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"Caera, can I..." How would Mia word this? "What happened? I mean, with Kia and Marquez." Not like that. She would not have worded it like that. She'd have found a much smoother, better way to ask that that didn't risk him getting eviscerated by an angry giant cat dragon lady.

Jes winced so loud he heard her, and Dao clicked quietly a few times *www.n(ə)veɪwɔrM.ðɔm*

Sighing, Caera's tail stopped tapping the floor. Still facing away from him, she took a deep breath and shook her head.

"You really are a blunt fucker, David," she said.

"I am, yeah. Sorry. If you don't--"

"I told you Cainites killed them."

"I know. I just..." Why did he have to open his big mouth?

Silence set on them for a while, a big cold wet blanket. It wasn't the first time David had said something stupid like this. First words out of his mouth when a fellow middle school student had said they'd been to a funeral: 'whose?' Mia hadn't been too happy about that.

But he had to know. He always had to know. *Ww.móvɛɪwɔrM.©©m*

"They were following me on one of my crazy, stupid exploring trips. There's a lot of tunnels in Death's Grip, and like you saw in that tunnel yesterday, some of them have runes hinting about the things that'd happened here. I also wanted to just... avoid Zel and her bailiffs." She sat up and faced away from him, almost like a cat giving him the cold shoulder. Slowly, she raised a hand and rubbed on her shoulder where a piece of black armor was strapped. The horde mark was hidden underneath. "They wanted to hide from her, too, probably because of all the horror stories I told them about what it was like, being summoned for a horde."

David looked back at Jes and Dao, but both them looked just as surprised as him.

"We were exploring a ruin, deep under one of the mountains. There was a lot of stuff there, some sort of old... I don't know, cathedral I guess, carved into the rock underground. I think it was a worship sight, for Belial."

"Belial," he said. That name was coming up a lot lately.

"We didn't realize Cainites had hidden inside until we were already in the cathedral, but we were sneaking out, hadn't been spotted yet. But then... a fucking angel came out of nowhere, right up to the cathedral, marching forward like nothing and no one could hurt them. And since Cainians are convinced they can ascend or whatever, if they kill and eat an angel, you can guess what happened."

She half turned, and looked at David in the corner of her eye. Even with her demon face, beautiful and slightly cat like, slightly dragon like, he could see the sadness there, no Mia needed.

"It turned into a shit show. Chaos. We tried to get out of there, but the cathedral had hallways that went below we didn't know about. More humans poured up, dozens, and caught us as we tried to sneak out during the fight. I... tried to fight them off, but there were too many. We got swarmed. Kia was a gorgala, and Marquez was a vratorin. They knew how to handle themselves, but... but not like I did."

Oh god he shouldn't have asked. Mia would have clubbed him upside the head for making Caera bring this up.

But, maybe not? It didn't take much prodding. Maybe she wanted to talk about it? It wasn't like demons could go to each other and talk about their lives, their struggles or trials and shit. Far as he could tell, Jes and Dao's relationship was unique.

"That... fucking sucks," he said.

Caera laughed, quietly, but a laugh was still better than the sad, guilty face she had.

"Yeah, it does."

"What happened to the angel?"

"He killed a bunch of the Cainites, more than I ever could, but there were hundreds. He left. I still don't know why he was there for sure."

David nodded, and looked down. Eye contact was tough for him in normal circumstances, let alone after making someone dredge up a shit memory where they blamed themselves for getting their friends killed. He didn't need Mia to tell him Caera blamed herself, too, at least partly.

"I... I'm surprised you told me all that," he said, squirming a bit and tapping his fingers on his knees. "You really shoulda just told me to back off. I, uh, sometimes I don't really get personal boundaries like that, you know? I'm--"

"A dumbass," Jes said, rolling her eyes.

Dao clicked once, but from the way she nodded, she'd agreed with Jes. So much for having the satyr in his corner.

Caera chuckled and shrugged. "Yeah, well, I gotta treat you nice if you're gonna help me, right? Get some Cainites killed, and read some more old runes." *Ww.nɔvɛɪwɔrM.©©m*

"True," he said, smiling and nodding. Thank god the awkwardness passed quickly. Demons were awesome like that.

Caera turned to face him before sitting like an upright cat again, arms straight down in front of her between her knees.

"You're a lot more awkward than your sister, you know that? You really suck at the whole 'talking' thing."

He tried to roll his eyes, or look annoyed or something, but Caera sat right in front of him, four feet away, with her large breasts squished together between her arms. And since she'd taken off her chest armor so he could have access to her back, that was a lot of naked skin on display.

"... yes," he said, after a few seconds of staring.

Caera laughed again, much brighter than before.

"You are the fucking worst."

"Uh, what? Oh, sorry. I mean... yeah, I--ack!"

Caera pounced him. A gentle pounce, a slow one, so he didn't bash his head against the ground, but he still ended up on his back with a giant tiger lady straddling him, and her clawed hands pressing down on his shoulders.

"But just like your sister, you're nice, and you actually seem to give a shit. Pretty damn rare down here. The only humans we ever see really with any kind of empathy are in the scrying pool."

"R-Right..." He gulped as he stared up at the muscular, deadly woman, and her huge breasts over his head.

Dao clicked a few times, chirped, and giggled.

"Exactly," Caera said. "No wonder Dao's keeping you as her pet. You are so damn adorable, I just want to squeeze you until you pop, and eat you."

Oh shit.

"I think that's called cute aggression?" Jes said. "Heard about it in the scrying pool."

David tilted his head back enough to look up at Jes. Her big raptor feet were literally beside his temples.

"Uh, I think that's... more for things like kittens and puppies," he said.

Caera grinned down at him, lowered her chest down, and pressed her breasts into his chest. They were getting redder, and softer.

"You don't think I look at you like a kitten or puppy?"

Dao clicked a couple times before giggling again, nodding. *Ww.(n)ɔvɛɪwɔrM.©©m*