



Ophelia Evander

"... I'm sorry, but I don't think I quite... Got it. Could you explain to me again?"

"So, to simplify it, your parents sold your soul to us. But, we're giving you a second chance."

"No, no, no. I understood my parents selling my soul. I'm fine with that. I have no regrets anyway. But what am I supposed to do? At least give me some explanation about my role. Please?"

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"So... You're telling me to help lost souls become satisfied with their lives before leaving? And... That's my job?"

"Yes. You'll be running a... Hotel of sorts."

"All... On my own?"

"Well, on the whole, yes."

"Okay... Anything else?"

"It'll also be a place for our kind to gather."

"So... I'll be running a hotel that will help the dead become satisfied and ascend, plus be a meeting space for other creatures."

"No, some of us might literally stay here like an actual hotel."

"Okay... Well, why do you need ascension?"

"Ophelia. Balance is very important for worlds to live in harmony. Your world is the world of the living."

"Yes?"

"We govern the world of the dead and the inbetween. That's the place we're currently in, by the way. The place between death and life. However, because souls in your world have regrets, they refuse to ascend and instead wander around in the world of the living. Therefore, the balance is slowly deteriorating. Of course, for most, they will eventually ascend. However, some regret so much they don't even want to ascend. Those souls will be the ones you help."

"Okay... Any... Regular patrons that are not souls I have to help ascend?"

"Oh, of course! There's me, for a start."

"Who are you...?"

"Haha, don't you already know who I am by just looking at me? A pleasure to make your acquaintance! I'm Azrael, an angel!"

Azrael has long white hair and blue eyes.

"Lucifer. Demon."

Lucifer also has long hair, longer than Azrael's, and red eyes. His hair is this black with glimmers of purple.

I nod, humming, when I suddenly feel a presence behind me.

"Ah, that's your last patron!"

"Kirin. I'm the leader of the undead."

"The... What?"

"Basically, he's the leader of everyone who lives here."

"...?"

Everyone here will either go to mine or Lucifer's realm eventually, but for those who have a close to equal ratio of good and bad tend to stay here and wait to be reincarnated and live another life with their memories wiped. This repeats until they qualify to go to one of the 2 other realms. Kirin is their leader and also your last patron."

"I see...."

Kirin has long hair around the same length as Lucifer, that has a white to orange gradient. He also has horns that look somewhat like a deer's and green eyes.

"Umm... After my souls go to a realm... Can they come down for a visit?"

"Oh, sure they can! Unless well... Reincarnation plus memory wipe happens. But until then, sure, why not? And if they go to any realm or mine or Lucifer's, of course they can visit anytime!"

"So... Ascension is essentially helping them move on to the land of the dead?"

"Yes. Essentially, help them let go from their attachment to the land of the living and accept the fact they are now dead. Most cases, they have unfinished business or feel unsatisfied with their life."

"Okay! I think I got it. So like... Am I dead or no?"

"Yes and no..."

"Excuse me?"

"Normally you would be dead, but uhh... We really didn't expect you'd be a literal 16 year old child. Even if your parents sold your soul, it's really quite unfair to end your life just like that. You had your whole life ahead of you. So, let me propose you a deal, is what we discussed. The only reason we resorted to buying souls was because no souls were going through ascension. So, if you can make 10 souls ascend, we'll let you go to the land of the living as if nothing ever happened. Oh, and time flows differently in each realm, so even if you spend months there, it'll just seem like a few hours passed in the realm of the living. So, what do you say?"

I nod. It's not like I had anything left to do though. I didn't think I'd die, but I always went with what I wanted to do. I would try it if I wanted. Of course, I didn't want to do anything really bad like skipping school. Heavens no. I was too scared for that. It was more things like walking around in the rain or eating raw cookie dough out of a bowl. In fact, I was saving a baby kitten on the road when I got hit by a car knowing I might die while doing so. Still, it's not like there's anything wrong with living for some more years.

"Wonderful. We'll send souls up to you if they still haven't ascended within a week after their death and funeral."

"Okay~!"

"... You certainly seem cheerful considering your parents sold your soul and left you to die."

"Did you offer them money?"

"Yes we did, but..."

"Then of course they would. We've been struggling a lot, so I understand. They were always saying I was so carefree it was worrisome. Besides, I can go back to the living eventually, right?"

"That is indeed true. Unless you want to stay here and keep helping souls ascend."

"... I don't think that'll happen, but anyway, I still have to help souls ascend, right? Give me my first client!"

"Alright then. We'll be on our way. Based on your first client's... State, it'd be best for him to meet as little people as possible."

"What do you mean, sta-"

And they're gone... I feel a presence near me and look down to see a man crouching down on the ground, rocking himself back and forth. Umm... Is he even sane...?! Okay. This is fine... Let's first figure out his name. I crouch down so I'm at eye level and give him a gentle smile, trying to seem as harmless as possible. He slowly looks up and makes eye contact with me.

"Hello. My name's Ophelia. Ophelia Evander, if you'd like the full name. You can call me Lia if you'd like. May I know what your name is?"

"... My name...? It's Raymond Alvis."

Oh, so he can talk. That's a relief.

"Raymond? I see. May I call you Ray?"

He nods shyly.

"Well... I don't really know whether you'll like this or not, but... You'll be staying with me for the time being. So, why don't we get to know each other a little better?"

Ray wipes his tears and nods. Hmm... He's actually so handsome all cleaned up.

"So... Ray... Would you first tell me your age- Actually, why don't you come in first?"

I gently extend my hand to him. He gingerly reaches out and takes it. I smile and lead him to a room.

"Okay! Now, would you first tell me your age please?"

"18."

18?! That's so young...

"I see... So you're 2 years older? That's great, it means we're of similar age! It's awkward to talk if there's a big age difference, you see. So... Is there anything you'd like to ask me, Ray?"

He goes silent. Ah... Perhaps...

"Ray, since you're older, do you want me to use formal speech? Even if we are of similar age, you're still my senior."

"N- No, no. Please don't. I like you talking to me casually... It feels like we're friends."

"Well... We are, right? I mean, I know it's only been like 5 minutes since we first met and all, but still. I think of you as a friend, although I don't know about you, haha."

"I... I want to be friends!"

"Really? I'm so glad~! I was really worried Ray might feel uncomfortable."