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"I'll be able to figure at least something out if I can see the place." So far all he knew was it was a big spire in the middle of a bunch of mountains. Not the sort of detail he needed if he was going to make a plan. "And--"

The ground vibrated. Heavy, deep, rumbling. The four of them spun around.

There was nothing there.

"The fuck?" Jes asked, eyebrow raised as she stared at the path behind them. But there wasn't anything there. Just mountains on one side, a big ravine on the other, and the shitty path they'd followed, wide enough for them to walk on but a winding mess covered in boulders and patches of bloodgrip.*WwW.nvLwDrM.coM*

"Uh..." David scratched his head, adjusted his cloak, and took a step back down the path, toward the sound. "That sounded... close." Unfortunately, a glance back showed all three ladies doing the same thing, cocking an eyebrow and staring down the path, looking for the source. The path was dotted with lots of little hiding places, but nothing anything big could hide behind, and the path went on for a good while with no mountain curve to block their line of sight. There was nothing behind them.

Daoka clicked quietly a few times.

"Yeah, could have been a falling rock," Caera said. "But it didn't... sound like one."

No, it didn't sound like one. It'd sounded like something landing, but it lacked the harsh snap of something hard and brittle cracking on the ground, or breaking it.

It happened again, and it sounded closer. A few pebbles rolled down the walls of stone, cracking against other rock in the quiet, each eventually creating loud snaps that echoed in the ravine below. No sign of whatever made the two booming thuds of impact, though.

The group took a step back. It happened again, and again, heavy, deep thuds of impact.*WwW.nvLwDrM.coM*

Now he recognized the sound. Now he recognized the sensation.

"Um... is... there any demon, that... that is that, um, heavy? So when they walk, the ground... shakes?"

"Not like this," Caera whispered. "Not since the first war, only Lucifer knows how long ago."

Only Lucifer knows. Expression, or literal? Bad time to ask.

The rumbling came closer. If he had a cup of water, sitting innocently in the cup holder of a jeep parked outside a giant, deactivated electric fence, it would have rippled perfectly with each deep, vibrating thud.

Chills shot up through his spine. Every hair on his arms stood up. His breathing quickened. His heart rate skyrocketed. He was a child again, four or five, watching a movie he was way too young to watch, about to see someone get eaten by a tyrannosaurus rex. He was that someone now.

But there was nothing there. The path was empty with nowhere to hide, and whatever it was making the sound, it had to be huge.

Daoka clicked a couple times softly, and leaned in closer to Jes until they were shoulder to shoulder.

"No idea," Jes said. "Hey girls, let's get going? I don't want to--"

All four of them jumped in place, when another thud ran through the mountain under their feet, and a giant footprint cut into the ground maybe a hundred feet away. While they could see down the path for much further than that, the rocks and boulders blocked them from seeing the actual ground surface of the path. But this close, they could see straight to the path's surface, and the enormous footprint that crushed pebbles into powder, and sank a few inches into the rock and dirt.

"What... the fuck..." Caera said. The only person in their little group with any possible idea of what was happening, was absolutely clueless. Fucking wonderful.

He gulped, staring at the huge footprint. Even that far, he could tell how big it'd be if it'd belonged to a real creature. A t-rex would have seemed small in comparison. The footprint barely fit the path, a path Caera and David had walked side by side. Its shape made no sense either, a blobby mess that almost looked like it could have been made by a soft hoof, but it had claws, too.

Another footprint, much louder, much closer, and all four of them held their breath as they stared down at the huge dent in the ground, now only fifty feet away. It looked different, less blobby, with the more defined shape of a cat's paws, but also the indents he'd expect to see from Caera or Jes's dinosaur-like raptor feet.

"W-What do we do?" he asked.

No one said a word, until finally one of them clicked a few times, yanked on their wrists, and ran. And like Daoka had undone their chains, the rest of them turn and ran after her.

Dao hopped around and over the big rocks along the path. Caera dashed left and right with a cat's agility, weaving around the rocks and curves of the winding path. Jes jumped onto one of the big rocks and used her wings to jump to the next. David just ran for all his shitty human legs could manage, and that wasn't much. For all a human's ability to endure long hikes that demon's struggled with, they left him in the dust almost instantly.

Another thud quaked and shook the mountain, earlier than last time, and its deep vibrating sound rumbled and echoed through the ravine. It was chasing them. The smart part of his brain, the part he was usually pretty damn good at listening to exclusively, told him to not look back. The panicking, stupid, oh-god-oh-god-we're-going-to-die part of him looked back. The footprint was closer, and it'd changed shape again. Still huge, but different.

Daoka looked behind her, and clicked furiously.

"I can't fucking carry him!" Jes yelled between leaps. "I can barely glide with this armor on!"

With a flurry of more clicks, Daoka turned around, but just as she readied a hop in David's direction, a huge mass of dark red flesh came back around at him and picked him up. Caera. She reached down with her arms, scooped him up, and ran back down the path toward the others.

For a second he thought she'd throw him on her back. Thankfully she did not. Riding bareback on a horse was a bad enough idea. Riding bareback on a tiger's back, with a spine lined with big spikes from end to end? It'd kill him. The tiger lady held him to her chest armor, and ran on her hind legs, already doubling his original speed.*WwW.nvLwDrM.coM*

"Thanks," he said between gasps.

She managed a quick nod, but otherwise dedicated every breath to getting as much oxygen -- or whatever the fuck Hell had -- into her lungs. With how far forward she was leaning, he stared at the ground and the rocks zooming underneath them, afraid she was going to fall forward at any moment and smash him into the ground. She didn't. Somehow, Caera was perfectly comfortable running on her hind legs, and it wasn't long before she caught up to Dao and Jes. They'd waited for her.

Daoka clicked a few more times, falling in step beside Caera and looking to David.

"Worry later!" Jes yelled. "Just go! Just--"

Another thud, another footstep. Closer again, and faster than before, like as if whatever chased them was taking an eternity to ramp up to its full speed.

David forced his eyes up to the path ahead. It went on and on, a stretch of mountain that connected to another mountain they'd have to take before the mountains spread open, revealing a valley with the spire in it, supposedly. If there was a place they could hide, maybe a crevice or ravine they could jump into that wouldn't break their legs, he didn't see one. All they could do was keep running, with him an anchor dragging Caera down.

The next thud hit the ground directly behind Caera, and it landed hard. Even with Caera half running half bouncing on her big powerful hind legs, he felt the vibration up through her body into his. Whatever this invisible thing was, it was beyond huge. So huge it shouldn't have been able to walk the path they were on unless the thing only had one leg, was hopping on it, and had a flat body or stick body or something, some shape with no width.

Or it didn't give a shit about shape or anything. It was invisible, after all.

"We have to get off the path!" he yelled. "It's going to run us down!"

"Fucking where then!?" Jes said, twenty feet ahead next to Dao. She managed a quick gesture up at the giant cliff wall on their right, practically a flat cliff face at this point on the path. And to their left, a ravine, and not one of the small ones either. The mountain across the ravine stood about a hundred feet away, and it wasn't much better, a harsh slope covered in jagged rocks, and no path to land on. Plus, the ravine was a few hundred feet deep, and they'd left the Adam's Blood river behind them a while ago. All that waited was more rock.

He didn't get to answer. The next thud came down beside Caera, and it landed much harder, as if the invisible creature had jumped. The mountain couldn't take it. As if someone had pulled out the bottom block on a Jenga tower, the rocks came crumbling down. First, the path directly under Caera and David. Half a second later, everything else. The wall, the path ahead, the path behind, everything broke, and gravity yanked them down the avalanche the creature had started.

Caera let him go. He barely noticed. Momentum threw him forward. Had she thrown him? No. She hadn't expected the mountain to give out anymore than he had. He spun around through the air and managed to see Caera sink her claws into the mountainside and slow her descent into the ravine, while he tumbled. His body landed on a chunk of flat path for only a second before it, too, crumbled away, and joined the rolling rocks underneath them.

He fell, fingers against the stone, skin tearing as he gripped at the rock wall and tried to find a hook, a ledge, anything he could get his grip on. Gravity was a cruel asshole, and it pulled David down faster and faster, no matter how much his hands clawed at the mountain.

He found something. His shoulders jerked hard as both of his hands found a stone outcropping. Gravity lost its power over him.

Clicks yanked his attention. Daoka. She was above him, and doing the same thing he was doing, claws scratching at the wall as it crumbled underneath her.

"Jes!" he yelled. Maybe she could do something. The gargoyle circled overhead like a kite, eyes wide, terror written into her face like he'd carved it there with a knife.

"Dao!" she screamed. "Dao!"

Dao fell.

David threw out his hand, and caught her. The satyr swung underneath him, clicking up a storm as she bounced hard against the rock, and her grip locked solid around his wrist. His muscles screamed at him, and his fingers went from aching to burning in seconds as they pressed hard against the stone he squeezed with his only free hand. He didn't let go.

"Hold on!" he said, snapping his eyes around. Rocks fell from above, not as many compared to the crumbling wall beneath them, but some did, and one caught Jeskura in a wing. Her shriek cut through the roaring avalanche, and both Dao and David stared at the gargoyle as she fell.

He pulled, and pulled, but it didn't matter. The thundering vibration of the avalanche was immense, and it made his grip tenuous. Worse, it made the rock protrusion's grip on the mountain even more slippery, and the rock broke away. He fell toward the falling rocks below, and pulled the clicking Daoka to his chest as they plummeted down.