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"Fresh meat always asks stupid questions, once they get the nerve to. Usually takes more than five minutes in Hell, though." Shrugging, the gargoyle squatted down in front of him again and hooked her huge wings snug to her back, with the thumb claws hooking around her neck. Like a cape. "So, what'd you do?"

"I... what?"

Laughing more, big and full, she grabbed him and rolled him back onto his back, earning a pained yowl out of him. It only got worse when she grabbed his dislocated arm, and yanked on it, pulling it away from his torso perpendicular. His scream made her chuckle, and his groan of satisfaction and relief as his arm slipped back into its socket made her laugh even louder.

"You're in Hell, right? What'd you do? If it's interesting I might let you live."

The satyr clicked her throat a few times, looking their way before ripping out another demon heart.

"What?" the gargoyle said, looking to her friend. "Six imp and grem hearts isn't gonna keep us fed long, Dao. We killed them 'cause they're Diogo's, not because you're hungry. We could always use more food."

The satyr clicked some more.

"Yes, I know. So we can kill this dude right here, fat ass."

David blinked up at the gargoyle standing over him, ignored the blood that dripped off her armor onto his chest, and looked to the satyr collecting hearts. Four hearts, almost as big as human hearts; he knew how big his own was now, for comparison. She held them like someone collecting apples with no basket. Apparently the satyr had an appetite.

"I didn't do anything," he said.

The gargoyle laughed, something she did a lot, and squatted down over him, straddling him face to face. Her tail slithered left and right slowly like a swimming crocodile, gliding over his legs. Warm, warmer than a human.

"You're in Hell, dude. What'd you do to--" Her black and red eyes snapped open wide, and she squatted down closer. Closer. Too close, until her face was only a few inches above his. "Where's your mark?"

"Mark?"

"Mark, dumbass." She pressed her hand to his forehead and brushed his hair aside, coating his head in blood. He didn't move. "You... don't have a mark."

He couldn't move his head to see, but some clicking sounds confirmed the satyr had come closer. Four giant black horns coming in close from overhead confirmed. The satyr was looking down at him, with no eyes.

"I don't know what you mean. Mark?"

"Mark! Mark, you dumbass. I--oh, here." The gargoyle got up, and walked down the shore into the water. David didn't move, not with the satyr still looking down at him. Why did she talk with clicks, and not words? Why didn't she have eyes? The big solid plate of black across where eyes should have been actually looked kinda like bone from so close, the same sort of dark material her huge horns were made of.

She clicked a few times.

"David," he said, because obviously the only thing the satyr could be asking was what was his name. What else?

"Here," the gargoyle said, coming back over him with a decapitated head in her hands, a fresh head, a woman who'd had long black hair, maybe from the Middle East. Hard to tell with all the blood. She hadn't killed anyone to get it, it'd just floated down the river. "Look, dumbass. Mark." She pointed to the number on the dead woman's forehead, something carved into it like someone had taken a knife or claw to the skin.

"452?" he asked.

The gargoyle laughed, threw the corpse head over her shoulder into the river, and squatted down over top him again.

"She must have been an evil bitch to get a number that high. But that don't mean shit down here, just that she's tastier." Shrugging, the gargoyle ran the blunt side of her claw along his forehead. "Seriously, where's your mark? No one gets through the first gate without one."

"First gate?"

"Uh, you know, the giant bridge of flesh and bone and stone? Enormous skulls with fire in their eyes? Big famous Estian letters spelling out 'Abandon All Hope Ye Who Enter Here' on the gate? You went through it to fall through the portal to Hell?"

He blinked. A lot.

"I... didn't go through that gate."

"You didn't? Holy shit. That... That's..." The gargoyle stood up and gestured to her satyr friend, who was still crouching over David's head and looking down over him. "Any ideas?" *©W(w).nOvèl()worm.com*

The satyr clicked in her throat, slow and deep -- for dolphin clicks -- before she shrugged.

"I dunno, Dao. Diogo's pretty furious. Stick our heads on pikes furious."

More clicks, more desperate this time.

"Don't fucking talk to me about Leos! I want to kill Diogo and Tacitus as much as you, but--"

Louder clicks. The satyr Daoka stood over David and shoved her friend hard enough to make her stumble back.

"Fine, fine! Jesus Christ, I get it." Groaning, she gestured down at David, and the satyr reached down and scooped him up. "It's your lucky day, fresh meat."

"I--"

Daoka set him down on his feet, and made no effort to make sure he landed softly. The jolt of his weight shoving up through his heels into his skull was painful, and he groaned, only for the gargoyle to slap him in the ass and send another spark of pain through him.

"Alright, we're going back to my hideout. Move it, fresh meat." *W(w).novelworm.com*

"I'm David."

"Ha! I love it when you guys treat your first day in Hell like it's no big." Shrugging, the gargoyle woman gave him a shove, and pointed toward the distant, jagged mountains. "It'll hit you later."

"Probably."

Apparently the gargoyle woman thought he was hilarious, because she burst into laughter even louder, loud enough to draw the attention of the demons up the shore. But they didn't come. Were they afraid of these two? Probably not. The gargoyle was almost seven feet tall, towering over him, and while the armor covered a fair bit of her, he could see plenty of muscle on the feminine figure, and same for the satyr, too. But some of the demons in the distance were bigger. A lot bigger.

They just didn't care. Six dead small demons, imps and grems according to the gargoyle, and the other demons didn't give a shit. But then, he was literally walking on a shoreline of white, because it was covered in bones, and the water was red probably because people kept getting ripped apart in it.

That was the world he was in now. Demons slaughtering humans, and each other. And no one cared.

"I'm Jeskura," the gargoyle said, "not that it matters."

"It doesn't?" *W(w).noèlworm.com*

"Nah." She pushed him forward with one of her giant bat wings before hooking it to her back and neck again. "You're fresh meat. Just a free meal for any demons lucky enough to see the portal open."

"The portal opens around randomly?"

"Yeap." She shoved him again, and pointed to the mountains. "Come on. You get to live for now, but don't push it. You got a few hours hiking to do, and I wanna get out of here before people recognize us."

"I--"

"I said move!" She used her tail to hit him in his ass this time, and he yelped.