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~~Mia~~

The two giant metal doors, decorated with skulls and chains, were closed. Mia wasn't getting out of the dungeon unless she opened them, and sure enough, she wasn't strong enough to do so. She pressed against them, and even with her bare feet getting a decent grip on the metal floor, they didn't budge.

But maybe someone was waiting on the other side? Adron or Kas? If it was Adron, then maybe...

She knocked on the door, hard as she could, and tapped on the rhythm everyone knew. Shave and a Haircut.

She got a couple of knocks back. Slowly, the enormous doors opened, Mia stepped back, and Adron stood in the now open path to freedom.

"Mia? What happened? Where's Zel?"

"Zel's busy. We need to get to her throne room, now!"

"What?"(w)ww.n@vélW@r@.cóm

"We need to get to her throne room now!" Mia marched forward and shoved the demon in the stomach.

Adron stared at her, unmoving. "You can't just--"

"Adron, please? I'll explain everything after."

After a slow frown and heavy sigh, Adron looked past her into the deep dungeon. There was no chance he'd see anything, this far from Vinicius's cell, but the fact he couldn't see Zel up and about was the problem.

"Alright."

"Alright? Alright!" Oh thank god. Maybe there was a little more to Adron than the mask he wore, a little more to him than the playful, mischievous, conniving demon he enjoyed being. Maybe he felt a little connection to the young woman he'd deflowered? Maybe--Maybe Mia you're being an idiot and you can psychoanalyze later.

They ran out to the balcony. Chaos. Normally there were big teeth doors around, like Mia's, something that needed to be opened with the spire's power. They were open, teeth pulled up and down out of the way into the skull archways. Betrayers, imps and grems, succubi and incubi, they all stepped out onto the balconies above and below, and the sound of panicked voices mixed with the screams of remnants.Wur(w).noVr(1)wo(r)m.C@m

"What's... going on?" she asked.

Adron knelt down, she slipped onto his back, and the demon wasted no time running to the balcony edge and jumping up to the next floor.Wwur.(n)(o)@élwoR(m).(e)ðmm

"The rider is attacking," he said between grunts. Every few seconds, he grabbed a dangling chain, or a dangling cage, or the rim of the next balcony up the spire's center, whatever allowed him to traverse as much distance as possible as quickly as possible.

"Zel said that, but I don't know what that means."

"Me neither. I've never seen him. But he's come at the spire with a massive hellbeast, and what looks like a couple dozen demons armed from False Gate."

"A couple dozen? How many demons are defending the spire?"

"Probably five or six hundred, and another five or six hundred demons in the mountains nearby."

Mia jaw-dropped. "Against two dozen?"

"In aera armor, and that hellbeast is... massive." He shook his head, and focused on his breathing as he got faster. The higher they went up, the louder the noises got, and soon the sound of roars and metal hitting metal joined them.

They passed the ground floor, and Mia managed a quick peek out through the big hallway to the outside. It was like a battlefield. No, it was a battlefield. Adron didn't give her time to get a good look, but a peek was enough to catch the sight of limbs flying, demons cut in half, and the legs of something that looked like Godzilla bred with an iguana and a demon.

Adron said no more. Demons didn't sweat, but she felt the heat pour off his body as he pushed himself, and his breathing grew faster and ragged. It was hard holding onto him, especially with the black spikes on his back. Half the size of the one she'd stabbed Zel with, but still problematic, and she winced as a few of them scratched her skin. Her white silk wrap couldn't protect her from a stiff breeze, let alone accidental stabbing.

The throne room wasn't on the top floor, but it was a ways up. By the time they reached it, a couple minutes had passed, and that was enough to give Mia an eyeful of what else was going on. She was right. All the doors that'd been closed by teeth were open. Zel's death, the way her extra amber horn had glowed and then died, it'd done something. Mia had half expected the tower to explode or light up with a big amber beacon or something, but nope, it was more like someone had flipped a switch to off mode.

How did someone become the new spire owner, anyway?

"Why are the sealed doors open?" Adron asked as he set her down.

"I... um..." She took a step toward a nearby big doorway, Zel's throne room, a giant black skull open mouth, with fire burning in its empty eyes. It was tall enough for even Vinicius to walk through.

She didn't get far. Adron put a hand on her shoulder.

"What did you do?"

"Umm... I'll tell you in the throne room, okay?" She gestured to the throne room entrance. "Come on. If that... that rider person is here for me, we should do this quickly." The rider and his assault were the only reason demons weren't around to stop Mia, ironically enough. They were outside, fighting, and dying.

"The rider won't be able to beat Zel and her strongest enforcers in a fight, not if they surround him."Ww@.oVélwoR@.com

"About that." She gulped and nodded toward the big skull door again.

The demon relented and followed her into the vast room.

The throne of metal and bone sat empty. Amber veins ran along the walls, still gently pulsing with the lifeblood of Hell. Whatever Zel's death had done, it hadn't undone the spire itself, just maybe the decisions she'd made with its power? It didn't matter. Mia ran to the table of stone, climbed a big bone chair, and stood on it so she could look down at the table.

No luck.

"Keys! Where are the keys?"

"Keys?"

"Keys! The keys to the dungeon. One of the demons down there told me they'd be up here. And I mean, it's not like anyone would go around releasing prisoners under Zel's nose, right? So she probably wouldn't have hid them. Help me!" Maybe on the throne? On a wall somewhere? There were so many damn random metal spikes and chains hanging from the ceiling and shit, they could be right in front of her and she wouldn't notice them.

Adron stared at her, eyes wide. It was a strange sight, seeing an eight-foot-tall demon man, all muscled and handsome, scary too with his demony face, big powerful jaw, skull-like eye sockets, big black horns, all of it absolutely paralyzed.

"What happened to Zelandariel?"

"She's dead!" Mia ran up to the demon and slapped both her palms against his chest, the highest point she could reach. He wore some pieces of black armor, but that didn't matter. She could have tackled him and it wouldn't have moved him. "I killed her! She's dead. She's dead, her corpse is lying in Vinicius's cell, and the only chance I have of surviving any of this insanity is grabbing Vinicius's leash and making him protect me so I can get out of here!"