
The Realignment

To beg her husband to relent was futile. His rage knew no bounds. Lilith mentally stared at his large, black, glistening hooves through her mind as she huddled on the searing floor of his pit and waited for the stomping to begin again. Her eyes had been ripped from their sockets and only oozed a warm jelly of torn tissue. Angry flies crowded into the openings on her face. Her nose was crushed, her mouth was a bloodied, gaping hole, her fangs gone. There was only blood-slicked pulp where her beauty once reigned.

She could feel her entrails quivering beneath her torso as she lie prone, breathing in sips, her back filleted by his massive, spaded tail. Snakes wound around the exposed bones, snapping at bits of flesh and pulling at her veins. Her legs were gone, lying in a heap across his chamber. Beetles and maggots had already begun to feed within the ragged, gruesome, wounds. A month of enduring his merciless wrath and he was still inconsolable.

“You allowed my son to be baited to his death by a Neteru! *My son?*” he bellowed, causing a thunderous wind to sweep across her exposed vertebra and ignite it in flames. Vermin that had nested in her hair squeaked at the violation of their feast. “They took Dante’s head, Lilith! His head by an Isis, which means that *even I* cannot raise him from the Sea of Perpetual Agony!”

She wailed from the excruciating pain and dissolved into sobs without tears, her will to survive fractured by the ongoing abuse. His litany had been a month long refrain with each tail lash. Every time a cloven hoof gashed her skin and peeled it away from

bone and muscle she'd beseeched him with all the guile within her, but to no avail. He slashed the smoldering air around them, and her skin began to tear in shreds again, turning her wails into shrieks of agony. The beast would not be appeased this time. In her mind she begged for him to turn her body over to the Harpies, anything but him.

"The Harpies shall not have you—for you have taken my greatest source of torture pleasure from me—*Dante!*"

She covered her head with a remaining arm, and immediately felt it rip from her body; the dull thud of flesh striking the wall simultaneously with the convulsions that jerked her limbless torso.

"Husband, please... I swear to you—"

"That you had been fucking my first born son for years was of no consequence to me. I enjoyed watching. That you would try to create another through a stolen half-vampire, half-Neteru embryo, I found delightful, sensually ruthless... I wanted to see what it would become, the experiment was intriguing. I loved how you sent a spiritual attachment to become a parasite within the male Neteru of this era, Lilith. But you failed. He prayed to warrior angels, even with your black smoke seizing his nervous system, which means you are weak! Your attempts to change history were fruitless."

"That's why I did it, my love... for you," she whispered, begging on a strangled swallow and choking on her own black blood. "*Anything* for you, *everything* for you, my all. I knew you would cherish the embryo, as nothing like it had ever been created. It was a gift, a surprise for you, darling. Please let me make it up to you, my dark essence, please... just *please* stop the torture. I'll do anything, just command it so."

“You were always my most treacherous and favorite, Lilith—how could you betray me with such a loss? Had you not set the strategy in motion, Dante would still exist,” he seethed between hooked teeth, bending down to snatch her within his grasp by her throat, and then holding her above his head with one clawed talon. He watched her blood drizzle down his massive, curved horns to splatter his arm.

“Just give me a chance to right this error in judgment...” Her voice broke off into sobs and gave way to wails of utter dismay coated by terror.

He flung her to the ground like a rag, his huge, leathery wings extending to cover her in complete shadow. “But I so enjoyed watching Dante’s empire grow in the darkness... So enjoyed torturing his existence with the possibilities of what he could have been, but was not. I loved watching him chase after the Neterus through the centuries, hoping to break his banishment to the sunlight, and wishing that he’d be able to procreate his kind through insemination, rather than the bite. His suffering and longing comforted me, Lilith, in a way that you can never fathom. And, now, he is no more!”

Her husband’s horrific roar fused with a screeching wail that bottomed out and shook all that was around them, piercing her eardrums till they bled the gray matter of her brain. Huge rocks and stalagmites detached from the walls and came crashing down with his cloven hoof to snap her spine.

“I will stomp you for this inequity until I make a blackened puddle! Then I will drink your foul essence and spew you into flames that will lick you for eternity.” His voice dropped to a frightening whisper. “Lilith, do I not always demand justice... that I be given *my due*? What is a son worth, do you know?”

“I’m the only one left that has interacted with the Neteru males to know their weaknesses and vulnerabilities!” she shrieked, forestalling his next blow.

“Speak to me!”

“I was the one who was the first wife of Adam.”

There was silence, and her mind scrambled to make her case within milliseconds.

“It was I who tricked the newest and most aggressive, Carlos Rivera, to descend into Dante’s throne briefly—only I did that. I even made him ignore the warnings of warrior angels! Dear husband, please consider the possibilities as you rightfully rage against me.”

A cool wind blew and her body began to knit itself back together and heal.

“Husband, my love, I was able to act quickly and rationally at a time of great chaos to snatch the embryo from the carnage of the female Neteru’s womb... the millennium slayer. If you let me survive, I know another way to raise Dante.”

“Speak,” a disembodied voice said as the Unnamed One disappeared into the shadows, considering her offer. His eyes glowed red then went black within their slits. “Bargain with me, Lilith... you know that’s my favorite game. Strike a deal with me.”

Hot tears coursed down her face as she tried to speak quickly to him in Dananu. “As long as Dante’s first born male from his original bloodline exists, all that he was can be summoned forth. It’s in the DNA, as always. There is only one other that can sit on Dante’s throne to replace all that Carlos Rivera’s existence promised, but that Rivera’s foolish choice to separate from his dark side and exterminate it, snatched from our realms. This one is his exact match, perhaps stronger.”

“The one you speak of is in a place that our realms cannot penetrate,” her husband’s low, growling voice thundered quietly through the darkness.

“Your month of exacting torture against me has ripped the fabric between the dimensions,” she whispered, shivering and holding her arms around herself, bracing against another possible sudden blow. “The subterranean disturbance has—”

“The one you speak of still resides within a realm that we cannot breach,” he said evenly. “Do not toy with me Lilith, for if you fail, I will blot you from all existence... slowly... with excruciating horror.”

She shook her head no. “Neither you nor I can breach that realm, but a living Neteru can. I’ve been around them, and know their weaknesses.”

Again, her proposal was met by silence.

Panic stricken and yet filled with hope, she pressed on. “The one we seek has the mark of banishment from The One on High that we never name, but a Neteru can bring him forward through the barrier, if the veil between worlds is weakened. You just did that, my beloved. You weakened the veil as you raged beneath the earth. Torturing me was wise, dear husband, and most appreciated, for it created another opportunity that we may have missed.”

When her husband didn’t answer, Lilith’s voice became strident. “I know Rivera’s greatest weakness, his insecurities, because he sat in Dante’s throne. Let me go to Dante’s throne and extract what we need from the residue of energy Rivera left in it. It’s still there, and as a female of our kind, I can still taste that essence,” she said, speaking quickly and bargaining for her life. “Therefore, knowing *his* shortcomings, I also know the female Neteru’s greatest weakness as well—because they are linked at the

heart chakra, they are *soul-mates*. Fracture the soul-mates, and you will have your revenge, which will be no less catastrophic to mankind than what happened to Adam and Eve.”

The lack of response made her tone urgent as she continued to speak in a flurry of Dananu. “Husband, your righteous fury thinned the veil between worlds. Time stopped, a rip occurred, therefore I can siphon the past to the forefronts of their minds. I can delve into the darkest crevices of what they had forgotten, what has been forsaken. After that, all we have to do is sit back and watch as their love implodes, taking their team of Neteru Guardians down with it. Unprecedented. The Covenant will wobble and fall. There will be no earthly protection for humankind. The past will feel like the present, the present like a far away thing of the past. Let me work, unhindered, beloved. You have seen my best efforts, and I have only failed you this once.”

Hot tears of anguish coursed down Lilith’s face. “I’ll make you a new Chairman, one that you have waited for since the dawn of time... one who is stronger than Dante ever was, and no less tortured. This one won’t be infertile, and can call out the others like him from the banishment realm. He will be able to walk in the daylight, and has a soul, like those around him—thus the Guardian teams worldwide will be bereft with confusion. He’s *half human*. Those with him in the banishment realm are also that. Therefore the Guardian teams must individually select those to slaughter and cannot enact a call to arms for the wholesale slaughter of the new Chairman’s soldiers.”

Her voice rose to a fevered pitch when her husband didn’t respond. “Anything less than that will mean that the hundred and forty-four thousand Guardians’ souls will be imperiled, if they make war against those entities. Think of it, my husband;

compromising the entire earthly army of Guardians at a time like this... forcing them to commit murder.”

A low threatening chuckle filled the cavern.

She bowed, and then fell to her knees, going prostrate on the floor in submission as tears of relief ran down her cheeks. “Let us turn our combined outrage to the more important matter at hand, rather than my continued torture... I know and respect that you have the Armageddon to concern yourself with as a priority to your magnificent master plan. I could assist you in creating chaos amongst the young Neterus, so that distrust, dishonor, fury replaces their love for one another... and just like the fragile balance between dimensions, a permanent fissure between them will allow one of them to call your grandson from his banishment.

“The female Neteru’s weakness is one of your most irresistible wiles... and it was encoded in your grandson’s natural lineage. All is not lost; his torture may even be greater than Dante’s. Through this new vessel, your first born can live again... if you allow me to correct the error I’ve made. It will even cause disarray amongst the Neteru Councils and The Covenant which has already been weakened, thus the angels above them, something we’ve never been able to achieve. Imagine how strategic that could be so close to the big war.”

Silence made her swallow hard and shudder with anticipation, knowing her husband’s decision could go either way.

“You were always my favorite, my most shrewd bitch.”

She remained cowering on the pit floor as the slow clatter of hooves began a threatening circle around her body. Lilith closed her eyes, but dared not shield her body

with her arm again. The situation had surpassed volatile; he could be thoroughly enraged that she'd devised a logical plan and he hadn't; or he could be temporarily mollified. His power charred her skin as he moved around her, thinking, but she didn't even breathe, much less cry out.

"I will install him on a dark throne," she whispered to the bloodied floor, her eyes shut tightly. "I will lead him by the hand to Dante's power vessel."

"If you fail," a low, dangerous voice said quietly, kicking up gale force winds around her, "I will visit all the wrath upon you that was once Dante's—banishment from daylight, sterility, blood hunger, and you shall take a non-ruling seat on Level Six, stripped of your powers here... and you will do so as a celibate, blind, ugly old crone, governing only human dark witches, without even the ability to create my most revered race of demons—vampires." He leaned down and spoke to her softly, his hot breath setting her hair aflame. "I will neuter you, seal up your pussy in stone, turn your breasts to marble, and you will know the pleasures of this realm no more. But you will hunger for it the way my dead son incessantly hungered for human blood."

"I will not fail you, will never fail you," she murmured as sensually as she could, standing and filling his embrace as his red, sulfuric plumes covered her. She petted his broad chest, trying to calm the massive beast that clutched her. Failure was out of the question. "I exist only for your pleasure."

"Yes. You do," he murmured, scoring her throat, making her shiver.

"Then seal the new bargain with a bite before you fuck me."

* * *

Eve felt it the moment the earth shifted on its axis. The Devil was beating his wife, again, but more severely than ever. It had rained through pure sunshine, off and on for a month. It was time to take matters into her own hands. She could feel the evil plot crawling beneath her skin like vipers, even though the details would never surface on their own. What was it!

She adjusted her golden, armored breastplate and stood legs wide East of Eden, prepared for battle. This had been coming throughout the ages, and she would not be moved or denied. Aset couldn't talk her out of it, nor could Adam. Dante was dead, which gave the Neteru Councils pause enough to hear her argument. It had been decided. This was between women. That her husband still challenged her about briefly having Dante's scent on her skin made Eve clench her teeth. Lilith had to die. The young female Neteru had not taken that godforsaken bitch's head, so she would.

Rage beyond mortal comprehension filled Eve as the past tortured her mind. She was still linked to Lilith's essence by way of Adam. Men just didn't understand how long a feminine grudge could be held... till the end of time. Nor could she ever explain the mixed feelings that she harbored about the fact that Dante was finally gone.

The unknown but pending threat had registered in both Neteru Councils, she was the first to perceive it and was the most affected by it, though none of them quite knew why. The only conclusion both Councils could draw was that whatever it was went far back to the beginning when the first would be last and the last would be first; the act had

to be swift and decisive. For centuries Lilith's haunting laughter and evil schemes had plagued her. The solution was decapitation by Isis. The pleasure would be all hers to dust Adam's ex-wife.

Memories riddled Eve as she stood on the edge of existence. Thousands of years of having her name tarnished, her motives in question, her womanhood and that of all women misconstrued in the sacred texts of mankind... her children defiled and murdered, her rightful rule given to Aset... oh, yes, this was more her battle than Damali's. The young one, her sister Queen, was no match for this very old evil.

The argument over the viable options had raged in Council for a month, until Aset had finally relented because Damali was still under a male Neteru apex haze, and oblivious. Thus the business of seasoned Neteru Queens would have to be handled by one with a long history under her broad sword belt.

Eve narrowed her gaze, tossed her long, Kemetian braids over her shoulder, and then opened her hand for the Isis long blade to fill it. She closed her grip around the bejeweled handle of the familiar weapon, clutching it like it was a long lost friend. Yes. This went back to the beginning. Renewed fury spiked adrenaline through Eve's system as she leaned back her head, and a battle cry filled her throat.

"Lilith! Your head on a pike!"

Instantly, Lilith materialized in black armor before her, standing a hundred yards away. The desert went dark, just before dawn. The wind rose and brought stinging particles of sand that felt like scorpions to beat against their faces. A pair of black glowing Bedouin eyes stared into unblinking Kemetian irises that gleamed silver in the eclipse.

“It’s been a long time, Eve,” Lilith hissed.

“Very long indeed,” Eve said coolly, walking forward too angry for any fear.

A swishing, spaded tail unfurled from Lilith’s spine as her legs became granite, and her gargoyle features slowly overtook her once voluptuous body and mouth. Eve watched dispassionately as she strode in a slow, methodical advance while Lilith’s fangs lengthened.

“You should fear me more than your husband, who just kicked your wretched ass,” Eve whispered through her teeth.

“At least mine can get it up!” Lilith shouted, “How is poor Adam these days?”

Eve was pure motion. Her lunge came without warning, the Isis chiming in the wind, her slash across Lilith’s breasts severe, missing Lilith’s throat as Lilith ducked backwards to avoid the blade. Black blood splattered Eve’s face. Lilith’s immediate return blow to Eve’s jaw was temporarily stunning; her razor sharp tail impaled Eve’s thigh to the bone. In two lightening-like moves, the Isis quickly disconnected the combatants as Eve simultaneously severed Lilith’s tail and levied a solid left-handed punch in the center of Lilith’s chest to drive her backward, leaving Lilith’s tail lodged in her thigh like an additional appendage.

Lilith quickly raised her arm to block a blow and to claw Eve’s face, but Eve’s fast reflexes knocked spit from Lilith’s mouth when her fist connected with it, half turning Lilith around. Before Lilith could respond with a black energy bolt, two swift kidney kicks, and a third delivered to Lilith’s abdominal section sent Lilith lurching forward for a second and then made her fall back, lose her footing, and hit the ground.

Eve advanced undaunted with broad, rage-filled Isis swings, opening gashes in Lilith's arms as she tried to protect her body while rolling away and then scrambling to her feet.

Unable to match Eve's blows, Lilith instantly retreated from the infuriated Queen, who raised the Isis over her head for a heart plunge. Lilith's wings unfolded from her shoulders, and she quickly flew backwards to put maneuvering distance between them. Silver-red blood ran from Eve's clenched fist where it had been torn open by a fang when she'd punched Lilith. Both old warriors faced each other, breathing hard, positioning for the next attack, death strategies blazing in their eyes.

"You've only lived this long during this encounter because I'd been weakened by Armageddon negotiations with my husband, but know that I will prevail!" Lilith backed up farther, panting with fatigue and from significant injuries, eyes now black fire.

Eve screamed, running forward, anger making her entire body shake. "I will take your head *before* the Armageddon! Know that!"

Lilith disappeared, her voice a taunt. "I will not fail, again. That is what *you* must know, dear Eve. I now know your greatest weakness, now that I've spilled your blood and tasted your heartbreak curdled within it. Just like before, *this*, you cannot win!"

Whirling around in a frustrated circle Eve shouted her complaint into the temporary darkness, brandishing the Isis. "Fight me! We do this to the death, you cowardly whore! I have wanted your carcass for centuries and will have it!"

Silence answered her. The dawn had crested. Tears of unspent rage glittered in the sunlight within Eve's eyes as she drove the Isis into the sand and walked away.

"Damn you! This isn't over!"

An eerie laugh echoed behind Eve like a whisper on the wind. “No, you arrogant Neteru bitch, it’s not.”