

## 1225

She stormed off with her three rods, and closed the big metal doors behind her, again leaving Mia alone with the giant four-armed dragon demon.

"Okay," Mia said. "Okay. This time, I'm going to focus. I'm going to create this control aura, and... and..." Punish. Zel was going to punish her. She'd said it so matter-of-fact-ly, while her eyes had said a million things more, and images of evisceration ran through Mia's mind. Zel apparently had a fondness for stabbing people in the gut, where they were most vulnerable. Then again, she also had a thing for skewering people on spikes, up the crotch and out the mouth. And the better Mia got at understanding Zel, at understanding how her twisted, devious mind worked, the more Mia was convinced Zel enjoyed torture more than the demon queen let on.

The dialog, the offer of reward, of a carrot, it'd been an act. She wanted to hurt Mia, and the only reason she hadn't was because Mia was useful to her, for now.

Sighing, Mia brought up the runes in her mind again, the strange ones her brain couldn't wrap around, and the ones it could. What was the one her mind knew as the battle rune, weapons and armor? Batlam? Zel said runes had power, and she'd also said the angels used that one in battle. Maybe it could help her? *www.NoVèL@.Tmm.©óM*

She brought the symbol up in her mind, and... nothing. The same as before.

Was there a rune for control? No, didn't seem to be. What about the rune for aura? Yes, that one existed, but summoning it into her mind did nothing, either. A part of her had hoped the demon heart she'd eaten would have suddenly given her super powers, or the ability to use the runes, anything. Nope.

Stop stalling!

She reached down into herself, found the new muscle she could control, and plucked at the strings of whatever it was around her she was able to touch. Nothing. Right, she had to feel the thing she was trying to create, or plucking the strings did nothing. More like, her hidden fingers passed through the invisible strings, without actually plucking them.

She needed to get into the mood, the right frame of mind. A queen giving orders, controlling her soldiers, ruling a kingdom. A princess, being doted on by servants. An empress, ruling an empire.

A young girl, barely a woman, being ripped open by her master for not being able to do what she wanted.

"Fuck!" Mia threw up her hands and stomped around, before hugging herself and clutching her silk tight to her body. Silk Zel had given her, while all the other humans in the spire went around naked. Even from the start, Zel had been trying to convince Mia that the demon queen was nicer than she really was. Nice, by demon standards, at least. Nice enough she didn't seem like the sort who'd hang Mia upside down from the ceiling, slit her throat, and literally bath in the blood shower.

Zel's mask had started to crack. She was that kind of demon.

"Vinicius," she said, "will Zel... hurt me, if I don't do what she wants soon? I mean, she's already threatened me, I get that, but she also made it clear she's not going to torture me unless she has to. But now... now I think she's been lying to me, and trying to give me a false impression, you know? The way she worships Valzanal..." Mia grabbed her hair and pulled on it. "Oh god, if I can't do what she wants, she's going to use those rods on me and somehow make me do it, isn't it? Or maybe she'll just torture me the normal way like she does all the other demons!" She gestured to the door, and the dungeon beyond. "She'll risk killing me, so she can make me do what she wants, and... and..." *www.NoVèlwor(m).co@*

With a heavy head, she looked up at the giant demon. He was looking up at the ceiling in thought, or maybe listening for more of that deep thumping, but he looked back down at her, and slowly nodded once again.

"Fuck. Double fuck. I mean, I knew... and she even told me... but I just... I thought she'd keep me as her pet like she said, and... and..." *ww(w).NoVèLw©(r)m.cóM*

Vinicius rumbled.

"I know! I know, okay, I know I was just deluding myself. I thought I was safe, sorta, and that Zel would keep me alive or some shit. Kas and Adron thought so, too! I thought..." She threw up her hands. "She's going to torture me if I can't help her until I can, kill me if that doesn't work, and even if I do help her, she's going to kill me the moment I've done what she wants, isn't she? Kill me and eat my heart to see if she gets my power or something!" She didn't bother waiting for Vinicius's response. She paced around in a circle, clutching her cheeks. "Oh god I've been helping her all this time, convinced if I just did what she wanted she'd keep me alive, and... Fuuuuuuck I'm like one of those pathetic nobodies in movies, the ones who help the villain because the villain says they'll spare them if they do. The audience watching knows the villain is lying, and everyone thinks the nobody is a moron for believing the villain. I'm that nobody! I'm that moron!"

Vinicius tilted his head to the side, as much as the chains allowed *www.n(ó)ve#wó(r)m.cóM*

"You--oh god, I'm sorry. You've been locked up down here for so long, you've never seen a movie or anything in a scrying pool. I--fuck fuck fuck fuck what do I do? What do I do!? I can... I can try and make the aura, and at least stay alive and keep her happy for now. But that's not going to work forever. Adron and Kas are wrong. She's going to kill me. She's going to kill me." Funny how getting to talk to someone, even someone who couldn't really talk back beyond 'yes' or 'no', let her process her thoughts so much better.

"I have to do something! I have to... escape! Escape, I have to escape. Zel gives me a lot of freedom, because she thinks it'll keep me on her side. I have to use that. I have to get out of here. But right now, she's going to come back, and she's going to expect me to have made progress on this aura thing. Panicking! I'm panicking. I--"

Vinicius let out a heavy grunt, and moved. Mia squeaked and jumped back as the chains rattled, the links ground on each other, and the metal wall screamed with the harsh scratching of the beast's back spikes scraping against it.

"W-What're you--"

Vinicius's whole body flexed, muscles tensing to steel, as the creature fought against the chains harder. Blood oozed from the hole in his gut.

"Vinicius! What're you doing!? You can't escape... right?" No, he couldn't escape. He'd been locked down here for centuries. "You're going to hurt yourself! Stop it, come on, I--"

He growled, a harsh and mean sound, and he pushed harder. One side of his body pushed against the chains, but the other side of him pushed into the wall, including his head. The room quivered, and the chains vibrated, clinking against each other as Vinicius fought against them. One side of him pressed its spikes into the wall hard enough she was sure he was going to break a limb.