

[David Lance POV]

As I walked behind Darkseid, I could feel his presence looming over me. His massive frame casting a foreboding shadow that seemed to suck the light out of the room.

It was rather impressive, that much I had to admit. And it wasn't the fact that his mere presence was trying to subjugate me through sheer pressure. But the fact that even though I knew with certainty that I could take him if push came to shove, my body was telling me not to act.

In a dark, twisted way, I couldn't help but admire him.

His presence was worthy of his reputation. His black armor was unmarked and unyielding; his red eyes burned with an unnatural fire, and with his every step, I could feel immense power emanating from him, making the entire experience both exhilarating and terrifying.

I wasn't afraid, not in the slightest. However, through his very presence, a part of me wanted to be afraid.

"I have to admit. It was an interesting development that you survived Wioska," Darkseid said in a deep and gravelly voice. There was an unsettling silence that followed his words before he continued. "You proved worthier than I had given you credit."

"That's an interesting way to say you send me to Wioska to die," I replied, not missing a beat.

Darkseid chuckled, but his laughter had no trace of mirth in it. "Your demise at Wioska's hands was a possibility I had accounted for, a welcomed possibility. Trigon's hold made you a liability, and Wioska was simply the easiest way to dispose of said liability. However, in the end, you proved yourself more resourceful than I had thought."

I suppose that response was to be expected, considering the individual I was dealing with.

"I see," I replied calmly, taking a small pause before continuing. "I have to admit I had my doubts about coming here for a second time. After I discovered your intentions of getting rid of me permanently, I was uncertain you would keep your end of the deal."

Darkseid's gaze shifted as he came to a stop in front of me, his eyes staring into me intently. "Darkseid always keeps his end of

the deal. As for eliminating you, don't confuse my words, child; all I wanted was for Trigon to be gone. Whether you lived or not after that wasn't my concern at all."

Hmph, that almost felt insulting.

"Fair enough," I replied with a nod.

With our conversation done for the moment, we continued walking until we arrived at a room. This room, unlike the one I had seen before, was different.

As I entered the room, the first thing I noticed was the blood-red walls and the fact that almost every inch of the walls was covered in grotesque works of art of what could only be described as abominations and tortured souls.

The floor in this room, unlike the one I had seen, was made of cracked black marble. In the center of the room, there was a large throne made of bone and something that looked like iron. On either side of said throne, there were two massive torches, their flames casting an eerie glow over the room.

"Table," Darkseid said, his voice echoing in the room. And immediately after, a table appeared in front of us, almost as if the room had been expecting Darkseid's command.

On the table he had summoned, there was a book and a small box, both made of what appeared to be pure obsidian.

"Take a seat," Darkseid said in a commanding tone, pointing at one of the chairs around the table.

Calmly, I took a seat and waited for him to do the same. Once he had taken his place on the table, I tilted my head slightly to the side and said. "Let us talk business, Darkseid."

Darkseid nodded, his face betraying no emotion.

I never would've imagined this ever happening. Having an affable conversation with Darkseid, well... as affable as it can be.

"This," Darkseid said as he pointed at the book, "It's your reward for your triumph."

I raised an eyebrow looking at the book. Wondering how a book, of all things, would help me take Superman down.

"What is it?" I asked, my curiosity getting the better of me.

At this, Darkseid lifted the book and opened it.

"A detailed inventory of the troops I have prepared for your quest," Darkseid said as he flipped through the book revealing various illustrations of creatures that I had never seen before. "Soldiers loyal to you, and only you. Trained by Granny Goodness herself."

I looked at the book and smiled. "You want me to believe Granny Goodness trained them to be loyal to me? I apologize, but do I look that stupid?"

A smirk tugged at the corner of Darkseid's lips. "It seems without Trigon; you truly have some sense in that head of yours."

"I do," I replied, crossing my arms. "Which is why I have my concerns. I hope you understand."

Darkseid leaned back in his chair, folding his hands against the table. "Your fears and concerns are not without basis. Granny Goodness' loyalty to me knows no bounds, which is why I made sure to let her know what I wanted from her."

"A most comforting fact, without a doubt," I replied with an amiable smile. "But, again, you will have to apologize me for my paranoia, but the thing is, I don't trust Granny Goodness to follow your every word."

Darkseid looked at me, his eyes carrying a dark edge. "You would question her loyalty to me?"

At this, I smiled, shaking my head. "No, I would never. How to question the unquestionable? Her loyalty to you truly knows no bounds, as you described earlier. However, because of that loyalty, I can see her breaking your orders if that ensures your undisputed rule. Even if doing that means her death."

Darkseid nodded slowly, his brows furrowing. "A fair concern. But one that has no place between us. My word is law, and I ensure all of my subjects learn that thoroughly. Even then, I understand your point, as betrayal is always to be expected, even in my position. However, when it comes to Granny Goodness, I have ensured she gives me nothing but absolute obedience."

Honeyed words, I thought to myself. There was no way I could simply trust his word, there was only so much I could trust him, and that line had already been crossed when I came here against my better judgment.

Be that as it may, I also knew there was no reason for Darkseid to lie at this point, I mean, if he truly wanted to kill me, there were certainly easier ways to do so, and most of them didn't include him giving me an army.

"Very well," I replied, nodding in agreement. "I will trust your judgment."

"A wise choice," Darkseid said, his voice scratching on my ears like a low growl.

"So, in that case, I suppose that is all?" I asked, giving him an inquisitive look.

Darkseid shook his head. "Not quite." At this, he took the small box that had been lying on the table and pushed it toward me. "Open it."

I raised an eyebrow at this, my curiosity piqued. And so, without much apprehension, I opened the box, only to find a small medallion resting inside it. "I suppose this has a use other than being nice jewelry, right?"

"Yes," Darkseid said as he pointed to the metal sigil on the medallion. "With that medallion, you can command your soldiers, and they will obey without question. No matter the order."

I looked at the medallion for a moment before I slowly nodded. "A useful tool, thanks."

Darkseid nodded, his crimson eyes glinting in the flames of his throne. "I have instructed Granny Goodness to give you a thorough rundown of your troops and how to utilize them best. She awaits for you in the barracks."

I nodded, slipping the medallion into one of my pockets. "I will go and see her then."

"One last thing," Darkseid said, his voice low and menacing. "If you succeed in this quest of yours, I will give you any reward you desire, within measure."

"I will keep that in mind," I replied before leaving the room.