

Red Winter

Chapter 1: The Pride before the Fall

Kaleth, the dragon and hell mage in the making, was on top of the world. He had avenged his own death by consuming the souls of the two men who conspired to kill him. Given, it was their fuck up that got him bound to his demon companion, Bereft, but when a couple of men use their position of power so they can use you as a sacrifice, you don't let that go lightly. Yes, Tobias and Mathias, the two priests that spelled Kaleth's doom were now defeated and no more. Tobias was first to go, his soul fully consumed by them, and, with some difficulty, the bounded demonic duo ensured Mathias' defeat as well. Currently, Kaleth and Bereft had been living it up for the past couple of days in Mathias' home, reveling in a battle well fought and a victory well earned.

Besides, it was all in the name of making Mathias suffer.

Mathias' wife, Alice, and daughter, Chastity, were both expendable pawns in Mathias' downfall. The demon and the drake used the two rabbits as leverage to get the rat, Mathias, to give up his soul willingly. Then, the demonic duo made Mathias contribute to the corruption of his precious daughter's soul and watch them feasting on it. Now, all three of their souls, mother, father, and daughter, were now feeding his budding hellish power. The entire nuclear family was consumed and made into thralls for the emerging hell mage's amusement.

And Kaleth was milking Mathias' humiliation for all it was worth.

Kaleth had never woken to something so lovely before. With a deep groan and a delighted moan, Kaleth stretched his limbs and flexed his toes. His black scales shimmering in the low light of morning. His morning wood was deep inside a warm pussy and his balls were in the mouth of some

skank. He opened his eyes to see the bouncing tits of his thrall Chastity as she rode her master's morning wood, her mother sucking his nuts behind her. The mother-daughter-duo couldn't get enough of his seed.

"Fuck, I don't think I'll ever get used to this," Kaleth sighed and smiled as he let his thralls do all the work of polishing his morning wood.

"Get used to it, Kid," Bereft spoke using their mouth. "These brood bitches are going to be so horny for your bastards that they'll try to ride you until they're too gravid with brats to move."

"Fuck, Bereft," Kaleth groaned as his dick shot a thick wad of pre into that sloppy pussy. "Your dirty talk is so fucking sexy."

That's just me telling you what I programmed them to do. Bereft's essence curled in Kaleth's body, his demon companion spooned his soul as he spoke directly into his mind.

You don't even know the meaning of the word "dirty talk," yet, my young protégé. Bereft's words rolled in Kaleth's skull, the bound demon essence licking over the folds of his brain with syrupy words. *Look at how this dumb bitch bounces on that dick, knowing each busted nut is raping over her eggs, forcing her to become more pregnant. Her mother who raised her to be a proper lady is now using that guiding tongue to pleasure your sack and churn out more bastards for you to spit in her wanton womb. Their lives are over, and they are only getting more trapped with each nut you bust. Each fucking load they desperately milk out of you only stains them further. Each string of cum a leash to their very minds as they please you.*

All while the cuck father over there weeps like a little bitch!

Kaleth turned his head to Mathias, the once proud Exorcism Core Officer broken down into nothing but a cuck for their indecent pleasure. He was naked, sitting on a chair in front of his wife's

vanity. The rat's eyes were stuck in a horrid mix of shame, revulsion and destitution, tears streaming down his face. His mouth however was stuck in a lustful grin, bound to relish his status as a subservient enthralled cuck. His muzzle and chest were caked in dried on cum that he ate out of his wife's and daughter's pussies. The image conjuring memories for Kaleth that put him on the fast track to nut central.

Last night was so fucking hot. Kaleth and Bereft, or Kareft as they called themselves while in sync, had fucked Alice while Mathias ate out their dragon ass. Kareft could have easily just ordered him to, but with their new augmented form, they manhandled him with their tail, choking him while forcing his face into their musky cheeks. Mathias had felt Kareft's prostate making him a cuck father as it churned more brats into his wife. Their demonic seed ensuring another brood would take root. They then forced him to eat his wife's pussy while they fucked their daughter on top of the mother. The two bunnies swapped places several times while Kaleth's balls churned out meal after meal for Mathias to eat out of his dear family, only to prep them for his master's next lay.

"Oh fuck, I'm gunna bust," Kaleth groaned. "Don't stop you fucking skanks! Faster! Harder! Fucking milk your master's dick like I give a shit about you!"

Fuck, Kid! Listen to you! And you're telling me that I'm good at dirty talk.

Bereft's words were lost on the drake as he thrust up, his cock digging deep into that rabbit pussy as she bounced on his shaft. His barbed cock head raking her insides for his pleasure and then bruising that cervix with how hard he fucked her. Her pleasure didn't matter, only that she was a nice place to bust his nut in.

Kaleth's balls drew up, Alice having to really suck on that sack to keep them in her muzzle. His taint flexed and prostate audibly crunched to jet out more of his demon charged seed into that womb.

“Oh fuck! Daddy! He’s seeding me again!” Chastity screamed, her usual white fur stained yellow from cum and sweat, her neck and breasts riddled with pink marking where Kaleth had scratched and bit her. “Yes master! Make me more pregnant! I’m you’re little high school dropout, single-mother slut!”

Both Alice and Chastity had big round bellies bloated with Kaleth’s cum. The demonic seed finding ways to stay in their womb to keep it a frothing primordial soup of life. They both already looked heavily pregnant, and that was just the demon duo’s nut fucking over their eggs and claiming them one at a time.

Alice used to be white as well, like her daughter, but now her fur was stained black as night. The demonic tattoo Bereft had placed on her had consumed all her fur. Now, only a red glowing heart pulsed over her womb, the glowing mark of a whore in heat.

Kareft finally came down from their orgasm, and they could have stayed that way all day, but being wet and sticky all the time was starting to lose its charm, and they were hungry. Kareft pushed Chastity off their dick, literally pushing her over like a used flesh light onto Mathias’ marital bed where the nut she had been holding in gushed over the sheets. Despite the seed’s need to impregnate, there was simply too much.

Kareft’s feet slapped against the floor wetly as they got up, their chest and legs a mess of fem-cum and his own slick. He walked up to the rat who was sitting naked, his seven inch dick hard as a rock.

“Your breakfast and paper are ready downstairs master. What else do you desire-”

“Shut up, fuck trash,” both Bereft and Kaleth cut off the rat in unison, their eyes a glittering purple as their desires aligned. “That mouth isn’t used for talking, now go lap up your breakfast. Cream filled devil’s food cake.” The demon and drake chuckled darkly as he gripped Mathias by the hair and yanked him behind them, his face smacking against the floor.

“Crawl, you fucking worm,” they commanded as they walked out of the bedroom. “Your chin isn’t to feel air until you get to your meal.”

Mathias, the broken Exorcism Core officer, crawled on the floor, a mix of dried and cold cum welling up on the carpet as he dragged himself to his daughter’s ripe, oozing pussy.

The demon duo left the bedroom and went downstairs, loving how their foot paws banged and shook the entire house on every step. He smelled the eggs and bacon before he even got to the kitchen.

Kareft entered the kitchen, a steaming plate of eggs, pancakes, bacon, and sausage were ready for him.

“Hope that fucker remembered my paper this time,” Bereft growled and noticed the neatly folded newspaper on the seat in front of their meal.

Kaleth sat them down to eat their breakfast and Bereft opened the newspaper.

It was odd to Kaleth how seamlessly he and his demon took over different parts of their body now. They were so in sync that it was getting harder to tell if it was him or Bereft doing something. Was he losing himself to the demon?

Calm down, Kid. Bereft rolled their eyes. *You are still you, but your soul is just learning to take what it wants, and because my desires align yours, we just flow easy now. Though, I will say, not every hell mage reaches this level of fluidity with their bound demon.*

How would you know, Kaleth smiled as he munched on some toast. *You’re a hell mage virgin.*

Can’t get my goat that easily, Kid. Bereft smirked as he read over the paper, flipping to the comics right away.

Boo, you're no fun, Kaleth smiled to himself as he continued to eat their breakfast while Bereft flipped through the paper.

The two dug into their own delights. Kaleth feasted on Mathias' breakfast; the guy was actually quite a good chef. Apparently he landed his wife with his cooking. Bereft, on the other hand, was enjoying his comics, catching up with Marmaduke and his other various friends in the funny pages.

"You're actually pretty cute with how excited you get about your comics," Kaleth said out of the corner of his maw.

What do you mean "actually?" Bereft spoke in their head. *I'm fucking adorable.*

"Really? I thought you weren't interested in showing weakness, or something like that."

I can be badass and charming, Bereft reasoned. *The two aren't mutually exclusive. Besides, not just anyone sees this side of me. Only a select few.* Bereft turned the page.

"Wait, are you saying you trust me enough to see you cute?" Kaleth spoke with bits of pancake flying out of his maw and landing on the newspaper.

Don't talk with your mouth full, you dork, Bereft shook their head. *And if we can't trust each other, then who can we? We're in this together whether you want me or not.* Bereft brushed the wet crumbs from the paper.

Kaleth's kinling instincts for semantics caught onto the words Bereft used. Something nagged him about that, but in a good way. He said "...whether you want me or not..." instead of "whether we like it or not," implying...that he wanted him?

"Bereft, do you actually like being bound to me," Kaleth smiled and turned the interrogation light on his inner demon.

What? You got all that from one little slip of the tongue?

“‘Slip of the tongue’ implies you were hiding that fact from me,” Kaleth smiled. “The big demon likes his vessel mate, doesn’t he. Admit it!”

Shut up, a deep fear rolled through Bereft’s essence.

“Calm down you big baby, I was just joking,” Kaleth smiled, but a blush remained on his cheeks.

“No, shut up,” Bereft’s voice was sharp as he spoke and pointed to something in the newspaper. “Do you see that?”

Kaleth swallowed and looked over the paper and saw an article in the local news. It was a local farmer who grew a large pumpkin over the fall and was getting some sort of award.

“What of it,” Kaleth narrowed his eyes. “It’s just some dumb local news.”

“No, look at the name of the winner,” Bereft urged. Kaleth just complied and looked at the name.

“Jude Thade,” Kaleth shrugged. “Nobody I know.”

“It’s shorthand for Judas Thaddaeus,” Bereft felt a panic welling up. Bereft grabbed the TV remote on the table and flicked on the set in the living room. The TV was angled so they could see it from the breakfast nook if you leaned back.

“What the hell Bereft,” Kaleth narrowed his eyes. “What’s going on?”

“Look through Mathais’ memories,” Bereft ordered, his essence already sifting through Mathias’ soul. “Specifically about EC Codes and public crowd control.”

“Why, what’s wrong?” Kaleth started to feel his own worry rising. “Bereft, what’s going on?”

“Oh shit...” Bereft breathed out of their maw. “We got to pack up and go.”

“What? Why?” Kaleth was about to say something when Mathias’ memories were shoved at him. Code Judas Thaddeaus in local news meant...

“Demon on the loose in the county,” Bereft snarled as he flipped over to the local news. “The county listed in the article is the one in Mathias’s district. Specifically the convent.”

“The convent we got started in?”

“The very one,” Bereft scanned the news. This time Kaleth caught it before Bereft.

“School closures,” Kaleth stood them up and walked into the living room. “For the entire district with the convent, and...oh shit.”

“What?” Bereft was having trouble following. Apparently the demon had never sat in front of a TV screen hoping their district would come up for a snow day.

“It’s not just the convent’s district,” Kaleth’s mind’s eye scanned through Mathias’ memories and latched on his daughter’s school. “Chastity’s school district is closed too.”

“Shit,” Bereft hissed before craning his neck to shout upstairs. “Mathias! Come!”

There was a rattling of objects and the squeaking of warped bed springs before the rat was running downstairs. He came sliding into the living room, his feet slapping the floor wetly as his muzzle was covered in a mixture of his master’s cum and his daughter’s honey.

“Yes master?” He asked, standing at attention.

“Wouldn’t you know about this kind of thing,” Kaleth seethed. “Why would they close the schools in in your districts and send out a Judas alert in the paper?”

“An alert? I swear I didn’t send out an alert.” Mathias’ face twitched. His eyes looked almost joyful, but his mouth was creased in worry.

“What do you know!” Bereft snarled. “Tell me!”

The command rocketed through Mathias like a bullet. He screamed as his consciousness was cracked and bent to the demon’s will.

“I don’t know, I swear master...” Mathias grunted. “Though, it looks like a total lockdown. I...I would have had to have been consulted on these things before issuing them. Someone...someone must have taken command in my absence.”

“Is there any way to be sure?” Kaleth asked.

“I could call the EC Office and see what’s up,” Mathias offered, wiping away a strand of cum from his chin. “Though they’ll trace the call.”

“They already have your address, Mathias,” Bereft answered using Mathias’ EC training. “It’s standard protocol for your records are unsealed in situations like these.”

“Find out now,” Kaleth finished Bereft’s thought and the rat obeyed. He grabbed his work phone and hit a speed dial number.

“Mathias, as soon as you know more, get the brood whores to Landon.” Bereft ordered. Mathias gave a shaky thumbs up, his brow knit in anger.

“My code isn’t working,” Mathias looked at his phone and hissed. “I’ll try again.” He redialed and walked over to the breakfast nook to give Bereft some privacy.

Kareft kept looking over the local news to see if there were any other clues.

“Whoever sent these reports out is either stepping in for Mathias, or he’s above him in rank,” Bereft reasoned.

“Yeah, that’s true,” Kaleth crossed their arms in thought. “But Mathias had most of the EC officers under his thumb in one way or another, and strict instructions on how to maintain the office in his absence.”

“Master-” Mathias was looking out the window while he dialed, his face drooping.

“You got a connection yet?” Bereft called back.

“No, but-”

“Then shut your dick holster and keep trying!” Bereft snarled. “What were you saying, Kid?”

“Well, either someone went off script at the office,” Kaleth continued to reason. “Or more likely, someone outside the office came in and took over.”

“Master, I need-”

“Stop interrupting!” Bereft snarled at their thrall. “I don’t care what you need, just do as I say!”

“But who would have the authority to do all this?” Kaleth pondered. “It still takes time for these things to go through, so someone with higher clearance must be calling the shots.”

“MASTER!” Kaleth was suddenly tackled as Mathias pinned him to the floor. “Stay down!”

“How dare you, you little cum stain!” Bereft hissed just in time for the room to go white.

Holy light blasted through the room, the drapes covering the windows searing away as powerful rays of golden energy sliced through them.

“What the fuck!” Kareft roared.

“Cover your eyes,” Mathias slammed his hands down on their head, their eyes being shielded by the blast of holy light.

“Get ready for infiltration,” Mathias instructed. “They’ll break down the door before the light fades.”

“How...” Kareft clawed the carpet, their eyes burning even with Mathias’ holy protection.

“Use my training,” the rat instructed. “You already know what they are going to do.”

It was true. Instantly their body tensed up, they pulled their arm over their eyes, and they readied themselves for infiltration. They used their bicep to cover one ear, their forearm to cover their eyes, and their other hand to plug their other ear.

Just then, the doors blew.

There would be two officers coming in right away for an initial sweep, and then followed by two more five seconds after. Mathias was already on it.

“Freeze!” The officers shouted to Mathias. The rat had his hand between the couch cushions. He felt the bible he left there tingle in his grasp. Two of his fingers on his free hand lit up with energy as a holding spell gripped the two officers and forced them to stay still.

“Just as I thought,” Mathias pulled the bible out of the couch and stood just as the holy light stopped. “They weren’t prepared for a holy fight, just a demon one.”

Mathias had his cocky grin again, as if he were staring down a duo of demons and not a couple of EC officers he used to call comrades only a few days prior. He didn’t even hesitate as he clenched his

fist. Anyone with holy vision could see it. The hands binding the officers' heads turned rapidly, their necks snapping and their bodies going limp.

Mathias opened his palm, the cracked doorframe glowing with holy energy, a snare trap like the one he used on Kaleth in the convent basement.

"Be gone!" Mathias shouted, the holy magic taking shape just in time for another duo of guards to burst through the door and get ensnared. The holy hands gripped those bodies, binding them and having them block the doorway.

"Master, run," Mathias cracked open his bible, the letters glowing golden as he poured his power into its pages.

"Not a chance," Bereft snarled. "I'm not going down without a fight."

"I can hold them for now, but I only got one smite. Don't make me waste it. Get out of here! GO!" Mathias swiped his hand, the holy hands snapping the necks of the two officers. "Four officers down, they won't hold back anymore. Get out of here now!"

Kaleth panicked, his body flailing as he scrambled scared into the kitchen.

The fuck kid! Bereft shouted at his vessel mate, but it fell on deaf ears as Kaleth was in a blind panic to escape. His worst fear since this all began. Being found out, pegged and hunted, trapped and subdued like a beast...he had to get out.

"Kaleth! Stop!" Bereft shouted as he tried to wrest back control of their vessel, but Kaleth's desires had gone haywire. He wasn't trained for this kind of thing.

But Bereft was.

“Kaleth, stop! They’ll break in the side entrance and cut us off-”

Kaleth froze in fear as a duo of officers broke in the side door, their bodies clad in armored vestments. The usual black priest garb was accented with a few sashes and rosaries to protect from demon possession and attack.

Kaleth lifted his hands in the air, his arms shaking and knees knocking.

Pathetic, Bereft growled in their brain.

Bereft bent a pinky, the finger glowing with orange hell flame as hellfire burst around one of the officers. He screamed and slammed back into his fellow officer, falling to the ground.

“Th-That worked?” Kaleth muttered out, but Bereft wasn’t wasting any time now that he had some control of their vessel.

“No, you chicken shit bastard,” Bereft growled as he quickly grabbed a knife, the officer’s vestments already extinguishing the hell fire. “They were just surprised is all. Mathias’ men are trained for theoretical combat, but not practical.”

Bereft lunged, hissing as he slammed the knife down into the throat of the officer, blood spraying as his neck was cut open. Bereft didn’t waste any time as he spiraled, slicing the next one’s chest. The man was wounded, but not mortally. He went for his rosary to cast, but Bereft roared, the orange crisscrossing patterns bursting into hellfire. This time, the father screamed in agony as the hell flame scorched through his vestments. The sash for hellfire protection having been severed by Bereft’s cut.

Kaleth was getting whiplash from how quick things were unfolding.

“Hold up,” Kaleth gasped.

“No time, shit dick,” Bereft snapped their head to look at the exit through the kitchen. There were already a duo of officers getting ready to go in. Bereft threw his knife, the blade sinking into the first officer and making him fall back onto the other. Bereft turned and ran back into the kitchen. The side entrance wasn’t an option.

That’s the only other exit, Kaleth couldn’t control his thoughts. He was in full flight mode and Bereft was in fight. The mix a paralyzing cocktail that Bereft powered through.

Every window is a fucking exit when you can fly, you dipshit. Bereft spat back in their mind as they rounded the corner back into the living room to head up the stairs. Mathias’ hand was fully glowing, all his fingers keeping some sort of binding together.

“The fuck are you doing!” Mathias screamed, his voice cracking. “Get out of here!”

Bereft was about to turn to go upstairs when they froze in place. A searing pain enveloped their entire body as though they had been pushed into a vat of acid that held them in place.

Kaleth screamed, his voice breaking as the pain seared his scales, the natural armor bubbling and cracking as though it were burning. Bereft was caught off guard and paralyzed in pain as he screamed as well. Their voice a tortured mess of two people trying to scream with the same throat.

Ice, they were covered in holy water that was freezing them in place. They was trapped, their body from the neck down fully encased in that in unbearable pain and agony. Mathias beside them was in the same situation, his body from the neck down frozen in place.

“Make it stop!” Kaleth screamed, his tail thrashing about behind him as his body tried to pull away from the pain, but every flex and lean caused him to press into more of that potent holy water.

Bereft caught something out of the corner of his eye. It was barely a glint of light, but he noticed it. Both Bereft and Kaleth's eyes went wide as they saw a Sister, a woman in a navy-blue habit come flying forward. A snow leopard with a rapier made of ice was charging them. The tip of that blade was unwavering, aimed right at the demonic duo's chest and ready to gore him through. She wasn't stopping to ask questions, not in a battlefield like this. She was going for the kill.

Bereft finally felt the true meaning of fear, the anticipation of the void glaring at him in that woman's steely eyes.

The snow leopard was suddenly pushed off course, her body flying to the side as a massive burst of holy magic caught her on the side and sent her soaring into the kitchen.

Through the pain and anguish, Bereft managed to find a moment of clarity and looked at Mathias. Mathias' arm was a bloody pulp, unable to focus the smite properly he just released it as a targeted blast.

"Master...hellfire..." It was all he managed before coughing up a thick wad of blood and going limp.

Bereft had never felt more grateful or indebted to one of his thralls before. Mathias had saved both their lives, given them a window to escape, and the answer to getting out of their current trap. Bereft roared, hellfire bursting from their orange markings. The ice cracked and melted over them. It was pain incarnate, like slowly powering through a corridor filled with barbed wire, but they were freed. Bereft hobbled forward, his feet pounding the stairs as he made his way up as quickly as he could.

Kaleth had practically passed out, his mind a shattered mix of pain and panic. At least it was good for one thing; helping Bereft channel that adrenalin into getting away!

Bereft felt like he was cut off at the knees. He was juggling healing from holy water burns, focusing through Kaleth's mental screams and fear, and finding a way out.

Alice and Chastity were standing at the top of the stairs, the duo of rabbits looking worried.

"Master, this way quick," Alice ushered Bereft into the bedroom. Chastity slammed the door behind them and locked the door.

"The window is open," Alice instructed. "You can fly out, but you have to do it now. They're placing a holy barrier around the house. It won't be long until the entire block is locked down."

They were interrupted by a terrified shriek that was quickly cut off. Kaleth snapped his head around to see Chastity was leaning against the door to hold it closed, only she had an icicle protruding out of her chest. The lance of ice gored her through only for her entire body to freeze over in a suspended scream.

"Go!" Alice screamed and pushed Kaleth towards the window, practically falling through it. The door broke down, Chastity's body shattering to shards as the door was blasted open.

"A brood nest," the same Sister as before said as she came in, her boots cracking the shattered remains of Chastity. She was clutching her shoulder, her sword arm limp at her side and dripping blood. In her hand was a rapier handle with no blade. Alice jumped forward and tried to tackle the Sister, but the she lifted the arm holding the blade handle, an icicle flashing into existence and shooting out like a bullet to gore Alice through. Her scream cut short as she met the same fate as her daughter.

Only a small spackle of blood splattered out her back as that blade shot through her, all of it forming frozen droplets as the rabbit was made into an ice sculpture. Alice's last act wasn't in vain though. Her body fell forward and smacked the snow leopard, the woman crumpling to the floor.

Bereft snarled and clawed his way out the window, their augmented frame making it hard to do, but he managed. You'd be amazed at what you're willing to do in order to survive. The demonic duo flopped out of the window, unceremoniously unfurled their wings, and started to gain altitude.

"Who the fuck was that," Kaleth huffed, the cold air making their breath catch fog.

"I don't know," Bereft snarled. "Now shut up while I actually do something to keep us from getting smote!"

Kaleth felt those words like a slap to the face. The rage and anger coming from Bereft's essence was palpable. Not just because he was fuming, but because a healthy chunk of that anger was pointed at him.

"What did you want me to do?" Kaleth shot back defensively.

"Fucking ANYTHING you little piece of shit!" Bereft snarled. "You may have an afterlife if I get exorcised, but I cease to exist! You were willing to throw my life away on the off chance those fuckers weren't going to shoot?"

Kaleth was going to argue when blistering pain racked their body, their wings freezing midflight. Fog rolled over them, a blessed mist that was sending poisoned darts of pain through their back. Bereft ignited their markings again, scorching away the frost just in time to get their wings moving again. The demon drew upon Landon's memories, Kaleth's former vampire bat landlord turned thrall, to keep them flying. The bat flew track back in college and wouldn't shut the fuck up about it, and for once, that shit came in handy in real life.

"Get us out of here!" Kaleth screamed.

"Shut up!" Bereft shot back.

“We need to get to Landon now,” Kaleth shouted.

“I know kid! Now stow it!” Bereft spat back and rocketed them off. A holy dome burning into existence behind them. They got out just before being trapped.

Down below, the Sister was steadying her blade hilt on the windowsill, her arm unable to lift her blade anymore. A lance of fog was shooting out that hilt as she aimed it at the demon, but she couldn’t focus enough to conjure another blade.

“Damn you to hell, you slippery eel,” the Sister cursed as her arm flopped to her side, the hilt of her blade hitting the floor. The snow leopard pulled a phone out of her habit and dialed her station’s number.

“Mathias’ office, Sister Yule speaking,” the sing song voice of the arctic fox came through the line.

“It’s me Yule,” the snow leopard winced and sucked in some air through her teeth.

“Oh my, Lorain, are you okay?”

“I’m fine, really,” the snow leopard known as Lorain replied. “I’ll have to see a doctor, but nothing that can’t be fixed.”

“Oh my,” the fox muttered on the other end of the line. “I’m so sorry. I thought I organized it perfectly.”

“It’s not your fault, Yule,” Lorain couldn’t listen to the fox blame herself. “We didn’t know that Mathias was a thrall already. We only thought that he may be harboring demons, not communing with them. Several officers are down, four confirmed dead.”

“Those are small numbers for a demon attack,” Yule reasoned. “Glad we can put this whole thing to rest.”

“Not yet,” Lorain sighed. “The damned thing got away. The holy ward didn’t get up in time. I was too confident in my own abilities and got clipped from the side. Lock down the districts and set up the normal sweeps.”

“God’s will be done,” Yule spoke across the phone, an old-fashioned affirmative saying.

“Good, I’ll have the medics take me to the hospital for healing. You get to work on the convent. There has to be some sort of clue as to who this demon is.”

“What kind of demon was he?”

“He could cast hellfire, so I’m assuming some sort of unregistered hell mage. Check the local kinling registry and focus on black drakes. I don’t know if his scales were changed in color, but he had a brood nest forming, so we can’t be sure of the extent of the demon’s influence.”

“A brood nest? What of the woman? Could they be saved?”

“No,” Lorain furrowed her brow and kicked a frozen shard of one of the rabbits. “Both thralls and attempting to keep the demon safe.”

“Well, that might have been a blessing in disguise. You of all people know what happens to whores of demons.”

“Don’t remind me of my family, Yule, and just do your damn job.”

“Oh! Sorry, didn’t mean to offend.”

“No, no,” Lorain shook her head. “Sorry, I know you don’t mean any actual offence. I’m just...defensive.”

“Do you need any other medical teams dispatched?” Yule decided to move on and not dwell.

“No, but we’ll need clean up and crowd control. Contact the local news and report a gas leak.”

“Not my first cover up, Sister,” Yule’s smile came through in her voice.

“Now who’s getting defensive,” Lorain rolled her eyes. “Still, I’m going to find this demon drake and I’m going to put him to the test against my blade. No man can hide from me, let alone their guilt. We’ll nail this bastard before the end of the day. I’m sure.”

“I’ll turn the convent upside down,” Yule confirmed. “I already have the warrants approved.”

“Do me proud Yule,” Sister Lorain smiled.

“Of course, Sister,” Yule finished their conversation and hung up. Lorain put her phone away and heard the other officers from below shout the ground floor and basement were clear. They were headed upstairs.

“I’m in here,” Lorain shouted. “Sister Lorain of the Demon Slayer Core.”

The sister gripped her hilt and shakily got back up to her feet. She couldn’t let them see her sitting *and* wounded.

“Head Sister,” an officer came running in. “What’s your situation.”

“Why the *HELL* didn’t you confirm if the room was clear first!” Lorain snarled. “Follow protocol or get off the force. Clear the room, then confirm casualties!”

“Y-Yes Head Sister!” The man stammered out before scanning the room, checking the closet and master bath before giving the all-clear.

“Better,” Lorain scowled. “Never, ever, enter a room without confirming if it’s clear. Now, help me down the stairs. I need medical attention.”

“What about the civilians?”

“No civilians, just thralls,” Lorain confirmed. “The two in the bedroom were brood whores, the beginning of a brood nest. We need to act fast before this bastard starts up again.”

“Of course Sister,” the EC officer answered.

“Now, where’s the closest hospital that deals in holy healing?”

“It’s actually pretty close to the convent you’re having us investigate.”

“Good,” the snow leopard curled her tail around her habit and took the officer’s hand to help her down the stairs. “I can get patched up and head on over.”

“Actually,” the officer guided her out of the room. “There’s a witness there that you might want to speak to.”

“Tell me the details on the way,” Lorain ordered as they descended the stairs.

It was just another day in the holy mishap ward. Plenty of people wounded from holy magic needed mending, and it takes a gentle and talented hand to treat those kinds of wounds. The thing about holy magic is that it festers. If not properly taken care of, it can infect and continue to burn. A useful weapon when combating demons that flee at the first sign of danger. Usually they are found

curled up in an alleyway having long since succumbed to the holy poisoning, or purifying burn as some call it. Though, the power of holy magic is a double-edged sword; if one is with sin, it can continue to eat away at someone until there is nothing left.

And we all have our sins to bear.

“Miss Cane?” A white mouse nurse squeaked as she came into the room. “It’s almost time for your next round of treatment.”

The gray cat stirred in her hospital bed, the pristine white linens clung to her body. She groaned as she sat up, her chest stinging as she did so.

“Still a little painful?” The nurse asked.

“Only when I first get up,” the gray cat answered. “Thank you for asking. Also, you can call me Margret. Sister Margret.”

“Oh yes, sorry miss...er...Sister,” the mouse corrected herself. “Sorry, not too many women of the cloth come through our doors with wounds like yours.”

“I understand,” Sister Margret nodded.

“So, after another good night’s sleep, did you manage to remember anything?”

“I...no,” Margret put her hand to her chest just above her scar. “I have no idea who would have casted such a potent smite spell on me.”

“No particular enemies you can think of?”

“Not a one,” Margret shrugged. “All I remember is...well...” Margret sighed, remembering that she couldn’t tell them everything. Father Ore was handling a loose demon with his friend from the EC. Well...that rat was more of an acquaintance than a friend.

“The only things I remember are the things I told you already,” Margret sighed.

“Don’t worry,” the mouse nurse pulled the long white curtains from the windows, the tall walls of the building were illuminated by the mid-morning sun, the yellow paint practically glowing gold with the lord's gift of a new day. “Short term memory loss is normal with smite survivors. Blinding light bleaches the memory white.”

“White is definitely all I see,” Margret shook her head.

“Don’t beat yourself up Dearie,” the mouse scurried over to Margret’s side. “Nothing to do but get some rest and apply treatment. Did you want to do your morning prayer first or the healing?”

“I figured I could pray while you heal,” Margret answered. “I can recite my decades in my sleep. I’m sure I can keep them silent enough while you work.”

“Sure thing,” the mouse agreed.

Margret pulled down her hospital gown, exposing her chest for the mouse nurse to work. The mouse recited some prayers and continued to pull out little shards of holy magic from the scar over Margret’s heart. It hit her square in the chest that’s for sure. It looked like a gorgeous cross was tattooed on her chest in an angry pink, but it was just the scar from the wound with a few branching festers that were easily hidden under her fur.

“Just a couple more treatments and you should be good to go,” the nurse commented as she wrapped up and Margret pulled her hospital gown back on, returning to her prayers. She held a rosary

in her hands. It was with her when they found her and the doctors allowed her to keep it close. It's what saved her after all. She brushed her thumb over each wooden bead while she prayed, clutching the pewter cross with her other.

There was a gentle knock at the door and the mouse nurse jumped.

"Oh, who is it?"

"Is the patient decent? We have an EC officer here to speak to the Sister from the convent."

"She isn't really--"

"It's fine," Margret sighed. "Let them in."

"Are...are you sure?" The mouse furrowed her brow.

"It was only a matter of time before the EC investigated me personally," she shook her head.

"Let them in."

The mouse was confused, but proceeded to open the door. A snow leopard walked in, her navy-blue habit torn and dirtied a bit, and had her arm in a sling. The hood of her habit was gone exposing her long silver hair that was tied into a long braid. She wasn't that tall, no more or less than Margret, but she held an air about her that made Margret feel like she was looking up even when she was looking down. The woman's eyes were powerful and steely as they looked at her, but they softened as she looked at her Sister in Christ.

"Thank you for seeing me," the woman said coming over and sitting down in a chair next to Margret's bed. "You're Sister Margret Cane, are you not?"

"That's me," Margret took a deep breath and let it out slowly.

“Thank you,” the snow leopard nodded and put her good hand over her heart and did a shallow nod of her head. “I’m Sister Lorain Fiord.”

“Wait,” Margret knit her brow and looked the leopard up and down. “I...I know you, don’t I?”

“We’ve never met to my knowledge,” Lorain answered. “Though, you may have heard of my work in the Demon Slayer Core.”

“Lorain of the DSC!” Margret’s fur stood on end. “They called you in to deal with the demon?”

“So, you know why I’m here,” Lorain put her one good hand in her lap, but her gaze stayed soft. “Listen, Margret, from one Sister to another, how much did you know about the demon?”

“I...I um...” Margret’s tongue felt dry and her fingers clutched her rosary. Margret felt a soft touch and she looked down to see Lorain had put her hand on hers, their fingers both touching the decade of beads she was praying on.

“You’re not in trouble,” Lorain shook her head. “I just want to see if you might know anything that could help. What information can you provide?”

“I...I knew we should have gone to the diocese,” Margret tensed up before she sighed. There was no protecting the convent at this point. “But we’re well past that now...and so much has happened.”

“I have time,” Lorain nodded. “If you’d like, I can have the nurses bring us some tea and we can discuss further. I promise, you will not be held accountable for anything you say here.”

“It’s not even that,” Margret clutched her beads harder. “Please tell me no one else got hurt.”

“No one at the convent got hurt,” Lorain reassured her. She wasn’t lying. No one at the convent was harmed.

“Oh thank God,” she sighed.

“One important question before we get down to it,” Lorain pulled out a photo from her Habit. “Have you ever met this man?” She handed it over to Margret. The gray cat focused her golden eyes on the image of a rat.

“Only recently,” Margret admitted. “Father Ore said that he was his connection in the EC that could handle the demon...discreetly.”

“You didn’t want the convent to close down, did you?”

“No...” Margret sighed. “I know it seems like a silly reason now. I just wanted to keep doing good for this community,” *and keep Father Ore close.*

“Mathias has been detained or otherwise,” Lorain narrowed her eyes but quickly softened them again. “I’ve taken over his position to exorcise this demon.”

“Oh, I didn’t get him in trouble, did I?” Margret blushed. Lorain was taken aback by that. She simply smiled and stifled a chuckle before continuing.

“You’re too kind for your own good, Margret,” Lorain shook her head. “No, you didn’t do anything. His fate was brought upon by himself.”

Margret didn’t know how to feel about that. She just looked back down at her rosary, her scar burning a bit.

“Why don’t I get that tea, and we can start from the beginning,” Lorain offered.

“I would...really like that,” Margret looked Lorain in the eye, the genuine look of warmth made her feel more at ease. “I would like that a lot.”

Lorain stepped out to get the nurses. As she did, Margret continued her prayers.

“Please...let Father Ore be okay,” she kissed the pewter cross and waited for Lorain to come back.

It didn't take long.

After all, Lorain works fast.