



Polina stood at the ship's railing, watching the horizon. The Eastern Terra-Firma slowly came into view. First, it was murky, a shadow in the distance consisting of meshed browns and greens. Then, as they drew closer, the demonic East defined itself; the blurred mountains announced themselves as jagged and tall, and the terrible Wilderness of ironwood trees and scaled beasts stretched as far as she could see.

"Look at that," a deep voice said.

Polina didn't bother turning as a large man came up and stood beside her. It was the Murian priest Caolan called Al. Polina had been travelling with him for a week before she found out his real name was Aldous. She didn't know what to make of him. He was unusually well-spoken, and the glimpses she'd gotten of his tattoos told her he must be well respected in Mur.

How had Caolan met such a man, and under what circumstances?

And why was he here, with them? Neither he nor the others had told her.

"Not long now," the Murian priest said, drumming his fingers on the ship's railing. "It's my first time coming to the Eastern Terra-Firma..." He glanced at her, a friendly smile on his face. "Any sights you'd recommend?"

She gave him a pointed stare.

"Ha..." He rubbed the back of his neck. "Cold as ever. Well... if opportunity strikes, I'd like to see the Needles of Nai. I've heard about them my whole life. Wouldn't mind walking about their Wilderness, either. Ironwood trees are the tallest in the Known World, did you know?" He raised an eyebrow, casting a side glance at her. "Different demons too. Red is a noble eye colour here." He chuckled. "That'll take some getting used to..."

Something about the intonation of the Murian's voice made Polina suspect he was speaking from memory. "Mr Russell," she said, "have you travelled to Cascadia before?"

"Well..." Aldous frowned and scratched his chin. "I had an opportunity once."

"And what was the noble eye colour there?" Polina asked.

The Murian's lips curled into a knowing smile.

"Gold," he said.

Polina couldn't contain her surprise. "You've been to the West?"

"Like I said." Aldous tapped the side of his broad nose. "Opportunity."

Was he playing with her? Federation Intelligence found it more than difficult to get information in or out of the elusive Western Terra-Firma, let alone set up any kind of Intelligence operation. Had this Murian priest really travelled there? From the time they'd spent travelling, Polina had deduced he had a playful personality, although she had yet to discover if it was a cover for something else or not.

"You're quite secretive, Mr Russell."

The priest grinned. "Is that a fair accusation to levy, coming from a spy?"

"I'm not a spy," Polina muttered. Not only was she not a spy, but she also wasn't sure that she was still a Senior Analyst. What had Boris Ivanov done when he found out she'd escaped from her guard? What would Natalia Marakova say to her? What fate would greet her when she returned?

No. Not when.

*If.*

Footsteps broke her rumination.

The pair turned to see another member of their group appear. Tall and slender, with dirty blond hair and blue eyes, Karina Bird was the quintessential Karlish

woman. She was in her early thirties, and, judging from the skilful manifestation of red aura she always maintained, a capable warrior.

"Look at that," Karina murmured, nodding to upper-sky. "Can't be long till their next moonrain."

Cascadia's Blue Moon was approaching its perigee. A dense ring of aetherliths circled the Eastern Moon, sparking as they caught the sun. In a week or two, tens of thousands of tonnes would breach the planet's atmosphere and the mad scramble would ensue to collect it all.

"*Bluheim*, bless us," the Murian priest said. "What a wonderful sight it will be. I hope we're able to see it. And if we are..." He raised an eyebrow at Polina. "It wouldn't be your first time, would it, Miss Volkova?"

"No," Polina answered. "It wouldn't."

She'd witnessed the Blue Moon's previous moonrain herself, from the garden of the estate where she'd been kept prisoner. It had been quite the exciting event for the house staff, and the only time she'd been offered alcohol during her captivity. She'd refused, even if the drink offered was the famed *loqua*. It was a strange moment, so very different from how the Federation handled it.

And the *colour*.

Growing up under the Orange Moon, it felt unnatural to be under the Eastern Terra-Firma's Blue Moon. The moonlit nights seemed wrong somehow. When the moonrain happened, the thousands of glistening blue lights that filled the sky seemed so otherworldly that it came across as fake. Although it had been beautiful, in its own way.

"Best crystal for lift engines," Karina said, seemingly unaware of Polina's thoughts. The woman sniffed before taking out a flask and sipping from it. "Lucky them," she said with a shrug. "Rather our Holy Moon, though."

Holy Moon. The Human Church's name for Christdom's White Moon.

"They are all holy," Aldous said. "*Zelos* as much as *Bluheim*. Even if they hang above demon lands, they are all a blessing, Bird." The priest reached up, as if

trying to grasp the Blue Moon. "*Bluheim*, the Sky Moon." He turned to face the west. "*Plergoth*, the Ice Moon." He twisted south. "*Pyrinn*, the Flame Moon. And to the distant West..." He stretched further, as if reaching past the horizon. "*Grendel*, the Life Moon. And in the centre of them all..." He turned in the direction of Centralis. "*Yeligar*, the—"

"Didn't come here for a sermon," Karina muttered.

"It is important," Aldous protested, clicking his tongue. "Important not to forget..." he trailed off, switching from his accented Imperial to his native Murian, muttering what sounded like prayers.

"What did you come here for?" Polina asked Karina.

"Curiosity," the Karlish woman answered. "Who wouldn't be curious these days?"

Polina blinked. "I suppose." It didn't take her skills as a Senior Analyst to deduce what Karina Bird's purpose was. Amelia claimed to hail from Karligard, Karina's homeland. Polina did not doubt that the Karlish authorities were every bit as interested as the bureau in discovering just how such a country had birthed, and then lost track of, the most important healer of the century. The only question that remained was whether Karina was acting in her own interest or under the direction of her government.

Regardless, it wouldn't help, because Amelia didn't hail from Karligard. Polina's blessing had verified as much when she'd met her in Kenhoro under the alias of Tatiana. Not only that, but Amelia's claims about how she arrived in Cascadia and spent time in Centralis had also been a lie.

Polina had been working on an alternative explanation.

But she wouldn't share it yet, not with these strangers.

"That is," Karina said, "if we're not arrested the moment we make land. You know what they say, don't you? Curiosity killed the peeka." She took another swig from her flask. "Isn't that right, Caolan?"

"Don't worry," a cool voice said behind Polina.

She jumped. Twisting around, she eyed the paladin. Caolan, like Aldous, was outwardly friendly. However, unlike Aldous, she knew of Caolan's background and just how much that friendly appearance was a veneer for a lifetime of bloodied battles. The man could move like a ghost when he wanted, sometimes appearing somewhere as if out of thin air.

Caolan's small smile was all he offered in the way of an apology for startling her.

"They have no grounds to arrest us," Caolan said. "That would cause an incident no one wants in this nervous post-war climate we find ourselves in. The worst they can do is deny our visa." He shook his head and approached the ship railing, looking at the approaching continent. "But it won't come to that. I am sure of it."

"If it does?" Polina couldn't help but ask.

"If it does..." Caolan shrugged. "Then we find another way."

Polina didn't reply. She simply stood, watching the Eastern Terra-Firma come ever closer. She stayed quiet while the others talked about small topics. There was a nervous energy in the air, and they were soon hailed by Imperial perimeter ships. After identification codes were shared, the *Lady Hope* was escorted the remainder of the way.

*At least we weren't blown out of the sky*, Polina thought, glancing at Caolan. The paladin had kept his cards close to his chest regarding the apparent influence he had that allowed them to be granted visas so easily.

A few hours later, when the sun was high in the sky, they arrived at the Three Sisters.

The demon cities of Asamoto, Asamaywa, and Asamino were, like the other plateau cities, a sight to behold. The capital of the East, Asamaywa, had long since merged with its sister cities to form one central urban sprawl that formed the economic and political centre of the Eastern Terra-Firma. Factoring in the lowland areas around it, its size and population exceeded that of the Federation's Numengrad.

"Look at that strange architecture," Karina said. "All those sloped roofs. Reminds me of Tinh Hai."

"Magnificent," Aldous said. "And those plateau lifts! Are they wooden?"

Karina shook her head. "One big tinderbox, if you ask me. Look..." She pointed at the lowland infrastructure near the Asamaywa railway station. "You can see how big that fire was. Without *Suijin* they would have had no hope."

"They rebuilt it fast," Polina said quietly. When she'd left the East, she'd seen the construction-in-progress from the transport ship that had carried her back home. She'd always been proud of the Federation's focus on efficient construction, but now it seemed they had a competitor in Cascadia's East.

"They don't have any skyscrapers," Karina mused. "Is that a limitation of the ironwood they use for construction?"

"It's not that," Caolan said, shaking his head. "The Three Sisters have laws against building anything higher than four stories. The Samino like to protect their traditional skyline. If it's one thing they like, it's tradition." The paladin chuckled and continued, "If you want to see how high you can build with ironwood we should stop by Kenhoro. They build pagodas there ten, twelve stories tall. All for those strange spirits they worship. Skyscrapers too. One of them's a hotel, actually. I was recommended to stay there should my path ever take me to the city."

"They might not build tall," Aldous said, "but they sure build wide. Look at this"—he gestured to the lowlands—"I can't even see the Wilderness anymore! It's like civilisation on Terra Aurea. Farmland, industrial towns, trains... I was always told that Cascadia was empty, save for the few plateau cities. It's like a demonic version of Christdom! I—" The Murian paused, casting an apologetic look at Caolan. "Sorry, friend."

"Don't worry yourself," Caolan answered smoothly. "The world is changing, friend. I believe they've cleared the Wilderness all the way to Nachon. The demons have been busy, Al. I'd like to see your reaction to Centralis. Which would you think is grander, I wonder—Celle, or Somerwall?"

"Can't imagine anything grander than Christdom's capital..." Aldous mumbled, rubbing his chin. He turned to Polina and asked, "Have you ever been?"

"To Centralis?"

"Yes."

"No," Polina answered. During her work she'd seen many reports and numerous photographs of both the Cascadia's Celle and Christdom's Somerwall. Both capitals made liberal use of marble and gold. If Polina didn't know better, she might have conjectured that the Empress and His Holiness were waging a childish war over who could build the grandest capital.

"Somerwall may be grand," Aldous said, "but Sumara will always be the greatest city in the Known World. Nothing could ever compare, not truly..."

Polina couldn't help but smile. Sumara was Mur's capital. In population, it wouldn't hold a candle to the Three Sisters or even an average Christdom city, but the tone in the Murian priest's words reminded her of how she felt when she thought of Numengrad. There was a warmth there that could never be extinguished or rivalled.

Even in Polina's case, after everything she'd learned.

Even if she were never to return.

It didn't take long for them to come into dock. The *Lady Hope* was a small ship, and thus didn't have to come in at the agonisingly slow crawl a battleship would have been required to. Speaking of battleships, their assigned bay was sandwiched between two *Oshiro*-class vessels, bristling with guns that could fire shells heavier than Polina and the rest of the group combined, and covered in modern aetherscopes whose silvery skin reflected the midday sun.

"This is reassuring," Karina muttered as the shadow of the Imperial warships covered the *Lady Hope* like a cloak, trapping it. "Think they assigned us this bay on purpose?"

"Probably," Aldous said cheerfully. "But they're not firing, so it's a good start, no?"

"Not yet," the Karlsh woman responded, taking another swig from her flask.

By the time the gangway was attached to the *Lady Hope*, there was a pair of demons waiting for them. One, a middle-aged Samino demon who seemed rather unassuming. Polina didn't recognise him. She did, however, recognise the older woman next to him.

Her mind connected the dots instantly.

*So this is who Caolan healed in the past, she thought. No wonder he could get visas.*

"Lord Inoue," Caolan exclaimed, striding down the gangway. "It has been too long."

"Too long?" Lunaria Inoue questioned.

"For old friends to meet again," Caolan said.

"But about right for enemies, I would think," the demon answered, her eyes twinkling.

"Enemies?" the paladin retorted. "Is that how you see me?"

Lord Inoue blinked. "That depends."

"On?"

"Everything else."

"We'd best be on our best behaviour, then."

The demon smiled. "Let's hope so, Caolan the Paladin." She then bowed, a slow bow in the Samino style Polina remembered practising with Marakova. "Welcome to the Eastern Terra-Firma, Caolan the Paladin and friends." She straightened her posture and slowly eyed each of them in turn. Try as she might, Polina couldn't help but look away.

Seemingly satisfied with whatever it was she was looking for, the demon nodded to the man next to her. He cleared his throat and took a step forward.

"I am Masayuki Tani," the demon said. "The Chief of Protocol within the Foreign Ministry. It is my duty to receive foreign Speakers and other people of..." he trailed off, his eyes flicking to Polina. "Interest," he finished. "Given the sensitive nature of your arrival, additional conditions have been imposed upon you. Before we go somewhere more pleasant to discuss those, allow me to cover the basics."

He cleared his throat and continued, "You are not to Speak or use any aetheric ability while on Cascadian Terra-Firma or in Cascadian airspace. The manifestation and maintenance of first-circle wards or red aura are permitted for general purposes. Greater abilities, up to and including the communion of a Word, shall be legal if, and only if, the commencement of such actions is required to save your life or the lives of others, or to protect yourself or others from grievous harm. Should you be arrested or detained for any reason, the use of any aetheric ability, up to and including the communion of a Word, will not be considered a lawful use of force and will be met"—the demon's eyes narrowed—"with greater force. Is that understood?"

Caolan nodded slowly. "Standard so far," he said.

Polina silently agreed. It was nothing the Federation wouldn't impose upon a visiting Cascadian aether user.

"Then for the non-standard material," Masayuki Tani said. "You are not granted freedom of travel. A liaison official shall be assigned to you, whom you will meet shortly." As the demon took a moment to thumb his way through some papers, Polina saw Caolan raise an eyebrow at Lord Inoue.

"It's not me," was all the demon said slyly.

"You must present an itinerary to your assigned liaison official," Masayuki said idly. "Including any changes or deviations that may occur. You are not to deviate from any route they decide, or to try to escape from them, trick them, or otherwise frustrate their duties in any way or form. Any attempts at deception will result in the revocation of your visas and subsequent ejection from Cascadian Terra-Firma and airspace. Is that understood?"

"It is," Caolan said.

“Excellent.” The demon gestured. “Then please, follow myself and Lord Inoue. Greatlord Oshiro is waiting.”

Polina swallowed reflexively. “Is he our liaison?” she asked.

The demon paused and frowned. “No, Miss Volkova. Greatlord Oshiro has a great many more important tasks that demand his time than to personally watch you.” The edge of Masayuki’s lips curled. “But don’t be disheartened. I assure you that your assigned liaison official will not disappoint you in terms of capability.”

“Ah...” It was all Polina could say. Almost at the same time, a stream of thoughts pushed their way to the forefront of her mind. What was she doing here? Should she leave? Return to the bureau and beg their forgiveness? She could—

A face flashed in her mind. A glimpse of a memory she’d held onto desperately, fearful of ever losing it. A handsome man, a perfect man with a smile that melted her heart. And in his hands he held a child.

Polina’s heart twisted.

And then a different memory came to mind. A more recent one. Another smile, this time from a woman. A woman with golden hair and a sparkle in her eyes that never wavered.

No.

This was the right choice.

There was hope in the world. In her future.

She was right to chase it.

“Just in here...” Masayuki intoned, waving them through a door and into...

The atmosphere became very serious very quickly.

The room was well-lit, with rows of neat white aetherlights set above ornate ironwood furniture. On one wall, a long tapestry detailing imagery of the Eastern Wilderness, and on the other, a large portrait of the Empress of Demonkind in her Samino form. The painted Empress looked down upon the room, where two rows

of seats faced an open space. One row had four seats, one for each of them. The other side had many more.

Greatlord Oshiro stood there, watching them shuffle into position. He was an imposing figure, in many ways reminding her of Boris Ivanov. Some people were so naturally suited to be in control that it was impossible to imagine them ever having done anything else. He wasn't the only one Polina recognised. Next to him was the plain-looking Cerulean demon who had visited Polina when she'd been a prisoner at the Overlord's estate.

Someone high up in Cascadian Intelligence; she'd gathered that much.

There were others, aides and assistants to the greatlord. That wasn't all. Behind the Cascadian side, there was a luxurious leather chair in the corner. It was facing away from them, and it was occupied. There was someone sitting there. Polina caught the faintest glimpse of a teacup held in a gloved hand before the pressure of Greatlord Oshiro demanded their attention and cast a spell of silence over the room.

No one said anything for a few seconds.

Then, with a single deliberate motion Greatlord Oshiro gestured for them to sit.

And so they sat.

The Cascadian side sat slowly, as if they had all the time in the world.

And then they looked at each other for half a dozen seconds.

It was the plain-looking demon who spoke first.

"I've thought of a good joke," the man said. "A Paladin, a *Luhran* Speaker, a Murian priest and a Pulpian Truthteller walk into a bar, and the barman asks, 'What can I get you?' and the Paladin says..." The man trailed off, raising an eyebrow and looking at Caolan.

"Amelia Thornheart," Caolan answered.

The Cascadian side burst out in laughter. Well, some of them did. Greatlord Oshiro only lightly chuckled, but the serious glint in his eyes seemed almost

deadly. Lord Inoue seemed to giggle with some amusement. And, if Polina wasn't mistaken, there was the faintest noise of mirth from whoever was sitting in the luxurious chair drinking tea.

The plain-looking demon smiled. "And who said Paladins were heartless creatures of the battlefield? Tell me, did Tamerlane bestow upon you humour as well as power?"

"His Holiness."

"Excuse me?"

"His Holiness," Caolan said once more, his voice even. "Or do you claim to hold such authority over the world as to use his name?"

"That's enough," Greatlord Oshiro said. "From both of you." He clapped his hands. Attendants swarmed them, providing each of them with a saucer and teacup. Once they all had their drink, Greatlord Oshiro said, "This is Kasimanda mint tea. I have prepared it myself. Let us drink." Without another word, he took a delicate sip. The demon side followed suit, and then, a few seconds later, Polina and the rest of the group did as well.

"I cannot give you Amelia Thornheart," Greatlord Oshiro said. "For she is not a thing to be given. I am also confident that she would not go with you. From your initial communication with Lord Inoue, am I correct in understanding that there is a little more subtlety to your purpose?"

Caolan placed his teacup down gently. "I do not wish to take her or own her. That is not why I'm here. I wish to..." He paused momentarily, his eyes wandering to the floor. "I wish to understand her."

"Understand her?"

"I did not fight in the recent conflict. I will not fight now. I do not intend to fight in the next one. You may see me as nothing more than a servant of His Holiness, but I am my own person, with my own vision, my own path..." Caolan took a slow breath. "I wish to meet her so I can understand her; I wish to understand her so that I can set this world onto a better path."

Greatlord Oshiro blinked. "And what path is that?"

"One that avoids the next doom."

"Doom?"

"The next war." Caolan tapped his saucer. "You must know as well as I do that a greater conflict is coming. There is a path, no, there *must* be a path to avoid it. I need to meet with Amelia Thornheart so I can take the first step on this new path, so I can walk it with those like me, and use our combined influence to avert catastrophe. That is why."

A long silence descended.

"Naive," the plain-looking man said. "You must know this is a naive endeavour."

"Even so," Caolan said. "I must do it."

"And if you met Lord-Prospect Thornheart and explained this?" The demon shook his head. "It would place an undeserved burden upon her."

"I will share that burden," Caolan said. "All of it, if necessary."

"Paladins..." The man shook his head. "So stubborn." He turned and nodded at Karina. "And what do you have to say?"

Karina swallowed and placed her teacup down.

"How do you know my Word?" she asked.

*So she really was a Speaker, Polina thought. A Speaker of Luhran.*

That was rare.

The demon smiled. "Do you think our Intelligence cannot reach Karligard? Once we discovered the origins of Lord-Prospect Thornheart, we naturally took an interest."

Karina didn't say anything for a long while. Eventually, she opened her mouth and said, "I wish to meet her. I wish to verify that she wasn't coerced, and to hear of who she is and why she has abandoned—" Karina cleared her throat suddenly.

She took a breath. "Why she left her homeland. These are the things I want to know, from her mouth."

The plain-looking demon exchanged a look with Greatlord Oshiro before facing Karina again. "And what do you make of Sir Caolan's desires?" he asked.

"There will always be war," Karina said with a shrug. "But if I can help avert one, I will."

"Hmm..." The demon nodded, as if satisfied, before turning to Aldous and asking, "What brings a Murian priest, worshipper of the Great Storm, to these lands?"

Aldous chuckled, rubbing the back of his neck. Polina could see he was sweating. The man was more nervous than he let on. "Ha... I come for a simple reason, my demon friend. I wish to see the Murian prophecy fulfilled."

Polina couldn't help looking his way.

"The Murian prophecy has already been fulfilled," the plain-looking demon said in an even voice. "The individual who fulfilled it is right there." He gestured to the painting on the wall. "The Enemy was vanquished, and the darkness obliterated by the Light Rekindled. Or is that no longer the consensus of the Murian Priesthood?"

"Ah, well..." Aldous wrung his hands. "Not all still agree, my demon friend. Recently, no, for years now. The stormwatchers report... they report..." The Murian cleared his throat. "They report disturbances."

"Causing disturbances is an essential feature of a storm," the demon retorted. "Some might say a thousand-kilometre storm system should ruffle a few feathers now and again, don't you think?"

"The stormwatchers..." Aldous swallowed nervously. "Have seen things. Shadows. Winged creatures. There—"

A sharp crack echoed through the room. It came from the chair and its mysterious inhabitant. They had dropped their teacup onto its saucer. Polina watched the gloved hand gently pick it back up, and the person began sipping tea once more.

"So," the plain-looking demon said, turning back, "you wish to meet the good Lord-Prospect and verify for yourself whether she fits this radical new interpretation of the Murian prophecy? And what will you do if she does?"

"I will..." Aldous swallowed again. "Ask her to return to Mur with me."

"And if she doesn't?"

"Then I will leave without her and report to the Priesthood."

"I see..." The demon looked at the Murian for a long time before slowly settling his gaze on Polina. "Miss Volkova," he said, "I must say I did not expect you to enjoy your previous stay to such a degree that you would return so soon. Some would call it brave. Others..." the demon took a deliberate sip of tea, "would call it foolish. Why have you returned?"

Polina had already prepared her answer.

"I have nowhere else to go," she said. "That is all."

Her answer prompted a few murmurs from the Cascadian side. Even the plain-looking demon looked surprised. It seemed that Cascadian Intelligence was not yet aware of her act of rebellion.

"Is that so?" the demon enquired.

"Yes."

"I suppose there is a sad story behind this?"

"Yes."

"Would you care to share?"

"No."

Her curt refusal seemed to amuse the demon. He leaned towards Greatlord Oshiro and exchanged a few words. After nodding to each other, the plain-looking demon spoke, saying, "You may make a formal request to House Thornheart. The good Lord-Prospect is still recovering after previously exerting herself. A type of

exhaustion that even her healing cannot recover, so I'm told. You are welcome to stay, but her recovery may take weeks, even months before she can see you. Rest assured, you can wait as long as you wish. No harm will come to you while you are here."

Reflexively, Polina used her blessing.

She didn't mean to, but some instinct of hers demanded that she act on the demon's words. Her ability shot out, an ethereal burst of power that struck the plain-looking demon and pulsed back to her. Revealing...

The hairs on the back of Polina's neck raised.

Nothing.

There was nothing.

Her blessing had never failed.

There was *nothing*, no sense of truthfulness, either right or wrong, from the demon. It was as if he wasn't there, as if he was... void.

Greatlord Oshiro shifted in his seat.

"That was impolite, Miss Volkova," the greatlord intoned quietly.

"Ah..." Polina swallowed. She looked between the greatlord and the plain-looking demon. She didn't understand. Why hadn't it worked? Did the man have his own blessing? Something that countered hers? She glanced at her group. Aldous and Karina looked confused. They didn't understand what had happened.

"I'm..." Polina forced her mind to settle. "My apologies, Greatlord. It happened on reflex."

"If it wasn't clear," Greatlord Oshiro said, "the restrictions you all have on your aetheric abilities include the use of blessings. Do not make this a habit, Miss Volkova." He glared at her with a look that seemed to swallow her whole.

"...Yes." She bowed her head.

"Then there is little else to discuss," Greatlord Oshiro said. "Lord Inoue has graciously offered to host you while you stay here. I suggest you take the time to carefully write a formal request for an audience with Lord-Prospect Thornheart. Should you wish to travel anywhere, you can coordinate with your liaison." The greatlord cleared his throat. "Stand, please," he said, gesturing to them.

They stood.

The Cascadian side stood.

And then, slowly, with the gentle sound of creaking leather, the person in the chair stood up. They entered the centre of the room, eyeing each of them with a stare that stripped them of all their secrets.

"Your liaison," Greatlord Oshiro intoned.

"Good afternoon," their liaison said. "Let us get along well together, yes?"

The woman bowed, her auburn hair bobbing as she did.

She straightened her posture, a set of purple eyes meeting Polina's.

"I'm Katalin of Driss," the demon said. "Nice to meet you."