What's up lads!!

Last time, we left off at interesting place.

Dear heavens! What happened?

Did they sustain any injuries!? Were they attacked by nefarious, eccentric villains!? Or are the pair up to something involving world domination!?

To find out, one has to read this chapter!

MUAUAHAHAAHHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

…

Ignoring my eccentric self, let's begin, shall we.

Start:

Pouting, Selah "hmph-ed" and turned away, crossing her arms as Naruto sent her an annoyingly triumphant grin.

“Oh, come on,” he teased, nudging her side gently with his elbow. “You put up a good fight. Not my fault I came out on top.”

Selah huffed, although a faint smile played at the corners of her mouth, betraying her amusement. “You and your army of clones ganging up on me doesn’t count as a fair win, you know.”

“Hey, I only used ten of them,” Naruto replied, feigning an innocent look but failing to contain the glint of mischief in his eyes. “I was practically holding back.”

“Uh-huh, and that’s supposed to make me feel better?” She raised an eyebrow, giving him a sidelong look. “So modest.”

He shrugged, unable to keep from grinning. “Hey, it’s not every day I get to impress a queen. I have to flaunt my power and all that.”

She rolled her eyes, though her own smile was starting to show through. "You’re lucky you’re cute," she muttered under her breath, loud enough for him to hear.

“Oh? You think I’m cute?” Naruto’s grin turned sly, his tone playful as he leaned in just a little closer, his warm gaze flickering with amusement.

Selah tried to keep a straight face but failed as a soft giggle escaped her. She bumped him with her shoulder, the pretend annoyance fading into a genuine smile. “Don’t get cocky. That was hardly a compliment.”

“Sure, sure,” Naruto replied, a chuckle escaping his lips. “I think you like it when I win, even if you’d never admit it.”

“Oh, please,” she replied, though her voice had softened, the teasing note blending into something warmer. “Keep dreaming.”

Their banter continued as they walked side by side, each step filled with an unspoken familiarity that felt both comforting and exciting. Selah allowed herself to relax, and before she knew it, her arm had slipped through his, her head resting gently against his shoulder as they moved down the quiet, softly lit street.

Naruto glanced down, his expression tender as he took in the sight of her nestled against him. The warmth of her presence, the quiet contentment between them—it was a feeling he was already beginning to love. “See?” he murmured, a hint of playfulness still lingering in his voice. “I knew you couldn’t stay mad at me.”

Selah tilted her head up to look at him, her eyes bright with humor and something deeper. “Who said I wasn’t still mad?” she whispered, though the softness in her voice betrayed her.

The blonde chuckled, the sound deep and genuine. “Right… as if you could resist my charm.”

She laughed, the sound light and joyful, echoing softly in the stillness of the night. “Alright, I’ll let you have this one,” Selah conceded, her lips quirking into a small smile. “Just this once, though.”

“Of course, of course,” Naruto replied, patting the hand she had looped through his arm. “I’ll take what I can get.”

They continued their stroll, the silence between them comfortable as they savored the evening.

The air was cool, the city lights casting a warm glow over the streets, and in that moment, it felt as though the world had shrunk to just the two of them. Selah leaned a bit more into him, feeling

the steady warmth of his body, her heart beating a little faster as she allowed herself to enjoy the closeness.

After a few more minutes, they arrived at the entrance of a small, elegant restaurant, its facade illuminated by soft, golden lights. The sign above the door was painted in elegant script, hinting at the class and charm that awaited them inside.

Naruto paused at the entrance, holding out his arm with a graceful gesture. “After you, my lady,” he said, his voice low and warm.

Selah looked up at him, her heart skipping a beat as she took his hand. There was something in his gaze—a softness, a quiet promise—that made her breath catch. And together, they stepped inside, ready to embark on what was assuredly going to be, an unforgettable evening.

Xxxx

“Welcome back to Power Devil News. As we continue our coverage on Lord Naruto Phenex’s call for reform, our latest statistics show a striking shift in public sentiment. It appears that a significant majority of devil society is rallying behind Naruto’s cause.”

He motioned to a graph displayed behind him, showing a breakdown of support across the different societal classes.

“Our data indicates that Naruto Phenex’s message has garnered near-universal support among the lower class devils, with a remarkable 90 percent of the middle class backing his vision as well. What’s even more unexpected is that among high-class devils, 62 percent have expressed alignment with his stance on reform—a surprising figure given the traditionally conservative nature of this group.”

Thaddeus looked over to his co-anchor, Mirajane Strauss, Mira for short, who shared his fascination with the statistics. “That’s correct, Thaddeus,” Mira began. “Naruto’s call to reform, which addresses the long-standing inequalities and imbalances within our society, has clearly resonated with the majority. The high level of support from middle and even high-class devils suggests a growing desire for change that goes beyond rank and tradition.”

“Indeed,” Thaddeus replied, “and it raises the question: why now? Why has this call for reform gained such traction, especially from someone like Naruto, a devil known more for his strength than for any previous political ambitions?”

The camera shifted to a panel of guests representing various perspectives. A well-known analyst, Drayke Rian, leaned forward, his expression one of conviction.

“It’s clear to me that Lord Naruto represents something rare in the Underworld—a figure who isn’t afraid to challenge the very system that he’s a part of. His influence as the strongest devil cannot be ignored. But let’s not forget that Lord Bael, as the current ruler, has maintained stability and order in the Underworld for centuries. His response, whatever it may be, could very well shape the future of our society.”

Mira interjected, “Drayke, do you believe that Lord Bael will accept this challenge? Or could he dismiss it as nothing more than an overreach by a younger, inexperienced, albeit more powerful, leader?”

“It’s hard to say.” Drayke admitted with a frown. “Lord Bael is an especially powerful devil politically who has been a stabilizing pillar for our society. He could address this challenge, or ignore altogether, or even react in a way that analysts such as myself won’t see coming.”

“Of course, after all, these recent events have been nothing but unprecedented and wholly chaotic” Thaddeus nodded thoughtfully. “The big question on everyone’s mind now is: what will Lord Bael’s response be?”

Before Drayke could answer, the lights in the studio flickered, and the large screens went blank. Confused glances passed among the anchors and panelists as the entire broadcast control room scrambled to figure out what was happening.

Then, without warning, a figure emerged from the shadows at the edge of the studio.

It was Lord Bael himself.

Gasps rang out across the room as one of the most, if not, the most influential devil in all of the underworld, appeared.

A stunned silence swept over the set as Lord Bael walked into view. Every eye in the room followed him, and whispers broke out across the floor. His physical presence seemed to command the very air around him. He wore a dark, regal cloak lined with silver trim, his posture and gaze exuding authority. With a faint smile, he raised a hand to quiet the murmurs, signaling that he would speak.

Just as he did, every screen, device, and display in the Underworld—from televisions in homes to monitors in government offices, from phones in the hands of civilians to large public screens

in city centers—all flickered to life, projecting the image of the Power Devil News studio. Every devil in the Underworld was now part of the audience.

…

…

Silence was all that was known as Lord Bael endured the attention of the entire underworld with finesse and class.

After a few moments of quiet, he smiled. "Good evening, my fellow citizens of the Underworld," Lord Bael began, his voice rich and smooth. “First, let me offer my sincerest apologies to Power Devil News and its esteemed team for this unplanned interruption. I ask your understanding, for there are times when the voice of leadership must resonate through every corner of our realm, and tonight is such a time.”

The anchors and guests remained silent, as did the millions of devils watching. There was something in his tone—a depth and sincerity that felt compelling, even magnetic. The Underworld was captivated.

Lord Bael continued, his tone shifting to one of calm reflection. “In recent days, our realm has been abuzz with news of a challenge. Lord Naruto Phenex, a warrior of unmatched strength, has spoken out, calling for a reformation of our society. His words, I know, have resonated deeply with many of you.”

He paused, allowing the weight of his words to settle. “I am well aware that our society is not perfect. The Underworld, like any realm, has its flaws, its struggles, and its imbalances. This is not something I wish to ignore, nor something I intend to dismiss.”

Gulping slightly, Mira leaned forward, gathering the nerve to speak. “Forgive me, Lord Bael, but you acknowledge these flaws now, is this an admission that reforms are necessary?”

Lord Bael smiled, a carefully crafted expression of understanding. “An excellent question, Mira. I do not deny that our society can be improved, and now that these issues have been brought to my attention, I fully intend to confront these problems and change our society for the better. However, change, true and lasting change, must be guided by wisdom, experience, and a profound respect for the structures that have preserved us for centuries.”

He allowed his gaze to sweep over the studio before refocusing on the camera. “Our traditions, our values, and our hierarchy—they are the foundation upon which our world stands. To abandon them recklessly would be to dismantle the very pillars that support us all. Lord Naruto’s challenge, though well-intentioned, is one born from inexperience.”

“While I hold deep respect for Lord Naruto and his vision, he is new to the intricacies of leading the Underworld. For two centuries, he was absent from our society. And only recently did he become a clan head, how can we trust him with the fate of our world? ” The Great King finished.

The camera captured Mira's thoughtful expression, as she gathered herself to ask the next question. "But Lord Bael, some argue that Lord Naruto’s experiences beyond our realm could bring a fresh perspective. That he may offer insights we have not yet considered."

"Indeed," Bael replied smoothly, "and I do not dismiss the potential value of such perspectives. However, insight alone does not guarantee effective governance. Leadership demands a unique blend of insight, restraint, and above all, a selfless commitment to those who depend on you."

He let his gaze sweep across the cameras again. "I will say this: Lord Naruto possesses unparalleled strength and skill in battle, and for that, he has my utmost respect. But these are qualities of a warrior, not necessarily of a leader. There is a difference between fighting with honor on the battlefield and building a stable society for generations to come."

Drayke Rian, the analyst on the panel, took the chance to interject. "Lord Bael, it’s no secret that much of the Underworld is now invested in this impending confrontation. Might we inquire about your intentions regarding Lord Naruto’s challenge?"

Lord Bael's expression turned serious, his voice dropping to a more intense, commanding tone. "To the people of the Underworld, let me say this: I have never been one to turn away from a challenge, especially one as significant as this. It is clear to me that the people want answers and clarity, and I am here to provide them."

He looked back at the camera, addressing the entirety of devil society. "I will accept Lord Naruto's challenge," he declared, his words reverberating across every corner of the Underworld. "But…" he paused, his gaze steely, "It comes with a sole condition..."

Allowing a bit of silence to stretch, Lord Bael narrowed his gaze on the camera lens. "This is not a simple dispute, nor is it a mere matter of pride. It is a matter of governance, of understanding the weight of responsibility. A true leader does not allow his pride and ego to inhibit him from realizing a better future."

Understanding nods were followed from the spectators, even those dissatisfied from Lord Bael's rule.

"And to live up to my own words…My sole condition to accept Lord Naruto's challenge is for him to fight alone as he battles entire peerages, and if successful in defeating them, to eventually face me and my peerage alone."

Gasps echoed from both the studio and the viewers across the Underworld as Lord Bael continued. "As such, Lord Naruto will not face a mere opponent. If he wishes to challenge the leadership of this society, he must face entire peerages, as a demonstration of his strength, his resolve, and, more importantly, his understanding of the burdens of leadership."

Mira, recovering from the initial shock of Lord Bael's condition, glanced at her colleagues before addressing the devil king with a respectful but firm tone. "Lord Bael, with all due respect, doesn't that seem…rather unfair? To pit one devil, even one as powerful as Lord Naruto, against entire peerages?"

Bael's smile was faint, his gaze unyielding. "Miss Mira, fairness in leadership is not always about making things easy. It's about making decisions that are best for the society as a whole. A

true leader must be willing to shoulder the heaviest burdens without the crutch of pride. I understand this which is why I'm setting my pride aside as I fully acknowledge that Lord Naruto is… superior to me in combat."

Astonished looks returned across the features of the watching devils as Lord Bael admitted the truth with a neutral expression. "He claims to want change—then let him prove he is willing to face the same hardships that those who lead the Underworld endure."

Thaddeus, having been silent and watching intently the entire time, finally spoke up. "Lord Bael, you mention the burdens of leadership. Are you suggesting that Lord Naruto's challenge is, in essence, a misunderstanding of what it takes to lead?"

"In a way, yes, Thaddeus," Bael responded, nodding. "Lord Naruto has a heart for justice, and that is commendable. But true leadership demands patience, diplomacy, and a readiness to make decisions that may not always be popular but are necessary for the stability of our society. My acceptance of his challenge, under these conditions, is to demonstrate the difference between being a powerful warrior and a capable leader."

With a calm but steely resolve, he added, "The date of this confrontation will be three weeks from today. On that day, Lord Naruto will face a high-ranking peerage. He will stand alone, to show not only his strength but also his resolve to face what true leadership demands, if he prevails, he'll face tougher challenges yet before me and my peerage personally confront him."

The entire studio remained silent, absorbing the weight of Lord Bael's proclamation.

Lord Bael looked around the studio, his smile returning, though now tinged with a hint of finality. "I thank Power Devil News and its esteemed team for allowing me this moment to address our great society. Change, if it is to come…

"*When* it is to come" Lord Bael corrected himself. "Must be approached with care and wisdom. I believe the Underworld is capable of growth, of progress—And I plan on driving our home to that progress. Which is why I ask that for the many of you who are dissatisfied with me, to endure me a bit more until I prove my worth."

He turned back to the camera, his eyes piercing as he gave his final statement. "May the underworld flourish, with only the most deserving leader to herald the future of our society."

As the ruler of the underworld walked away, his face hidden from any camera lens or prying eyes, a malicious smile rose across his features, with Lord Bael barely quelling an amused chuckle as his mind replayed the events and dialogue of his interview with the underworld.

Being the king that he was, he had to be master tactician and possess charisma, it was a necessity.

And he had put those talent to use.

Every word he had uttered, every carefully measured pause, had been a weapon in his arsenal—a way to sway the hearts and minds of the Underworld. He knew his influence stretched beyond his power alone; his true strength lay in his mastery over words, his ability to temper caution and doubt with hope.

He had crafted his message to perfection, subtly casting Naruto as a reckless challenger, while presenting himself as the wise guardian of stability.

And manipulating the stage as he just did, Lord Bael now ensured, with no consequences what's so ever, that Naruto Phenex would be alone in this fight that *he* started.

Once out of the room, Lord Bael's chest rumbled with dark-veiled amusement, his purple eyes flashing cruelly.

Xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Unaware of the monumental announcement echoing across the Underworld that night, Naruto and Selah sat together on a secluded beach, bathed in the soft glow of moonlight.

The quiet lapping of waves against the shore was their only backdrop, a serene rhythm that seemed to amplify the intimacy of the moment. Hours had passed since they left the restaurant, and in that time…

Naruto had spent much of the last two hours recounting his journey—how he had lived another life as Naruto Uzumaki in a different world, a place where he had fought countless battles, loved deeply, and even started a family. Selah had listened, her gaze fixed on him, watching every shift in his expression, her heart tightening with each revelation.

He spoke of his marriage, of the children he'd cherished, Boruto, Himawari, and Kawaki, and of the crushing loss he'd endured. Finally, he'd shared how, after their passing, he had found himself reaching out to Great Red, learning a technique that allowed him to return to this dimension.

By the end, Selah's heart was full of wonder, disbelief, and quiet admiration.

Was his revelation insane sounding and ludicrous? Most certainly yes!

Did she believe him? Absolutely!

She knew Naruto to be a man of honor, a man who valued truth above all. She had no reason to doubt his words; everything he shared felt deeply genuine. It was one of the many reasons she had fallen for him in the first place, because he was so kind, honest, and genuine.

"Another dimension… another life…" she murmured, gazing out at the dark sea before turning back to Naruto, awe in her eyes. "That's amazing, Naruto. You actually lived through all of that." Her voice was barely more than a whisper. "A family… children…"

Naruto nodded slowly, his gaze soft as he watched her process the weight of it all.

“It was… surreal.” Naruto stated as he looked back at the memories. “There isn’t any words to really describe it all, but I went to that world a broken man, lost my memories as I started a new life, went through hardships, found friends, and eventually, a family, and… yeah…” He laughed in the end, stumped and not sure how else to describe his experience.

He turned to her. “But that’s basically most of the important stuff that happened, where I was, before coming back and staying in Kyoto for the past year and a half.”

Selah nodded subtly, her mind flooded with thoughts, though one in particular she decided to speak out about. “And what made you decide to stay in Kyoto? You could have returned earlier, y’know.”

Naruto winced. “Part of it had to do with the fact that I had no idea what was going in the world and staying in Kyoto, where I was living with my identity kept hidden for the most part, allowed me to catch up on all that I missed. But the other part was shame.”

“Shame?” Selah repeated, confusion lacing her tone as she gazed at him questioningly.

The shinobi nodded. “Considering how cold I was to you, to Grayfia, to Ajuka and Serafall and everyone else… It took me a while to summon the courage to come here as I felt shame for how unkind I was to all of you.

“I already told you.” Selah raised a hand and softly cupped the side of his visage, trying to physically convey just how much love she felt for him, and comfort him from his guilt. “I don’t hold that against you, If I lost my family, I would react the same, if not, even worse. so, stop being hard on yourself.”

Naruto nodded slowly. “I’ll try, can’t make any promises though.

“As long as you actually try.” She murmured before letting her hand drop back down, moving around and scooting a bit until she sat side by side with him.

A gentle silence lingered between them, broken only by the rhythmic waves. Then, with a smile that softened the lines of her face, she looked up at him, her eyes warm and tender. “I’m glad you’re here, Naruto.” Her voice was quiet but full of warmth and affection. “I know you went through so much, but… I’m grateful that you came back.”

He offered her a small smile, and without thinking, he lifted an arm and wrapped it around her shoulders, pulling her close. Selah happily let herself be drawn in, leaning against him, feeling the warmth of his embrace and the steady beat of his heart.

They sat there, wrapped in each other, simply listening to the waves for a few moments. The night sky stretched above them, stars glittering like scattered diamonds, casting a soft, celestial glow over the shore.

“Coming out of that world,” Naruto began softly, his gaze fixed on the horizon, “after everything I experienced there… it changed me. It made me a better person, I think.” He turned to look at her, his eyes bright with determination. “And now, I’m here, and I want to do things right by the people I care about. To make this world a better place—starting with the people I care most for.”

Naruto looked down on her, his sea blue eyes locking onto her amethyst purple ones. “You’re precious to me.” He admitted without shame before continuing. “You. Are. Precious, and I don’t want you to ever think otherwise because you mean a lot to me. ”

For the umptieth time tonight, Selah’s heart swelled at his words, her chest feeling tight with the intensity of her emotions. A soft smile curved her lips as she looked up at him, her eyes brimming with love.

Slowly, she leaned forward, her gaze never leaving his, until her lips met his in a gentle, lingering kiss.

The world around them seemed to fade away, leaving only the warmth of his touch and the softness of his lips. Naruto returned her kiss, his hand sliding up to cradle the back of her head as he deepened the embrace.

But just as quickly, Selah backed a bit away, Her, taking a quick breath she knew would be needed for further, more intense sessions,

Her lips parted just in time to welcome his once more as Naruto leaned, his lips fusing with her own seamlessly, pressing against her lightly before pulling away only to fall back onto her harder, deeper.

Underneath the glowing stars, the two of them lost themselves in each other, the world slipping into quiet oblivion as they found a brief and satisfying eternity in each other's arms.

End.

So this chapter isn't as long as I'd like it to be, as I sadly covered everything.

But I do hope you all enjoyed the chapter regardless, as we've made progress with Naruto and his relationship with Selah, while also driving some progression in the sense of Lord Bael finally speaking to the underworld.

The challenge has now been declared, a date… given, the stage set.

And that’s everything I have to say for this chapter.

I do hope you all enjoyed it regardless.

Take care lads.

Peace