

It was what she deserved, Asmodeus thought. His hand on the hair of the pink Skire before him. She sat on her knees. Her fire flickered around her neck with blood as light as her dripped from her lips and bruises.

She'd lost.

Asmodeus's magic twirled around his arm like clocks ticking to an endless time. He could recall when he'd first begun learning to use his time magic. Howwer's warnings ringing in his head.

"Don't use it for evil. You'll have what you've done come back to you tenfold." He warned when Asmodeus sat in his classes. Reverting objects back and forth between an old and new version of itself with the time magic he'd learned that day.

Now here he stood. The fallen body of a Skire who had only wanted to do good. How foolish she was to believe that. To think she was anything but a drop of water in an ocean to save people. Save others. The fire that once illuminated her dwindled to nothing but a crackle as the color left her.

Willow had stared. Blankly, perhaps in shock. Though it looked more as if she were considering how she felt herself about it. About her. Yet, no pain laced her tone. No anger. Nothing but that lilted, dreamy, soft, and airy voice that spoke, "You killed her." It hung for a moment, as if the words needed time to settle in the air between them. The weight of them. Only then did she lift that glowing blue eye to Asmodeus. "I'm not one for violence, I won't be now. But you will pay. For everything you've ever done to me and others. Heartache to heartache."

All of Asmodeus's life, he'd seen people come and go. He'd watched people he loved leave, thus giving him reason to learn Time Magic. He wanted to keep them in a bubble forever. Make sure they could never leave him again in an empty void.

What you've done comes back to you tenfold.

And so it did with the vengeance of a woman scorned. What he'd used to take from others, he'd watched used on his own loved one.

His beloved, his light in his life, the only thing that held him to that earthly planet still. He watched the gears, the fear in Chernabog's eyes, and the world he'd once known was taken away. He didn't know him anymore. He'd forgotten. His memories turned back decades like it was nothing for a woman whose magic took over her body.

"She's alive, isn't she!? Why must you do this!?" Asmodeus could only bargain.

"He's happier now, wouldn't you say?" Was all she answered in that damned gentle voice. "Everyone is. And you? You deserve this. Heartache to heartache."

It didn't matter. The damage had been done, and Asmodeus could do nothing but return home. He didn't want to, his feet dragging as he'd watched his life uprooted so quickly. Without a second thought, over a woman who was brought back with Life Magic without a second thought. Yet, he'd already scorned many. Ruined the lives of a dozen who always, for some reason, came back.

Was this his curse? What Howwer meant when he'd said his warning? Did it finally come back to bite him and rip his heart out once more? He had nothing. No one to hold him there when the tears started.

He stopped in front of his home. His hand was hovering over the knob that led into an empty house. No joy, no happiness, no nothing. He was alone again and again. That witch would never give him a chance to be happy again as long as she could find him. He wondered what would happen if he left the continent of Skire. Disappeared to where she couldn't find him, so maybe finally he could be happy.

At last, he turned the knob. He pushed open the heavy wood door into the massive manor. Decorated in white and gold with hints of them. All he had left to remember them in were the little things, like trinkets they'd never even remember they owned. He should just leave. He should fall into the ocean and maybe, just maybe, a different God would pity him.

"Dad, you're home!" Aurum called from the top of the marble steps. A gleam in his eyes and a smile across his pale skin. Only, it didn't last when he saw the tears. The heavy breathing from Asmodeus was as if he had been sobbing, and his white hair that hung loosely over his face. "Dad? Are you ok? Do you want me to make you some tea again?"

Aurum was hesitant to move down the steps as Asmodeus only stared.

No, no, no, no! He couldn't let her take him away, too. He couldn't let her rip away the last thing he had. He should send him away. Return him to his father so he could remember him for what little happy memories he had. Keep it that way. Put him in a bubble she couldn't reach. Forever there, forever his baby.

"Come here... Please." Asmodeu's voice came out as a rasp. Ragged and torn from sobbing and screaming at Elisia, who had only stood by and watched. Heard him beg to die because everyone would be better without him. Aurum would be happier.

The last light left was slow to finally move. Aurum kept his hands close to himself as if ready to protect himself from being harmed. As if Asmodeus would grab him at any moment as he descended the steps.

Asmodeus could do it, and Aurum would never know. Keep him in a time bubble forever. His baby.

Yet, that was the problem, wasn't it? His selfishness as he fell to his knees. His arms opened to the pod whose steps slowed to a stop at the final step.

"What's going on? Are you ok? I'm sorry if I did anything. I-I promise it won't happen again!" Aurum's voice trembled, ready for the worst while keeping his distance. He was too used to his father. The man who hated everything he did. The joy in his eyes, the creativity, the boy who loved too much for what he got.

"You didn't do anything wrong. In fact, you're perfect." Asmodeus' voice steadied in a soft, hushed whisper. He motioned for Aurum to come to him, and once he was within his arms' grasp, he pulled him into him.

His arms held him tight as new tears began. They pricked at the edges as he hugged his son. The last thing he had. How could he forget about him? About what truly mattered when the Gods at last turned their back on him.

"What's wrong?" Aurum asked softly, their small arms wrapping around his shoulders to hug him back. The first true hug that Asmodeus had given someone in far too long. He'd forgotten what it felt like. Shared warmth, shared heartbeats, and the steady pace of another's chest rising and falling brought his fear down. "Where's Bog?"

He squeezed. Asmodeus's hands were careful not to dig his nails into the pod that didn't deserve that. He deserved to be held gently as a new wave of tears found their way down his marble face.

"He's not coming back... It's just me and you now." He tried to keep himself steady, but the quiver in his voice closed his throat. It made it hard to speak through threatening sobs, knowing once more someone who truly loved him had left. This time, not by choice. "But it's ok. It's all going to be ok."

At last, Asmodeus broke the hug, pulling Aurum back so he could look at him with new eyes. A new appreciation for the young pod who'd entered his life and chose to stay. The concerned look on his face stared back at the trembling smile he put on. Asmodeus needed to be strong for himself. Be the dad he always should have been since the pod had moved into his home.

"You know I love you, right. I know I've never said it, and I should have sooner... But I love you so much, son." Asmodeus spoke lightly, like a feather, as he held Aurum's face. The smile that cracked on his face and the tears that started in his eyes in return. He should have been better. "Now, how about we watch a movie. I'll make your favorite dinner, and we can finally fix your favorite doll."

Asmodeus stood, his body aching and begging to finally relax for the remainder of the day. He watched the light return to Aurum's eyes at the thought of a night spent together.

"Pasta night!" The pod cheered, taking Asmodeu's hand as he jumped up and down with joy. He was optimistic, didn't let things tear him down as long as he could. At least Willow didn't know where he lived or who he lived with.

He walked with Aurum into the living room. First things first was taking the broken porcelain doll he'd purchased for the pod for his birthday. An expensive piece, but fragile when he picked it up. His magic twirling around the cracked face of the doll to revert it back to before it had been dropped. It's perfect porcelain cheeks as if it had never been dropped at all.

"Find a movie you'd like to watch, ok? Dinner will be ready in no time." He smiled as he passed the doll back to Aurum. The joy on his face as he took it and ran for the large couch. It would be emptier now without Chernabog there. His bed would feel a little colder.

At least, Aurum was not a picky child. He liked it simple. Plain pasta with salt and butter, white chocolate as a promised dessert when Asmodeus returned to the living room with hot bowls of food. On a normal day, he would have them eat in the dining room. He wouldn't want to risk ruining his couch or carpets that cost more than he'd like to admit, but when he looked at the smile of his son, it didn't really matter anymore.

"Can I stay up late tonight?" Aurum asked when Asmodeus sat. Leaning into his side to cuddle close with the hot bowl resting on a pillow. It's steam rising and disappearing through the air in light wisps but Aurum didn't seem to mind at all as he broke up the long noodles to make it easier to eat. Shoveling heaps into his mouth as he stared up at Asmodeus expectantly. The soft hum of Fish Tale's opening music humming through the surround sound TV.

"Fine... But only because you're my baby." Asmodeus mused as he wrapped her arm around Aurum to allow him to get closer.

Word Count: 1809