

# Seven Months of Hell

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## Kapitel 1:

Dante was tired of fighting, something he had never, *ever* thought possible. Here he was now, though, deep in literal hell and fighting was all he did- could do. He didn't know for how long he had been here now, fighting, wandering and more fighting. *Ivory* was all he had left at this point. The motorcycle he had come here with long since abandoned when it had been necessary for him to make a quick escape that hadn't left him any time to start it up. His beloved sword *Rebellion*, the keepsake of his father, had been knocked out of his hand and there had been simply too many enemies to even take the second to call it. He hadn't even realised they were pushing him away from the place where he had been fighting them, only noticing the unknown environment when the last demon had fallen, and at that point he was too far away for *Rebellion* to heed his call. He had gone searching for it, flicking his wrist every other time in hopes of hearing the familiar noise of it wheezing through the air on its return to him, but it was all in vain. Too soon the next wave, army of demons had found him and forced him to abandon his effort. *Ebony* had been lost during a huge explosion that had caught him off guard, knocking him through the air and his precious gun away from him. He watched in horror as it fell down a cliff, causing flickers of a memory from over twenty years ago to pass through his mind.

Clutching *Ivory* tightly in his hands, Dante heaved a breath. He was tired, so very tired. This wasn't at all what he had expected when he had decided to enter the deepest pits of hell. He thought he had seen it all, and he took a moment to curse at the overbearing arrogance he just couldn't let go of. All because he had been careless, overconfident, and his family had paid the price. He could still see the scene unfolding in front of his inner eye- Him, Nero, Trish and Lady fighting. He was mocking their enemy, they all were because they had grown too confident over the years. In his carelessness, he had been hurt, which had first surprised him, then awakened his anger. He had triggered, but it had felt different from usual. He had barely been in control of his movements, demonic instincts having taken over, and the next thing he remembered clearly was finding himself alone surrounded by a mountainside of dead demons. No sight of any of his friends. Horror had crept through him and tried to overwhelm him, but he had forced it down and the gears in his head only took seconds to launch into all the action they could offer. For weeks, *months* he had been trying to find them, setting everything into action and recalling every favour he was owed in order to learn their whereabouts. But nothing, *nothing*.

And that's when he had been called by the clan of the *Vie de Marli*. His first instinct

was to refuse, he didn't have time to waste on some faraway island. He kept telling himself there was still a chance to find them alive and well, and he clung to it with every fibre of his being, no matter how this hated part of his head told him that they were gone for three months now. That the chance of finding them still alive and kicking had dwindled to almost nothing as time passed.

But then he had heard the name of the demon that this crazy business man wanted to summon- Argosax. He still remembered the stories about him, how he dwelled in one of the deepest parts of hell, and Dante had made his decision. If he couldn't find them in the human world, they must have been taken to hell, and he would turn it upside down in his search for them. He would keep on searching until he had either found them or the dreaded confirmation of their demise. Lady worried him most. She was the only human in their little group of friends with a bond that was forged through battles and bloodshed over the course of years. He had started to notice a few years back that her movements weren't as sharp and precise as they used to be. Age was catching up to her, and the realisation had hit him in the face stronger than the humongous statue of a *Saviour* ever could. She was 41 now- or maybe 42, he didn't know for how long he had been in this literal hell now- and he knew that she would have to retire sooner rather than later. But he also knew that she never would. It scared him.

He recalled his journey on his way to battle Arius. The closer he got, the more thrill he had felt in the prospect of finally doing some progress in his quest. At least that what he had kept telling himself. He made it a point not to ever take any of his enemies too lightly again, considering it was the reason his life had become such a mess in the span of a few hours, the cause of things happening that he had never thought possible.

But here he was now. Leaning against a deformed rock of some kind, tired of fighting hoards of demons day in, day out, with nothing left but *Ivory*. He didn't want to give up, it went against everything in his nature, but... *he was so tired*. He could already hear the next wave of demons coming and his eyes briefly took in the tattered mess that had once been his coat. *I must look like I feel*, he thought to himself while clutching *Ivory* and standing straight. No, giving up wasn't an option. He would either get out of this again or die trying. He took a step away from the stonewall and prepared himself for the onslaught.

Only a few seconds later Dante could see the first demons approaching him. More followed, more and more, until he was faced with another ocean of devils attempting to drown him. He raised *Ivory*, aimed, and started the massacre. The first demons were already disintegrating long before they reached him, but it was the same as always- for each one he killed, two more seemed to appear. He quickly rolled out of the way when a few Sloths materialised out of thin air next to him, their scythes impaling the ground where he had been standing a split second ago. They were dispatched of with a few precise shots and without missing a beat, he returned his attention back to the army ready to pounce on him. His jaw clenched in a grim smile as Puias started to descend on him, their sheer mass casting a shadow over his surroundings. His fist connected hard enough with one of them to knock it back into its brethren, never once stopping *Ivory's* rapid fire into the mass of demons. There was no need for him to pay too much attention, there were enough enemies to ensure that every single

bullet would hit a body part, no matter where he shot. He felt a prickling sensation in the back of his neck and was just in time to dodge the huge pair of scissors emerging from the wall. He used his momentum to run the surface up a few metres before jumping off it, firing off round after round at the demons below him before safely landing on the Sin Scissors' head, disintegrating it. He reached for one part of the broken scissors before it could vanish, blocked incoming projectiles with it and finally threw it into the awaiting mass of devils with enough force to cut the first few targets cleanly in half.

His eyes quickly scanned the area for any Wraths. They were both dangerous and incredibly useful in this environment. The sound of battle and demons was too loud to make out any particular noises. More than once had he been forced to make a quick, sloppy escape or take a few blows because a Wrath had managed to make its way over to him without being noticed before exploding right in his back. But if he found them early enough, they were an amazing help in dispatching big chunks of the demon mass. There was one, the tell-tale mass on their backs pulsating, slowly making its way over to him. Dante leapt high into the air and jumped off a Soul Eater that had attempted to sneak up on him from behind, kicking it right into a scythe in the process. He aimed at the Wrath and fired a few shots until it blew up, taking all the demons with it within a ten feet radius. He saw a Frost coming straight at him, icy blade aimed at his chest, but before it could impale him, Dante grabbed it by the head and hurled it with all his force into the devils below. He landed on the ground again, immediately ducking to avoid the demon's attacks and kept firing.

Dante kept fighting for what felt like hours, even if he didn't know for sure. Maybe it was really just minutes, or maybe it was days. There was no way for him to tell. There were finally fewer demons around. It didn't look like an endless ocean anymore, no new devils taking the place of their fallen brethren. He felt a sharp pain in his right arm and his grip on *Ivory* faltered for a second. A quick look revealed that an Enigma's red arrow had embedded itself in his flesh, and with a growl, he kept firing despite the pain. He just ripped the arrow out of his arm and threw it back at the statue that had managed to hit him, watching in grim satisfaction as it shattered into pieces, the larger chunks knocking other demons off balance as they were hit. But his moment of triumph was short-lived as an Assault dived at him from behind. He blocked the lizard's blade with his gun before delivering a kick hard enough to shatter its shield and throwing it back a few feet. He was panting and his body was short from simply giving out, but he refused to give in now. Not when this wave was almost finished and he would have time to rest and search and wander afterwards. Not much time, granted, but enough to gather the strength necessary to survive the next attack.

While he was focussed on shooting the Assault down, its thick skin withstanding *Ivory*'s bullets, he failed to see a Mephisto emerging from the ground in complete silence. He was too exhausted to notice it regarding him for a second before sticking out a single, claw-like finger.

He hissed in pain as the elongated nail pierced his shoulder and Dante had to stop himself from whirling around. Without turning, he aimed behind him and fired blindly-one of the bullets had to hit their goal. He heard the signature shriek that the Mephisto had indeed been wounded, but apparently the demons were smarter than

he gave them credit for- or he was simply too exhausted to prevent it from happening- because they noticed his moment of weakness and immediately jumped into action. Before the spear in his shoulder had completely vanished, more pain erupted in his chest and stomach. Looking down he saw a multitude of red and blue arrows protruding from his torso and he felt his knees giving in. Even though he could feel his strength leaving him, he ripped them out of his flesh, one after another, and hurled them back at the descending demon hoard. He had gotten so far, had managed to survive until this point, there was absolutely *no chance* that he'd die at the hand of some low demons like those! Forcing himself to stand upright again, he unleashed his inner devil, sending his attackers flying with a shockwave. He hated using the form that had caused all this mess, even if he had his instincts under control now, but it didn't feel as though he had a choice right now.

He charged into the demons, the red, glowing swords on his forearms slicing through hide and flesh like it was butter. Swords and arrows simply bounced off his skin, unable to penetrate his armour while he unleashed his fury in a macabre dance of death among the devils. This form was powerful, much more powerful than he remembered his father's having been back on Mallet Island fifteen years ago, but it was all the more taxing. It put a great strain on the human half of his body, and all too soon he felt it wearing off again. A small part inside of him sighed in relief when the power went dormant again, but a bigger part realised the excruciatingly bad timing when he saw the blade aiming at his chest but he was unable to move.

Pain exploded in his ribcage and for a short moment, a black veil obscured his vision. He blindly shot at the demon who was wielding the weapon that was pinning him to the ground, but his arm was trembling, causing the bullets to miss their target. Dante tried to breathe through the blood filling his lungs, tried ignoring the agony in his chest to keep fighting, but the demons were closing in on him. Still unwilling to give in, he simply ripped the blade out of his chest, even if it took more effort on his side than it should have. He threw it at his enemies in a way that made it bounce off them, hitting the others surrounding him and giving him a brief moment of air. He struggled to sit up, coughing up blood and had to close his eyes in order to get them back into focus. When he opened them again, he was surrounded once more. Clutching *Ivory* tightly in his hand he started firing. Over his own wheezing breath, *Ivory's* firing and the screams and shouts of the devils dying, he failed to hear the sound of an engine approaching. And even if he did, he would have thought it to be an illusion, a hallucination caused by blood loss, exertion and the slow descent into madness he was almost sure was slowly enveloping him.

Then suddenly, a lot of things happened too fast for his tired mind to pick up on. The sound of the engine had gotten louder, loud enough to make him wonder about it briefly, but before he was able to make something out of it, the sound of screeching brakes tore through the air and something slammed forcefully onto the ground next to him. He felt the demonic energy of a shockwave washing over him without hurting him, and Dante was confused. Dust was obscuring his vision, so instead he tried to hear what was going on around him. He couldn't hear anything but the breathing of another person, but that was impossible. Demons didn't breathe like that, it almost sounded like another human-

"I finally found you, man. This sure is some mess you've gotten yourself into."

The dust finally started to settle around him and Dante could make out a familiar shape he had hoped to see again, but deep down not been expecting to anymore. He saw Nero rising from his crouch on the ground to stand in front of him, *Red Queen* in his left hand and his right, demonic arm glowing brightly. *Ebony* and *Blue Rose* attached to his belt and *Rebellion* fastened to his back.