

## 1152

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~~Day 21~~

~~David~~

"Oh, I get it." He pushed the spike to the side, and it did bend, barely, right at the skin. "It's not hard all the way through. I figured it'd be like your horns."

Caera shook her head, and sighed as she relaxed on the ground, a long, sexy sigh. She was on her side, legs and arms out to the side, exactly like a cat would when lying down like that, in that completely relaxed way. It was adorable. It almost made him forget she looked like a big wingless dragon with a mostly human face, who just also happened to have a slightly feline body shape.W@w.n@ve|w@Ŕm.c@M

He pressed down on the hard skin and muscle between two of her back spikes with his elbow, and leaned into it, hard. At one point he had to get up and press all his weight down on the elbow, until the muscle underneath loosened. Caera outright moaned at one point, and her tail bounced against the ground, its tip wagging.

The spikes on her back had a decent amount of space between them, big as they were. And it surprised him how much he could bend where they connected to her spine, despite how hard the spikes were. It made sense. If the spikes were rigid at the connection point, all it'd take would be one bad fall or getting snagged on a rock or something and Caera might break her spine. But these had bend to them at the connection, like a really tough tree branch.

"Feel better?" he asked.

She nodded as she rolled back onto her hands and feet, stretched out classic cat style, and then rolled back onto her side, back spikes aimed at him once again.

"Yeap. More, please."

He laughed, and got to work.

The four of them still hid in their cave, and after a day of zero nearby activity, they felt a little more comfortable with relaxing. He still had his armor on, and even had his big sword he could barely use nearby, just in case. Unbroken, but still, better than nothing. Caera had taken off a few chunks of her armor, the black plates that covered her chest and bits of her back.

Talk of ancient languages, or saving Mia, killing Diogo and Tacitus, and killing Cainites, was all put on hold for a day or two to just sit around and recover.

Dao and Jes sat behind him about ten feet away, still in their armor save for the parts on their damaged limbs. The satyr's right arm and left leg weren't as swollen anymore, but she made effort to avoid moving them. Same for Jes's right ankle and wing. They said they needed another day before they could risk using those limbs, and another day after that before climbing any mountains. And another day after that again before they could risk fighting. A long time to heal by demon standards. They'd been bad breaks.

Which of course had them all thinking about one thing. A giant invisible monster hunting David.

"No signs of the monster yet," David said as he drilled his elbow between Caera's shoulders.

"Nope. Whatever it was, it went away when it realized it couldn't touch you, or even lift up a rock without it breaking apart. I'm guessing it wasn't easy for it to even... exist, or whatever it was doing, considering it didn't walk away. It just stopped being there."

"Agreed. Whatever it was, it went poof. I mean, even more poof than being invisible. Think it'll find me again?"

"It found you walking a random path in the mountains," Caera said. "So, maybe. But you were out in the open where anyone could see you, too. If I had to guess, hiding in a hole like this will keep you safe for a while."

"A guess," Jes said, with a quiet slap of her tail on the floor. "A big guess."

Dao clicked and chirped, and poked at Jes with her good arm.

"Hey, I'm just making sure we don't forget this is some crazy shit we've gotten ourselves into. The original plan was to just kill Diogo, remember? And maybe keep David as Dao's new pet. But now we're getting into some heavy shit! David's got an invisible Godzilla chasing him, and he can apparently read the ancient language, which is just all sorts of fucking weird." So much for putting talking about that stuff on hold.

"Don't forget the memory thing," he said, half laughing as he lowered his elbow down to a groove between the next back spike. Better to laugh at crazy, overwhelming shit, than let it destroy you, according to Mia. He had to agree, at this point.

"And the memory thing!" Jes said. "No one picks up new memories from eating a human's heart, or demon's. And Caera said there's no runes mentioning anything happening like that anywhere. So... yeah!" She threw up her arms. "That's a lot of really weird shit, fresh meat!"

"Preaching to the choir."

"I've seen a lot of strange things," Caera said. "Three years ago, Kia, Marquez, and I went hunting, and we found some old tunnels. It took us deep underground. Met Renato again."

"Renato, the tetrad?" Jes asked.

"Yeah, old friend. He was hiding out, avoiding Zel."

Jes snorted and laughed. "Ballsy."

"He knew I liked exploring old tunnels, and he pointed me down one. I found a giant chamber deep deep in the ground, with tunnels connecting to it from many sides, but no way to get to the other tunnels, or the bottom of the chamber. And at the bottom, were statues of demons. Dozens, maybe hundreds of them, all in fighting poses against each other, some with weapons, some not." She groaned softly as David ground his elbow into a tight muscle. "Each one of them was made of metal, many standing in a river of lava cutting across the bottom of the chamber. Each of them was huge. Bigger than tetrad demons."

Dao clicked once.

"Yeah, bigger," Caera said, "each as big as... Belor."

Jes and Dao both sucked in a breath.

"Children of the Old Ones? Statues of them?" Jes asked.

"Must have been. And with those runes David read about Belial, I'm guessing they were children of Belial. Or, monuments to the children of Belial."

David almost whistled, but decided against it. Just because they hadn't seen another demon, hellbeast, or human in the past day didn't mean there weren't any nearby who might hear something like a whistle leaking out of their cave.wW(w).n@ve|w@Ŕm.c@M

"Someone made the statues?" he asked.V@w@.n@ve|@o(r).M.c@M

Caera shrugged. "Or Hell grew them. She does like to pay tribute to really big events. Kia, Marquez, and I found a few other things like that, other statues Hell grew. There's a few of Valzanal around, last ruler of Death's Grip before Zel took over."

He smiled. If he asked, she'd go on and on about the Valzanal, and about all the crazy things Caera had found in Hell. She really had a passion for it, and it was so damn weird to see that in a demon. Jes just wanted to get revenge, and enjoy life, eating fighting and fucking. Dao seemed perfectly happy to stick with Jes in that endeavor. Caera was different. She had a curiosity about stuff, passion. It was very human.

Or rather, she'd had a passion.