

The whole damn city of Cynderace had been celebrating like crazy since we came home. Didn't matter what time or where, someone was popping champagne and wine bottles. It was probably like this everywhere. From Scoth, all the way to as far as Mou'nan. Hell, even the demons in Sathorayne were celebrating.

Our war was finally over. All four queens, Dragon of Tohoku, Bishamonten of Kyushu, Blizzard of Hokkaido, and Ashura of Kansai... I beat them all, and now I stood at the very top. I had wanted this ever since Chika left me and Yui, but now? I just wished she was still here. It wouldn't have made her happy though.

Something shattered in the streets below, and a fight broke out.

"Hey, you bastard! You better pay for that!"

"Huh? You should've watched where you were going!"

Sighing out my nose, I pulled Chika's cap lower over my face and tried my best to ignore it. The bickering only got louder, to the point where I couldn't relax anymore.

"Tch..." I sat right up and peered over my mansion's roof. "Take your fucking fight elsewhere before I come down and finish it for you!"

Two drunk dudes stood there petrified, hands still on the other person. They let go, apologized, and booked it without looking back.

Maybe I should go. Prince Kain and King Allo were probably freaking out, wondering where the fuck I was about now. But the last thing I needed was to shake hands with a bunch of fancy nobodies.

When I put the cap back on my face, the window squeaked open.

"I knew I'd find you here." Loraine's voice came as clear as day.

I lifted the cap as Loraine climbed out of the window and onto the roof. She pleated her robes out before sitting down next to me.

"Lemme guess. Everyone was asking about me?" I turned back to the mostly clear blue skies of Scoth smattered with some cotton ball clouds.

"You should have seen Prince Kain. He introduced you in front of hundreds of guests. When you didn't come out, he started breaking out into cold sweat," Loraine explained while giggling up a storm.

Imagining Princey-boy's panic got a chuckle out of me. The others were down there, too. Anya, Kaoru, Yui, Emperor Yonnu, Chieftain Breila... hell, even Lady Katrine dropped by to broker an alliance with the UKD. As for Ririko, she was going to miss out. Hopefully, she ended up finding Eri.

"What about you? Aren't they gonna start wondering where the sultana went?" I asked.

Loraine shook her head. "Yes, but my council of ministers should be able to handle all the pleasantries. Same with ruling Amarith. I'd much rather be with you here in Cynderace, or wherever you go."

"You sure? Things always tend to get a little wild around me."

"I wouldn't have it any other way," she said, placing a hand over mine.

That right there was what made all the fighting worth it. I chose to stay. So did the others. This whole time, we weren't fighting just to fight. We found something to fight for.

"Alright. I slacked off enough. Let's not keep Kain waiting." I fastened the cap on my head and picked Loraine up as I got to my feet, then leaped off the rooftop with her.

We landed on the courtyard below. Freshly-bloomed flowers carpeted the area from the house to the edge of the fence. Kain worked hard to make it look like home again after Sultan Yusef's attack.

Kawa, who was waiting patiently by the front door, sidled up and dropped low enough for us to climb onto her. She raced through the streets towards the Arcane Ward, leaping over and weaving through people in celebration. Many waved to us as we sped by.

We got to one of the arcanatriums holding the party. Prince Kain pushed past guests to get to me.

"Lady... Micchi... where have you... been?" Kain panted.

"Overslept." I shrugged and traded a grin with Loraine. "I'm here now though. Gonna need to slam a couple of shots first." A servant was just passing by with a tray of alcohol, so I pulled him to a stop. "Gimme one of 'em— not just one, the whole damn tray."

Kain had lifted a finger to retort, but he swallowed the urge.

"Now I'm worried," he said by the time I was on my third shot.

"Ah! Prince Kain, this must be the hero of Dysentia you sought to introduce earlier?" an arrogant voice asked.

A group of nobles sauntered up to us with drinks pinched between their fingers. Their gaudy clothes had a little too much flashy jewelry on them. Stung my eyes just looking.

"Name's Micchi. Put 'er there." I stuck out my hand.

"Put... what there?" the confused man asked. It clicked for him a split second later. He extended a hand to shake mine. "Oh, I see! It's a pleasure to— iiiieee!"

His face immediately contorted in pain. When I let go, he started blowing on his aching hand. The others backed away, holding their hands as close to their bodies as possible.

"Quite the grip strength... I can see how you ended up defeating the demon lord... If you will excuse me, I must find a healer." He nodded to us and left with his companions.

"Some things don't change." Kain sighed and smiled. "There was a time we never expected to be able to defeat the demons. You have my eternal gratitude, Lady Micchi. Allow me to excuse myself here, too. I'm going to look for Mildred. Enjoy the rest of the afternoon *without* violence, please!"

Lorraine and I did just that, going around and enjoying the atmosphere. Talking to people from other countries. At least she did. I was just along for the ride, snacking on whatever was available. Over by a long table, Kawa was staring at a whole roasted boar. Guests were keeping a wide berth around her. I picked up the entire plate and put it on the ground for her to dig in.

While some folks were chatting Lorraine up off to the side, Lady Katrine took the opportunity to strike up a conversation with me.

"Not one for small talk, are you? Neither am I... Being around all these people makes my skin crawl... and I know they would rather I not be here either." Katrine sulked.

"Tell me about it. So, how's life as the demon lord again?" I asked.

"Terrible!" she cried. "Why elect me again? Instead of books, I've been having to play politics again and searching for a place to land Sathorayne... Well, it isn't too bad. Visiting surface-world kingdoms has given me a chance to explore knowledge I otherwise couldn't in the sky."

"I'd like to say I'm happy for ya, but all that nerd shit is gonna rot your brain. Don't forget to throw a few punches every now and then."

"No... I feel that's quite the opposite..." Katrine eyed me with an expression screaming of bafflement.

Across the room, I noticed the distinct cherry blossom design of Kaoru's kimono among the crowds. Lorraine, trapped in conversation, shot me a look and gave me the go-ahead to mingle. Kawa was still chomping away at food anyway. I made my way over and realized pretty damn quick they were mostly older men around her.

"What's the matter, Kaoru? You changed tastes?" I teased.

"Oh, Micchi. These gentlemen are offering their son's hands in marriage. I'm vetting their ages." Kaoru clenched a triumphant fist in front of herself while holding a straight face. "My paradise continues to grow."

"Alright... I didn't need to hear that, but it sounds like you're getting exactly what you want outta this."

Kaoru folded her arms. She made a gesture with her head, and a gang of finely-dressed Jinwan thugs began forcibly clearing away the suitors. They bowed to her after vacating them, then left us alone.

"I can tell you're unhappy. Is it because there's no need for fighting in a world at peace?" Kaoru asked.

"We're just gonna brush aside that you have a mafia at your beck and call now? Whatever. Maybe you're right. Maybe you're wrong. Either way, you're probably not far off the mark. I look at all this and think... You know, I don't actually know what to think." I frowned.

"Walk with me," she said.

I followed Kaoru to the balcony. There were a few guests around having a good time, but her people came out to shoo them away. Once the balcony was clear, they turned their backs to us and formed a wall so others couldn't come out.

"I have two names," Kaoru began. "Makinohara was my family name. Sensoukouji was given to me later by the acting chairman of the Tono Clan after I seized control of my family. I inherited a prefecture of violent criminals who knew of no other career than crime, during a time where yakuza was quickly becoming obsolete. It was tough. Change is tough. That in itself is a fight that you must overcome. Just like the yakuza who had nowhere else to go, in a Japan that left them behind. Otherwise, this world too, will leave you behind."

"You're saying that someday, no one's gonna need a fist to solve problems anymore?" I asked.

She smirked. "I didn't say that. We'll just need to adapt to using... more than just fists. That being said, if you ever want to spar, my strength is still plenty comparable even without the primordial lifecrystal in me."

"Heh. I'll take you up on that offer another day. By the way, where are the squirts?"

Kaoru cast turned gaze towards the royal mansion where Kain's family lived.

"Theo is showing Yonnu around. They are safe and in capable hands," she said.

I glanced down at my two hands. We all fought for something. Kaoru, for a new life after her kid brother passed away. Ririko, to find Eri again. Yui, to grow strong enough to be recognized. Anya, getting her words through to Chika. As long as we got people to protect, the fight was never over.

"Say, how's Taiq'ae this time of the year?" I asked.

"If you don't mind the giant cinderblock still floating in the sky, it's very nice all things considered. Why?" Kaoru turned to me.

"Thinking of taking a vacation with Loraine and Kawa. Probably a whole lotta stray demons that need to be put in their place. Am I right?"

"Jinwa welcomes you with open arms. As long as you don't come in swinging your bat first like before," she chided.

We were about to head back inside when Anya and Yui called to us from below the arcanatrium. Both of them look winded. Anya more than Yui, who was being given a piggyback ride.

"Anego, there's some big monsters tearing up the Rolling Plains! Let's go play!" Yui shouted to us.

"Kaoru, you too! Get your shotacon ass down here!" Anya yelled.

"What's going on?" Loraine asked as the Jinwan group parted to let her and Kawa through.

"Dunno. But I'm gonna go find out." I hopped onto the elemental wolf and pulled Loraine up behind me.

"Lady Micchi!" Kain rushed over, hands braced on his knees and catching his breath. "Don't tell me you're about to leave? We're about to hold an honoring ceremony for you!"

"Sorry, Kain. Got better things to do!"

I whistled for Kawa to jump over the railing. We landed next to Anya and Yui, and Kaoru dropped down a second later.

"Master, wait for me!" Lilim cried as she flew down the street after us.

"Let's not keep those monsters waiting. Time to go fuck some shit up!" I grinned.