

1217

~~Day 25~~

~~David~~

"They were here," Caera said. She dragged her claw on the ground hard enough to make a scratch. "Near Adam's Back. Renato might still be there, spending his days and nights doing nothing but fucking."

"How's he keep everyone fed?" David asked. He sat beside her, the two of them in their armor and drawing a really shitty map in the stone using the tiger lady's claws. A shitty map was better than no map. *WwW.m.rpO(w)orm.čo(m)*

"Lots of humans getting dumped into Hell regularly. We'll probably see another portal open up soon. At least one has already, nearby. They come and go pretty quick."

He nodded. The portal that'd eaten him and his sister had shown up pretty damn fast, and it'd lasted in the sky, what, a few minutes? Then it'd vanished.

"I wonder how many times it drops humans off in Hell as a whole. Over fifty million people die every year, and--"

"Fifty million?" Caera asked, raising a black eyebrow. Not really an eyebrow, so much as a darker patch of skin that looked like an eyebrow, but it fit the part. "How do you know that?" *wW.W.nOveOWORm.čOm*

"I looked it up once."

"Why?"

He blinked at her. "Why not?"

She blinked back at him, before laughing and shaking her head. *Ww(w).mOveLworM.čOm*

"Okay, so, fifty million a year. How many of those people you think deserve to go to Hell, to die here, and then spend dozens, hundreds of cycles being tormented and killed over and over as a remnant?"

"I don't know. Maybe one in twenty?"

Caera laughed again, but it had a darker sound this time.

"You think one out of every twenty people go to Hell, and the other nineteen people go to Heaven?"

"I mean, yeah?"

Jes sat nearby, wings pulled around in front of her so she could clean them with her claws. And of course, she paused her grooming routine to laugh at him, complete with a pointing of the tip of her tail.

"You really overestimate how good people are, David. So many humans, so fucking many, are absolute shits. And I don't mean jerks who are just apathetic or mean. I mean real, absolute shits who would let you drown for five bucks."

He returned her laugh with a sad frown. "Come on, humanity isn't that bad."

"We don't have information to prove it," Caera said, "but, down here, the idea is it's... a lot higher than one in twenty."

"Yeah but you're in Hell," he said. "More humans coming to Hell means more food, so I imagine most demons like to think humans are coming down here in droves, right? Pretty biased."

"Sure. But you don't think you're being naive, too?"

"I don't know."

She tried to smile, but it faded into a tired sigh.

"Remind me to show you in the scrying pools."

"What, they can show how many people are going to Hell?" *wW.W.nδ(v)OŁw(o)Om.črM*

"No, but if you ask something like 'show me someone in this area committing murder or rape or torture', it'll show you. You won't like what you find."

He winced. "No... No I guess I wouldn't."

The room grew silent. A peek over his shoulder showed Jes and Dao looking his way, listening, and while Jes had her usual 'yeah the surface sucks too, get used to it' face, Dao's softened into a sad frown. She crawled over to him, sat behind him, spread her legs around him so she could snuggle into his back, and hugged him. She wore no armor, but wasn't aroused either. Firm breasts pressed to his back, borderline hard, but the skin was soft enough they reminded him of a well worn, comfortable leather couch made of real leather. A strange feeling, not exactly sexy, but a sports bra wouldn't cut it considering how much jumping around and fighting demons had to do. Firm, nearly black skin worked better.

"For the love of Lucifer," Jes said, "stop babying him! He gets sad for one second and you're mother henning him."

"You know..." He laughed, shaking his head. "How much scrying pool do you watch to know what mother henning is?"

"I dunno. Human speech kinda bleeds over into Hell 'cause of them, and all the demons watching them, and... shut up."

Rolling her eyes, Caera pointed back at the ground, and drew some scratch marks indicating the inner and outer shore of Hell, this time more toward clockwise. She drew some mountains and valleys, too.

"This is where we fell." She tapped a claw between some lines. "Here's the Gorzen Eye. Here's Adam's Back." Her claw slowly moved further clockwise. "Here's where Renato was hiding, last I met him. If we need somewhere to hide, after we kill Diogo and get Mia, he might be able to help us." She tapped on the opposite side of her map. "Here's the border between Death's Grip and the Black Valley." She tapped on the other side of the map again, closer to Renato's hiding spot. "Here's where Kia, Marquez, and I were ambushed."

"If this is to scale, that'll take a couple weeks of solid trekking to reach. But the border with Black Valley is closer, maybe half that distance." And it was on the Black Valley border they expected to find the Damall. The two goals were in opposite directions.

The tregeera nodded. "We'll have to make a choice on which to do first."

David held his two hands in front of him, palm up. "On one hand, we might learn more about what's trying to kill me, and all the crazy shit going on, if we go look for the Damall. On the other hand, I owe you my life. I said I'd help you and I will."

After a strange deep purr, almost like a crocodile rumble, Caera slipped her big tail up onto his lap, and left it there. So of course he did the only reasonable thing. He put his hands on it, and worked his fingers between the spikes that lined its top.

"I've been looking for a way to kill those Cainites for years, David. I can wait a few extra weeks."

"You sure? That doesn't sound like very demon behavior."