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"I'm..." Mia gulped as she looked down at the muscle under her feet, the rib bones on the walls, and the slow, heavy, deep thud that accompanied each pulse and flex of the flesh walls. A heartbeat? "Like, alive alive?"

Pavia clicked once, nodding. "She is alive, and she births everything that lives within Hell."

Mia rubbed her arms as she slowly looked at the eggs around her. "Can I... touch one?"

Acelina grumbled, but both mothers eventually nodded.

Mia smiled as she squatted down in front of one of the smaller eggs. The walls hadn't placed it there, the mothers had. Even as Mia touched it, and shivered at the wet, hot sensation of the weird bony texture, both mothers crouched down in front of some eggs of their own and rotated them. Others, they made sure got a little more contact with the fleshy floor, and others they moved closer or further from other eggs. Spire mothers. They took care of the eggs.

"What kind of demons are in here?" she asked.

"Most kinds," Pavia said. She approached one of the orifices, and effortlessly slashed and killed a remnant who'd had the audacity to grow too close. As always, the remnant collapsed in a gory mess of soft flesh and easily broken bone, and Pavia used her wing to wipe it away. The blood soaked into the flesh floor even faster than it would have on Hell's rock and stone surface outside.

"Most?"

"Older breeds," Acelina said, and she gestured to herself, Pavia, and Kas, "they are birthed less often with each passing century, while the younger breeds forever spawn in greater numbers." She gestured to the small egg Mia touched. "And the imp in that egg will join their ridiculous swarm."[www.NovelWorld.com](#)

"You can tell it's an imp?"

Grumbling all the more, Acelina shrugged. "I am a spire mother." As if that explained everything.

"Uh, and they hatch here?"

"No," Pavia said. "We move them to the hatching pit when it's time."

"Hatching pit?"

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The egg room had been well cared for, with Pavia and Acelina, and probably the other two spire mothers, constantly walking around, killing remnants, and rotating the eggs to keep everything perfect. They wanted to make sure all the eggs hatched.

The hatching pit was completely different. It took them a little while to get to it, and the closer they got, the louder the background groans and screeches became. Screams, but not the scared kind. Moans, but not the sexy kind. Screams of fighting, moans of exertion.

It was a huge room. Beyond huge. Football stadium huge, a colossal room filled with enormous rocks, cages dangling from chains and filled with remnants, and enormous white spikes of bone that stuck out from the flesh walls. Movement was everywhere. Demons jumped from rock to rock, big and small, squeaking and yelling and roaring. Demons ran between the rocks, pushing each other out of the way.

The little demons fought, and ripped each other to pieces.[www.NovelWorld.com](#)

Mia covered her mouth, eyes wide, staring at the pit below her. It was like the fighting pit Zel had shown her yesterday, but so much bigger, much much deeper, and inside it were hundreds of demons and empty egg shells. Bones littered the floor, as did corpses, and tiny imps and grems chewed at the flesh of bigger, dead demons while young tiger ladies, vrats, succubi and incubi, brutes, gargoyles, and a few other kinds drifted around.

For some reason, it reminded Mia of high school, with cliques and stuff, except the cliques were a mix of demon types. Maybe hatchlings who'd hatched at similar times? However they came to form their groups, it wasn't breed specific, and the imps and grems didn't seem all that interested in following them. The little rascals hopped around, banging bones together like drum sticks sometimes, chuckling super evilly like anyone would expect from a stereotypical small demon troublemaker. The other demons were a lot more careful, but even they still roamed around, chatting, climbing on big rocks or bigger piles of empty egg shells and bones, before they got into fights with other demons.

Oh god it got worse. Mia stared down at the huge pit, and the shadows along the floor. They weren't shadows. They were holes. There was a network of tunnels.

"How... How big is this place?" she asked.

"Big," Acelina said. "There's at least a few miles of tunnel, though none of them lead to rooms as big as this one. This is the only entrance and exit to the hatching pit."

"You put the eggs in here?"

"Yes."

"And they hatch and... and... what? Demons just run around, killing each other?"

Acelina grinned at her with that big scary smile of hers. "Indeed. We might throw them a soul every so often, but for the most part, they kill each other to get their food."[www.NovelWorld.com](#)

"Oh god. That's fucking horrible." Mia clutched her stomach. The floor of the pit was flesh, but all around the pit the enormous walls were made of metal, and were perfectly smooth. No one got out of the pit unless someone helped them out.

Kas shrugged, clicked once, and gestured down at the hundreds of demons wandering around, some going down into the tunnels, some coming out.

"It's how we earn the right to be adults," he said.

"It's still fucking horrible. Why not just... let them all out and do their thing out there?" Mia gestured back to the path they'd walked in from.

"That's how things used to be done," Acelina said, "and Hell was chaos, so the tale goes."

Much as it was sickening, watching young demons drift around in a giant pit, fighting each other and killing each other, Acelina made a point. How horribly chaotic would Hell be if there were even more demons everywhere, and they had to kill each other constantly just for an opportunity at a meal? It was still sickening, but it wasn't hard to picture Hell so fucked up and horrible that the demons wouldn't even have been capable of communication, regressed to nothing more than starving animals, forever fighting for food among waves and waves of newborns.[www.NoVWorld.com](#)

"How long ago did you start... doing things like this?" She gestured down at a gargoyle girl who sat on a big rock by herself, half as tall as the gargoyles Mia had seen before. Half as tall, but she didn't exactly look like a child, either. Proportionally she looked older than she must have been, almost like childhood was skipped? Or at least, partially skipped?