Alina was dead.

It was just an ordinary evening. I had just finished my shift with her at the Dragons Den. Lucas, who was unfortunately the owner of this place, greeted us as we left.

“See you two tomorrow! Bright and early for the Newborns' big day.” he had said.

“Yeah, yeah. It isn’t that big a deal.” I said

“Come on, that’s not true. It’s the day you share your name.” said Alina.

It was tradition in Nirvana that after one month of you existing, you officially announce your chosen name in front of your closest friends as part of your Nameday Celebration. Then, you are officially part of Nirvana as a true citizen.

Alina’s Ceremony was just last week. Her smile was so blindingly beautiful. It was the most amazing thing I’ve ever seen in my life.

“The name suits you, Alina.” I had told her.

Alina grinned even brighter.

“I know, right? I can’t wait for your Ceremony. Your name will be just as perfect as mine, I promise!”

She’ll never get to know my name, thanks to them.

We were ambushed just outside our apartment building by a group of thugs from the Blood District. Unfortunately, they were specialists in blood magic, meaning that torturing us was very easy. Our screams echoed through the night.

“That’s it, girls. Scream even more!” one of them said.

When they were finally done, I could barely recognize Alina under all of that blood.

“Which one should we take to the boss?” said one thug

He looked at who I assumed was the leader, evidenced by the gold badge on his chest. The leader looked between me and Alina and pointed at me. The other thugs nodded, grabbed Alina, and started dragging her across the concrete.

“Stop it!” I yelled.

One thug used his bat to hit me across the head in response. I reeled back from the pain, recovering just in time to see a gun pointed at the back of Alina’s head. The gun fired.

She fell. I screamed.

And my body started to burn.

No, my body became surrounded by flames.

The thugs that surrounded me were suddenly smaller than before. For the first time that night, they looked afraid. The last I remember before I faded into unconsciousness was a voice that came from my mouth, but it was not mine.

“DIE!”

I didn’t know what to expect when the Jade Dragon suddenly called me, but it definitely wasn’t this. I arrived at the scene to find that the Jade Dragon himself had made an appearance, something only reserved for high level threats. He was right in front of the crime scene, channeling his green flames into a cage to stop the monster. The Jade Dragon gave a small nod as I approached him.

“What’s the situation?” I asked.

“Right on time, Lucas. A fire demon was spotted in this alley. Murdered five thugs from the Blood District. I have contained it in my flames.” said the Jade Dragon

“If you have it contained, then why am I here? You could kill it from this position, like always.”

“This situation is different. The demon, when I contained it, asked for your name specifically.”

“What? So you think…”

“It might be someone possessed by a demon and my flames can’t purify, only kill. I need you to go in and calm the demon down.”

“Ok, Jade Dragon.”

“Lucas, please call me Jay. We’re friends. I’ll open the flame barrier for you to step through and if things go wrong, I have your back.”

“Thanks, Jay.”

With a wave of his hand, Jay moved some of the flames aside and I passed through onto the alley. It didn’t take me long to find the bodies. They were seared to a crisp, but their faces were still frozen in fear. The smell almost made me throw up, then I heard an unusual noise coming from the very end of the alley.

It was tears, loud and ceaseless sobbing.

Quickly, I followed the noise and found its source.

It was the demon. It had red scaled skin and glowing yellow ears. Flowing long white hair touched the ground and when she finally looked up at me, her tears were black and staining her face. Wordlessly, she pointed a shaking finger towards a corpse. I didn’t notice it until now because it was hidden under some rubble. I moved it aside and gasped.

It was Alina, a bullet wound on her forehead, not burned like the others. A thought entered my head, but I dismissed it quickly due its sheer impossibility. That couldn’t be the case, could it?

“Lu…cas.”

I turned towards the demon. More black tears spilled from her eyes. Her finger was still trained on Alina, almost as if she was trying to reach for her.

“My…fault…I’m…sorry.”

A blinding burst of red light erupted from the demon and I shielded my eyes. When it finally stopped, the demon was replaced by that impossibility.

The Newborn, naked and bleeding from injuries.

I grabbed her body and carried her towards the flame barrier. She can hate me all she wants later, but I need to get her safe. Jay was shocked when I stepped out of the barrier with her body.

“You were right, Jay. It was…kind of a possession.” I said

“Kind of?” questioned Jay

“It was almost like…she turned into a demon.”

For the first time since I’ve known him, Jay looked shocked, but he recovered quickly. His gaze briefly went to the Newborn then back to me.

“Who is she?” Jay asked.

“A newborn. A dear friend. Her Nameday Celebration was supposed to be tomorrow.” said Lucas

“Then, we’ll take care of her as if she were one of our own. Come with me to the Palace. Let’s get her a room.”

I followed Jay back to the Jade Palace, clinging to the Newborn tightly.

Her first day of her new life was tomorrow. But now, that day is tainted with death, and it always will be.