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Clicking a dozen times, Dao grabbed David by the ear, and reduced him to a bunch of 'ows' as she dragged him back down along their stomachs toward the lip of stone they peeked over. Sure enough, the big lizard, now without rider, was going crazy. It spun around, faced the hundreds of demons swarming around its feet, and embraced violence in a way only a honey badger would. Sheer, reckless insanity.

"It's a suicide mission for... all the demons the rider brought?" he asked. "And the hellbeast?"

"No idea," Caera said. "I don't see any way of them getting out. Even with aera armor, and that creature."

"The rider wouldn't come here just to kill Mia and then die," Jes said. "I mean, that doesn't make any sense, does it?"

Kill Mia. The words cut across his chest straight to his heart. Ice ran through his veins, and his lungs seized as he stared out at the waves and waves of demons throwing themselves at the dragon.

The demons didn't seem to mind giving into violence and dying in battle. Whether that was because of the sin auras they were releasing, turning the valley into a mosh pit gone rogue, or because demons just loved to fight that much, he didn't know. The girls with him weren't like that... except, they kinda were. Jes and Dao hadn't hesitated to kill those humans, the ones that'd attacked them, or theimps and grems on the day they met. Caera hadn't hesitated to kill those humans when she and David had gone hunting. And from the look on the tiger demon's face, she was itching to get in there and do some fighting. Same for Jes, even Dao, who both licked their fangs as they watched.

It wasn't that they were different than other demons, but made an effort to keep those same urges from controlling them.

He watched them, and smiled. He'd really gotten lucky with them, beyond lucky. But he wasn't going to sit here and wait for Mia to die.

Logic, out the window. Not a single intelligent thought going through his head, and he knew it. Just one thought, one stupid thought. His sister, his twin, the only person in the world who really knew him, was going to die unless he did something.

He shoved Dao hard enough she hit Caera, and the satyr chirped once in shock as David bolted over the edge. Somewhere in the back of his mind, a little piece of him was aware what he was doing was crazy. It screamed and yelled, told him to get back with the girls, but the tiny voice drowned underneath the roars of the battle.*w@w.(n)@v&Lwdr@.com*

Before him was the valley, huge and mostly flat, surrounded by mountains. There had to be at least a kilometer between him and the spire, and unfortunately, the hiding spot Caera had picked for them after the invisible monster attack meant each time their little group approached the tower, they approached it from the front, the same direction the rider had approached it from, putting his whole army in David's way. The only front-ish thing about it was the giant cave-like entrance at the base facing their way, but that looked as good an entrance as any.

The only hope he had was to take advantage of the chaos.

He didn't look behind him. There were noises, girl's voices, probably Jes's and Caera's and Dao's chirps and clicks, but just like the tiny, logical voice in his head, they were buried. His feet slapped the stones, the balls of his toes catching the hard ground, the only saving grace the callus armor his feet had developed since arriving. His heart rate jumped like someone had injected cocaine, adrenaline, and PCP straight into his veins. Everything went hot, and then numb.

Just keep moving.

The demons all faced toward the dragon and the gold-armored demons, and they were off to the side, not directly in his path. By about a whole twenty feet. He had no choice but to veer around them, and the further he veered to the side, the longer the trip would take. Better that than getting caught up in the chaos.

To his right, nearly a thousand demons of all shapes and sizes, many naked, many wearing slabs of black armor, some with weapons some not, all of them throwing themselves against the demons in gold and bronze. None of them looked David's way, and he risked cutting closer to the crowd.

The cries of pain were... demonic. Axes and swords butchered Zel's demons and sent their parts arcing through the sky before smacking the ground or over the heads of the swarming demons. One of Zel's brutes, over eight feet tall, no spikes or tail but all muscle and black skin, fell apart at the waist. A gold sword cut through him from side to side, and when the brute's torso hit the stone, the gold-clad demon turned its red eyes toward David.*w@w.móve@wdr@.com*

With the layers of gold and red-tinted bronze, he didn't recognize the breed buried under the many layers of beautiful, horrifying metal. Its head was covered, but black horns came out from behind the helmet regardless, and the helmet's bottom had enough room for the creature's long snout to open for it to roar. A whole half second reprieve before it turned to the next demon that came to it. Whoever the demons in gold armor were, they weren't just better equipped. They were trained.

Gliders came down onto the battlefield on his left, and they shrieked with hunger as they ran at him. Not at him, around him. Like magnets to magnets, the gargoyle and bat women poured past him, and he had to hop back at one point to avoid getting run over. They couldn't even see him. Some of them jumped onto the backs of brutes, vrats, and tigers, anything bigger than them they could use to vault over the crowd to get to the other demons. Others went low and ducked under weapons and arms. None of them gave a shit about the possibility of dying.*w@w.n@v&Lwdr@.com*

Not entirely true. Some demons were smarter, and waited for the opportunity to strike, not caught up in the mindlessness of the riot turned slaughter. When a fellow demon went down, they jumped in and climbed over the corpse to take a stab at the gold-protected demon, only to jump back and let the crazier demons take a stab. Maybe the sin auras drowning the place affected some demons more than others, but it definitely affected David. The violence permeated him, hooked claws into him, and demanded he join in the madness.

He ran past them, and ignored the blood-soaked, delicious aura as best he could. A demon ahead of him turned to face him, a brute, but the death cry of the demon between him and the gold demons yanked his vision away. David ducked underneath him, between his legs, and kept going. A tiger came flying out of the insanity on David's right, and blood gushed out of her empty shoulder socket. She pushed herself back up, and marched back into the fray.

David's foot splashed in the blood she left behind. He didn't look back.

A vrat stepped back from the battle, sword in hand. Over seven feet tall, he was the classic example of a demon, with a thick tail, raptor feet, a skull-ish demon face, a couple big horns, and a mostly human body shape. One of the most common demon breeds, and the battle around David proved it, with dozens of nearby vratorins throwing themselves into the fight.*w@w.rto@&Lwdr@.com*

The opening the vrat created in the battle lines showed a gold demon on the ground, a horn broken off, helmet knocked off too, and a deep gash that cut halfway through their skull. They'd had two gold axes, and now the vrat had them.

The vrat turned to face David, and David did the first thing that came to his mind.

"Look!" He pointed back toward the rider's demons.

The vrat turned, and the sight of violence lit something in it. A single glance was all it took for the auras the demons around him exuded for the vrat to give into the urge, forget about David, and run back into the violence. David almost followed him, tiny broken sword clutched in hand.

He didn't. Half because of Mia, the reason he was risking a random sword, axe, or claw separating him from his legs. Half, because of the five-eyed dragon.

The titanic creature turned toward the demons, straight toward David. The center eye looked directly to him, and David froze. Chains dangled to and fro from the two smaller horns on the top of its skull, next to the array of colossal horns almost as big as its head, no longer held by the rider. Blood dripped from the deep gash in its snout, but it made no effort to cover the wound or protect itself.

It wasn't like an animal on the surface. It didn't try to find a place to retreat to recover. It didn't do the evolutionary, tried-and-true tactic of only risking minor injuries for a meal, and never its life. It, like the demons, wanted to get into the violence. It wanted to fight and slaughter, more than it wanted to survive. And it set its five-eyed gaze straight on David.