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But, Mia really was burnt out on being scared all the time. Fuck being scared. Plus she had a bodyguard now, and he'd been an enforcer at a dueling pit before that. Surely he'd be able to kick serious ass if he had to.

"Kasimiro is a sarkarin," Mia said. Considering the breed name, and how Kas looked, she didn't even have to guess that other humans probably called his race sharks. "What are you?"

Acelina clicked several times as she turned her head, and aimed her eyeless face over her shoulder back at her.

"If it weren't for my love of Zel, I would punish you."

"Yeah well, like you said, Zel wants to keep me around. Besides, not like I'm asking a horrible question."

Acelina clicked once, hard and loud, as she looked back to the path.

"I am zotiva. But many call us spire mothers, or simply mothers."

"Spire mothers?"

She didn't answer. Mia was tempted to push her on it, but considering how much Acelina didn't like her, getting one answer was pretty good.

But maybe she could go for two anyway?

"How do you know Diogo?" she asked.

Acelina stopped, half turned, and glared down at Mia. How she managed to do that so well with no eyes was a mystery.

"Do you know what I do to unruly children?"

"Uh..."

Kas clicked a few times, and gently tapped his much, much larger tail on the floor. Whatever he said, Acelina took it in stride, grumbling, and resumed the tour.

Remnants dangled from the walls of flesh and bone, groaning and screaming, but as they went deeper into the tunnel, the amount of remnants faded to almost nothing. A few still dangled from the giant rib bones ceiling, but it did seem like there were a lot less of them. But as if Hell couldn't dare let Mia get comfortable, the floor she'd carefully been navigating, jumping from big bone to big bone, stopped having bones to walk on. All that remained, was a floor of flesh.

She sucked in a breath as she forced herself to look down. The floor wasn't skin, but a giant slab of muscle, not bleeding but it still felt exactly like muscle, warm and pulsating. It was alive. God, every step she took really hammered her with that strange reality, that Hell was a-fucking-live.

And somehow, she still didn't see the next room coming.

There were holes in the walls of varying sizes, all of them close to the ground--er, flesh floor. And the holes pulsed slowly, same as the floor did, just more obviously, more like an... orifice, that wanted to push something out. And one of them did.

That was an egg.

"What the fuuuuck..." Mia took a small step forward, but froze as another demon moved around the room. A big room, like the others, but this one was covered in eggs. Dozens. Hundreds. Each egg sat on the floor in a groove in the muscle, varying shapes and sizes, with some eggs fighting for space. Some eggs were tiny, like a loaf of bread, others were a few feet tall, ovals.

They didn't even have the courtesy to be white eggs, or maybe blue, or have colorful dots on them. Nope, all black, with some red blemishes on them. They looked moist, too, as if someone had dipped them in a blood bath.

Another one of the demons like Acelina, a spire mother, walked among the eggs, squatted down, adjusted them, and moved along to do the same to more. Just like Acelina, this one was ridiculously tall, ridiculously curvy with an extremely tiny waist, and all sorts of scary jewelry. Every step she took was the most exaggerated, sensual, beautiful thing, with a hip sway that was hypnotizing. Combined with the chains, especially the belly chain and the skulls dangling from it, it was practically a dance.www.noveltworm.com

"Pavia," Acelina said, strutted up to her fellow zotiva, and gestured back to Mia and Kas. "This is the little irka Zel told us about." Irka?

Pavia looked past Acelina to Mia, and showed the exact same sort of crazy, scary smile that would have made Pennywise proud, in a black void face.

"She truly is unmarked."www.noveltworm.com

"Zel didn't exaggerate," Acelina said. "Unfortunately she didn't mention the tiny ingrate has a tongue."

Mia folded her arms and glared, which sent Pavia into a fit of laughter.

"Delightful," Pavia said, and she and Acelina walked over to join them. "Have you tasted her yet, Kas? She is a tiny thing, and delicious looking. I bet she would squirm."

Okay, so Acelina was a bitch, but Pavia seemed to be a flirty sort, and her grins looked somewhere between evil monster smile, and actually kinda seductive. It was hard to tell, considering all Mia could see of their mouths was the big white sharp teeth. But Pavia carried herself with a little less pompousness, and once she was close enough to Mia, she squatted down in front of her.

"I haven't slept with any demon," Mia said, doing her best to look at Pavia in her obsidian, featureless face, and not look down at her insane curves. Like Zel and Acelina, she had nipple piercings, and had three chains of different lengths connecting them. The red silk hanging over her tits was too see-through to hide any of it.

"Oh my. Not even Adron? I heard he helped escort you here. He is quite the mischievous fellow." Pavia said 'mischievous' the same way a woman back on Earth would have said 'fun and sexy'. And Adron was definitely that.

"Diogo wanted me unspoiled, for Zel." It took effort to say that with the most deadpan, serious tone and facial expression Mia could muster. It was meant to sound like a bad thing, because being treated like some sort of prize, like a piece of meat, was finally starting to piss Mia off, now that the fear of being taken to some mysterious queen named 'Zel' was wearing off. And Mia mostly succeeded in making it sound like the horrible thing it was.

But Pavia just chuckled, nodded, and stood back up.

"You do have an aura, little Mia. I am sure Zel will find ways to exploit that." Wonderful. "But," Pavia continued, "you are in luck. Zel has been in a good mood, since your arrival. You are a puzzle piece she's been missing."

"I'm not a puzzle piece. I'm a person."

The three demons looked between each other, and Acelina grumbled as she clicked a couple times, gesturing to Kas again.

Kas clicked back, slowly lifted his huge tail, put it between him and the two boob ladies, and gently pushed Mia away while taking a step forward. Okay, yeap, she'd crossed a line, having the nerve to say she was a human being. Pavia's evil little grin was almost kinda cute, but Acelina's was a full-on sneer.

Time to defuse the situation.[www.Noveltworm.com](mailto:www.noveltworm.com)

"So, uh, eggs. Coming out of... the... walls..." She gestured to the flesh walls, their orifices that were--yeap, those were moist orifices. And oh god, one of them was laying another egg right now, a small one.

Pavia clicked in her throat a few times, high pitched, maybe even excited, as she walked back into the room and its center.

"Yes yes. Come, see."

Acelina eyelessly glared down at Mia and Kas, but after a while she stepped back and followed her fellow spire mother.www.noveltworm.com

"I don't understand," Mia said. "Where are the eggs coming from? How did they get made?"

"Betrayers never understand. I suppose you wouldn't either." Acelina stood near Pavia, adjusted her wings, and gestured out to the walls. "Hell is alive."