

Chapter 11

The Dawning of Destiny

It was dark and cold, like a fall thunderstorm had just dropped its weight in wind and rain on the indifferent ground below. The after-chill seemed like it would never go away, like it would never be warm again, nor would it ever be daylight again. All was silent, there were no people or animals to make any noise, not even the subdued wind made a sound. It was dark as though the sun had set for the night at twilight, making it was difficult to see in the dying light.

In this desolate land of twilight, Hisoka awoke on the ground. His face and hair were completely on the dusty, damp ground and when he sat up, his T-shirt and summer shorts were covered in semi-mud. Groggily, he took in his surroundings, not entirely sure why he was in this place nor how he had gotten there. Getting to his feet, he realized that he was alone. There were no houses, no roads, no trees, nothing. It was just him and nothing, left to wander an endless wasteland for eternity. From time to time there would be a patch of summer trees wilting in the cold temperature. Then he realized something: He knew this place. He had been here in his nightmares when the monstrous Akuma tried to hunt him down. But back then, he found a hidden power to fight Akuma and to break free of the dream that held him captive. This time there was neither threat nor any yet undiscovered power that could help free him from this place. He was alone and powerless.

But he had to try. "I can't just lie down and die," he thought. "I won't."

And so he set off walking, past countless boulders scattered here and there, past trees with their summer leaves shriveling in the cold air. For as far as he could see there were no houses, no path to follow. There was only Hisoka's inner compass that wouldn't let him quit. He would keep going, however long it took.

Several hours of this and Hisoka suddenly felt as though he was beginning to change his mind. Although there was little wind, it was still very cold. He had been dressed for typical hot, summer weather, not for this early winter landscape. Shivering, he rubbed his hands against his arms in an attempt to keep warm. How much longer could he keep on walking through this nothingness? Shock suddenly washed over him when the thought of *actually* lying down crossed his mind.

But before he could ponder giving up any further, something in the distance

caught his eye. It was just a tiny speck in the distance, more like a light of some sort. Whatever it was wasn't far away and yet it felt like it took forever to come closer. Whatever it was had been floating in midair about eyelevel; it was round and glowing like a mini blue star. The closer Hisoka came, the more detailed it became. First it was just a glowing blue light, and then it gained blotches of white across its surface, and then greens and browns speckled the blue areas as the white began to swirl like fluffy feathers across the globe. Then when Hisoka came close enough to touch the object he knew what it was.

He was looking at Earth, *his planet*.

And again shock tried to grip him and he fought to keep his feet. He remembered about the planet that he shaped with his own life energy all those billions of years ago, shaped it in the image of his mother's watery blue eyes, his own eyes once shared the same shade of blue. He remembered when early civilization began to prosper how a black, diseased monster appeared and tried to destroy his creation. It had been prophesized that a black beast would one day appear to usher in the end of the world, and when it finally did, people became desperate and prayed for salvation. That was when Aurien first became the fabled dragon in ancient myths, the Legend of the Golden Dragon. It was said that a gigantic, golden dragon fought and destroyed a black serpent that rose out of the water, saving the world.

The memories kept writhing in his head like fish out of water. So many vital memories of Aurien's life flooded through his brain, so much that he felt as though he would drown. But each time he felt as though he could take no more, a different kind of memory reached a hand down to save him. These were fun, playful memories. He was young, just learning how to fly with his small wings. No one could help teach him since he was the first born with wings. Although, there had apparently been rumors of another, but every time Aurien asked about it, people avoided answering. Many even ignored the fact that he said anything at all. So like the child that he was, he quickly lost interest and went running off another high hill to practice flying. In the end he managed to make friends with someone who knew how to fly and so forgot about the whole thing anyway.

But he remembered now. Had there been another, before him? Maybe he never would have asked this question if he hadn't been given this opportunity to review his past memories like watching a movie. He could remember the most ancient of memories while remaining objective with an adult mind. He saw things in his childhood that he couldn't have understood at the time but now understood completely. So many things took on an entirely new meaning.

He saw himself at maybe age 14 when Gedeon was introduced as his new brother. For roughly six years they had been close brothers and friends until the Arena Battle destroyed both of their lives. He saw himself hurled down from heaven by Gedeon's will, he saw Sydirna and a girl who looked like Kaori...? But before he could hold on to that thought, he saw something else: he watched his own death as his soul was ripped apart. And he could remember why.

It was his own fault that it happened. When Gedeon hurled him down upon the planet, he was still very much whole, until he met a young, human girl and fell in love with her. That was Sydirna. He lived in her village for several months before disowning his heritage by forcefully removing the part of his soul that contained his godly life-force. All he wanted was to live a peaceful life with Sydirna and eventually die, something he couldn't do if he remained a god. So he did it even without knowing how, he ripped his soul to shreds and allowed for chaos to awaken.

Like a bridge with a missing support beam, his soul began its downward spiral into pure chaos. There were times he remembered losing consciousness and awakening drenched in blood with bodies all around, yet he had no memory of how it happened. Eventually, the village realized his connection to the murderers and charged him for it. That was when...

Yes, that's right. Her name wasn't Kaori then, it was Youko. Youko was the one who had to perform the ritual to isolate and remove the demon within him...but he wasn't possessed. A mere exorcism wouldn't cure his ailments. So the wrong diagnosis led to the wrong cure, which finally shattered his devastated soul. The outcome: death.

Then other memories whipped at him, these were Hisoka's memories from an early age up until his death and rebirth. All of Hisoka's uneasiness, his fear and anxiety gripped his being and tried to drag him down.

He remembered being a little child trapped in a machine that was designed to gather energy from a host and convert it into useable electricity—somehow the people his father worked for found out that Hisoka was special and used him as a human battery in many experiments, a final one that took his father's life when he tried to free the child. That was why he had no father...he died to free him from his destiny.

And then he remembered his mother, how completely over protective she was; but at least now he understood why. There had always been someone after him. For Aurien it had been Gedeon, and for Hisoka it was the scientists and lastly Katakai. But unlike his father, his mother's death was completely without meaning. Katakai broke in to their home and slaughtered her simply because it would hurt Hisoka. Still, for all

those years, Hisoka's mother was able to protect him until Gedeon connected the dots and discovered who the "new" Auriel was.

With all of Auriel and Hisoka's memories mixing and melding into each other, he began to feel very confused. "What's left? Who am I?" he thought. He looked down at his hands and then back at the planet in front of him, his green eyes searching the clouds for answers.

But none were there. The sky grew gray with thick, grim clouds and the memories came more slowly until nearly stopping completely. A storm began to form, first in a very isolated region of the globe but it quickly spread from ocean to ocean. Lightning streaked in all directions, even some bolts reaching up through the clouds and singed his face. Then he felt a deep pain in his neck. He raised a hand to it and felt something hot and sticky-wet and he knew what it was. The last of Hisoka's memories to be restored was his end. He saw Akuma standing above him with a dagger, saw as the edge bit deep into his skin...

"This is how I died?" he thought, words unable to be formed because of the deep cut in his throat. He took his hand away from his neck and saw it stained with his deep-red blood. Then the storm on the planet grew even more violent. The entire sphere began to shake in the air, flashes of lightning the size of an atomic explosion...and then it happened. With a final white flash, the tiny planet exploded into tiny bits and pieces. Nothing of the mystical blue planet was recognizable as a half dozen larger pieces of the shattered sphere floated past his face.

But by that point the pain was too great to bear, the loss of blood and the loss of his beloved planet was more than he could withstand. He fell to his knees, the cold, damp ground soaking his skin as his blood flowed from the gash in his neck. With the last of his consciousness, he took one last look at the space above him, at the obliterated planet and cried.

"No," he thought. "This is how I die..."

Jerking awake as though from a sudden loud noise, Hisoka quickly sat up in bed, the fear and pain from his dream still very real in his mind and body. He again raised a hand to his neck. Some sort of bandage was tightly wrapped completely around his neck. It felt very smooth and new, maybe made out of leather. The slightest movement of his neck was excruciating. "I have to find out where I am, what happened," he thought.

And so he whipped the neatly tucked in bedding off of his legs and found that he had been dressed in what he first thought was black, exercise clothing—he also thought

of the black wetsuit that he wore going into the Dredge machine, but after closer examination it appeared to be some ultra thin, resilient armor. It was soft and light weight, stretching the entire length of his arms and legs. As he poked and even punched himself, he found that no impact could be felt at all.

“Excellent,” he thought. “So wherever I am, somebody’s trying to protect me at least. The question is: from what?”

Standing, he took a closer look at his surroundings. He was in a small yet very homey room with a bed, which rested only a few centimeters off the ground, in the center of the room. On one side of the bed was a burgundy, cushioned chair with a few items on it and on the other was a full dresser table with a large, overly decorated mirror complete with sparkling stones and jewels. He took this opportunity to look at his injured neck in the mirror and instead stood staring at his own reflection.

He hardly recognized himself. It wasn’t because he had more injuries besides his neck, in fact he had none besides that one. It was as though someone had given him a crazy haircut during the night. His hair had always been pretty long in the back and often fell into his eyes, but now it was shorter, just barely touching his shoulders in the back—and it was spiky, sticking out here and there like little, fluffy feathers. Besides his hair was his skin tone. He was usually pretty fair skinned but now it seemed as though he had spent a couple days at the beach. He wasn’t black by any means, but still a very nice tan color. And his eyes, although Aurien had blue eyes, he still had Hisoka’s emerald green eyes that seemed to shine gold in the light of the room. Lastly, he examined the bindings around his neck. It appeared to be made of the same material as the protective body suit that he wore. He felt the band with his hands all the way to the back where it seemed to attach, but before he could try to remove it, he heard a voice from the other room.

“Don’t call me out here again, do you hear? I don’t care who’s dying next time; I won’t ever make another house call.”

“I understand, Tyr. I can’t thank you enough,” said another out of view, followed by the sound of a door closing.

Hisoka’s attention turned from himself to what lie beyond the wooden door on the other side of the room. Curiosity crawling on his skin, he turned from the dresser, stepping close to the door, and placed a warm hand to the cool, silver handle. The door opened with almost no effort and no sound.

Opening out into what seemed to be the only other room in a very small house, Hisoka saw one man facing the door that, he imagined, another had just exited. To Hisoka’s right was a small sofa where a very dog-ish man sat stroking a beautiful wolf

at his feet. Next to the dog-man was a girl with green hair. That was Youko. ...Youko? Wait, no, that was Kaori. Where did that name come from? That's right. The girl from Auriel's past, when Gedeon flung him down to the earth. *That* was Youko. *This* is Kaori. But she looked exactly the same. Why? Hisoka tried to speak but the same pain that he had felt in the dream came back and he coughed harshly, startling the others in the room to his presence.

"Hisoka?" Kaori said, her eyes spewing concern as she leapt at him. "You shouldn't be out of bed yet! You just miraculously came back from the dead...twice!"

A very scruffy man next to her frowned. "I'm sure he doesn't like you all sappy in his face like that..."

The man nearest the door turned around and looked upon Hisoka. His skin was very dark brown with odd tattoos up and down his arms, his eyes were a bright yellow. He stepped nearer and said, "Hisoka. You're awake sooner than we expected."

Hisoka, with a hand on the band around his neck, frowned at everyone before him. He took another uneasy breath and tried to speak again. "Who... who am I? What happened to me?"

The dark figure before him smiled sadly. "You are my brother, and yet you are not."

"Wait," Hisoka said in a suddenly very clear voice. "I remember. When I was little, I couldn't fly well. I was the only one of us with wings so no one could teach me. So one day I met someone who said he knew how to fly... Was that you?"

"I didn't always look like this," he said, referring to his demonic curse and ripped wings on his back. "When I saw you, I had some very powerful medicine to hide this cursed form and protect you from possible infection. Sadly though, the medicine is no longer totally effective."

"I told you not to do it!" cried Chibiru.

The gruff dog-man sat up suddenly. "You mean, we're all infected!? Why didn't you warn us before?"

"Shut up," Kaori said and slapped the man back against the sofa. "We're perfectly safe here thanks to a little trick that I know." She smiled her trademark 'I'm Awesome' smile.

"It's alright. This curse isn't easily transmitted. That's why you have that bandage around your neck, just in case." Hisoka again touched the band around his neck as Marix continued. "Do you remember anything after you died?"

Normally it would have been a preposterous question to ask, but for gods, perhaps it was valid. Hisoka painfully shook his head and said, "No, I don't remember

anything except for a dream that I had just before I woke up here.”

“You don’t know how you came to be here? Or what happened in the meantime?”

“No, I don’t,” Hisoka said, getting a little frightened. “Why? What is it?”

Marix shook his head. “No, it’s nothing. Just when Gedeon tried to reforge your soul and claim its power as his own, he lost control. Your soul energy reformed into a black demon version of your dragon and tried to destroy the planet.”

“So that’s the reason for my dream?” Hisoka thought, looking utterly defeated. ‘I tried to destroy the planet I created myself?’

“No, no, don’t worry. It wasn’t you, just your energy.”

Not believing, Hisoka frowned. “There’s a difference?”

“Yes, there is a huge difference,” Marix said, grabbing Hisoka by the shoulders and guiding him to sit down in another sofa on the left side of the room. “Now listen, when the Chaos Dragon was off wreaking havoc across the globe, you somehow came back to life all on your own.”

Hisoka’s face wrinkled even more. “What? How is that even possible? I died, didn’t I?”

Finally taking a seat next to the dog-man, Kaori answered, “Yes, I was there as you took your last breath, Hisoka.” Her eyes seemed glassily distant as she recounted the moment. “It was horrible.”

Very confused, Hisoka spoke again, “Then you weren’t kidding when you said I came back from the dead...”

“No,” she said. “It wasn’t a joke. What happened after, though, was the first miracle I had ever seen. One moment you lie dead on that laboratory table, the next you were standing next to me, telling me to stay behind and safe. But you looked completely different. You were golden. Everything about you was radiating this intense golden light; it almost hurt my eyes to look at you. Most shocking of all was your hair—it totally looked like you went on a trip to the salon.”

“Yeah, that just freaked me out a minute ago, too,” Hisoka grinned. “Then what happened?”

Kaori bowed out to let Marix continue the story. “We saw you fight and destroy the dragon without a single weapon besides the pure light that was inside of you. With the dragon’s body destroyed, you gathered the fragmented pieces of your soul into yourself and from that moment on obtained new life. Although, it was a bit touch-and-go for a while.

“Apparently, while you were in your hyper-gold form, all your wounds were

healed; you seemed invincible. But as your strength waned, your body reverted back to its previous state. The wound on your neck opened again and we couldn't stop the bleeding. I did the only thing I could think of to help buy you time."

Chibiru cried angrily, "I told you not to—again!!"

"What did you do?" Hisoka felt as though it was something he really didn't want to hear.

Reluctantly, Marix answered, "I used my magic to help slow the bleeding long enough to get you here and get someone to help you."

"But he was forbidden from ever using white magic!" Chibiru sobbed. "Because it was his favorite. She said that if he was to ever use it again, she would make the curse permanent and infect the one he—"

"I made the decision to accept my destiny," Marix said, looking firmly yet gently at Chibiru. "He's the one who must fulfill the rest."

There it was again, that one word that had been hunting him for centuries, maybe even longer: destiny. Would it ever leave him alone? Was there a way to get it to go away—?

While Hisoka's brain swarmed with large ideas, he suddenly felt something hot, almost beginning to burn, on his back. It felt as though his whole body was breaking in half. The pain grew so great that his mind went blank, he lost sight of everyone and everything in the room. He fell to the floor, shouting in agony, as two large, golden wings burst out of his skin and protective suit on his back that nearly filled the small room.

With all the time that has passed, with all the loss, the pain, the sorrow, how can he stand and continue his way down the path toward his destiny? It's a dark path littered with danger, despair, possibly even death; that is why he must tread softly, carefully planting each step ahead of the other, for one misplaced step could lead to disaster. However, if he chooses to ignore his destiny and let it simply wash over him, thus such a future can also come to be. However, inaction may cause the same destruction as though caused by his own hands.

There is but one choice, one final outcome.

Memories are like thorns ever so gently pressed against the skin. They are only painful when recalled, and when they are, the pain is so sharp, so acute, that everything else fades away into oblivion. Nothing exists but that seemingly endless pain.

But somehow, dazzling stars from heaven began to fall, gently floating in the dusty air until they rested on the listless ground below. Of course, they were not real stars, but rather the fluttering feathers of a god.

Hisoka lie on the ground in a heap of pain, both real and remembered, the scattered feathers from his newly formed wings casting a circle of gold all about him. He was completely unaware of his surroundings, those watching in awe, or his own outspread wings searching for escape as they thrashed against the binds of the small shack that imprisoned them. He was unaware of the hand on his shoulder that guided him to his feet and somehow lead him outside and into a dismal world illuminated only by the stream of stars and magical lights in the sky and the god's own blazing wings of light.

It was Marix that lead him from the tiny house out into the open. Hopefully the fresh air would help bring him back to his senses, to the reality of what had just happened. It's not every day that a god reborn to his former glory and power.

Hisoka felt the hand that led him from the house leave from his shoulder and the sudden disappearance of its heat made him search for it uneasily. Standing with his angelic golden wings stretched high above his head, Hisoka turned his head toward where his cursed brother stood protectively beside him.

"Welcome back, Aurien," he said simply with a smile, a comment that made Hisoka frown and turn away.

"That's not me anymore."

"Then who are you? Can you tell me?"

Hisoka didn't answer, he just continued to look out across the black plains of Marix's in-between world.

"If you can't tell me, then let me remind you what's at stake. I didn't want to say this in front of all of them but, everyone in that little house are at risk," Marix said, gesturing to the little shack behind them. "And most of all, every one of them." This time Marix raised an arm and pointed to something in the sky straight ahead and slightly to the right of where they stood. He pointed to a bright blue light in the center of a sea of darkness, greatly separated from the other glistening lights of heaven.

Hisoka followed his glance and saw the steady blue light hanging in the black swirl of space. That was his home, where he was born and also where he died. That one single light meant more to him than anything he could ever imagine. And that light was in danger of getting swallowed by demons lingering in the surrounding darkness. Although, even as he fondly caressed the world in his mind, an unknowing tear streaked down his face as a name escaped his lips.

“Sakura.”

Amazed, Marix stood staring in wonder at his brother. After all that he’s gone through, after losing and finally regaining his former life, he still knows the life of Hisoka the best. Maybe what he said was true. Maybe the life of Aurien has passed on rather than that of Hisoka. Simply amazing.

“They are planning something big, Hisoka,” Marix said, reverting back to Aurien’s human name. “I can’t tell for certain what is going on from my vantage point here, but whatever it is, it’s not good.”

Hisoka listened as his locked gaze on the light in the sky fell to the ground in painful thought. “I’m sorry, Marix. You can never go back, can you?”

Marix smiled. “It was my decision.” He clasped a hand on Hisoka’s shoulder. “And it was the right one. Don’t worry about me; I’ll be fine.” Taking a few steps away, Marix faced Hisoka, his face twisting in a dismal frown. “More importantly, we need to figure out what to do about our little brother.”

“Gedeon,” Hisoka said softly, his mind still a jumbled mix of memories. “I think he’s lost it.”

“That was my thought as well. Hisoka, you know he isn’t like the rest of us.”

“I know. He never should have been taken like that...”

The young boy Chryarnth, abused and tortured to death by his own human father, came under the holy goddess’ wing, whisked up from the world between life and death and merged with godly energy to create a new demigod. That was Gedeon; neither human nor god but rather a crude mix of the two.

“It’s unnatural for gods to be born in such a violent manner. But it could explain his erratic behavior...and desire to kill you.”

“His anger is horribly off mark. Why can’t he see that?” Hisoka said, shaking his head in disgust.

Marix could only shrug his shoulders. “Maybe he can’t.”

Hisoka thought for a moment. It was possible. While his own soul was fragmented, each Aura Soul began emitting different personalities, existing solely on its own. Maybe that was the way with Gedeon, too. If his human soul was forcibly mixed with too much mystic energy, his heart soul—his true being—could have drowned in the storm, buried deep beneath layers of memories, hatred and pain. Every new deposit would bury the original soul more and more, leading way to inevitable chaos.

“Maybe,” Hisoka agreed, thoughtfully nodding. “Then we’ll have to get to him before he’s completely lost. Maybe he can still remember.” Hisoka looked

down at his left arm as he gently touched the ancient scars from the Arena battle with Gedeon.

Nodding, Marix said, "Good, then you know what your next move should be." The he sighed deeply, his eyes turning sorrowful. "Look, I know you've just come back to us, and you must be feeling so many things right now, but we need you; everyone does. I don't know what might happen if..."

"It's okay. You've been holding things together from afar for so long. It's about time I take over, don't you think?" Hisoka said, smiling. "Besides, I could really use some exercise. It's been so long since I could do this." And without as much as a look behind, Hisoka took a slight jump off the ground as his majestic golden wings pounded against the dry air, pushing him higher and higher into the eternal starry sky. It was just like in his dreams as a human, how he could feel the rush of air against his face, how it tossed his hair all about, how his stomach tickled with pleasure as he dove low to the ground only to playfully "walk" across the land while still in midair before dashing off into the sky again.

The joy of being alive is a beautiful thing, Marix thought as he watched Hisoka flutter here and there tirelessly. "If only this moment could never end."

And it would end all too soon.