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Hell was proving to be strangely... real. It wasn't a mess of chaos and insanity, where nothing made sense. There were rules, some that seemed like they could have been evolutionary, and some that felt like divine laws passed down from God or whoever.

If it was a system, with rules and concepts that could be understood and used, then it was a system someone could learn to exploit. That included him. And he was damn good at figuring out how things worked. Shit at finding the balls to actually do shit, though. That was Mia's domain.

"You're probably hungry, right?"

"I... I am." He looked down at his naked body and checked the bottom of his feet. Healed, mostly, and they felt tougher too, calluses aplenty. At this rate, his feet would be ready for trekking across Hell all day without issue in just a few days. But Jeskura was right, he was starving.

"My tree has a couple tiny fruits growing. You can have one, and it should tide you over until the next time you hurt yourself. Assuming you're still with us."

"I don't need to eat every day?" *wWw.nov(ell)W@rM.C@mm*

"Humans don't, sometimes going months without food. Demons usually eat once or twice a week." She grinned at him as she leaned in close, only inches away from him. "Dao doesn't want me to eat you, and I won't. But damn, you are a cute little thing, aren't you?" She ran the blunt side of her claw down his chest, grinning at him. "Maybe I'll eat you anyway, and I bet you'd enjoy it." *wWw.n@ellw@Rm.C@*

He stared at her, and gulped. That was too close to flirting and a death threat for him to tell which was which. *wWw.novEllw@rm.C@mm*

Dao hopped back, clicking loudly and quickly, and she gave Jes a gentle shove away from David.

"Oh come on, I'm only kidding. He's your pet, I know!" Laughing, Jes hooked her wings around her shoulders, and stepped around the curving wall of the cave where Dao had just come from.

Dao nodded, clicked happily, set her hands on David's shoulders, and guided him to follow. The fact they were nude meant nothing to them, but he had a damn hard time not staring at Jeskura's ass and the tail swaying above it as she walked ahead. Her raptor feet and slightly forward posture only meant it was even harder to ignore. The only reason he didn't have a boner, was pure nervousness at this point.

There was a tree. A ruined, withered thing, but a tree, much bigger than the bushes outside the cave, and conveniently, not on fire. A couple small pieces of red fruit dangled from some of its dark, thin branches, no bigger than plums. The color was way too close to blood.

"A tree grows here?" he asked. "I... I suppose if burning bushes are growing everywhere, and don't burn away, this is normal."

"They're normal, but rare," Jes said. "This little cave of ours is pretty awesome. If you tell anyone about it, I'll rip your dick off and make you eat it, got it?"

He nodded hard and fast enough to make his body shake *(w)wW.novEllw@rm.c@m*

"Good. Yes, forbidden trees exist in Hell. No one really knows how they work, but hey, it's Hell, a lot of shit is like that. You want answers, ask Lucifer." She shrugged as she reached out, and plucked one of the blood plums. "These are full of essence and resonance, probably Hell sucking it up from the little bits that don't get eaten. Hell's a bitch, but she throws us a bone every now and then."

She tossed it to him. He managed to catch it with both palms, and he stared down at the strange thing. It was warm, and it was soft, a texture he recognized from the many steaks he'd eaten in his life. If Jes's theory about how it was created was true, biting it would be like biting into a juicy piece of regrown human and demon and whatever else existed in Hell.

But he really was hungry, in a strange way deep inside him he couldn't ignore. And holding the forbidden fruit sent a tingle through his skin that told him this was for him, that it was special. He didn't believe in any of the stories in the bible, at least not at face value, but considering where he was, he'd have to start reevaluating his views. This was forbidden fruit, and it was important.

"You're letting me eat this?"

"I am. If you screw me over on the plan though, I'll do more than rip off your dick. This cave is important to be, but killing Diogo is more important. Get in the way of that and you'll wish I just killed you."

Eyes wide, he slowly nodded, and looked down from the gargoyle's intense gaze. But Daoka reached around him and pushed up on his hands, guiding them toward his mouth. He managed a smile, and bit into the fruit.

It was blood, and it flooded his mouth like he'd just bit into a juicy grape mixed with a juicy slab of meat. He'd had a feeling it might though, and he made sure to not spill a drop, all of the warm liquid squirting into his mouth. The first thing he'd eaten in seventeen days. It tasted good.

It tasted great.

He blinked down at the second half of the fruit. No seed inside it. He tossed it into his mouth and chewed, and let the meat-like texture remind him of his favorite restaurant as he devoured. Better to think of eating a cow than another person. The flesh went down his throat like he'd eaten these things a thousand times before, and within seconds, he felt good. He felt whole, and full, and alive; it took some effort to not laugh at that.