

## 1104

Wincing, Mia looked behind her to Hannah. She walked in the back with Adron and the gargoyle Loria, a little out of earshot as long as Mia spoke softly. Of all the things she wanted to ask Hannah about, the sort of things she'd done to warrant a trip to Hell were not on the list. It was so much better thinking the only other human woman around, wasn't deserving of who knew how many years and how much pain of this place.

"I wanted to ask you. Um, when I woke up, you were... you seemed kinda... like you were trying to escape? Are you okay?"

"What? Oh. Ha, yeah. Trying to get away while Diogo and Darvus fuck me really gets me off."

"It does?"

She nodded, short tendrils hair bouncing under her horns and over her neck.

"Demons fight and fuck, and sometimes they do both. You'll get used to it."

"Oh." Mia had figured out that much, but she hadn't really expected to see it like that, so close, from people she'd been traveling with.

"Ha. Were you checking up on me?"

"I mean, kinda?"

The demon rolled her eyes as she chuckled.

"Very strange."

"So, um... do you know Zel?"

"I've met her a few times."

"What's she like?"

The tiger lady shrugged, somehow, despite walking on all fours.

"You'll find out. Why ask?"

"Because I'm nervous as fuck. Everyone's on this trip to make sure Zel sees me, as if she's super important or powerful, but no one's told me anything about her, not really."

"She's a bolstara, one of the tetrad. Bigger and stronger than any of us."

"Bigger?"*www.noVELworm.com*

"Yes."

"That's... big," Mia said, gesturing to Diogo.

"The tetrad are massive. Not as big as the children of the Old Ones, according to Caera, but still big."

Mia gulped. Diogo was already almost twice as tall as Mia, and there were things bigger than him, and things bigger than those things? The longer she was down here, the more Hell sounded like Jurassic Park.

"And... um, she'll..."

"She'll either eat you, lock you up, or keep you as a pet."

"I suppose of those three options, pet is the best?"

"Yes."

Mia smiled slightly down at the huge tiger woman. Apparently being a bit nice to her had opened her up a little, enough to talk to her. Maybe she could try being nice to Diogo, or Darvus, and find out if they wouldn't mind talking to her and telling her stuff? Unlikely. But, it didn't seem like there was a rule against telling her things, either.

"What would... being a pet be like?"*w@w.noVELworm.com*

"You see what life is like for Hannah."

"Just a sliver of it."

"Like that, except bigger."

"Bigger?"

"Zel rules the Death's Grip spire. If you're her pet, you'll be around as she manages the spire, which is a vast and powerful position. And you'll be around when she fucks her guards." The tiger grinned up at her again, a knowing look in her red and black eyes. "Pray they go easier on you than Diogo and Darvus go on me."

Well, fuck. It sounded kinda hot, until she considered the reality of two giant demons like that trying to fuck her at the same time. Less sexy, more 'oh god I died, again'.

"Thanks, for talking to me."

The tiger demon laughed, but nodded and shrugged again*www.NoVELworm.com*

Mia looked to Diogo. No tail, no spikes, no horns, no hair tendrils, just a big tall beast of a creature walking on raptor feet, with thick muscles and a slightly hunched back. Or maybe not hunched, just, a mountain of muscle.

She took a deep breath, picked up her pace, and caught up to him and the two brutes at his sides. What to say? What words to use to poke at him and figure him out? With types like Diogo, big and powerful and full of themselves, but also kinda stoic and happy to use strength instead of words, it'd probably be best she use the least amount of words possible. If she wanted to figure out how to manipulate him, she had to be careful.

She fell into walking speed between him and the other brute Darvus, and didn't say a word.

Diogo eventually looked down at her, and his bassy voice rumbled in his chest as he quietly snarled.

"You have gall."

"I do."

"You know I won't kill you, because I think Zel will want you."

"That's part of it."

"And the other part?" he asked.

"Just felt like exercising some free will. Kinda feel like that'll be difficult, in the future."

His snarl changed to laughter, and he nodded.

"Perhaps."

"And, I also wanted to know... This all seems so, I don't know, regular, and normal."

"Normal?"

Okay, good, he was willing to talk. Being brave and quiet had worked.

"You're marching me to see a big scary ruler, right? I expected to be locked up in a cage, carried by a dozen slaves, and for everything to be so much more... epic."

"You think you deserve that treatment?"

"No. But I'm getting the impression even if I did, Hell wouldn't really be able to pull something like that off." And an insult to the man's pride, to see if he'd talk more aggressively and spill secrets.

But Diogo just laughed again.

"Maybe in the Navameere Fields, or the Red Pits. But only here in Death's Grip could the spire ruler's call summon hordes of demons over the mountains to fall upon our enemies like a surface tide."

Surface tide? Right, no moon down here, no tide, if Hell gave a shit about physics.

"Like... barbarian tribes."

"Yes, though I don't watch the scrying pools with the addicted mindlessness of fresh hatchlings. Ask Adron if you want to know more."

"Yeah, but you're in charge. You know how shit works in ways people like Adron don't."

Diogo turned his demon-skull face down at her, squinting slightly, small red and black eyes cutting deep. He was suspicious of her.

"You're like every betrayer, fresh meat. You want to know more about Hell. Unlike most fresh meat, you seem willing to ask demons who would more than readily eat you."

"I guess I don't know what's good for me." She shrugged, and walked proud, even managing a tiny grin. It was fucking hard, ignoring that she was naked, and that she was walking between two enormous demons who'd just double teamed a big tiger lady. Now it was her between them, and it made her mind wander to scary, sexy thoughts*W@w.noVELworm.c@M*

"Regardless," Diogo said. "This is Death's Grip. We have no use for armies here, or grand marches and parades, or ridiculous spectacles. We are hard and simple, as the land is."

"The land. Hell? I suppose it is land."

"She is a cruel bitch of blood and pain, and she'll devour you if you're not careful, fresh meat. Try and stay alive until Zel sees you, at least."