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The door opened. Mia jumped back and did her best to look casual. She failed.

Zel stood there, a smile on her face, with three large, metal rod things in her grip. She had more than enough hands to wield them.

"Little soul, have you..." Slowly, Zel's smile faded, and she tilted her head to the side as she glared down at her. "I told you to work on breaking the beast, not seducing him."

"I uh... I tried, but..."

"Your ability to arouse demons is of little use to me. Your potential is in your ability to control and manipulate." She took a step toward Mia, and aimed one of the metal rods at her. Her face had changed. "Do not misunderstand me, little soul. I did not give you a request. I gave you a command. If you do not obey, I will see if I can force you to obey." With her free hand, she gestured to one of the black rods. An amber stone sat on the end between sharp prongs, glowing with light, and radiating heat.

"Sorry! I'm sorry, I just... I got distracted, and--"

Zel walked up to Mia, hips swaying, each step emphasized by her hooves. Slowly, she crouched down in front of Mia, and gestured she come to her@wW.m0(v)éLWorm.Com

Mia hesitated. Mistake. Zel snapped out her free hand, grabbed Mia's wrist, and yanked her forward. The look in the beautiful demon's mask-like, smooth face shifted from calm, to icy, and stabbed a dozen holes through Mia's guts. She raised one of the amber-tipped rods, and brought it within an inch of Mia's face. Hot hot hot.

"These are tools of the spire. This one, I can use to seal the call of the horde, or other desires I summon from the spire, should I need the spire's aura to last for some time within my soldiers. This one"--she brought up another rod, tipped with amber again, but larger, no sharp prongs--"can summon the power of the spire's desire in a small area. This one"--she waved the other one, a shorter rod covered in spikes and tipped with jagged blades--"is something the previous queen crafted. Valzanal.Ww.N0vE@worm.com

"Valzanal?"

"Indeed. One of the most powerful fujara tetrad. She held Death's Grip for thousands of years before her death in the Spires War. She was an avid fan of torture, as well. She hung people upside down and let them drown in their blood, and she danced in the dripping crimson. She raped men using her sin, often to death, and she ripped women in half from the crotch up. She..." With an almost happy sigh, Zel tapped one of the metal rods against her hip. She liked what she was describing, or at least liked the idea of a woman in charge doing that sort of stuff. "If you explore the tunnels around and beneath Death's Grip, you will find the monuments Hell grew in her honor."

"Wait, what? Hell grew monuments?"

Zel grinned, but it wasn't the flirtatious, playful kind, not anymore. A part of her seemed to be happy with the memory of her predecessor. Another part of her seemed to dance on the precipice of getting angry with Mia.

"Hell listens, young soul. She listens, and on the waves of her existence, the vibration of her music, she plays her song. The flesh, the stone, the blood, the bone, the metal, the sky and fire and the incinerating heat of her embrace, they bend to the song."

"I... don't hear any song." Mia gulped. Vibrations. Music. Maybe she did hear a song?

Her words definitely earned a frown from Zel, though. Maybe she'd been hoping Mia could.

"Not a literal song, soul." Oh, never mind. "But yes, Hell adapts to the things she hears and feels. Monuments to Valzanal show her statue, and include the remains of slaughter and pain. Skeletons, some real, some grown by Hell, litter the tunnels and speak of the pain she wrought. The cries of her victims scarred the flesh and memory of Hell for thousands, and perhaps for the next hundred thousand years or more."

"Scary."

With an increasingly wicked, angry smile, Zel pointed the rod with the sharp tip toward Mia's face.

"The demons and souls I have skewered upon the spikes at my door are but a small taste of the respect I pay Valzanal. And there is one thing, one thing specifically, that draws my ire and asks me to bring Death's Grip back to the days of the Third War, and the pain Valzanal brought."

Uh oh.wwW.NoVeLWorm.Com

"|--"

"To be ignored!" Zel stood up quick, and Mia jumped back with a squeak as Zel swung the weapon. Mia covered her head, but managed to see Zel turn from underneath her arm. With a shriek of rage, Zel stabbed the weapon into Vinicius's gut.

The leash Zel had used yesterday on Vinicius seemed like the worst torture Mia could imagine. She was a moron. Vinicius tried to outright scream, an animal, alien sound, but the chain wrapped around his snout stopped him from opening his mouth. The half roar half scream muffled between pinned teeth, the chains rattled as every limb fought for freedom, and his muscles bulged with futility. His tail shook, his wide eyes stared to the ceiling with blind agony, and his spikes and horns rubbed against the metal wall behind him hard enough to leave deep scratches.

Zel yanked the rod out of the beast's gut. It dripped with blood, and a hole the size of its tip remained in Vinicius's stomach, oozing red that boiled, not burning but somehow sizzling. With a snarl and death stare, she pointed the drenched tool toward Mia, and the blood on its amber tip steamed.

"If you do not take my orders, every one of them, as if they are a matter of life and death from now on, I will teach you what this tool of Valzanal's feels like, little soul, and you will wish for death each and every day until I am satisfied! Understood?"

Mia lowered her hands, forced her eyes away from the tool, back up to Zel's face, and swallowed down the barbed rock in her throat:wwW.n0(v)éLWorm.Com

"Understood."

Happy smile returning, Zel nodded, and gestured to the bleeding beast.

"Now, let us try again. These tools will help." Her voice had changed, too. From rage and hate, back to fun and almost flirtatious.

"Are... Are they all torture tools?"

Zel waved around one of the other tools. "This one is unique. It will force the will of the spire, my will, my order, upon his mind, and it will torture his mind to do it. I will use it, and you will use your aura. Now."

After a heavy nod, Mia reached into herself, and looked for the aura she'd found earlier.