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The burning bushes brightened again, the fire reached higher, and the roaring sound grew louder. Hot wind cut through the cathedral, and it howled. The runes on the pages brightened too, and Mia winced as the light brought tears to her eyes.

Zel didn't turn the page. With teasing claws, she teased the dark stone, eyes locked onto the glowing runes she couldn't read.

"This place," Zel said, gesturing around with one of her other many hands, "was a place of worship. Demons paid tribute to our most unholy here, and to his nine children."

"Tribute?"

Nodding, Zel ran yet another hand along the floor, and her claws made quiet ting sounds as they clicked over the bones. Oh god, the bones.

"I feel like... like reading this is casting a spell?"

Zel's grin grew big enough to expose her fangs, and she slowly turned the page.

"Come," Mia said, continuing to read for some reason, "children of Hell and Belial, crafted by my hand. Children of the Great Tower. Children of sin. Come, my agents of justice. Prepare for war."

~~~~~W@.n.Vellw6rM.c(m)~~~~~

~~David~

"Alright, I got it this time." Nodding, he pressed his whole body up against the boulder.

It hadn't been easy, getting a rock big enough into a place where they had a bit of a cliff overhang, but they did. One small rock he rested the sword against, and the big boulder was pushed up to it so the hilt and a bit of blade rested underneath it.

The plan was simple. Drop a big rock on the sword from above. The big rock David pressed against would stay over the bottom half of the sword. The lever rock in the middle would apply the pressure needed to snap the blade in half so it wouldn't be so damn heavy.

Or it'd snap the blade off at the hilt and make it useless. But he couldn't use a sword that weighed at least fifty fucking pounds.

Fifty pounds. Divide by two point two. Twenty-one? Twenty-two kilograms? He did the pointless math in his head as he quadruple checked the position of the rock and sword, held up a hand, and aligned them with the giant rock teetering on the edge overhead.

He gave the thumbs up, and backed up around a bit of the cliff path. A nasty engineering accident in his youth had taught him the value of putting a wall between him and any potential explosion or breaking object. Thankfully he, and his guardian at the time hadn't been injured, but Derek's garage did get a big nasty dent in it.

Caera rolled the rock off the edge. Crack, crack, silence, crash.

"Think it worked?" Jes said, chuckling as she stood up. He held out a hand and gently pushed her back behind the rock wall. "Hey, what the--"

Clang. It'd taken a few seconds, but something had come up, and then come down. Much as Hell or the afterlife didn't seem to follow many rules of biology and whatnot, it did seem to at least care about physics a little. Hopefully enough for breaking a sword.

"Things bounce," he said, which of course earned the biggest rolling of the eyes from the gargoyle. He laughed. Dao did too, some chirps and clicks mixing into the lovely sound.

All four of them gathered around the rock, and David let out a long groan as Caera pushed the big boulder off the hilt. Of course it didn't work the way he'd wanted it to. The blade had broken, but way too close to the grip. Dao clicked sadly a few times as she picked up the top half of the blade, sitting ten feet away, while David stared down at the grip in his hands, and the whole three inches of blade sticking out of it. The blade had broken at an angle, so at least the sword had a point, but the blade was shorter than a dagger, and weighed a good fifteen, maybe twenty pounds.

It was now borderline useless. The blade was just too damn short.

Dao clicked softly as she tossed the blade aside, came up to him, and patted his shoulder. www.n(o)Vellw6rM.(c)oM

"Don't worry about it," Jes said. "No one's expecting you to fight any demons, unless it's an imp or grem. Or maybe an incubus or succubus; they're not much stronger than humans."

He threw the grip away into a nearby cliff wall, and it clanked and clunked, a bit louder than was probably a good idea. They were supposed to be hiding out.

"I guess," he said as he leaned against one of the boulders they'd moved. "The armor is heavy enough. I used to wear a weighted vest when working out, all the time, but it never got easy." x(w)w.M@veLw6rM.cOm

"You're tiny," Caera said, nodding.

"I'm not... tiny."

"You are so tiny." With a playful grin, Jes came up to him, and used her good wing to hook him around the back and shoulders. Jes was over a foot taller than him, and Caera was over a foot taller than Jes. He was tiny.

"I am not tiny."

Dao clicked a few times, came up, pulled him away from Jes with her good arm, and rubbed a horn against the side of his head. The two girls laughed.

Caera got on all fours in front of him and poked him in the stomach with a claw.

"I don't know how we're going to kill Diogo and stop Tacitus, or get those Cainite bastards, but it doesn't involve you wielding a sword and fighting, David. Just focus on staying alive."

Jes poked at the tiger lady with her tail. "You just want him for your rune reading crap."

"Yes, I do. Learning about the origins of who we are, why Lucifer created us, what happened to them and the Old Ones, you don't care about any of that?"

"Nope." Jes slipped behind David, hugged him, set her chin on his shoulder, and grinned down at Caera. "But I know Dao wants to keep her pet alive. And I know, no matter how much I bitch and complain, Dao won't be happy until she knows he is."

David smiled, but didn't turn around to look at the gargoyle. Instead he gave his smile to Dao, who returned it, leaned in, kissed his cheek, and rubbed her horn on his head some more.

Caera slapped Jes's tail away. "Unless the two of you want to fuck him again, stop getting all over him. He can't control the aura, and I can already feel it growing again."

Jes and Dao laughed. David said nothing. Jes was in a lot better mood now, after having sex again, and he was happy keeping it that way. Maybe she was thinking more clearly now? Maybe sex was how to keep her temper under control? Ha, no way. But whatever it was, she was being a lot nicer than before.

"You girls... You know I'm unbelievably grateful, right? I mean, yes, the sex was amazing and you're all super hot, but... but I'm in Hell, and you three are the luckiest thing that's..." Shit, what would Mia say? "The most amazing..." Nah, she wouldn't say it like that, too corny. "I just... I want to say..."

"Holy shit you suck at this," Jes said, and she kissed his cheek, right where Dao had kissed it. "Just use your aura and seduce us."

"Again?"

Dao clicked a few times, hopped in place once on her good leg, and nodded, big grin on her face.