

About Him...

Von Khaosprinz

"Can I ask you something?"

Nero, lounging on the couch in the office area of the Devil May Cry with a long forgotten book on his lap, finally decided to voice the question that had been burning on the tip of his tongue for the past twenty minutes, ever since Lady had left again after a throw-away comment on that one time Dante had apparently borrowed her customised rocket launcher Kalina Ann during the conflict with his brother.

He watched Dante carefully as he threw the younger part-demon a look, the phone clamped between his ear and his shoulder.

"One sec, kid- yes, yes, I can pay. Shut up, Fredi. Alright, later", he ended the call with his favourite restaurant and slid the receiver down his shoulder and arm until it landed perfectly on the stand. He turned turned around to face his younger relative, the ever-present grin on his lips making space for a hint of confusion as he caught Nero's thoughtful and slightly hesitant look.

"Why the formality? But sure, shoot away."

Nero waited as Dante shifted, leaning against the desk behind him and crossing his arms in front of his chest. He could still see slight puzzlement in the other's grey eyes as he waited for the younger, who was biting his tongue in doubt, to spill. After a few more seconds of silence, Nero finally opened his mouth.

"I... want to know about your brother."

There, he'd said it. Finally, after months of feeling his curiosity rising whenever he caught Dante looking at the photograph of his mother or catching a glimpse of the golden counterpart to the amulet the older hunter was always wearing. Despite their agreement on not digging any deeper than necessary concerning their blood relation, Nero couldn't help but wonder about Yamato's former owner. He knew nothing about that man except for his name- Vergil. And even though this was an area he had no desire to delve too deeply into, he almost desperately wanted to know more about him.

Slightly wary, Nero watched as Dante's face turned entirely neutral. He knew this

seemed to be an uncomfortable topic for his older friend, but... His thoughts were stopped short when he heard the other hunter heave a deep sigh. Dragging his hand through his white hair, Dante threw the younger a wry grin.

"I s'pose I should've known this would come sooner or later..." Another sigh left his lips before he nodded once, the movement slow as he seemed to be looking straight through Nero. "Okay. There isn't much to tell, though."

Nero felt a strange sense of relief flowing through him and his tense posture relaxed a little. After marking the page of the book he'd stopped at, he closed it and laid it down on the couch next to him, trying to figure out where to start.

"His name was Vergil, right? Was he older or younger than you?"

To his surprise, Dante let out a brief chuckle that sounded only semi-humorous. "If you asked him when we were kids, he'd have proudly told you he was older. Which was true, but only by a few minutes."

Nero's eyebrows shot up. "You were twins?" Maybe he should've paid attention during the sermons in Fortuna sometimes. Or, well... ever. Dante nodded.

"Few knew, but yeah. Mum and Dad didn't exactly parade us around, obviously. A bunch of guys were still after my old man, so we lived rather secluded on the outskirts of town. I don't remember him all that well, he disappeared when I- or, well, we- were five or so."

Although this had nothing to do with his initial question, Nero couldn't keep it from coming out of his mouth. "Do you know why?"

Dante shrugged. "Not for sure. But I guess he wanted to keep the guys after him off our trail. Dunno what happened to him afterwards, though I guess he died at some point. I don't really care, either."

Nero leaned back into the couch, his fumbling with the scales on his right arm betraying his nervousness. Of course, he was familiar with that part about Sparda-how could he not be? So he decided to ask a little more about the person he was actually interested in.

"Your- Vergil, what was he like?"

He watched as Dante placed both of his palms on the face of the desk behind him and stared up at the ceiling, a far-away look in his greyish-blue eyes as he remembered a past from over thirty years ago.

"Before my old man disappeared... We were pretty similar back then, I guess. Close, too. We both admired our father- he was strong, he gave us our swords, he trained us... But he was always calmer and more collected than I was. I started all kinds of trouble, but he would always join in with a little bit of coaxing. When we were busted, he usually managed to sweet-talk us out of the consequences. I'm still not sure how,

but he somehow got us out of getting punished after we nearly burnt down an entire forest.”

Somehow, Nero had absolutely no issues imagining that. He felt a grin creeping upon his lips which was mirrored by the other, albeit it seemed slightly wistful.

“After Dad disappeared, he changed for the first time, though. I think he figured it was his job to take care of Mum and me now, as the man of the family- hah”, a rueful chuckle escaped Dante's throat. “He was either training or getting on my case for not training enough. Said he couldn't look after the both of us yet, so I had to help protect Mum. We just kept going like that for a few years, him regularly dragging my sorry ass outside so we could bonk each other over the head with our swords. Mum nearly had a heart attack when we came home after our first real spar- we were both full of blood and could barely stand. She thought we'd been attacked. Not even Vergil managed to get us out of that. We had to promise we'd be more careful from then on and I think that's... what caused us to drift apart initially. He started retreating, training by himself rather than with me. I tried roping him into my usual shenanigans, but he would refuse and said that I should grow up already.”

Nero listened quietly, trying to paint a picture of that man in his head. The face was easy, of course, as was stature. But what would he look like if Vergil was here now? Would he wear his hair like Dante, clad in red with a stubble? Somehow, the young hunter doubted that. Another image formed in his mind, one that seemed oddly familiar although he was sure he'd never met the man. Messy, combed back hair. The coat he was wearing- like everyone related to Sparda apparently did- was blue instead of red. The bright eyes were cool and calculating instead of good-natured and friendly, but they still shared the same gentleness hidden beneath the rough exterior. Nero furrowed his brows. Something was ringing in the back of his head. What was it? Dante's voice snapped him back to attention before he could figure it out.

“We got these-”, Dante pulled the amulet he was always wearing out from where it was hidden underneath his clothes, the red gemstone glinting in the light. “For our eighth birthday. Mum said they belonged to our old man and that he wanted us to have them before he disappeared. I think she always thought he would come back, some day... Anyway, we drifted even further apart and started to become our own people. I'm not entirely sure why it happened like that, but I wasn't opposed- as much as I loved him back then, being constantly told to be more like your brother sucks. Then the demons came.”

He observed the older hunter as he regarded the amulet slowly spinning in his hand thoughtfully. Dante took a moment to continue his tale, but Nero wasn't sure why. If he didn't know any better, he'd say the other needed a moment to recollect the memories. He still gave him all the time he needed, though, and a short while later, Dante gave him another wry grin as he stuffed the keepsake back underneath his clothes.

“Vergil was out training by himself when they attacked. Mum told me to hide and so I did. I barely remember what happened, just that our house was burning and when the noises finally died down, Mum was dead and Vergil nowhere to be seen. I searched for

him, but found nothing. Thought he was dead, too." Dante shrugged and stretched his arms, his shoulder joints noisily popping back into place before he sat on his desk. Nero started playing with the scales of his Devil Bringer again, somehow uncomfortable with having made Dante talk about his brother.

"Turned out he wasn't, obviously. Didn't figure it out until much later, but he was actually in this city for quite a while before he made me confront him. Thought I'd seen him when some new demons were appearing, but I only knew for sure when he opened a gateway to the demon world around here a year later when we were 19. Didn't really care at first, until he sent Lady's father to invite me to his idea of a reunion party."

"Lady's father?" That was a new one. Nero had only ever heard that she didn't like thinking and much less talking about him, but he'd never dared to ask why. Dante nodded before rubbing the back of his head.

"Yeah. Don't tell her I told you, she'll gut me- but her old man was helping Vergil with opening the gate to the underworld. I never understood why Vergil decided to work with him- that guy was one of the few where I was glad that he dabbled a little too much with demonic powers so that I could gleefully rip him a new one-" Nero shifted uncomfortably, his deep blue eyes flickering to Blue Rose on the cupboard next to the stairs. He felt Dante's eyes on him as the older picked up again, furrowed brows taking a moment to smooth over again. "But anyway. So yeah, when I met Vergil again... He was really different. I knew from the moment he sent that weirdo through my doors to get my amulet- the Vergil I grew up with wouldn't have taken that away from me, however different we may have become. But after Mum's death- I don't know what he was doing until then, aside from starting to hunger for our old man's power. It's why he wanted to open the gate in the first place and he needed my amulet for that. Both amulets plus Dad's old sword were the key, as well as some other stuff like his blood. Well, we met again, he kicked my ass and stabbed me with Rebellion-"

"That's almost some kind of hobby of yours, isn't it?" He was ignored. Nero wanted to sulk. Not like he's never been impaled by his own sword before.

"- but that also awakened my Devil Trigger-"

"That seems to be a family thing, too." Nero sulked even as he kept listening.

"Hell if I know whether he did that on purpose or not. I hated him at the time for trying to become a full demon, like the father that left us and Mum alone when half the demon world was after us. Kept going on about how he needed more power and that you couldn't protect anything without-"

The bells in Nero's head returned and he briefly spaced out as he was trying to remember something.

"- but even today I'm not sure what his motivation was, whether he was making fun of my choice to side with the humans or whether he felt bad for letting Mum die... I

guess we'll never know, either."

The alarm in his mind was still ringing, even as he nodded slowly, letting the words sink in for a moment. Then he spoke up again.

"And how did that turn out?"

Dante's gaze shifted towards his right hand. Nero watched, slightly puzzled, as the older man stared intently at his palm before answering his inquiry.

"In short- Lady's father betrayed him, opened the gate and took our old man's power for himself. He couldn't control it, though, so Vergil and I teamed up and beat it out of him again- from what I've heard, Lady offed him when he returned to the human world. But Vergil... was still set on obtaining the legendary power of the legendary Sparda. I need more power!", he quoted, raising his hand and clenching his fist slowly in front of his face before dropping it back into his lap.

Nero's mouth suddenly turned dry. He remembered why that Vergil sounded so familiar- that was the man he'd seen in his head or in limbo back in Fortuna, in Agnus' lab as he was dying. The man in blue, asking him what he wanted and saying "Power" when the hunter directed the question right back at him. What the hell's that supposed to mean? He mentally slapped himself to return to the present where he caught Dante rubbing, almost gently, the very palm he'd been staring at, even if his face looked as nonchalant as ever. Nero knew his older friend well enough by now to know better.

"In the end, he lost and ended up in the demon world when the gate closed again. I managed to escape with Dad's sword and my amulet, he kept his own."

Dante shrugged again and stayed mute afterwards. Nero looked at him intently. He doubted it went down as simply as the red-clad hunter tried to make it look- his entire demeanour contradicted that. He struggled with himself, not sure whether he should probe any further when Dante himself seemed to plan on keeping his story superficial.

They were briefly interrupted by a knock at the door which had Dante almost reaching for Ebony on his desk. Nero shot him another look, slightly concerned, even as he stood and headed to the entrance to their office. Just as he'd suspected, he was staring into the familiar face of Fredi's delivery boy who's slightly annoyed expression was flooded with relief as he realised it was Nero standing in front of him and not Dante. Which took an almost embarrassing amount of time, considering Nero was wearing neither coat nor hoodie, just his sleeveless tank, meaning his very distinct Devil Bringer was on full display.

Nero threw him a deadpan look even as he grabbed his wallet from the back pocket of his jeans. Taking some bills and dropping them into an outstretched hand, the young hunter took the two boxes as well as a pair of cans and shooed the delivery boy- who was technically older than him, but well- away before kicking the door shut. He threw one of the Italian treats and a soda into Dante's direction before returning to his spot

on the couch with the other box in his hand. As soon as he was seated, he caught Dante staring at him, his own box still sealed in his hands and not already on the way to the abyss.

"What?", Nero grumbled, already knowing why the other was staring like that and not being particularly happy with that.

"You- nothing, it's cool", Dante quickly retreated, figuring he didn't need to spell it out. Nero threw him a half-hearted glare- yeah, he knew he'd just paid Dante's debts at Fredi's off with his own money, so what? He'd just wanted to, a whim of the moment he was probably going to regret tomorrow at the latest, but whatever.

They begun eating in silence, but it took only a few seconds until Nero found himself wanting to hear more. He fumbled with his demonic arm again- which, of course, didn't escape Dante, either. Greyish-blue eyes met his own and the older hunter grinned again, the motion wry but also admitting defeat as he bit into another slice of pizza.

"Just ask. If you knowing wasn't fine by me, I wouldn't have said anything to begin with."

Slightly embarrassed, Nero scratched at his cheek and avoided the older hunter's gaze for a moment. He was still a little confused about the fact that he'd apparently seen Vergil, or some sort of apparition or whatever, during his brief touch with death, but Dante was right. He had started this entire conversation and was obviously being indulged. No need to be shy now.

"... The Dante I know wouldn't have just left him behind, being at odds or not. You said so yourself- family is family." It felt so weird to be saying that indirectly about himself, too. "He stayed because he wanted to, right?"

Dante's grin turned slightly appreciative, but it was still a little tight.

"Haaa", he breathed out, leaning backwards on his hand again and tilting his head upwards to look at the dirty ceiling. "You're right about that. Despite all, he was still my brother- my twin. Tried to reach for him, but he wouldn't let me- bastard nearly cut my fingers off to make his point."

Nero could almost feel the light bulb lighting up above his head. That cut-up glove Dante still kept in the same drawer as the golden amulet- he'd said he'd worn it around the time he was Nero's age. That must mean that was the one he had been wearing during the confrontation with his brother. The young hunter felt something he couldn't name rising inside of him as he silently kept listening while munching on another mouthful of pizza.

"Told me to get out while I still could, he'd stay where our old man used to live. That was the last time I saw him while he was still himself."

Pondering about the latest statement, Nero quietly opened his can of soda and took a

sip. Obviously, this story wasn't entirely over- none of this explained how Dante got his hands on his brother's amulet or how Yamato could have ended up in the Order's hands. This encounter definitely sounded as if Vergil had taken both of them with him into hell. He hesitated again, slowly swivelling the can in his Devil Bringer so he could hear the liquid inside sloshing about. After downing another mouthful, he placed the can on the ancient table in front of him.

"That's not the end, though. You met again- that's when you got his amulet and that's how Yamato broke, right?"

Dante threw him a glance as he emptied his own can of soda before crushing it in his hand and dropping it onto his desk. He sighed and gave him a rueful smile.

"Of course it isn't", he concurred in a drawn-out breath before he grinned. "You're really not planning on letting me off the hook now, huh?"

Nero raised his hands and shook his head. "As curious as I am- if you don't want to tell me then don't. I'm not going to beat it out of you, you know."

"Nah, it's fine. It's just that I've never told anyone about this- Patty doesn't even know I had a brother, Trish... heard somewhere else and Lady knew better than to ask. But I admit, you've got a bigger reason to ask than she ever had. You remember when I told you about that bigshot Mundus, when I sealed him on Mallet Island where I met Trish?"

Nodding, Nero put the now empty box aside and leaned back on the couch again, soda in hand, Devil Bringer along the backrest, legs crossed. Neither Dante nor Trish had revealed all that many details, but he knew that she had been created by this Mundus-fellow in order to lure Dante into a trap. Which did not quite end as the so-called Prince of Darkness had envisioned, but alas- that's what they did.

"I have no idea why- I guess Vergil thought this was another thing our father did and he, therefore, had to do, too- the guy always was too obsessed with following our old man's footsteps- but at some point between our confrontation and Mallet Island eight years ago, Mundus captured and enslaved him. Made him stronger, took his will, gave him a new name and sent him to fight me." Dante rubbed at his face as he stared in front of him into nothingness. "I killed him without knowing. Only found out when his armour cracked when he died and nothing but his amulet remained. I don't know how the whackjobs in Fortuna got their hands on his sword, but I suppose his death is what caused it to break. But anyway- to be honest, I could've done with just never seeing him again if we had to be on different sides. But he chose his and I chose mine. But I do wonder sometimes...", Dante trailed off, musing to himself for a few seconds until he continued.

"You know, he actually almost got me on Mallet Island", he explained and Nero's eyebrows shot up once again. "Or rather, Nero Angelo- the name Mundus gave him-" Well that's an awkward coincidence. "- did. Call me a sap or whatever, but... He had me pinned to the wall and probably the biggest chance anyone ever had at putting me out of my misery, but he retreated when this-" Dante tapped his chest where Nero

knew the amulet was lying, “-fell out of my coat. So... yeah. I wonder if there actually was a little bit of him left in there after all. But it's not like it matters now, he's dead anyway.”

After a few seconds of silence, Dante slid off his desk and back onto his feet before he clapped his hands twice.

“But that's it! That's all I can tell you about Vergil. Wasn't a lot after all, huh?”

Nero shook his head, a strange lump forming in his throat. “No, no, it's... Enough. Thanks, I guess.”

Dante merely waved him off even as he made for the stairs. “Nah, it's cool. I think I always figured you'd have the right to know- you're related to him as well, after all. And I guess I also thought it wasn't fair to be the one keeping everything a secret while sticking my nose into your business.”

Even if he'd wanted to, Nero couldn't deny that. Despite Dante's carefree attitude, he could be surprisingly obnoxious if he finally decided there was something he wanted to know about. He'd been on the receiving end of that more often than he cared to remember. So instead, he merely nodded before Dante headed upstairs with one final wave, leaving the phone and the office in his care.

Nero stayed like he was for a while before he ultimately kicked his legs up on the couch and laid down, hands crossed beneath his head. Dante's entire view on family made sense on a whole new level now- unlike Nero himself, who'd never had a loving family aside from Kyrie's parents that had always been kind to him, but they weren't actually related, the older hunter had had a family and lost everyone thanks to circumstances way outside of his reach. With a small grimace that wasn't entirely heartfelt, the young man realised that Dante's reluctance in letting him go on his own was probably also tied into that- even if it had gotten better. The thought caused a small, strangely fluttering emotion in his chest and he couldn't help when his mouth curled into a small, sincere smile.

He knew he was neither Vergil nor anything like him- at least, hopefully he wasn't- but he couldn't deny that Dante held him in a special place. As incredibly awkward as that made him feel merely thinking about it, it also served to validate his own perception concerning his decision to have left Fortuna back then. He hadn't just hoped for family, he'd actually found it- and at the same time, given someone else who had been just as alone as he had been a second chance at one, too.

When the phone suddenly rang, Nero was ripped out of his musings. Throwing his legs off the couch and rising to his feet, he walked over to the desk before he kicked it hard from two feet away, causing the receiver to jump into his hand as he grabbed Blue Rose and attached her to his thigh.

“Devil May Cry.”

He listened quietly to the panicked woman on the other end of the line. It didn't

sound bad to him- just a nest of some small suckers trying to wreak havoc by eating the resident goats in a small village an hour or two away. After assuring the woman that he'd come right away, he dropped the receiver back onto the stand and headed upstairs to his own bedroom to throw some more clothes on as well as grabbing Red Queen. When the young hunter was geared up and ready, he knocked once on Dante's door before raising his voice.

"New mission. Nothing big, just a couple Msiras eating the local cattle", he shouted through the old and heavy wood, "I'll be back in a few hours."

Instead of an answer, Nero heard shuffling from the other side of the door and was already back on his way downstairs when he could hear it being opened. The younger part-devil threw a look back over his shoulder and found Dante heading his way, armed and ready. He raised his eyebrows.

"I can take care of it."

"I'm not doubting that, but I could use the change of scenery."

Nero was about to open his mouth to protest when a thought occurred to him- and instead of telling Dante to shove it, he merely shrugged and turned back to the stairs.

"You're driving", he declared over his shoulder as he jumped over the railing, halfway down the stairs, and landed heavily on the creaking floorboards. Grabbing the keys from the desk, he threw them over to Dante who caught them with his left hand, an easy grin on his face, and they both headed to the large double-doors leading to the world outside.

"As you wish, milady."

Nero smirked when he heard Dante's indignant squawk from behind the wood where he had nearly- albeit entirely accidentally, of course- slammed it right into his grinning face, the exterior of the building still shaking a little from the impact.