

# Observations

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It was a simple mission, really. Just a group of frosts terrorising a small coastal town, but for some odd reason, there hadn't been any casualties yet. That did leave Dante slightly curious and would forever be his excuse of why he was tagging along. Sure, he'd seen enough of Nero, who was currently sitting in the driver's seat of his old corvette while the older hunter was lounging about with his feet propped up, to know that he should have no trouble whatsoever with them. But, truth be told, Dante still felt like he should tag along.

The younger part-demon had moved in a mere three days ago and they were both still getting used to this. This was also the best moment to see how well they mashed in battle- not that Dante had any doubts about that, but still. He wanted to use this chance to observe his young relative in battle, now that he was looking at him differently than he had a year ago in *Fortuna*.

Soon after, the two of them arrived at their destination and coincidentally, also found out why no humans had lost their lives yet. To their surprise, the hunters didn't just barge into a tribe of Frosts but actually into a group of them engaged in battle with some of those living armours from the Order of the Sword. Dante raised his eyebrows and shared a look with Nero. He, too, seemed a little puzzled about that- the younger hunter had confirmed that he'd hunted all of them down before leaving his hometown for good. Apparently, some had gotten away and decided to go demon slaying on their own.

In the end, Dante only saw Nero shrugging at this before his young friend started to head to their little friends poking each other with long and sharp objects. The older hunter, however, stayed where he was and merely leaned back against the passenger door of his car, crossing his arms in front of his chest. He grinned at Nero when the latter stopped after a few steps and threw a questioning glance back.

"You can have'em, kid."

Nero arched an eyebrow. "What?"

Dante shrugged, looking as carefree as ever as he crossed his legs at the ankles. "Not enough for the two of us anyway. Humour me."

After a brief staring match, the older man heard a "Whatever you say..." being muttered before his new partner turned around again and made his way over to their objectives. That were still ignoring him, engaged in their own battle.

Humming to himself, Dante watched as Nero took *Red Queen* off his back and threw himself right into the melee. He was still slightly impressed by the younger's sword, especially since he'd already seen Nero taking it apart for maintenance and quite frankly, Dante didn't have a fucking clue how it worked and much less how the hell the younger even built it like that. The idea behind *Blue Rose* was neat, too, and upon hearing that Nero had constructed that one by himself as well, Dante had no trouble believing that his relative seemed to have some kind of talent when it came to all things mechanical. Not to mention that Dante himself had nearly knocked some of his teeth out when he'd tried to shoot the double-barreled revolver for the first time, *completely* underestimating the immense recoil thanks to the other using it with one hand as if it was nothing.

Dante tilted his head to the side when some ice shards came flying at him and watched with mild interest as they flew past, nearly brushing his cheek, before dissipating a few feet behind him. His gaze turned back to the fight and he silently observed Nero as he destroyed an Alto Angelo's shield with a hard punch from his *Devil Bringer* before grabbing the armour, suplexing it and ultimately dropkicking it hard enough in the neck to cause it to shatter, the remains of demonic souls scattering in the air as the metal disappeared in white smoke. If he was anyone but the Son of Sparda, he'd be wondering where the hell Nero picked up moves like that, considering they were normally used in wrestling and he didn't quite figure that *Fortuna's* national sport, but thinking of their heritage... It really did seem to run in the family to simply know how to fight by instinct, utilising all weapons they ever stumbled across. And one of his younger relative's greatest assets was his immense physical strength. And, apparently, his flexibility, judging the absolutely perfect bridge he was holding while throwing a weighty suit of armour around, but Nero being bendy was something he had no desire to think too deeply about.

He'd initially been reluctant to admit it even to himself, but he had actually *felt* the punches back in *Fortuna* when they'd fought for the first time. Hurt like a bitch, enough to cause Dante to briefly trigger in order to accelerate his regenerative abilities to keep up with the damage. Not to mention the sheer audacity with which Nero had kicked him in the *face* of all things. Sure, he'd definitely underestimated him- but still. The potential was there- and it was on full display now as well.

Dante leisurely raised *Ebony* and pumped the Frost that was flying his way- thanks to Nero not just throwing but *launching* it away- full with magical lead and watched with mild interest as it melted. Having Frosts chucked at his person was a new experience, too. Its remains were already gone before they could touch the ground and as soon as his view was clear again, flames erupted from the cluster of demons, followed by high-pitched shrieks as some of them were knocked backwards. Now, that was something that actually made Dante curious- he meant what he'd said when Nero had first shown up, that he didn't care about *how* they were related. But he still couldn't help but *wonder* at times.

Of course, it wasn't like the hunter had anything to go on. But still... and what made him most curious was the fact that Nero was so emotional compared to all the Spardas he's ever met. Really, the young man himself was as much of a raging inferno on the battlefield as the one his unique sword ignited. Sure, he really had no idea how in the seven hells they turned out to share the same blood- or even how much of it- so it was entirely possible that Dante himself happened to have an equally hot-headed aunt hidden away in the depths of the underworld or wherever. Or this trait stemmed from the other half of Nero's family, the part he didn't share. He really had no idea.

It did, however, give him slight reason for concern- Dante watched as a Bianco Angelo smacked his lance against Nero's back, causing the part-devil to stumble half a step forward. That had been by no means intentional- but the Angelos and the Frosts were still engaged in a fight of their own. The older hunter had quickly realised that Nero liked to leave himself open both during and after his attacks, courtesy of his brutal fighting style, at least compared to what he himself preferred to call his own stylish, yet precise swings. He hummed when the poor sucker was being impaled with his own lance before being shot away like a rocket, crashing into a bunch of other demons and all of them exploding in a colourful, steamy mess, and thought about pointing what could be considered flaws out. But then, he decided that he had no desire to insult the younger hunter- he was fully aware of that and obviously didn't care. And, well, truth be told- it wasn't like there were all that many people around who could even make use of those openings to begin with. Physics, which, admittedly, weren't his strongest suit, also played their part- Nero swung his blade with one hand and *Red Queen* was almost as big as *Rebellion* was while being heavier. His young relative put everything he had into his attacks to cause maximum damage. That was just the way he was.

Dante hummed when he caught some disturbances in the air as if the very fabric of the atmosphere was being sliced apart on a molecular level. Nero had whipped out *Yamato*, then. He clicked his tongue. As much as he could relate to the desire of making the job as fun as possible, pulling *Yamato* out was more than just overkill. Nero was pissed, then, probably because he'd let himself be hit in what could only be considered a squabble by their standards- although he couldn't be blamed for that. Three-way-fights were a league of their own, as Dante very well knew, especially if you were on your own against two groups. Part-demons or not, not even they had eyes on their necks and keeping track of over twenty enemies' movements while everyone was pummelling everyone was no easy feat. An unlucky coincidence, nothing else- and therefore no reason to get mad about.

But judging the way Nero, surrounded by flames, suddenly shot up from the demons, propelled by the massive momentum caused by his fully charged sword, before revving it in the perfect moment to launch himself back down, tip driving through some demons and into the ground, he was mad. Well, as Dante had already figured, the younger's temper was something he had some qualms about. He wouldn't quite call it an illogical fear, not at all, but rather... some ill-placed apprehension. Yes, Nero could definitely take care of himself, proven by the fact that a mere three demons were left and there wasn't a single scratch on his young friend, but he could feel worry settling heavy in his stomach. Although he wasn't quite ready to admit to it, and much less so openly, the Son of Sparda had lived through enough of his family members dying as he was powerless to do anything against it. His mouth pressed into

a thin line as a resolve he didn't quite appreciate but accepted nonetheless surged in his chest. He didn't like seeing Trish or Lady hurt, either. What was so different about wanting to look after the kid? The fact that they were related actually just added to his reasoning, didn't it? Could he really be *blamed* for wanting to keep his family safe and sound?

Smoothing his expression over when the last Bianco Angelo turned into white fog, it's arm reaching for the sky, Dante observed Nero as he reattached his sword to his back and made to return. The older hunter pushed off his car and opened the door to the passenger seat before plopping down on it, boot instantly propped up on the dashboard. He ignored the look he was receiving when Nero walked around his red corvette to drop into the driver's seat. Dante scrutinised his young friend as he started the engine, slowly turning the vehicle around before speeding towards their client to collect their fee. Was he imagining things or did the younger seem slightly... embarrassed? Some pieces fell into place inside of his head. *I see*, he mused to himself, *so he doesn't like it when I see him messing up, huh*. Well, if that was the case, maybe he could push his plans, however involuntarily he might have cooked them up in the first place, though. He realised that if Nero knew about his most recent thoughts, he'd probably find himself being hung up on a flagpole by his underwear *really* quickly.

The two of them soon arrived at their client, but Dante had no intention of leaving his somewhat comfortable position. He ignored the muttered "Lazy ass..." when Nero got out of the car to get their money and closed his eyes instead. That weird feeling was back, the one that had been coming and going ever since the younger part-demon had shown up in his office with the intention of staying. Despite his carefree attitude, he, too, was still getting used to this. Having someone to call family again, having a real business partner who wouldn't go gallivanting around the world any time soon- as much as he appreciated Trish and Lady, they were usually off doing their own thing, the former occasionally popping in and staying for a couple months before hearing about another interesting culture and joyfully skipping their way to learn more about them. She sure was curious about all things human for being the only full-blooded human in their little group. But then again, that probably was the very reason behind her thirst for knowledge.

Dante opened his eyes again when he heard the car door being opened again. He blinked when he saw a stack of bills being shoved into his face.

"Your half", Nero explained curtly as he was slamming the door on his own side shut again, causing the car to shake.

A slow smile tugged at his lips as the red-clad hunter let out a breath before shaking his head.

"Keep it. 's not like I did anything but look pretty."

He was given a surprised glance. The hand with the money stayed where it was, uncomfortably close to his face and scratching his stubble. He carefully pushed Nero's hand a few inches back.

"You serious? I told you, I'm not going to mooch-"

"I know you're not", Dante interrupted, ignoring the slowly forming glare Nero was regarding him with out of slightly squinted, dark blue eyes. "And I told you, you can make yourself useful. You have. You get paid. That's how this business works, kid."

Dante almost expected to hear more protests, but after a brief staring match, Nero pulled out his own wallet again and stuffed the bills inside, reuniting them with their brethren. The older hunter almost felt a pang of regret at his decision.

"Fine then...", Nero relented before starting the car again to return to his- their office again. *That* was also a thought he would need time to get used to. Especially since he seemed to plan on staying for a longer period of time.

They were already halfway back to the *Devil May Cry*, most of the trip spent in silence with Dante napping- aside from that one instance in which he'd been ripped out of his daze by some other guy nearly cutting them off and Nero offering a long stream of fairly colourful curses to said guy- when the younger part-demon spoke up, his voice neutral enough to make it clear that something was going on.

"I'm starving. Any places you can recommend?"

A grin nearly split Dante's face in half when he picked up on the implications and he took a moment to cherish them before answering the question.

"*Fredi's* has some really good stuff on the menu. It's on the way, too."

"Sure. You want me to pick something up for you as well?"

"Just tell him I want the usual. He'll know."

Dante watched as Nero nodded carefully, eyes still locked on the street even as he was drumming his fingers on the steering wheel. The older hunter settled back, figuring that missing out on a fight, but being treated to his favourite food was a good deal indeed. Yeah, it was all fairly new and strange for the both of them, but he was pretty sure they could work it out in the long run. And if he thought like this because one part of him *wanted* to believe in it, then... well. That was just the way it was.