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"A cute nerd," Jes said, poking at him with her tail again with Dao too busy to stop her.

"I wasn't around back then," Caera said, "but far as I know, demons usually used the Forgotten Place, the center of Hell, as their reference point, and said right or left. Sometimes East or West." www.novelsworld.com

"Hmm, kinda like... if you looked down at Earth from the North Pole, East is counter-clockwise." His brain actually exploded. "But if you looked at Earth from the South Pole, East is clockwise, so that--"

Daoka gently covered his mouth, giggled and clicked, and kissed the crown of his head.

Caera grinned at him, relaxing as she rolled over onto her side slightly.

"Did you want to learn about hordes, or how to tell directions in Hell?"

Both. He really wanted to say both.

"Hordes," he said between Daoka's fingers.

"You already know about auras. Spire rulers have access to a unique aura: summoning the horde. It's powerful, and goes far, nearly to the border of the province it owns. It sucks you in, covers your mind, and before you know it, you're heading toward the spire to join the horde. Every inch of you wants to join the mass, swarm over your target, and rip and tear until it's dead. A deep need that's..." With a heavy sigh, Caera flopped over completely, on her side with her arms and legs out beside her. It was a shitty memory for her. He didn't need Mia to tell him that. "The only demons the summon doesn't seem to work on is imps and grems. Or at least, not well enough to really harness them." www.novelsworld.com

"And the brand?"

"Seals it in. Binds you to the call and its purpose. Zel uses the spire's tools to make sure you can't break free of the call until it's done."

"Spire's tools..."

The tiger shook her head. "I don't know enough to talk about the spires and their tools, but it's how they rule. It's not some empty position with no power. Zel can and does rule Death's Grip with her own power, and the power the spire gives her. She's more than capable of enforcing her position."

"Yeah," Jes said. "Zel is a scary bitch. We have to be careful, the closer we get to the spire."

"Sounds like we have a lot of enemies," he said.

"She's not my enemy," Caera said.

The gargoyle stuck her tail out and whacked the tiger on the hand.

"Yet. She's not your enemy yet. When she finds out what you've been up to, you know she's going to put on you the kill list, like Diogo did Dao and me."

It was a good thing Death's Grip wasn't organized. Dao and Jes had been out and around, hunting for a meal when they found David, and assured him as long as they didn't get close to other demons, they'd be fine. Did they not have surveillance cameras in Hell? Binoculars or telescopes? Anything? www.novelsworld.com

Hell really was medieval.

"I hope she... she doesn't hurt Mia," he said.

Daoka clicked a few times and hugged him again.

Jes nodded. "Yeah, I doubt Zel will eat her anytime soon, if ever. She's patient. She'll try and figure out how to use her first. And that's of course assuming we can't catch up to Diogo and figure out a way to kill him."

Caera shook her head. "We're not gonna catch up, you know that."

Daoka clicked, louder than usual.

"Exactly," Jes said. "Any number of things could happen. Maybe Mia will hit them all with the same aura David did us, and they'll spend a whole day and night in one big orgy?"

Groaning, he rubbed his eyes with his palms. "Please don't make me think about that."

"Hey, this is the only way to keep your horny brain on the goal." Jeskura climbed up to her feet, stretched out her wings, shook out her tail, and got moving. "Let's go. We'll find something to eat tomorrow."

~~~~~

~~Mia~~

They found a crevice, higher up along the mountain wall than the others nearby. There were crevices everywhere, small ravines, rock ditches, everything a mountainscape that wanted to kill her could offer. That included bloodgrip, a black, ever-so-slightly green vine with red thorns, that had a habit showing up in places her hands wanted to brace against. She hadn't stabbed herself, yet, because either Adron or Scilra were always ahead of her, calling it out.

"We stop here," Diogo said. "Tomorrow's rekindling is the last before we reach the spire." Nodding to himself, Diogo sat down against a wall of stone, and didn't move. Talk about being literal.

Mia watched the group prepare for the night. No one got naked and asked an incubus to finger them. No one grabbed anyone else and used them like a flashlight. No one even asked for a quick blowjob. Everyone found rocks and grooves to settle into for the night, and the few that'd take first watch took high perches. Hopefully the lack of sexual activity was coincidental, and not because Mia had been decidedly not-horny ever since she'd nearly been pounced by a giant lizard that also nearly killed the closest thing she had to a bodyguard at the moment.

She didn't know if she should not want that, not want it to be true that the weird tingling sensation all the demons were feeling, was linked to the subtle vibration she sometimes felt inside her. If it was true, then there was something special about her, something that had all the demons confused, and would guarantee Zel took an interest in her. Maybe she'd try and use her as a tool for power. And maybe she'd eat her, hoping to gain that power. But then, if she was a perfectly normal human, Zel would have no reason to keep her alive at all.

Nights in Hell lasted about twelve hours, and her afterlife body seemed to still want about eight hours of sleep. Perfect for night watch. A third of the demons took a shift for four hours, then another third for the next four, then another third for the next four. A perfect balance all the demons understood innately.