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He got walking. Bones crunched under his feet, and the stones pressed and dug into his skin. He looked down and stared at the white and bloody shoreline as it changed into stone, before he looked up and stared into the burning sky. Adrenaline crash, assuming his body even did the adrenaline thing anymore. He could feel things again, more than just the big pain, but the little pains too. He could feel the rocks stabbing his soft feet. He could feel the dull ache in his shoulder. He could feel the hot air blowing by. He could hear the two demons escorting him breathe. He could...

He could think about Mia again.

"My sister," he said. "She... She was with me."

Dao looked over her spiky shoulder to him and Jeskura, and she clicked softly before shaking her head and letting it hang.

"Dao says your sister is probably dead. But if she didn't have a mark either, a demon might be thinking the same thing we are. Take you to Diogo and get on his good side."

"Diogo?" *wVW.m0vElW0r@.c0m*

"Bailiff for this corner of Hell and Death's Grip."

"Bailiff?"

Laughing all the more, the gargoyle slipped an arm over his shoulders, and walked with him, like they were buddies. Good. If she didn't distract him, he'd break down crying. She'd been right, the hellish reality did hit him later, just not later enough.

He pushed it aside. Focus on learning about Hell, and on finding a way to save your sister.

"You got a lot of questions, fresh meat. Don't suppose you can just accept that you're in Hell, and you're probably gonna die? Horribly? And then again and again and again. Questions are pointless. Hilarious, but pointless."

"Die again?"

"Yeap. The mark I showed you on that corpse? That was just their first death. They gotta die that many times before they get to go to the Great Tower, and Hell will make sure each death is fucking torture."

He trembled.

"But," she said, "you don't have a mark. Never seen that before. So hey, maybe you'll only have to die the first time? If that's true, consider yourself lucky you don't have to become a remnant."

"Rem--"

"You'll see, later."

"Oh." He gulped as he nodded, before looking up at the gargoyle woman with her arm still around his shoulders. "So, you're going to... take me to this Diogo, so you can get on his good side?"

"Yes and no. We're gonna take you to Diogo so we can trick him into lowering his guard. Then we're gonna rip the fucker's head off."

"Oh. And... you're telling me this because--"

"Because who the fuck you gonna tell, fresh meat? Besides, I like you. You stabbed gremla demon, and tripped up that impin." She leaned in and poked him in the cheek with her other hand as she grinned at him, black and red eyes up close. "And you make me laugh." *w(w)V.v.n0v0lW0r@.c0m*

"I'm... just asking questions."

"Yeap, that's why you're so funny. By now most fresh meat is a blubbering mess, on their knees screaming up at God for mercy and shit. No one answers." She shrugged and let him go, and walked slightly behind him as they made their way toward a path between the massive mountains. "You got me in a good mood, now. So keep 'em coming, I guess."

Keep them coming? Oh, questions. His confusion was her entertainment. Better than his pain, he supposed.

"I'm the only unmarked you've seen?"

"That anyone's ever seen, far as I know. People don't get into Hell unmarked, fresh meat."

He gulped, forced down the rising urge to cry again, and looked for something to talk about. Keep talking, keep learning. Get answers. He needed answers. *wWw.n0@Elw0M.c0m*

"It... It was weird. I was at the gates of Heaven, I guess, when my sister and I tried to walk through them, and--"

Daoka turned around, and leaned in toward him, tilting her head to the side as she clicked a few times quietly. He didn't need to understand her clicks to guess she was curious. *WWw.n0v0lW0R@m.c0M*

Of course, when Jeskura spun him around to face her directly, and her eyes were dead serious, it was obvious they both wanted to know more.

"You saw Heaven?"

"I uh... the gate to it, yeah. Touched it even, kinda."

"Holy fucking shit." She tightened her grip on his shoulders and shook him, earning a pained groan as she squeezed on his bad shoulder. It stayed in the socket, somehow. "Details!"

"Details?"

"Details, fresh meat. Give us details! No one's ever seen the pearly white gates." Nodding, a smile across her dark red skin and red lips, she walked with him. "You tell us about what you saw, and we'll make sure you don't die the most painful death possible."

But he'd still die.

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The walk was painful. His bare feet hated the ground, the stones, the dirt. It wasn't long before he had to stare at the ground with each step to avoid sharp things, which annoyed the two demons escorting him. But they cut him some slack as he described what the gates of Heaven had been like. The angels, the warm aura, the gold, the infinite universe above, the floating islands, all of it.

He planned to ask more questions of his own, but every second his eyes found something to be distracted by instead. The path led between two colossal mountains and became a ravine, and the thousands of bones that'd littered the shore of the distant river, and much of the ground, were gone. Instead, the sharp rocks were bleeding. No, not bleeding, blood didn't glow amber. Amber veins? Amber didn't glow, either, but these did.