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Mia raised a brow, looking between the demon and woman. That sounded less like a master slave relationship, and more like romance with a side dish of intent to murder, which was all sorts of fucked up. Then again, it was Hell.

Ignoring the need to squirm at the strange, socially awkward situation, Mia came up to Adron and gave him a quiet smile.

"Thanks, for pushing me out of the way."

"Hey, don't thank me. If we didn't get you to Zel, the boss would have my hide." Adron gestured to the juggernaut standing at the head of the group, down the path **Ww.nO()Elw()m.cOM**

The juggernaut snorted, and resumed the march. Not a word **ww.N()()woRm.cOm**

"Wait," Mia said, loud enough to be heard over the noise of everyone shuffling, "we're not--"

"No, we're not," Diogo said. And he said nothing else as he continued the march.

"Thanks for waiting for me, boss," Adron said, grinning at Diogo's back. "Half expected everyone to just move on without me."

Diogo looked back long enough to glare at Adron, before continuing on.

Mia stared at the brute's giant back, but no matter how hard she tried, for some reason she couldn't make the bastard explode into a million pieces with the power of her mind. So she did the only thing she could do. She fell in step with everyone else as they resumed the trek toward the spire. Eventually it was Mia with Hannah and Adron and Scilra, with Loria and the other vrat behind them, the two human men and the two sex demons in front of them, and Diogo and his two brutes leading. As if nothing had happened. As if Adron hadn't just almost died.

"I didn't expect a big rock to come my way," Adron said, grinning down at her.

"I didn't expect everyone to just stand there, watching." Or for it to piss her off so much, either.

"Wouldn't really make sense for Diogo to risk more demons dying for me."

"So everyone just stands there, and waits?" **Ww.NoVe()W()m.c()m**

"Waiting is more than demons would in the Red Pits, or Navameere Fields," he said. The places Diogo had described as militant **W()no()LwoRm.cOm**

"You're telling me Death's Grip is nice by comparison?"

"Ha. No, just different. Demons in those places wouldn't hesitate to fight for you, as long as you made no mistakes. The moment you did, they'd let you die to whatever mistake you made, and they'd laugh, too."

"Mean."

He laughed. Hannah laughed too. She stood between Mia and Adron, Adron walking on the outer edge of the path, and she poked Mia in the shoulder.

"You really are too nice for Hell."

"I... guess."

"She's right," Adron said. "It was just a short encounter with a basilisk, anyway. In and out in a jiffy. Happens all the time."

Hearing a tall, sexy demon with big horns, a long tail, and a demon-skull face, say 'jiffy', was just too damn much. Mia burst into laughter, until even the tiger demon beside her was chuckling, too.

"I'm glad it worked out," Mia said. "The rock didn't exactly go where I aimed."

"Yeah well, neither did the basilisk. I aimed the kick to push him into the rock's path, so it'd hit his gut, not his leg." He shrugged, and poked Mia's side with his tail. "The rock could have hit me, too, ya know."

"It was either that or watch you die."

"Not much faith in me?"

"I uh, I mean, you dropped your sword, and--sword! Your sword--"

"I'll get a new one. It's just a slab of meera metal. There's thousands of them everywhere, since... whenever. Ask Caera where they came from, if you ever see her again."

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~~David~~

"It was during the Nine Spires War," Caera said, "must have been maybe ten thousand years ago. That's when all the meera weapons were made. Most, anyway."

David, Caera, Daoka, and Jeskura walked along the path, and at this point, it was all starting to blur together. Rocks. More rocks, lots and lots of dark rocks, many solid black, many dark red, and a lot of gradients between, with the occasional burning bush. The warm breeze was relentless, and the occasional bead of sweat dripped down his body. The air smelled like it always smelled, like rocks, and blood. But somehow, the demon women knew where to go, and recognized the paths like he recognized the icons on his PC desktop.

This high up, he could feel the heat of the burning sky press down on him. It sucked.

"Long time," he said. "A... very long time, by human standards. Like, so long ago historians are just grasping at straws trying to explain shit from back then."

"Hell isn't the surface, so if you get lucky, you find some runes in Estian, and if you're familiar with them like I am, you can adjust for the old style of talking. And I've managed to find a few places talking about that war. Belor, last child of the Old Ones, was trying to take over Hell. All the spire rulers were at war that time, a big free-for-all frenzy that had Hell swimming in demon blood. Belor controlled False Gate, and the anvil beneath the vortex. He used it to make thousands of weapons and suits of armor. Mostly meera, like you see us wearing." Caera lifted her front leg-arm, long enough to gesture to her, Jes, and Daoka. "He made some aera metal too, but mostly meera."

"Aera. Meera?"

She shrugged. "I've never seen aera metal up close, but I know his generals and strongest soldiers wore it." She hit his butt with the broadside of her big tail. Thankfully the spikes ran along its spine, not its sides. "Don't distract me. So, Belor thought if he gave every demon in his horde a weapon and armor, he'd win."

"Did he?"