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~~Mia~~

They both fell back on their butts and clutched their noses, as they ran into an invisible wall.*www.nOVelWorm.com*

"Fuck!" David yelled, lying on his ass on the white marble floor, hands over his face.

"Ow!" Mia said, groaning and rolling around before getting to her feet. "What the fuck? What--" Her ghost mouth went dry, and her body froze, as she looked around at the angels.

All of them, hundreds upon hundreds of them, stared at her and David, and all of them slowly drew their weapons. They looked stunned, and confused. Even the angel Mia had been talking to stepped back, eyes wide. He didn't know what was happening. None of them did.

"Not... again," the angel said, mouth dropping open.

"Again?" Mia got up, helped David up, and did her best to not pee herself as everyone stared. She hadn't peed in two weeks, but if she could, she might have, with every angel pointing their weapons at her and David, including the colossal angel with the six wings.

"What's going on?" David asked. "Why can't we--"

A roaring, screeching sound buried them all. The angels didn't react, but each human soul staring at them, also confused, covered their ears as the sound thundered. It sounded like an air raid siren, if blasted by a thousand trumpets.

"What'd we do?" Mia asked. "What'd we do!? We... We just got here. What's going on? I--" She gave up. The other souls couldn't hear her over the siren, and if the angels could, they didn't respond. Instead, the angels came in closer, giant shields up and spears pointed at them, enormous wings spread and blocking off the human souls.

They were blocking the other souls from getting close to David and Mia?

The juggernaut lifted their sword and pointed it at the two of them. Face still hidden in the unnatural shadow of their helmet, only their golden eyes cut through the darkness, and they stared at David and Mia with intensity she hadn't known since the time her second guardian had caught her drawing on the walls with crayon. They didn't approach*www.nOVelWorm.com*

"Do not move," they said, voice a booming, rolling wave of alien bass.*www.nOVelWorm.com*

"Don't move?" Gulping, she looked to David beside her, but he was clamming up like he always did when put in an awkward situation. That evidently included horrifying situations, and she couldn't blame him. "But we didn't--"

The sky erupted. High above, gold light shot down around them, and both Dave and Mia covered their eyes as best they could against the near-scalding beams of pure sun. They burned, and Mia and Dave pressed their backs together as the pillars of scorching light moved in closer and closer, trapping them like prison bars. The nearby humans ran, screaming, diving onto their stomachs and covering their heads as if a nuke was about to hit.

"Someone! Please!" Mia threw up her hands and kept them there. "Someone please tell me what's going on? What'd we do? Please, we just got here, and... and... Please!" She made sure to scream loud enough she knew someone heard her, but while the angels flinched at her voice, they continued to stare at her with the same confusion plastered on their faces she knew she had. How could the angels not know what was happening?

David grabbed her hand again and squeezed. All she could do was squeeze back, as the pillars of light, striking down at them from miles and miles above, closed in on them, each as thick as a person, each radiating waves of heat.

The floor opened up. Mia and David managed to look down fast enough to see the white marble split open under them, and expose a tunnel glowing with red and lined with sharp stones, before gravity pulled them down. The golden gate, the angels, the beams of light, the stairs, the clouds, it all vanished. The warmth, the calmness, the safety, the inviting aura telling them they were home, it was all gone in an instant.

The hole overhead closed as fast as it opened, leaving David and Mia in darkness as they fell, and fell, and fell. She screamed, and David screamed seconds later, as the endless hole swallowed them. Hot wind cut against their skin, and she looked at her naked body to double check it wasn't literally cutting her. The walls were covered in spiky shards of dark stone, and she pulled her arms in as the air spun her and David around. They managed to keep their bodies pointed down, still holding each other's hands, still screaming as the glowing red light below grew brighter.

She stopped screaming, fully intent on taking a breath and screaming more, and she heard David pause too, but the screaming continued anyway. Echo? No, it wasn't their screams. The air was screaming. The wind was screaming. The tunnel was screaming*www.nOVelWorm.com*

She tried to look to David, but she couldn't tear her eyes away from the tunnel dragging them down and down. The walls reached out for them, and Mia shrieked as she yanked her hand in. Everything was a blurry mess as the scorching hair singed her skin and burned her eyes, but through the tears, she knew the walls had reached out for her. And the walls were screaming.

Hands. Thousands of hands. Fingers broken and bloody reached out from the walls on arms bent and ruined. Ripped bodies, torn flesh, gaunt skin and visible bone. Torsos reached out from the tunnel wall, naked and dying, bodies lodged inside the stone and metal spikes. Their eyes were wide with mania, mouths wider with split lips and shattered teeth. But they swung their arms out for David and Mia with the energy and hunger of desperate lunatics who could save their lives if they somehow caught the people falling down the tunnel.