrified. “I can’t believe you would even suggest such a thing!”

“I don’t see what other choice we have,” he continued, going back to his egg inspection.

“What about the orphanage?” Lady asked. “Protecting it I mean, not using it as bait...”

“I highly doubt anything will actually happen to it,” Vergil said. “From the information we have so far, I believe our opponent is far from capable of harming that many people.”

“So, uh... You plannin’ on keepin’ this look, or...” Nico trailed off as she watched Trish climb gracefully up a nearby tree, look around briefly from her new vantage point, and then jump back down, landing with a light thud.

“I’ll keep it for as long as I need to,” Trish replied, turning to face Nico with a wry smile. “Why, see something you like?”

“I-I was just wonderin’ was all!” Nico stammered, holding her hands up defensively. “It uh, suits you I guess.”

“Why, thank you,” Trish said, turning away with a soft swish of her hair. “You spotted anything unusual yet?”

“No, ma’am,” Nico said, reluctant to admit that she had been spending most of her time staring at Trish rather than their surroundings.
“I have a feeling this guy isn’t going to turn up, you know,” Trish said as they started their third lap around the building. “He’d be a complete idiot if he did.”

“Well, he ain’t exactly been described as the most intelligent guy around,” Nico said, pulling a pack of cigarettes out of her pocket. “You mind if I…?”

“Whatsoever, we’re outside,” Trish said, looking through a gap in the fence. “Just don’t let Nero spot you.”

“Thanks,” Nico said, pulling out a cigarette and offering the pack to Trish, who waved it away. “What’s the plan if he don’t turn up anyway?” she asked, trying to get her lighter to stay lit. There was a light breeze around them, making it almost impossible to keep the flame from being extinguished.

“Beats me,” Trish said, taking the lighter from Nico’s hands and flicking it on with instant success. She cupped her hands around the flame and lit the end of the cigarette before tossing the lighter back to Nico. “I guess we just wait to hear further from Vergil.”

“Since when did he call the shots anyway?” Nico asked, taking a long drag of the cigarette and watching the as the smoke she exhaled was carried away by the wind.

“Since Dante said so,” Trish sighed. “I just hope they know what they’re doing.”

Nico jumped slightly as her phone started to ring. “Oh hey, it’s Nero,” she said as she took it out of her pocket. “This can’t be good…”

"...And in local news, police officers are urging homeowners to watch out for what at this stage is believed to be a pair of armed burglars. One of them has been described as an elderly gentleman with white hair and stubble, while the other was unseen but has been described as sounding much younger. We’ll bring you updates as they come."

“I can’t believe this!” Dante yelled at the small TV on his desk. “I’m barely past forty, come on!”

“Vergil?” a small voice asked suddenly, distracting Dante from his frustrations. He looked over to the sofa to see Alisa sitting up, a confused expression on her face.

“Oh. Uh, hey kid,” Dante said, turning off the TV and getting to his feet. “How ya feeling?”

“D-Did you have an accident or something?” Alisa asked, shrinking back against the rough material of the sofa. Her eyes darted round the room nervously as she tried to make sense of where she was.

“What are you talking about?”

“You look dirty,” Alisa said, her eyes widening as Dante approached her. “And you smell bad. I thought maybe something had happened.”

“Hey, I showered three days ago!” Dante said angrily. He lifted an arm and sniffed himself lightly, his nose wrinkling as he did so. “Okay, maybe it was four days ago. Or was it last week…”

“Who are you?” Alisa demanded, looking around for something to defend herself with.

“Uh, right. I’m Dante,” he replied, holding out a hand. Alisa stared at the outstretched limb until he finally got the hint and lowered it again. “I’m Vergil’s twin brother.”
Alisa let out a light scoff. “No way,” she said, still huddling as far into the corner of the sofa as she could manage. “He looks much classier than you.”

“Classier, huh?” Dante mumbled, scratching at his stubble. “That’s a big word for such a small kid.”

“I’m seven,” Alisa said dryly. “I’m not an idiot.”

“How do you know my brother anyway?” Dante asked, crouching down in an attempt to look less intimidating.

“I met him at the orphanage,” Alisa said, starting to relax a little.

“Hold up,” Dante said sharply. “Are you saying Vergil kidnapped you?”

“Huh? Of course not dummy,” Alisa said. “I-” her expression darkened slightly. “...I went to visit him.”

“Does Nero know about this?” Dante asked, standing up again.

“Please don’t tell him!” Alisa begged. “I don’t want to get in trouble!”

“You’ll be in trouble anyway once he realises you’re missing,” Dante said. “At least if I let him know you’re safe he won’t be worrying about trying to find you.” Just as he started to approach his desk, the phone began to ring. “Well hey, looks like I might not need to call him after all,” he said, grabbing the receiver.

“Dante, it’s Trish.”

“That was quick. Run into trouble already?” Dante asked.

“That kid you have with you - what’s her name?”

“Hey kid, what’s your name again?” Dante called over his shoulder.

“Alisa,” she replied, looking down at her feet.

“You heard that right?” Dante said into the receiver.

“That’s great,” Trish replied, sounding relieved. “I was worried for a moment that we’d lost two of them.”

“Two?” Dante asked, clearly concerned.

“Vergil didn’t happen to drop off a young boy at the same time did he?” Trish queried. “Nero and Kyrie were going through the list of children to make sure they’re all here; Alisa and a little boy called Edward were both missing, hence the call. ...Nero is not going to be happy when he finds out where Alisa is, but at least she’s safe,” she added.

“Hey if anything, she’s safer here than she would be at the orphanage,” Dante said. “I’ll be expecting payment for babysitting though.”

“I’ll be sure to let Nero know that,” Trish said. There was a muffled cry in the background followed by what sounded like a curse from Nico. “I need to go,” Trish said hurriedly.

“Found the other kid?” Dante asked hopefully, only to find that she had already ended the call.
“Is everything okay over there?” Alisa asked, fidgeting nervously.

Dante turned to face Alisa and looked her up and down. “Is there a reason it wouldn’t be?” he asked in return, eying her suspiciously.

“Y-You just sounded worried on the phone is all,” Alisa said unconvincingly.

Dante watched her for a moment, wondering whether he should try to question her further. After a moment or so, he let out a sigh. “Damn it, I’m not about to cross-examine some brat,” he mumbled, more to himself than Alisa. “All right, look - I’ve been tasked with looking after you, and that’s exactly what I’m gonna do. Can I get you something to eat?”

Alisa looked over at the dirty kitchen and shook her head. “...I’m not hungry.”

“Something to drink then?”

Alisa shook her head again. “You have a lot of scary looking things on your walls,” she pointed out.

“Don’t worry, they won’t bite,” Dante said, grinning.

“Can I play with them?” Alisa asked excitedly, her eye coming to rest on Dante’s sword, which was currently leaning against his desk.

“You wouldn’t even be able to lift anything in here,” Dante chuckled.

“Wanna bet?” Alisa grinned.

“What’s the matter?” Trish asked, slipping her phone back into her pocket.

“That’s the matter,” Nico said, pointing towards a very distressed looking Kyrie running towards them.

“N-Nico, i-it’s awful!” Kyrie sobbed as she drew closer. “You need to-” She broke down in tears, collapsing to the ground at Nico’s feet.


Kyrie nodded, wiping her eyes. “It’s not him, it’s…”

“Let’s get her inside,” Trish said quickly, helping them both to their feet.

_________________________________________

Lady used her fork to push the remainder of her eggs around the plate. They were sitting at the small dining table in Vergil’s living room, with Vergil taking a brief pause from his room scanning duties to watch the current news article on the TV. Lady had convinced him to have it on in the background with the excuse that they could keep an eye out for any incidents which may relate to their case, but in reality, she just wanted something on to stop herself going insane from boredom.

"...while the other was unseen but has been described as sounding much younger. We’ll bring you updates as they come."

“Ridiculous,” Vergil growled.

“Huh?”
“I’m clearly the older twin,” he grumbled.

“That’s what you’re worried about?” Lady asked, giving up on the remainder of her breakfast and finishing off her glass of water.

“You’re not finishing your food?” Vergil queried. “It may be all you get to eat for a while.”

“I appreciate you making it, but it’s just kinda…” she struggled as she tried to find a polite way of saying tasteless.

“I understand,” Vergil said, his own plate completely spotless. “But we can’t add seasoning, just in case.” He took a sip of water from his own glass. “And we definitely can’t risk making any coffee.”

“...Are you doing okay?” Lady asked unexpectedly.

“What do you mean?”

“Physically,” she clarified. “No offence, but you don’t look too great.”

“Always the flatterer,” Vergil said, smiling slightly. He closed his eyes for a moment and took a deep breath. “I’m just tired,” he stated. “I don’t believe I’ve slept in a bed for over twenty-four hours, if not longer.”

“You told me you’d slept!” Lady protested.

“I didn’t say I’d slept in a bed,” Vergil said, opening his eyes again and standing up. Lady couldn’t help but notice that he wobbled ever so slightly as he did so. He reached out to collect the dishes, only for Lady to grab them first.

“Let me,” she offered. “You need to keep watch, right?”

“And you have a broken arm,” Vergil said, pulling the plates free from her grasp. He brought them through to the kitchen and placed them in the sink. Lady watched as he leaned over it for a moment, using the worktop for support.

“Vergil-”

“I’m fine,” he said sternly. He came back through to the living room and sat down opposite Lady again. “I’ll clean the dishes later,” he said when he noticed Lady staring at him. “I have more important things to do right now.”

“I think you should try to get some rest,” she said softly.

“Later,” he said, turning his attention towards the television again. “Any news?”

“I mean it,” she said, daring to place one of her hands over his. His skin felt cool and clammy beneath her touch. He looked at her out of the corner of his eye but made no attempts to remove her hand. “You’re strong, but you’re not invincible,” she pointed out. “Sometimes you need to remember that you’re half human too.”

“Enough of such talk,” he said, pulling himself free and standing up again. He staggered slightly as he walked back towards the bedroom doorway. “I just need to keep my mind occupied.”

“At least come and sit on the sofa or something,” Lady said, following after him.
“I need to be able to see everything—”

“Vergil,” Lady said harshly. “Take a look at yourself - you’re swaying back and forth as we speak.”

“Your eyes are playing tricks on you,” Vergil growled.

“What if you just sit on the bed?” she suggested. “Then you’ll be able to see everything while resting a little.”

“I can’t risk falling asleep,” Vergil said, standing firm and staring past the top of her head.

“I won’t let you fall asleep,” Lady said, gently pushing him. “Come on, just for a moment.” To her surprise, he stepped back slightly and allowed himself to be guided to the foot of the bed. “Sit down,” she ordered.

Vergil looked down at her and bent his knees slightly as though to follow her request, only to suddenly straighten them again and attempt to shove his way past her. “I can’t,” he said, shaking his head. “I can rest later—”

“Just sit down!” Lady said angrily, using her good arm and shoulder to practically tackle him to the bed. They both stared at each other in shock as they realised that her attempts had actually worked.

“Impossible,” Vergil said sharply, trying to get to his feet. Lady, who had rather embarrassingly ended up sitting on his lap, used all of her strength to push him back down again.

“Stay where you are,” she commanded.

“You should not have been able to overpower me like that,” Vergil stated, glaring at her.

“Yet more proof that you’re not in good shape,” Lady said, somewhat reluctantly getting to her feet. “If I can push you over, imagine what this other guy could do to you.”

“Something isn’t right here,” Vergil said, eyes flitting around the room. He let out a short gasp. “The eggs, “he snarled. “He must have done something to them after all—”

“Or you just haven’t slept in god knows how many hours,” Lady pointed out. “I feel completely fine.” She jumped up and down a couple of times to prove her point.

“Does nothing about this strike you as odd?” Vergil asked.

“Of course it does,” Lady said, sitting next to him. “But I’m reluctant to attribute supernatural causes to what could just be genuine fatigue.” She looked at the dark shadows under his eyes and sighed. “One hour,” she said. “Try lying down with your eyes closed for just one hour. You don’t even have to sleep.”

“I refuse,” Vergil said stubbornly.

“If anything happens, anything, I’ll come and get you,” Lady promised.

“I’m going for a shower,” Vergil said, getting unsteadily to his feet. “Although I would rather not isolate myself from the rest of the apartment, at the very least, a shower should reawaken my senses.”

“What if we get attacked while you’re in the bathroom?” Lady asked scornfully.
“Then you come and get me,” Vergil said bluntly, grabbing a towel.

“Double or nothing,” Dante said, glancing at the hand of cards he held in front of him.

“...Are you sure you wanna do that?” Alisa asked, adjusting Dante’s coat around her shoulders. They were sitting on opposite sides of the desk, Dante wearing nothing but a vest and a pair of sweatpants he had fortunately found lying around. Alisa on the other hand was surrounded not only by the rest of Dante’s clothes, but also every weapon that had previously hung on the now bare walls.

“At least give me a chance to get the Devil Sword back,” he groaned. “It doesn't even work properly unless I wield it!”

“That’s not my problem,” Alisa said, adjusting her newly acquired Faust Hat. “You better find something to bet with though, cuz I’m pretty sure an old man like you getting naked around a minor is illegal.”

The orphanage was eerily quiet as Trish, Nico and Kyrie stepped inside. “What’s the issue?” Trish asked.

Kyrie just pointed in the general direction of the kitchen, still sobbing quietly. Nico looked at Trish and then back towards Kyrie. “Perhaps I’d better stay with her,” she said, nodding in the latter’s direction.

“That might be for the best,” Trish agreed.

“Where is everyone?” Nico asked Kyrie. “We’ll probably be safer with them.”

“T-They’re in the dining room,” Kyrie stammered.

“And Nero?” asked Trish. Kyrie just pointed towards the kitchen again as Nico started to lead her away.

“Come get me if anything changes,” Trish said, heading for the kitchen. She pushed the slightly ajar doors open further and poked her head inside. Nero was standing in a far corner of the room, in front of what looked like a walk-in freezer. The air was filled with the hum of various kitchen appliances, while the fluorescent lights cast a cold blue hue over everything. “Nero?” she called out hesitantly.

“Trish...” Nero said, turning to face her. He looked pale, and not just because of the lighting.

“What happened?”

“I’ve got some good news, and some bad news,” Nero said, his voice wavering slightly. “The good news is, I think I found the guy you’ve all been looking for.” Trish joined him next to the freezer, her own eyes widening slightly. “The bad news...” Nero continued, “is that he’s already dead.”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for delays again, work and life have been hella busy recently... Thanks for
sticking with it though!
By the time Vergil returned from his shower, dressed in his usual attire with his hair slicked neatly into place, he almost looked normal again. The slight stagger in his steps however, was anything but.

"That was a long shower-" Lady began.

"We need to leave," Vergil said gravely, stumbling over to the sofa and leaning against it for support. Lady, who had been sitting on it watching television, turned to him with a concerned expression, which she quickly tried to mask with annoyance.

"Look at you," she tutted, trying to suppress the slight waver in her voice. "Will you just rest already-"

"I'm serious," Vergil hissed, the room around him starting to spin. "It took all of my effort just to make it this far…" he trailed off slowly as he began to slump forward, his head almost touching the seat of the sofa.

"Hey, cut it out…" Lady said nervously, reaching out to shake him. When he didn't respond, she shook him harder, accidentally pushing him off onto the floor. He landed on his side with a painful sounding thump. "Whoops…" Lady mumbled, getting to her feet and walking over to him. She stared at him for a moment, waiting for him to open his eyes. "Come on, this isn't funny…” she said, kicking him lightly.

"I need to get away from here," Vergil wheezed quietly.

"Let's go then," Lady said, trying to sit him up and failing. She looked down at her broken arm and let out an irritated sigh. "I can't do this by myself, you're going to have to help me out here."

"Try harder," Vergil said, opening his eyes and looking up at her. He managed the smallest of smiles before he had to squeeze his eyes shut again as nausea hit him. "I'm not trying to make this difficult," he whispered seriously. "I don't know what's wrong with me."

"It's okay, we'll figure this out," Lady replied, looking around for something that might make things easier. She glanced down at him thoughtfully for a moment as she stood over him. Here was Vergil, always so proud of his power, always so prideful and unwilling to accept the help of others, reduced to a weak mess. Her eyes flitted to the Yamato lying on the ground next to him, then back to his pained expression. Just a few years ago, maybe even a few months, what would she have done with such an opportunity, she wondered. Ridiculed him? Demanded that he beg for forgiveness? ...Slew him where he lay? She shook her head violently, trying to dispel such unpleasant thoughts. She reminded herself that things were different now, that the demon - no, the man - before her was not who she had spent so long thinking he was. She no longer hated Vergil. But... what did she feel towards him exactly?

"Mary?"

Lady looked down at him again, brought back to her senses by the use of her former name. She suspected that she would never fully get used to hearing it again. He nodded gently in the direction of the Yamato lying behind him. "I'm on it," Lady said, carefully picking it up. "Now what?"
asked uncertainly.

"Unsheathe and give it to me," Vergil mumbled, weakly unfurling the fingers of his left hand.

"Uh, okay, but if I break it, it's not my fault," Lady said, slowly removing the sword from its scabbard. She caught sight of herself in the polished metal and was somewhat taken aback by how panicked her expression looked. She bent down and placed the handle in Vergil's hand as he had asked, making sure to aim it in such a way that neither of them would end up impaled. "...Now what?"

"Turn me away from the sofa so that I'm facing the open space behind me," Vergil said slowly. It was clear that he was expending a great amount of effort in order to be able to speak. "Then help me to draw two slashes in the air - you've seen me do it before many times."

"Wait, you want me to try and open one of those portal things while you're like this?" Lady asked incredulously. "What if we end up in the middle of nowhere-"

"You won't be opening anything," Vergil said frustratedly, glaring up at her again. "You will merely be assisting me in doing so."

"I don't know about this…"

"Just trust me," Vergil demanded. When she continued to hesitate, he closed his eyes again and let out an irritated sigh. "...Please," he mumbled.

"My, my, the great and powerful Vergil is begging for my help," Lady said teasingly. "I could get used to this…" Before he had a chance to protest, she stepped to the side and managed to turn him over so that he was facing the rest of the living room as he had requested. "Any particular direction for the slashes?" she asked, placing her left hand over his.

"It doesn't really matter," he replied, opening his eyes again slightly and looking at their interwoven hands. He wondered if he would ever live down the shame of asking a mere human for help. It had been a long time since he had felt this powerless, and he hated it. He could feel Lady crouched over him, her body warm against his even through the thick material of his coat. He supposed he would have to thank her somehow once this was all over. That, or threaten her into silence about the whole ordeal.

"Ready?"

"As much as I can be."

Lady used both of her hands to help Vergil lift the Yamato into the air, wincing slightly at the strain it put on her broken arm. She took a deep breath and - with some difficulty - swung the blade through the air twice in quick succession, once towards the ceiling and once left to right. Nothing happened.

"...That's not good," Vergil mumbled, dropping the blade and rolling onto his back as his vision faded to darkness.

"It just doesn't make any sense," Trish said as she paced up and down the kitchen.

"He's still not answering his phone," Nero said seriously, opting not to leave another voicemail for his father in addition to the three he had already left. "Why would he tell us to contact him and then not answer? Something's wrong."
"You don't say," Trish said dryly, nodding towards the freezer.

"We still don't even know if this is the same guy," Nero said, his finger hovering over the call button. "...Should we call an ambulance?"

"I think it's a bit late for that," Trish said, smirking slightly.

"The police then? This is clearly a murder, right?"

"The emergency services can wait," Trish said. "I say we start heading to Vergil's place."

"And leave the orphanage unprotected?" Nero asked angrily. "There's no way I'm leaving these kids here all alone, especially not after something like this."

"I don't think we have much of a choice," Trish said seriously. "You said it yourself, something is wrong. If whatever this is can take out Vergil of all people, then I'm gonna need all the help I can get."

"There's nothing to say he's been injured," Nero said defensively. "He is pretty bad at answering his phone after all..."

"You and I both know you don't really think that's the reason for him not picking up," Trish said, raising an eyebrow. "C'mon, let's go."

"But the orphanage..."

"Figure something out," Trish said sternly. "I'm going to call Dante, I'll meet you outside."

"You owe me big time for this," Nico said bluntly as she shoved yet another pair of sticky hands off the steering wheel.

"What choice did I have?" Nero asked. He was currently wedged against the passenger door, his face pressed heavily against the window. Between him and Nico sat five, maybe six children, all chattering away and shoving against each other. In the rear of the van, sat on sofas, tables, worktops, stools, and even peeking out of the bathroom were a multitude of other children, all crying, laughing or shouting. Somewhere amongst the crowd were Kyrie and Trish, although their whereabouts was impossible to tell.

"Will you young'uns keep it down? I'm tryna have an adult conversation here!" Nico yelled behind her.

"Keep your eyes on the road darn it, there are children on board!" Nero chastised her angrily.

"Yeah, yeah whatever- Hey! Don't touch that!" Nico shouted, looking in the rear-view mirror. "Them devil breakers are expensive to make!"

"How much further?" Nero asked, wincing as he received an accidental kick to his bruised ribs.

"Why ya askin' me? He's your daddy."

"Yeah, but you're the driver," Nero retorted.

"Yeah well, hell if I know," Nico shrugged.

"Language, Nico."
"Like I give a damn," Nico said, winking at a little girl who was giggling next to her. "Sides, the kids love it."

"This isn't the time for parenting advice," Trish called out from somewhere within the crowd. "By the way, Dante is on his way."

"Didn't Dante have one of our children with him?" Kyrie's worried voice said. "Surely he wouldn't bring a child to a potential fight?"

"He's meeting us at the drop-off point first," Trish said reassuringly. "By my calculations we'll probably get there just before he does."

"Speakin' of fightin', has anyone bothered to check on Lady?" Nico asked, sharply turning a corner and almost causing the entire van to tip over.

"Aw shoot!" Nero shouted. "I completely forgot about her!"

"Wow, great set of friends she has here," Nico said sarcastically, rolling her eyes.

"I'm sure she's safe," Trish said.

"How can you know that?" Nero asked, slightly panicked. "Where's her house, is it on the way? Is she still staying with that friend of hers? I haven't heard from her for-"

"She'll be fine," Trish said, more firmly this time. "Anyone would be with him watching over them." Nico and Kyrie hummed in agreement as they realised what Trish was saying. Nero however just continued to look confused and queried it a few more times before finally giving up.

"I'm trusting you, Trish," he said at last.

They drove in silence for a bit before Nico cleared her throat and spoke up. "So uh, what's the deal with the dead dude in the freezer?"

"Nico!" Nero said angrily. "There are kids here!"

"They ain't even listening," Nico said.

"There was a dead dude in a freezer?" a little boy asked behind her.

"Yeah didn't you hear? Edward found him!" a young girl called out.

"Whoa, did Edward kill someone?" another boy asked in disbelief.

"No one killed anyone," Nero said, managing to turn himself towards the back of the van. "Nico is just being silly."

"You know, lying to kids ain't good for them," Nico said seriously. "In the world we live in, they're probably gonna come across stuff a lot worse than this. We oughta prepare them."

"I am not about to traumatisé a van full of orphans," Nero said, turning back towards the front.

"Okay, okay, but the kid who was with Kyrie when she found the dude is alright at least, yeah?" Nico asked.

"You sat with me and Edward in the dining room," Kyrie called out. "He's… in shock, but he'll be fine."
"Oh, *that* was Edward?" Nico asked. "Sorry, I was too busy makin' sure you were okay, Kyrie."

There was another sharp turn of the van, this time slamming Nero even harder against the passenger side of the vehicle. He let out a pained gasp as the wind was knocked out of him.

"Please be more careful," Trish growled, pushing a pile of children off her lap.

"Hey I'm doin' the best I can here!" Nico called back. "This is real stressful, ya know? I can't even smoke to help calm my nerves!"

"I could have made it just fine on my bike," Trish grumbled.

"Maybe, but you said it yourself - we need to stick together," Nero said. "We have no idea what we're up against here."

"Whatever," Trish sighed. "If Vergil turns out to be fine, I'm going to be hella pissed."

"If he's fine when we get there, he won't be by the time I'm done with him," Nero said quietly, gently rubbing his bruise.

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I'm sorry, your call cannot be connected at this time. Please try again later.

Lady stared angrily at her phone before throwing it across the room in frustration. She had tried to call Dante, Trish, Nero, and even Kyrie with no luck. She paced up and down for a while, occasionally running her fingers through her hair, while she tried to think of what to do next. She realised during another sweep of her hair that she must have picked the habit up from Vergil at some point, and she quickly lowered her hand. She looked down at his unconscious form, now covered in the duvet from his bedroom and with his head supported by a pillow. It had been an hour. He hadn't moved for an entire hour.

She knelt down to check that he was still breathing, then returned to pacing up and down. She needed to get him out of here somehow, she knew that. She supposed she could leave the apartment to seek help; maybe take a taxi over to Dante's place, or try to find somewhere with a better signal. But what if something happened to him while she was gone? What if he woke up and thought she had been kidnapped, then put himself in danger trying to find her? She stopped walking and let out a frustrated yell. Why did she care so much anyway?! He was just Dante's annoying jerk brother! Sure, he'd been a bit nicer to her recently, but so what? He'd also fought with her and threatened to kill her multiple times too! Granted she had provoked him into doing it most of the time, but still…

She grabbed the Kalina Ann from its position leaning against a wall and marched over to him. She stood over him and aimed the rocket launcher down at him, the bayonet mere millimetres from his forehead. "Wake up," she demanded. Nothing. "Wake up!" she shouted, moving it even closer. Still nothing. She let out an exhausted sigh and tossed the weapon onto the sofa, then sank down until she was sitting next to him. "I'm going crazy here," Lady said out loud, leaning against the wall. "I want to help you, but I don't know how to. I don't even know why I want to help you…"

She leaned forward and took his left hand in hers. She told herself she was feeling for a pulse, but even after she had checked his wrist, she continued to hold it. Although most of his hand was covered by his fingerless glove, she could still see that the skin was scarred and rough, despite his demonic healing abilities. She looked closer and was surprised to see that he had unexpectedly nice nails. "God damn it, what am I doing?" Lady groaned, throwing his hand back over his chest.

She sat staring at him for a little while before a thought suddenly struck her. Vergil had a phone too, didn't he? But where would he keep it… She pushed herself to her feet again and headed over
to his bedroom. She hesitated briefly in the doorway, unsure just how much she was prepared to
invade his privacy. Eventually she decided that she would only check his bedside table and
whatever clothes he had discarded before changing, in case he had left it in a pocket somewhere. If
she couldn't find it, she would give up and try to figure something else out.

She started with the bedside table. It was pretty much empty save for a charger for the phone in
question, and a crumpled up piece of paper inside the drawer. She looked around guiltily before
quickly unfolding it and taking a quick peek. It seemed to contain nothing but a list of restaurant
names with the types of food they served written out neatly next to them. Some of them had circles
drawn around them while others had been crossed out. She shrugged and replaced the note, then
started to look for a laundry basket of some sort. After finding one but discovering it empty, she
checked the bathroom and found Vergil's previous outfit rather uncharacteristically tossed in a
corner next to the shower. She used her foot to push the clothes around, listening for the sound of
anything falling out of any pockets. Despite her best efforts, she couldn't help but catch sight of the
one thing she had been trying to avoid looking at, and was unable to stop the next thought that
came into her head - *Wow, even his underwear is blue.*

Her phone excavation unsuccessful, she quickly ran back to the living room, trying to suppress the
redness that was undoubtedly covering her cheeks. Finally, she turned to look at Vergil again. If
his phone wasn't in his bedroom, then he must have it on him somewhere... She knelt by his left
side, her fingers twitching slightly as she tried to plan how she would go about doing this. *Start
with his coat,* she thought logically. She lifted the duvet and quickly ran her hands up and down
the outside of his coat, searching for pockets. *Completely flat,* she realised to her irritation.

*Waistcoat then…* Her hand hovered above his chest for a moment before she lowered it and started
to gently probe for any openings where a phone could possibly be stored. Nothing but the
continuous feeling of warm leather. She sat back again and sighed. She glanced at the pockets just
below his belt. "*…No way,*" she said out loud, shaking her head.

"...Shame," Vergil mumbled suddenly, causing her to fall back in surprise. "I was rather looking
forward to you getting to the back pockets."

"You're awake!?!" Lady yelled angrily, punching him in the chest. "You son of a-"

"Only for the last few seconds," Vergil clarified, turning to face her. "I didn't think you were the
type to molest an unconscious man, but here we are."

"I was looking for your phone, you bastard!" Lady shouted, hitting him again.

"You do realise there are such things as inside pockets?" Vergil asked, trying to stretch and failing.
"Damn…"

"What is it now?" Lady huffed.

"I still can't bring myself to move properly," Vergil replied. "My entire body feels heavy…" He
laid his head back on the pillow and groaned, closing his eyes. "This is pathetic," he growled. "I'm
stronger than this…"

"I'm sorry for not listening to you earlier…" Lady said. "If I'd just believed you from the start, we
could have got outta here."

"You weren't to know," Vergil sighed. "At the very least, the fact that I have regained
consciousness is probably a good sign."

"Well, hurry up and give me your phone so I can call for help," Lady urged.
"It's in the inside left breast pocket," Vergil said faintly. He could feel the pull towards unconsciousness again and was doing everything in his power to resist it.

"...Okay," Lady said hesitantly, leaning forward. "Don't try anything funny though."

"I'm too busy trying to stay alive," Vergil said, forcing his eyes open. "You must not let me fall asleep, do you understand?"

"I dunno, you're a lot less annoying to be around when you're unconscious," Lady said, lifting the edge of his coat. Vergil's eyes followed the movement of her left hand as she slipped it into the inside pocket. To her relief, she felt her fingers wrap around the cool plastic of his phone, and she quickly withdrew her hand.

"It was not a request," Vergil said. "If you let me lose consciousness, I may not wake up again."

"You and Dante are always so dramatic," Lady said, flipping the phone open.

"Your pretence of not being concerned is appreciated," Vergil said, smiling slightly.

"Whatever," Lady said, searching the contacts for Dante and desperately hoping that Vergil couldn't sense her fear.

_I'm sorry, your call cannot be connected at this time. Please try again later._

"Not again!" Lady said angrily. Her attempts to call the others yielded the same result.

"He's probably done something to stop the phones from working," Vergil pointed out. "I think it's safe to say that we have severely underestimated our opponent."

"But why go this far?" Lady asked. "What can he possibly hope to gain from this?"

"If only we knew..." Vergil said, his eyes drooping closed despite his best efforts.

"Hey," Lady said, forcefully slapping his cheek. "Don't go dying on me."

"...Thank you," Vergil said, glaring up at her.

"I'm just doing what you told me," Lady pointed out.

"Look at me, I'm Nero!"

Nico watched on in horror as various children started sticking their arms into the devil breakers she had been working on. "Kyrie, can't you do somethin'?" Nico begged as the unpleasant sounds of snapping metal filled the air.

"I'm sorry, there are just too many," Kyrie said softly. "I can't stop them if I can't reach them..."

"Then let's just get out-"

"Nico, we talked about this," Nero said angrily from next to the wound down driver's window. The van was currently parked on a grassy hill, a good few miles away from the border of the town where Vergil's apartment was located, but still close enough to keep an eye out for any signs of danger. "No one leaves this van unless it's an emergency, capeesh?"

"You an' Trish got to leave," Nico huffed, folding her arms.
"Stop being such a spoilt brat," Trish said, detaching her motorbike from the back of the van. "Besides, you should be proud to have such an important role."

"Babysittin' ain't exactly the most glamorous job," Nico complained.

"Not babysitter, getaway driver," Nero said encouragingly. "These kids' lives are in your hands!"

"No pressure, right?" Nico sighed. "You better not go dyin' on me. I ain't ready to be a mama yet."

"We got this," Nero said, indicating towards the 'Field Day (name in progress)' devil breaker hanging from his belt. "Any signs of trouble, you drive - got it?"

"Yeah yeah, I get it," Nico said, waving her hand dismissively.

"Binoculars ready?"

"Right here," Nico said, indicating towards the pair of binoculars hanging from her neck. "Can I at least smoke if the window's open?"

"I'll leave that up to Kyrie," Nero said, joining Trish next to her motorbike.

"Dante should be here any minute now," Trish said, checking the time on her phone.

"Any mention of Alisa?" Nero asked.

"I actually spoke to her briefly during the drive over here," Trish said matter-of-factly. "Apparently she was greatly enjoying her first ride on the back of a motorbike."

"What?!" Nero exclaimed angrily. "Are you seriously telling me he let a kid sit on that thing-"

"Hey gang!" Dante called out suddenly as he appeared over the brow of the hill. The Cavaliere came to a halt mere seconds before it collided with Nero.

"Dante! What the hell do you think you're doing bringing-" Nero's words caught in his throat as he realised that Dante was standing in front of him wearing nothing but a vest and a pair of boxer shorts. Beside him, Alisa stood covered in every type of armour and weaponry that Nero had ever seen in the Devil May Cry shop, and then some.

"What?" Dante asked as Nero stared at him in disbelief. After a few seconds of silence, Dante looked down at himself and slapped his forehead. "Oh right! I, uh, didn't have time to change." He looked over at Alisa who grinned back at Nero and waved. "...Long story," he added. He reached over and grabbed one of the swords attached to Alisa, causing her to topple over with a loud clanging noise.

"I'm good!" she called out, giving a shaky thumbs up from underneath the pile of metal and bones.

"Shall we?" Dante asked, grabbing a shirt and trousers from the heap.

The ride to Vergil's apartment was short but uncomfortable for Nero. He hadn't been on many motorbikes, and he'd never been Trish's passenger as far as he could recall. "Just wrap your arms around my waist already," Trish said after Nero almost fell off for the second time while tentatively resting his hands on her shoulders.
"It's okay, we're almost there right?" Nero mumbled.

"There's no point in us travelling together if only me and Dante arrive alive," Trish said, pulling over. "Would it make you feel better if I removed this disguise?"

"M-Maybe a little…" Nero said nervously.

"Alright, done," Trish said with a shake of her head. "Kyrie is lucky to have a man as loyal as you, you know that?"

"Whatever," Nero said, looking away and hesitantly wrapping his arms around Trish's waist as she revved the bike back into action.

"There a problem?" Dante called over, slowing his own bike to catch up with them.

"Just Nero being a wuss," Trish said teasingly.

As they approached the town, Nero noticed that the bike seemed to be slowing down again, until it came to a stop all of a sudden, causing him to fall off.

"What the hell, Trish?" Nero asked, looking up at her. She was stood with one leg propping up the bike, staring towards the first few houses that were coming into view.

"That's not good," she said, shivering slightly.

"What're you talking about?"

"Can't you feel- Oh right. Quarter demon," Trish said, stabilising the bike and helping Nero to his feet.

"...You okay?" Nero asked as he noticed her wobbling slightly.

"I think me going any further right now would be a bad idea," Trish said gravely.

"Wait, what?" Nero asked, walking around to look her in the eye. "You can't bail on us now! We're so close!"

"Nero causing problems again?" Dante asked, approaching them when he realised that they were no longer following. His slightly bemused expression turned to one of concern as he realised the pair were arguing. "Hey…"

"Well then how come I don't sense anything, huh?" Nero was yelling.

"Unlike you, I have no humanity. I'm a pure demon, and whatever that is doesn't seem to like my kind very much."

"When have you ever backed down from a fight?" Nero asked angrily. "We're meant to be in this together-"

"It's not safe for me, Nero!" Trish shouted.

"Guys, cut it out already!" Dante called over, parking his own bike up. "What's going on here?"

"Trish is abandoning us," Nero said, pointing aggressively in her direction.

"I'm not abandoning you," Trish hissed. "I'm not exactly happy about this either, but if I go anything..."
further, there's no telling what might happen to me."

"Hey, hey, calm down," Dante said, placing a hand on each of their shoulders. "Trish, you okay?"

"I'm sorry Dante," she said, stepping back slightly. "But this is as far as I go."

They looked each other in the eye for a moment before Dante nodded in understanding. "If you're sure."

"I am…" Trish sighed sadly. "If I could stand to risk it I would, but-"

"It's fine," Dante said. "You can't help your heritage."

"I'll head back to the van," Trish said. "I may as well make myself useful somehow."

"That's it? You're just going?" Nero asked. "How am I supposed to get the rest of the way over there?" Dante cleared his throat and nodded towards his bike. "...Fine," Nero said reluctantly. "But you better not pull any weird stunts."

"You sure you're not on the bad guy's side?" Nico asked as she helped Alisa to remove yet another gun holster. Despite Nero's instructions, she was currently standing outside the van trying to free the small girl from her newly acquired armoury. Kyrie had been very clear that she wanted none of the children inside the van to have even the smallest chance of accessing any of the weapons.

"I know how it looks," Alisa said, throwing a pair of gauntlets onto the grass. "But I'm not bad, I promise!"

"Did you know 'bout the guy in the freezer?" Nico asked, looking around guiltily before sticking a cigarette between her lips and lighting it.

"What guy in the freezer?" Alisa asked, genuinely taken aback.

Nico stared at her thoughtfully for a moment and took a drag of her cigarette. "Well, guess we don't really have much of a choice," she shrugged at last. "We can't exactly leave you alone outside…"

"Wait, wait," Alisa said, shaking off a bone bracelet of some sort. "You can't just mention someone in a freezer without explaining it!"

"It's probably best you don't ask too many questions," Nico said, taking another drag of the cigarette. "Listen, you keep me smokin' a secret, an' I'll tell you all about it later, deal?"

"I don't make deals any more," Alisa said seriously. Nico looked over at the pile of Dante's belongings and raised an eyebrow. "That was through gambling," Alisa explained. "It's different."

"You seem pretty smart for such a small kid," Nico said, nodding in approval. "How'd you feel 'bout comin' to hang out with me sometime when this is all over?"

"Oh Vergil, what kind of mess have you gotten yourself into this time?" Dante chuckled as they pulled up in front of Vergil's apartment. He could feel the hairs on the back of his neck standing up slightly as he dismounted the bike, almost as if the air was filled with static electricity. "I'm glad we sent Trish back," he said, slightly more seriously.

"You're right," Nero nodded. "I couldn't feel it way out there, but now that we're here, there's definitely something off." He shuffled his feet guiltily. "Guess I owe her an apology."
"We can deal with that later," Dante said, reverting the Cavaliere back to its dormant form. "Alright, let's go."

"How many are we up to now?" Vergil groaned as he felt the familiar sting on his cheek that followed each slap.

"Uh, twelve I think?" Lady guessed. They had taken to counting the amount of times she had been forced to keep him awake as another way of keeping his mind focussed while they tried to work out their next move.

"There must be a more dignified way of doing this," Vergil sighed.

"I mean, I could start pulling out hairs?" Lady offered, reaching towards his slicked back locks. "Don't you dare," he growled, baring his teeth.

"You seem a little stronger at last," Lady noted, drawing her hand back. "Maybe we'll finally be able to get you out of here."

"You're right..." Vergil realised, lifting his head from the pillow slightly. "Something seems to have changed..."

"Do you think you can sit up?"

"...Dante," Vergil said, with what almost sounded like relief as he laid his head back down. He chuckled quietly.

"What-

"Vergil!" came Dante's voice from outside the front door. "Are you in there? We're coming in!"

"I swear, if you break that door again, I'll-" Vergil began before the room was suddenly filled with splintering wood. Dante came charging in, swiftly followed by Nero. Both of them had their guns aimed at the room around them, and they each did a quick sweep of the apartment before approaching its fallen owner.

"What happened here?" Dante asked, seemingly out of breath.

"We need to leave," Vergil said quickly. "Help me up."

"Lady? What are you doing here?" Nero asked in surprise. A sheen of sweat coated his forehead.

"I-"

"Forget that," Vergil growled, managing to prop himself onto his elbows. "We need to-"

"Give me a sec," Dante panted, holding up a hand. He sank to his knees next to Vergil and leaned against the wall. "Man, those stairs are a pain, huh?"

"Wow, you are getting old," Nero said, wiping his forehead with the back of his hand. "I agree though, we should leave - I'm melting in here. Learn to work your thermometer, pops."

"Enough will the small talk already!" Lady called out suddenly. "You two, help me get Vergil to his feet before-"
A large explosion filled the room behind her as the outside wall seemed to disintegrate completely, taking the television and sofa with it. Before she even had time to register what had happened, Vergil had thrown himself over her, pulling the duvet over them as a makeshift shield.

"No, not the TV!" Dante cried out unhappily. His voice sounded muffled through the thick fabric of the quilt and the ringing in her ears.

"This is it," Vergil whispered to her. Warm air hit her face as she felt Vergil roll away, pulling the duvet off her in the process.

"You can still run," Lady whispered back as she watched him trying to prop himself up using the Yamato and failing. Behind him, Nero had been thrown against the dining table by the blast and was sprawled out with his back against the wall, staring in awe at the glowing light that was steadily rising upwards outside.

"Never," Vergil said through gritted teeth before collapsing forward again. Dante managed to dash forward and catch him before they both fell to the floor in a heap.

"What the hell is going on here?" Dante asked, looking over Lady's shoulder. His eyes were illuminated by whatever it was that had caused the explosion. Lady turned to look behind her just in time to see the glowing light dim slightly, revealing a young blond male floating in the air.

"At last!" a booming voice called out, shaking the remaining walls of the apartment. "I finally have all the power I need! It's finally time!" He spread his arms and Nero and Dante both let out pained grunts as a wave of dizziness came over them. "No more will my future be determined by the demons within me! No longer will I be cursed to live a doomed existence! Thanks to you, I finally have the means to dispel this possession of my soul-

"What the heck are you talking about?" Nero called out, dragging himself closer. "Wait…" he squinted slightly. "Don't I know you?"

"Silence!" the figure boomed, sending a wave of light into the room which threw them all against the back wall. "Now that I no longer have a use for you, you will be the first ones I destroy!" He moved forward until he was standing in the apartment itself. "Ever since-

"Oh boy, here comes the bad guy monologue," Dante sighed.

The man scowled at him before clearing his throat and continuing. "...Ever since that demon whispered in my ear ten years ago, I have been searching for a way to remove it. First, it took over my father, then my mother. I knew it was only a matter of time before it took over me completely."

"Your old lady's alive," Dante called out. "We paid her a visit personally-"

"That thing is not my mother!" the man called out. "She is merely a shell… A demon wearing my mother's face!" He started to pace up and down the room.

While all of this was happening, Lady felt a light tug on the bottom of her shirt. She turned to her right to find Vergil shakily holding the Yamato out towards her. "Take this," he said quietly. "When you get the chance, use it."

"Don't be ridiculous!" she hissed, pushing it back towards him. "I have no idea how to use this thing!"

"No one else can," Vergil growled. "Look at us, we can barely move."
Lady glanced over at Dante and Nero who were both slumped against the wall, shakily trying to hold themselves up.

"It wasn't easy," the man continued. "I didn't want to hurt anyone, really I didn't. But what choice did I have? I never thought of myself as a murderer, and even now I don't. Those lives were sacrificed for the greater good!" He turned to look at Vergil, who quickly managed to hide the Yamato under his coat. "An old lady lived in this apartment you know. I figured she'd be the easiest to dispose of since, you know, she was old. She was due to die anyway. It was worth it to get you where I wanted you. I spent five years setting up this town. At first, I thought the strength absorbed from lesser demons would be enough to force my intruder to leave, but as soon as I discovered you, I knew I had to have you." He walked over to Vergil and bent down to look into his eyes. "What better way to exorcise a demon, than to push it out with the power of the mighty Son of Sparda himself!" He glanced at Nero. "And to think that my own father worked with Sparda's very own grandson!" He let out an electrical sounding cackle. "Talk about fate!"

"Just get to the point already," Dante said, feeling mildly offended at his lack of mention.

"I knew I'd never be able to get you here by force," the man said, ignoring Dante's remark. "I read up on you. I observed you for a while. I knew you weren't happy. What better way to get you where I wanted than to offer you freedom in the form of your own living quarters!"

"What if he hadn't accepted?" Nero asked.

"Don't engage with him, otherwise he'll never shut up!" Dante groaned.

"I would have gotten him here one way or another," the man said. "But as it so happened, things worked out just as I knew they would. I finally had a source of power, right at the centre of my operation. But then, that idiot had to go and ruin it-"

"I've checked this apartment multiple times," Vergil butted in, his skin drenched in sweat. "I have never found anything even close to resembling a sigil. What exactly were your means of achieving this?"

The man cackled again. "Didn't you know?" he asked playfully. "Almost every place in this town has a basement!" He spread his arms again. "And this one is right at the centre!"

"I thought you said you'd checked the entire building?" Dante asked Vergil.

"I don't use the lift very often... I had no idea about the basement," he admitted.

"Silence," the man huffed, pacing up and down again. "Alexander - that's the man you thought was me this whole time - was meant to place a tainted jar of coffee in the apartment after you threw out the one I so lovingly left in the cupboard for you. I was afraid to face you alone after what I'd read about you, so I thought it wise to send a proxy. Unfortunately, he decided to betray me at the last minute, and instead tried to out me by giving you information about me. How he managed to get my father's business card, I have no idea, but it was enough to make me realise that I needed to act quickly before I was found out." He sighed. "I should have known I couldn't trust him when he gave me the pattern for those sigils on my bedroom walls - you know the ones, I know you've been there."

"The ones that sapped strength?" Dante asked.

"Human strength," the man corrected him. "Alexander told me he had given me the wrong ones by mistake and offered to show me how to do it correctly, but by then I had already figured it out."
Unfortunately, it was already too late, and my possession could not be removed by mere weakening alone. I knew Alexander from the occult group I had joined before this all started, and I decided to take him at his word. I realise now that I was wrong to do so, and thus he unfortunately became another casualty in all of this." He looked over at Nero. "I hear he was found, despite me hiding him in an unused freezer."

Nero winced slightly as he remembered Kyrie's tear-stained face and the screams of Edward as he had run into the kitchen upon the discovery.

"It's a shame," the man sighed, pacing up and down again. "I always liked Alexander, and he always claimed he was trying to help me... But, just like everyone else, he tried to fix something he knew nothing about. 'You've gone too far, Christian', 'This is beyond just a hobby'... The man - Christian - shook his head. "At least try the medication... They had all kinds of names for them... Aripiprazole, Risperidone, Olanzapine... If those aren't demonic names, then what are they??"

"Wait a second..." Lady murmured, realisation starting to kick in.

"I knew I was in trouble when even my own parents tried to force them on me," Christian continued. "I watched them decline into madness with each passing day, as the demonic power within them grew stronger. I ended up running away from home, and only found out that my father was dead when I tried to put my plan into action a year ago. I figured I could use his influence to gain access to you through the orphanage, to slowly befriend you if need be. As it turned out, I ended up having to do everything myself after all."

"There was a photo of you at his funeral," Dante pointed out. "Why would you attend if you thought he was a demon?"

"I had no choice," Christian said. "I thought my mother had managed to expel her demon, and I went along to protect her in case my father's possessed corpse tried to attack her. When things went well, I thought perhaps both of my parents had managed to cure themselves, and I moved back home briefly." He sighed. "And then I found the empty pill packets in the bin. It was obvious I had been drugged, but I couldn't bring myself to kill something wearing my mother's face, so I left again and decided to focus on my goal of purifying myself." He walked over to Vergil and grabbed his chin, forcing him to look up at him. "The one thing I didn't expect was for you to leave your home so damn often," he growled. "You're almost never here! You're always out on some mission or other, or trying to woo this harlot of yours," he said,nodding at Lady. "You were supposed to go to the orphanage for a few hours and then come back here so I could drain your power! To think that I had to resort to using a child just to get you to stay in one place for a few hours..."

"Unhand me," Vergil snarled, trying to shake himself free.

"Thanks to Alexander, I had to amp up the strength of the spell," Christian said, tossing Vergil aside with ease and picking up the Yamato which clattered to the floor in front of him. Vergil let out a muffled grunt and indicated to Lady to stay where she was when she tried to move after him. "Everything I read said that doing so would be dangerous - slow and steady wins the race and all that - but what do you know? It ended up working out pretty well! I even managed to get three for the price of one!" He closed his eyes and slowly started to unsheathe the Yamato. "And now, I will finally use this newly harnessed power to erase the demon that has tainted my soul for over a decade..." He took a deep breath. "Both forces will fight a battle within me, and I will come out victorious! All I must do is use my newly acquired power to wield the legendary Yamato, which separates man from demon-"

"You're not possessed, you goddamn idiot!" Lady cried out.
"...What?" Christian asked, opening his eyes and lowering his arms.

"She's right," Dante agreed. "The only demonic presence I sense from you is the energy you stole from us. You're just a regular, deluded, human."

"But..." Christian let out a pained growl and shook his head again. "No! You're wrong! I remember it - Ten years ago, a demon appeared to me in my room. He told me he intended to use me as a vessel and spread corruption throughout the earth... He held me down as he..." Christian banged his fist against the wall. "I've heard him! For years he's been telling me how useless I am, how I'm pathetic, and I deserve to die... He projected awful thoughts into my mind whenever I would look at my friends and family, told me to kill them... I managed to resist for as long as I could-

"There is no demon inside you," Lady said gently, getting to her feet. Cautiously, she approached him, slowly unholstering a gun behind her back. "You're not possessed, Christian," she said calmly. A low chuckle started behind her, and she turned to find that it was coming from Vergil.

"Unbelievable," he said, slowly shaking his head. "To think that you did all of this for nothing. Humans really are pathetic."

"To hell with all of you," Christian growled. "Delusional or not - which I'm *not* - I have within me the result of five years worth of draining demons. I'm stronger than all of you combined - even now I am stealing your strength as we speak. Your reign ends here-"

"Something about this seems worryingly familiar..." Dante said, glancing over at Lady. "If my experience tells me anything, a human trying to harness raw demonic energy can only end in disaster..."

Christian let out a shrill laugh. "But I am not just some mere human, I am-" His sentence remained unfinished as he suddenly exploded in a wave of blood and gristle. The four demon hunters stared in wide-eyed shock at the spot where he had stood just moments ago, blood running down their faces.

"...Well, at least he didn't turn into an amorphous blob..." Dante said at last, wiping blood away from his eyes. "Man, I wish all our enemies would just self-destruct like this."

"Is... Is that it?" Lady asked, sinking to her knees.

"Looks like he didn't account for so many of us being in one place," Dante grinned. "Trying to absorb too much demonic energy'll do that to ya." He flicked a clump of hair off of his shirt. "Anyone for celebratory pizza?" he asked, trying to stand up and finding himself still unable to do so.

"Don't be so naive," Vergil said coldly, attempting to sit up. "That much energy doesn't just disappear; it must have gone somewhere-" he gasped as he suddenly found himself hit with an immense force from behind, throwing him into Lady's back and almost catapulting them out of the now missing wall.

"...Like the building itself?" Dante asked hesitantly as he watched the wall next to him morph into a giant brick fist.

Chapter End Notes
Hey everyone! I'm sorry for the long delay in this chapter, things have been pretty hectic with the whole virus thing going on (plus I had a bad flu for two weeks!), but thanks for sticking with it all the same!
I think the story will finally be coming to an end soon, but a big thank you to those who have kept up with it so far. Stay safe! :)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!