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The strange, electric flow continued to run between them, but didn't blind her with a flood of sensation and information anymore. Whatever it was, it'd settled down to something ignorable.

She scaled up her brother's arm, waist, good shoulder, and got her hands onto the metal beam that connected her balcony floor to the floor above. It was covered in huge jagged spikes, and the spikes were covered in torn bits of flesh where they'd once been covered in the spire's muscle and bone wall. She got her hands around the curves of some spikes for a better grip, dangled from both hands, and looked down again.

The blackness looked at her.

There were stories about the things people saw in the ocean. It was one of the deepest, oldest fears humans had, right up there with the fear of spiders, snakes, and heights. Staring into the darkness of night was one thing. Staring into the endless depths of the ocean, straight down into blackness that defied understanding, while things in the dark stared back up, hidden enormous things, was the stuff legends were written about. Legends and horror stories.

There was something in the darkness below her, something that swam in shades of onyx and almost shining edges of obsidian. Whatever it was, its movement stirred the black waves, and countless, invisible eyes surrounding an eye the size of the universe stared up at her and her brother.

"The fuck is going on?" David asked.

It was David's voice that ripped her eyes away from the void, this time. He was closer to the balcony, and with the whole spire bending and tilting almost forty-five degrees, he got his feet up and pressed to the balcony behind him. The tilt didn't look so bad on the floors below them. It looked worse on the floors above, but at least the half of the spire that grew above ground had kept its walls. Only the lower half had lost its walls, all on one side, ripped away by the opposite ravine cliff face. The metal beams were literally bending.

If the spire lost its grip on the canyon wall they were on, it'd fall into the dark.

"I don't know what's going on!" she said. "Did the rider do something?"

"I don't think so."

"I killed Zel, that might have--"

"You killed Zell!?"

She glared at him, and slowly swung toward him and the balcony along the metal beam. If she thought of them as monkey bars, and not the bones of a flesh spire, or the only things keeping her from falling to her death, it wasn't so bad.

"She was going to torture me! And I don't think her death has anything to do with... with this!" She waved one of her feet below her at the pit. Best gesture she could manage with both hands busy. "Now help me get up!"

"The fuck are we going to do if we even can get back into the spire!? The--"

"David stop thinking and just go!"

"Go where!? We can't climb back up this slope!"

"I... I..."

Shit. He was right. Her brother pressed his feet up against the balcony slope, and tried to push himself up back onto it, but without an edge to get his feet on, he couldn't get up. He did manage to get a foot up long enough to pull himself up and straddle the metal beam, though.

Once settled, he reached out for her and helped her do the same. She had to sit higher on the beam, and slip her legs between some of its big spikes, but it was a shit load better than dangling off the edge of the spire, over a black hole.

She forced herself to look down and did her best to keep her eyes on the canyon wall and not the pit. The ravine that'd ripped open underneath the spire had taken at least a third of the spire's flesh walls right off the metal bones, where they now oozed blood from the other canyon wall, or literally fell off the canyon wall into the void below, joining the hundreds of remnants and demons that fell into oblivion.

Demons roared. Some stood in tunnels, either on her canyon wall or on the opposite one, tunnels that'd once been connected to the spire's guts. Most stood on the canyon edge high above, on both sides, and all of them stared down into the endless black. Whatever battle had been happening on the surface, it was over.

A familiar shape glided across the air from above, someone tall and curvy, with wings that struggled to hold her weight. A spire mother. Acelina? How the fuck? Either that wasn't Acelina and one of the other spire mothers, or she'd survived the rider, climbed a few floors, and fell out of the tower like the rest of them almost had.

The zotiva glided toward the opposite canyon wall, ignoring the other demons and souls that fell from the tower to their deaths below. Definitely a zotiva, barely able to glide at all with her almost skeletal wings, but she managed to reach a tunnel entrance at the very bottom of the canyon wall. Any further and she'd have died.

The spire mother looked back at the tower, too far for Mia to read her obsidian face, and disappeared into the tunnel.

A glint of color drew Mia's eyes up. Someone else waited on the top of the canyon edge, opposite of the spire, someone in gold and bronze armor like the rider. Someone... slimmer than the rider?

"Mia!"

Adron's voice. Mia snapped her eyes up, and her stomach dropped.

The rider stood on the doors of the dungeon, literally. The huge metal door hung open, Vinicius dangled from it, and the rider stood on its edge with one foot, the other pressed to the sloped balcony. David's broken sword no longer stuck out of his neck.

How long had he been standing there, with the doors open? Maybe Acelina really had gotten out?

David shook his head, looking up at the rider. "There's no way he'll--"