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"Just... leave her alone, Adron, okay? I didn't want any of this to happen, and I don't want to kill anyone who doesn't need to die." She didn't wait for his response. "Hannah, help me out." With a hard gulp, Mia stepped around in front of Vinicius, grabbed onto one of the big spikes sticking out of his knee, and climbed him.*www.WritesL(wo)rm.com*

"Uh, what're you--"

"The chains holding him are latched onto hooks! He might be able to shake them loose, but that could take time. Let's just do this fast!" The faster they got it done, the faster they could get out of here, and the faster she could go check if that was David she'd seen.

It couldn't have been David. No chance. She was a panicking mess and doing her best to stay afloat in the ocean, grabbing onto anything drifting in the water. But she was still going to check and find out.*www.WritesL(wo)rm.com*

Climbing Vinicius like a jungle gym was interesting. She had to be careful where she grabbed or put her feet because of the spikes, but his hard leathery skin was easy to grip, and she was light. Soon she was on his lower left arm, then his upper, and doing her best to ignore the demon's dragon gaze as she half pressed her side into his thick neck, and grabbed onto where one of his arm chains hooked a wall spike.

"Lift your arm, high as you can," she said.

Vinicius, after a tired rumble, did as she requested. A whole few inches of leeway to work with, with how the chains held him, and a few inches wasn't much compared to how thick the chains were or how long the spikes they were hooked onto were. She had to use her muscles, and the small section of chain she had to lift weighed as much as she did. More.

Grunting and groaning like she was back in her dorm, doing her Sunday workout, she got her feet flat down against Vinicius's shoulder, and lifted like she was doing a deadlift. All in the ass.

The chain link on the hook came up, up, up, until eventually it slipped over. The only thing that stopped her from plummeting backward and cracking her skull open on the metal floor was a little forethought. She held onto the chain, fell off Vinicius's shoulder, and her chest planted into the front of the beast's sternum as she dangled.

"Fuck, you okay?" Hannah asked, working on one of the lower chains around the giant's legs.*www.WritesL(wo)rm.com*

"Yeap." She climbed back up and got to work on the other chain. Two of them held Vinicius's right arm, and maybe if she got them both off, he could help them out.

She wanted to peek down and see what Adron and Acelina were doing. Acelina was still alive, judging from the hisses and snarls, so at least Adron hadn't killed her. It was damn weird, seeing the tall demon and her scary black void face complete with massive black horns, seem so distraught. Adron was right, she had loved Zel. Maybe that's what her argument with Diogo had been about?

It was nice to know demons were capable of that emotion, at least. Except now she felt a thousand times worse because now she couldn't help but think about Acelina and Zel being romantic and lovey-dovey with each other, like Adron and Hannah were. Fuck.

She unhooked the chain binding the end of Vinicius's arm. Two slack chains dangled over the right arm now, both ends still connected to the binding chain behind him, but now that the padlock was undone and the chains off the hooks, they were loose. It was a very weird setup, something Zel probably put together because of Vinicius's size.

His top right arm fell, and dangled in front of him. As Mia climbed down the chain like a rope, Vinicius flexed the fingers of the free arm, like Mia sometimes did when she woke up with a numb arm. Hundreds of years not being able to move it more than a couple inches probably left him feeling like he didn't even have limbs anymore. Adron had said time didn't affect demons the same way as humans, but still, the relief Vinicius felt from being able to move his arm again after centuries of immobility must have been bliss.

Slowly, he lifted his hand to his head, and lifted the chain binding him off one of the hooks behind him. He did the same for the other, pulled it off his snout, and set it behind his head, behind the myriad of big black spikes.

Mia, back on the floor, stared up at him as the beast looked back down at her. Her muscles refused to stop shaking.

He opened his mouth. The quiet room grew deadly silent.

"Finally, I am free," he said.

Mia's jaw dropped again. Hannah's, too. That was a deep voice, deeper than Kas's, and gravelly in a way only an engine of destruction could be. Or someone who'd smoked cigars for forty years, and had a dump truck engine lodged in their chest. But there was a hint of rasp in there, too, a hiss, something almost serpent-like that mixed with the bassy rumble.

Adron and Acelina both stared up at him, too, though Acelina was the first to break the silence.

"He's going to kill and eat all of you," she said. "Zelandariel had him locked up for a reason."

"Zel was going to do worse to me!" Mia summoned some rage and launched it at Acelina with as much energy as she could find. Basically none. The moment she looked at the demoness, her slouching wings, and her collapsed posture, the rage vanished.

Hannah, on the other hand, didn't give a shit. She marched up to Acelina, one of her wings still bound in Adron's grip and his claws at her throat, and Hannah slapped the woman across her perfectly obsidian face.

"You are such a bitch, Acelina. So many times I wanted to kill you."

Acelina hissed, but all that earned was Adron pressing the tips of his claws to her throat.

The rattling of chains grabbed everyone's attention again as the goliath slipped more chains off their hooks with his free arm. Soon both his top arms were free, then his lower arms, and finally his waist, legs, and tail.

He was free. The twelve-foot giant was free. He took a step forward, and even trying to walk lightly, she felt the subtle vibration in the floor. One of his lower hands held his stomach over the bleeding hole, while his others found a wall. He leaned against it, and sucked in deep breaths as his colossal tail slowly swayed left and right behind him. Exhausted, and drained.

Mia touched the amber stone around her neck. She hadn't tested it, but it felt like the previous necklace. A little bit of intent, of focused will, and it'd trigger. The last thing she wanted to do at the moment. Vinicius could barely stand, and the reality of the situation hit Mia hard. How the hell could this demon protect her when he could barely move?

"Adron," she said, "how... how does someone become the new spire ruler?"

"Not sure. Something to do with that room Zel took you into, at the base of the spire."

The room with the giant castle made of bones. The book written by Lucifer himself. Something in there?

"So if we feed Vinicius Zel's heart, that won't happen?"*www.WritesL(wo)rm.com*