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"We can talk about what to do when we find Caera and Dao. So, in the meantime, tell me about yourself."

Jes laughed. And laughed. And laughed, to the point she stopped and rested a hand against the wall.

"Are you fucking serious?"

"I... was. Now I'm not so sure."

After a few more laughs, she brushed the back of his body a few times with her wing, and got walking again.

"I keep forgetting you're not like other souls. Literally. No number or anything."

"And if I had a number?"

"Then I'd assume you were trying to manipulate me, with a ridiculous request like that."

"Oh."

She grinned over her shoulder at him, reached out with her wing, and used its thumb claw to hook around his neck and pull him in close to her side. From angry to happy in seconds. Much as David sucked at reading people, Jeskura was all over the place, regardless. [Ww.n@VεLw0rm.c0m](#)

"Told you before, I was born in the hatching pits around sixty years ago."

"How'd that go? From what you told me, that's a rough way to start life." [ww.n0V@Lw0rm.c0m](#)

"Yeah... yeah it was." She sighed, let him go, re-hooked her wing on her own shoulder, but didn't push him away. "You may have noticed me, Dao, Caera, we're not exactly the type to go around mindlessly killing whoever we can."

"I did." [ww.n0vεLw0rm.c0m](#)

"We have our reasons. Caera saw some serious shit in the horde call. That probably changed her. I knew an asshole in the spire called Kasimiro with a kill count that makes even Caera look like a child, but hates violence, and how much demons love it. I know demons who get pretty attached to their betrayers, like that Adron guy you mentioned. Dao had to deal with that Tacitus fuck. Some of us just... get exposed to different kinds of stuff, I guess. We turn out different."

"Sounds pretty human, honestly."

"Yeah?"

"The whole nature versus nurture argument. How much is a person shaped by the innate biology of their brain and body, versus what their life was like growing up." He tapped his chin. "I guess, I never really thought demons would be like that. Humans kinda just assume all demons must be horrible, innately."

"Grow up in a hatching pit and you probably will be, but plenty of us aren't. The nicer demons get killed and eaten."

"Eesh."

"But some of us watched a few too many scrying pools and maybe got a little carried away with some of the stuff in them. I remember sitting around one in the hatching pit with a few other gorgalas, and we were swooning over this big human man, very strong, very handsome. He was saving a girl from a fire."

David raised a brow. "Was he a... firefighter?"

She laughed. "He was." She spun around a couple times in a very un-Jeskura way as she jumped ahead a little. "It was amazing, seeing someone go through flames to save someone's life. It was the last thing you'd ever expect to see in the hatching pit."

He rolled his eyes, but couldn't help but laugh. "This was in the 60s, right? Pretty crazy for a firefighter to actually go through flames, back then. Not the best gear."

"It was crazy." She flicked her tail back at him and poked him several times as she walked ahead. "And of course, more than a few of those firefighters got some good pussy. That was great to watch, too."

"Ha. That a normal thing, watching people have sex on the surface with the scrying pools?"

"It is, in the hatching pits. Demons aren't born babies like humans, not really. More like, a kid adult mix? Whatever, it's not long before we're horny as fuck and have no idea what to do with ourselves."

He gestured down at himself, and her tail that continued to poke and prod his chest and stomach. Ow. Ow.

"Sorry I'm not a two hundred pound, six foot six firefighter made of pure muscle."

"Ha, fuck me that'd be awesome if you were."

He frowned. She laughed.

"I guess," she said, "I did spend too much time watching the scrying pool, but something about the surface really intrigued me. Humans and all their stupid bullshit, the romance, the fights, it's all so much more... deep, I guess, than the shit down here. Here we just fight and fuck." After another chuckle, she continued, eyes now pointed down. "A gremla I knew was absolutely in love with some guy she'd randomly learned about, and she watched him in the scrying pool a lot."

"A grem? Kinda figured they weren't... uh... didn't have the mental capacity to really do something like that."

"Gremla, yeah, and of course they do. Imps and grems might not be the best at talking, and maybe not as smart as your average demon... Okay yeah they're pretty dumb. But not hellbeast dumb. But shut up for a sec, let me talk."

He put up his hands. "Shutting up."

"So she watched this human in the scrying pool, this guy... think he was a cop. Good guy, had a wife, treated her well. Active sex life, which this horny little gremla girl fucking loved watching. Caught her masturbating to that shit like fifty times. The wife really had a thing for getting tied up, you know? Full on rape roleplay sorta stuff. And--"

David did his best to tune out the very detailed list of things the mysterious husband did to his wife that she apparently very much enjoyed.

"Then, one day," she said, "the cop died. Got shot on the job. There was a funeral, lots of crying." After a heavy sigh, Jes came to a stop and looked down. He recognized the look. She was reliving a memory. "I was pretty sad, but that gremla, it really fucked her up. Like, devastated. She cried." Jes took another deep breath. "Then some other demons showed up looking for food, and she... didn't fight back."

"What?"

Jes shrugged weakly and shook her head. "Some hungry demons showed up and killed her. Pretty normal in the hatching pit. Grems and imps are damn hard to kill usually, 'cause they're so good at getting away. It was the first... only time I've ever seen one of the little rascals just let themselves die. It was quick, no torture or anything, though some demons learned some of that shit from the scrying pools, too." Growling, she resumed the march, and David followed. "Seeing her die like that really fucked me up, too, I guess. I killed the demons that killed her, even though I wasn't hungry and didn't need to. And after that, I just..." She shrugged again, but each shrug got weaker than the last one. "I dunno. I didn't really get such a thrill when making a kill anymore."

That was definitely a core memory for Jes. Whether Hell gave a shit about neurology and synaptic pathways, he didn't know. Probably not. But Mia had gone on a dozen rants about how important early life experiences were in forming who you were as a person. This fit the bill.

"Thanks," he said, "for telling me about yourself, I mean. Kinda got the impression you were just gonna tell me to fuck off when I asked."

"I was tempted. But then I remembered you're just that kinda moron who needs shit direct."

"Yeah, I am."

"Ha! You really are getting better at this talking thing." She slowed down until she walked beside him, and again she used her wing to hook his neck and pull him in close to walk shoulder to shoulder. Or, mostly shoulder to shoulder. She had over a foot of height on him. [ww.n@el\(w\)0r-m.c0M](#)

"Not gonna lie, being with you, Dao, and Caera for over a week straight has been the most socializing I've done in that short of time in my entire life."

"Fucking nerd."

"Yeap."

"Heh."