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"Let's get out of here," she said. "These two were probably with the others. They'll circle back when their rear scouts don't report back, and I don't want to fight twelve of these assholes." [www.No\(e\)rm.com](#)

Daoka clicked, nodding as she went back to David. Gulping hard enough it hurt his throat, he stood up straight and stared at the satyr. She clicked at him softly a few times, nudged him aside, and grabbed the dead man she'd killed. And again, in a bloody mess, she used her demon strength to rip open the human man's chest and tear out his heart.

David didn't move away from the splatter of blood that hit his waist, and the puddle that pushed out and coated the bottom of his feet.

Even when Daoka held out the heart to him and clicked gently, he didn't move. A heavy chunk of muscle that once pumped blood, or whatever it was in the afterlife, sitting in her claws. And for some reason, a part of him wanted to bite into it.

"I thought... hearts only had resonance. And humans--"

"Resonance and essence," Jes said. "The rest of the body has some essence, and very little resonance. Most of the resonance is in the heart, but there's a lot of essence in there, too."

"So humans run around, killing each other, eating each other's hearts..." He stared at the heart, but did not hold out his hand.

"Give it up, Dao. You know how fresh meat is at first. Give him a few weeks."

Dao pouted at him, but after a few seconds of waiting, she bit into the heart, ripping a chunk out of it. Half of it gone, she gave it to Jes, and the gargoyle finished it off. It did make more sense for them to eat it anyway, if they needed to keep eating, while humans only needed to eat rarely, or if injured. He was fine. Jes was bleeding. And the skirmish made it damn clear he was fucking useless in a fight against humans.

That was a fucking horrible feeling. [www.No\(e\)rm.com](#)

Clicking quietly to herself, Daoka leaned back down over the man and removed his cloak. Off came the two other pieces too, a single chunk of metal that covered most of the man's chest and stomach with straps to attach it, and another piece that was basically a skirt. Daoka handed them to David, and he stared down at the bloody things and the crimson drops that fell from them onto his toes. Warm.

"Dao," Jes said. "He can't keep the clothes. We'll have to strip him when we take him to Diogo."

Dao clicked loudly several times at the gargoyle.

"Ugh, fine. Maybe it'll keep him alive next time we get jumped and he just stands there like a statue."

Ouch.

He looked back to the corpse, and the dead, empty look in his eyes. How casually Daoka had stripped the gory mess naked, and given David his clothes. And as if what she'd done was as normal as breathing, Daoka nodded at him and hopped after Jeskura, leaving David alone with the wet leather.

"Come on fresh meat. We can't stay here."

He nodded, staring at the clothes. They were just clothes. Clothes soaked in blood. But everything was soaked in blood, and Hell would suck up the blood soon enough.

Freak out later. For now, just do what you need to do.

He put on the cloak and the kilt he swore he'd seen Conan wear. The breastplate thing though had three leather straps that had to be tied together behind his back.

"Um, can--"

Dao hopped back to him, pushed his cloak aside, and tied the three straps together behind him, nice and snug so the heavy slab of metal pressed to his chest, covering most of his left pectoral, and all of his stomach.

"Thanks. Thanks." Okay, wow, heavy breastplate. Whatever this black metal was, it was a good thing he was in good shape or he'd be falling straight onto his tits. [www.No\(e\)rm.com](#)

Case in point, he picked up the sword, and try as he might, couldn't hold back the groan of exertion. Dao and Jes laughed, and the satyr took the sword and set it down.

"You're still our prisoner, fresh meat," Jes said, grinning at him down the path. "Not gonna let you arm yourself."

"Yeah, I figured. And I... don't think I could wield these weapons anyway."

"Neither could they."

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Dao and David sat in a crevice, facing each other, the crevice only a few feet wide so their legs lay next to each other's. Her hooves were exactly what he expected, bigger though, almost as big as a horse's. It made sense, with how much she jumped around, and how she had to balance on them.

"No horseshoes?" he asked, gesturing to them.

She chuckled, clicks slipping between the soft sound, before shaking her head. Of course she knew what horseshoes were, with scrying pools keeping demonkind informed about everything on the surface.

They weren't far from the big cave, but Jes assured them the crevice was safe, not visible from the cave or to roaming imps and grems. It was a good hole in the ground, with no remnants around. But this close to asshole HQ, Dao and David had to whisper.

Silence fell on them. At first, it was easy to chalk it up to needing to be quiet to avoid being found again, or that Daoka couldn't speak English. Or Estian, according to Jes. But it wasn't long before he was looking down and away, as that annoying feeling crept up through his guts and into his brain. Shame.

"Sorry," he said.

Daoka tilted her head slightly and clicked once. No need for a translator on that one.

"Because I froze."

After couple more clicks, she shrugged slightly, smiling at him.

"Well, I mean, I never thought I'd be that guy who freezes. I suppose no one does, but I... guess I always thought I'd be able to respond quick when shit hits the fan like that. I could stab an imp, but when it's... another person..." He pulled his knees up a bit so he could rest his elbows on them, and he let his head hang forward. "And it's not just that. It's... It's..."

Daoka clicked quietly a few times. Before he knew it, she sat down beside him, shoulder to his, and she smiled as she looked down at the ground under their feet.

"I guess the reality is finally setting in. I thought it already had, but seeing a couple of... people, humans, looking like a couple raiders straight out of a Mad Max movie?" Sighing, he sat back and pushed his head against the stone behind him. "I'm in Hell, and the only reason I'm not dead is because of you two. And... I don't know. I'm trying to process that."

More clicks, followed by a gentle nudge of her elbow.

"I'm really in Hell. I'm really in Hell, and I can't find my sister, and now every day and night my life is going to be at risk to demons and even other humans, all of whom want to rip out my heart and eat me. I'm wearing the clothes of a dead man, someone you killed, because if you didn't he'd have killed Jes, you, and me. I'm relying on two sexy demons to keep me alive and hopefully save my sister, and I have no idea what to do if we even accomplish that. I hate not knowing what to do. I hate not knowing what the future's gonna bring even more. I... fucking hate this..." [www.No\(e\)rm.com](#)

Dao clicked at him a couple times, a weird sound he hadn't heard her make yet. High pitched but quiet, almost like a morning bird.