

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Rumi wakes up.

-x-X-x-

“-umi? Rumi, can you hear me?”

She comes to consciousness slowly, Zoey’s worried voice acting like a siren’s call dragging her out of the depths of slumber and back into the waking world. Rumi’s eyes flutter open and she stares up at the ceiling of their penthouse for a moment, only for Zoey’s concerned face to suddenly fill part of her vision from one side while Mira comes in from the other.

“How are you feeling, Rumi?”

Blinking, Rumi looks at Mira, surprised to hear anxiety in the taller woman’s voice. Was she... really worried about her? Even after all the lies? Or did she just feel like she had to be worried about her because Rumi was sick? No, not just sick... dying.

Although, for the first time since she started to feel weaker, Rumi reaches for her body and is surprised to find parts of it actually answering the call of her mind. Fingers that had grown so feeble that they couldn’t do much more than twitch suddenly curl much more strongly around the hands currently holding each of her hands.

Both Zoey and Mira jolt at the same time at Rumi squeezing down on them, and then they each yelp when she lifts herself up off of her back and into a proper sitting position on their beloved Couch™.

“I feel... I feel good. Better.”

That shouldn't have been possible. Rumi hadn't told them... but she'd figured out why she was growing weaker. She'd figured out days ago that it wasn't just some random sickness. Internally, she could tell that her energy reserves were... running dry as soon as her insides started cannibalizing themselves.

By the time she'd figured it out though, it was too late. She'd come up with half a dozen plans but was too weak to implement any of them. In the end... she'd decided it might be best not to tell her girls the truth. She didn't want to be a monster in their eyes when she passed. She wanted... she wanted to just be 'Rumi', as selfish as that probably was.

Now though, looking inward Rumi sees energy where there shouldn't be any. Of course, her immediate and greatest fear is that Zoey and Mira figured out what was going on all their own and had done something truly regrettable like feed her a soul or something.

However, when she looks close at this new energy... it doesn't look anything like the soul energy she'd harvested from both the Honmoon and Gwi-Ma back on the night of the Idol Awards. She'd consumed the rapidly decaying remnants of the Honmoon and she'd consumed Gwi-Ma, which had given her some power in the bank to subsist off of for a time, but had quickly depleted without a continuous source like a proper Honmoon.

And yet... this new energy feels completely different to her senses. It feels almost... cheap in a way. Like normal soul energy is a proper five course meal from an incredibly fancy restaurant, while this is more like the fast food one would get from your average drive thru.

Much like fast food, it's fleeting in the sustenance it provides as well. Rumi can already tell it's going to run out soon. Pursing her lips, Rumi sweeps her gaze back and forth to the two girls on either side of her.

"Girls. What did you-?"

The 'do' is ultimately left unsaid as she finally notices the fourth individual in the common area with them. Unfortunately, she doesn't have the strength to do more than sit up let alone summoning her Spirit Weapon, so all she really does is jerk in surprise and stare with wide eyes at the angelic-looking man standing a few feet away from the couch.

His beauty is frankly unnatural and her first instinct is to say he's clearly not human. And yet... she doesn't think he's a demon either? Or at least, her senses are telling her he's not a demon. Upon gaining her attention, he smiles softly and holds up a hand in a casual wave.

"Hello. I'm Amadeus. I'm the reason you're currently awake."

That draws a nonplused blink from Rumi, only for Zoey to suddenly bury her face in the crook of Rumi's neck and wrap her free arm around her in a tight one-armed hug.

"R-Rumi... I'm so glad you're awake and a-aware. It's been so hard watching you just... wither away."

Rumi opens her mouth... but she doesn't quite know what to say, Zoey's words putting a lump in her throat that she chokes on a little. Then, she happens to meet Mira's eyes... and the other woman doesn't hesitate to explain what's going on.

“Zoey summoned this guy. He claims he’s a Devil and that its physically distinct from a Demon or something. He was able to use some of his magic or whatever to give you the energy to wake up... so you could make an informed decision on what happens next.”

The rest of Mira’s words sort of fly right over her head as Rumi latches onto that first part and twists around to look at the younger woman currently hugging her.

“Wha- Zoey! You summoned a DEVIL?!”

Zoey’s teary eyes don’t go away... but she does scowl a little bit and shoot Mira an irritated glare from around Rumi’s face.

“Tattletale.”

Mira just raises an eyebrow, clearly not about to lower herself to Zoey’s level. Finally, Zoey pulls back from Rumi’s neck and lets out a sigh.

“... Yeah, I summoned Amadeus here. It’s fine Rumi, he hasn’t tried to do anything bad. And he might be able to help you permanently too! It just... comes with a cost...”

Rumi purses her lips and furrows her brow, Mira’s earlier words about ‘informed decisions’ finally penetrating alongside Zoey’s talk of ‘permanent help that comes with a cost’. Finally, she looks to ‘Amadeus’ again, pushing past her instinctive awe at his supernaturally handsome face and inhumanly gorgeous body so she can huff.

“What... what are they talking about, exactly?”

Amadeus hums, fixing his cufflinks for a moment before rolling his shoulders. Then, he offers her a sharp smile.

“I feel like I should preface all of this by saying I had no intentions of making an offer of this magnitude today. In fact, I had no intentions of making an offer like this... ever, really.”

Zoey squawks while Mira narrows her eyes.

“But you said this was common among you devils.”

Amadeus inclines his head.

“I did, yes. However, I am not a common example of my species. I have never had much of a desire to build a peerage like so many of my kin do. I only ever wanted a set of the items necessary for one reason and one reason only... and even that is currently a work in progress.”

Letting out a soft growl, Rumi shifts.

“Can you stop talking around me and tell me what’s going on?”

Sighing, Amadeus nods. And to his credit... he does explain himself. He explains how Devils are different from Demons. He explains how the fertility of your average Devil is so low that they literally couldn’t replace their own losses without another way. And he explains everything about Reincarnated Devils and Peerages and Kings.

Rumi listens quietly, still holding hands with her girls, as Amadeus lays it all out on the table. The inhumanly beautiful devil is clear and concise, admittedly... even as he talks about demanding her eternal servitude in exchange for saving her life.

He seems confident in being able to save her at the very least. The price, however, appears to be damnation. In order to stop her demon half from killing both her human half and itself, she would become a Reincarnated Devil. That would save her. But because they would be using one of Amadeus' own pieces to make it happen, she would become part of his peerage and enter his service... there was no way around that.

"I feel like I should clarify... it's not like I'd expect you to leave your old life behind entirely even if you did join my peerage. However, we would need to make some sort of... arrangement for it to be worth it for me. Some way for you to provide value to me as your King without being by my side at all times. Given what I've been told, I don't think that'd be impossible though... you three seem to be very wealthy and influential, and I hear you're musicians. And I do love music."

Rumi forcibly quiets the flutter in her heart as he flashes a way-too-sexy smirk at that last line. For a second he reminds her of... no. Better not to even think about that. They were all gone. All of them. She'd made sure of it. Besides, if she was being honest with herself... Amadeus beat out Gwi-Ma's demon boy band by a country mile.

"I would still belong to you though, wouldn't I? I would still be expected to follow your orders and serve you however you decided. Any deal we made after the fact would ultimately only continue at your discretion so long as you cared enough to let it do so."

Amadeus nods solemnly, not even trying to sugar coat it.

"Yes."

Another point in his favor, Rumi has to admit. Then again, it wasn't like he lost anything by her saying no. He left without having expended anything except for a bit of his 'Devil Magic', she died... the end.

Rumi's eyes dart between Zoey and Mira, both of whom have been quiet while Amadeus talked. The pleading look in Zoey's eye makes it clear what the group's maknae wants Rumi to do... she obviously thinks any Rumi is better than no Rumi, no matter what it costs them. Rumi isn't so sure about that though and seeing the uncertainty in Mira's eyes, she latches onto that, looking directly at the dancer as she speaks.

"... It might be better to just let me go. Rather than live on as the monster I've always been... or this new life as a Devil... maybe I should just... go?"

Zoey makes a panicked strangled squeaking noise on the other side of Rumi, but Rumi ignores it for the time being. Mira is who she's focused on right now. Mira is who she knows can be trusted to be objective about this.

... Or so she thinks. Because as Rumi had spoken, Mira's eyes had widened, her face had paled, and she'd become... downright horrified by the end. And before Rumi can apologize or ask for clarification or anything-

SMACK!

Mira's hand slaps her across the face hard enough to turn her head with the force. Zoey chokes on her own spit while Amadeus curses under his breath. Rumi though... Rumi just slowly turns her head back to see Mira looking outraged at her... but seemingly on her behalf at the same time.

"Y-You're not a fucking monster, Rumi. You never have been."

In the face of Mira's shaky words, Rumi just smiles sadly.

“I ate the fucking Honmoon, Mira. And then I ate the Demon King and all his minions for good measure. Now... I’m literally eating myself from the inside out. If that’s not a monster, what is?”

“GWI-MA! Gwi-Ma is the monster! No one is born a monster, Rumi! No one is a monster for things outside of their control! Monsters are forged by their own actions, by their own choices! You fought! You fought so hard all your life! You made all the right decisions! You aren’t a monster, you’re a fucking hero and no matter what you choose now, you always will be.”

Mira’s vehemence catches Rumi off guard, admittedly. She stares back at the other woman for a long moment before looking down at her hands.

“... but I lied to you. All that time, I lied to you...”

Suddenly, Mira’s hand is on her face again. Not for a slap this time, but so she can grab Rumi by the jaw and force her gaze back up into blazing eyes once more.

“And I’d rather have you around to continue lying to me every single fucking day for the rest of our lives than see you dead, Rumi.”

Rumi swallows hard, unable to really muster a response in the face of Mira’s raw, unabashed emotion. She means every word, Rumi can tell. And as Mira loosens her grip on Rumi’s face, Zoey’s own hand comes up and more gently but still firmly turns her to look over at the shorter girl.

“P-Please Rumi... I don’t want you to make a choice you’ll regret. But... I love you. *We* love you. Please don’t leave us...”

Sitting there on the Couch™, holding her girls' hands in her own, Rumi finally fully realizes something she should have known all along. They would never have been willing to kill her, not even once they learned about her demon side. Because they were her girls and she was theirs and... and...

Finally, Rumi lets the walls come down. She stops thinking in the abstract, about how her demon half needs soul energy and mathematically she should die so no more souls are endangered by her living. She stops thinking in the general... and allows herself to be honest. Not just with herself, but with the most important girls in her life.

“... I don't want to go.”

Her broken tone is followed by tears, a sob breaking free of her throat as she finally confesses the truth. She doesn't want to die. She doesn't want to end. She wants to keep on living, to be with her girls, to keep making music, to continue experiencing life with Zoey and Mira at her sides.

And if that means becoming a Devil's servant... then maybe that would be okay. Maybe the benefits outweigh cost?

Zoey lets out a noise of happiness and glomps Rumi right away, going right back to nuzzling into the crook of her neck and hugging her as tightly as she possibly can. Mira, meanwhile, just nods decisively and then looks over to Amadeus.

“So its settled then. We're all joining your peerage.”

Wait, what?

“Wait, what?!”

“Huh?!”

At least Zoey and Amadeus both have the same reaction to Mira’s words as Rumi does... complete and utter bafflement. Only, Zoey’s surprise and confusion only lasts a moment before she suddenly does a one-eighty.

“Oh yeah, that’s perfect! We’re all going to be immortal together! It’ll be great!”

Rumi can’t help but be a little nonplused. She was the one who was literally going to die unless she became one of these ‘reincarnated devils’. Zoey and Mira had full human lives ahead of them though still, lives they didn’t have to pledge service to some inhumanly beautiful fiend from hell in order to continue living.

... What did it say about this situation that it was only the Devil of all people who looked just as nonplused by the idea as she felt?!

-x-X-x-

A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!