

## 1258

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"Thought I saw you gliding out of the spire. Get knocked out by the quake?" Jes whip cracked her tail behind her. The tall demon underneath her had a tail too, smooth like Jes's, but not long enough or thick enough to be dangerous. "Give me one reason I shouldn't rip your throat out, you fucking bitch."

"I have done nothing to deserve such treatment!"

"Yeah? You're a fucking asshole and the worst zotiva in Hell."

The nine-foot-tall demoness hissed and squirmed, but for all her superior height, she didn't take a swing at the gargoyle.

"I was hard on the hatchlings. I had to be. Zel wanted--"

"Yeah well, Zel's dead. Rider got her. And on top of that, you're stuck on this side of the canyon." How Jes managed to lie without even the smallest break in her voice, David couldn't fathom. Might as well have asked him to lift a building than lie smoothly.

"Jes," David said. "Who is this?"

"This," Jes said as she got up and off the much taller demon, "is Acelina, one of the spire mothers. A royal bitch. Most mothers are at least a little nice to the hatchlings, and tell them what's up when they're old enough to come out. Acelina might as well have been a drill sergeant."

Acelina hissed a few more times as she stood up. For Jes to let her up probably meant Jes wasn't scared of her. Surprising, considering how huge Acelina was, and it wasn't like those claws of hers or her big hooves wouldn't be able to rip and tear and crush. Or at least, they could definitely rip, tear, and crush David.

"!--" Acelina didn't get to finish.

"Shut up," Jes said, and she pointed a claw up at the demon. "I still haven't decided if I'm gonna let you live. I'm hungry, and David here needs food."

Acelina slowly turned her head and aimed it at him. If she was anything like Dao, that was her way of letting him know she was looking at him.

"Another unmarked... Zelandariel was convinced an unmarked girl would be a useful tool."

"My sister," he said. "She's trapped on the other side of the canyon, now." Which of course earned a quick, harsh glare from Jes. Okay, don't tell Acelina anymore than she needs to know. Got it.

"So how come you fell out of the spire?" Jes said. "Where're the others?"

"I don't know where my fellow zotiva are. Probably still in the spire." Acelina folded her arms across her chest and set her eyeless gaze on Jes. She was trying to not bare her fangs too much, but having trouble. Apparently, she had trouble controlling her temper. "I had heard Zelandariel was in the dungeon, and was on my down to see her when... when..." Her shoulders drooped, her wings followed, and her tail dangled behind her. "The rider killed Zelandariel?"

If this spire mother knew nothing about that, she couldn't have been the demon David saw in the dungeon behind Mia.

"He did," Jes said. "Turned into a big clusterfuck in the dungeon. I had to swoop in there and get my boy out, and then... ah what the fuck am I telling you this for?" Shrugging, Jes gestured to David, and resumed the walk down the curving tunnel. "That way just leads you back to the canyon, by the way, and the tunnel pinches tight. Your giant tits won't fit through."

Grumbling, Acelina hooked her wings to her shoulders, just like Jes would. With how skeletal and spindly her giant wings were, and the membrane thin, it kinda gave her bat-ish vampire vibes. The insane curves, ridiculous tiny waist, long legs -- and arms -- and regal set of four giant horns sealed in the image of a regal dominatrix or something. Super tall demon vampire dominatrix?

After a heavy scowl and frustrated hiss, Acelina turned and walked in the opposite direction, ahead of Jes and back the path she'd come from. David stared. Yeap, even the way she walked was like someone on high heels because of the hooves, much more pronounced than Dao. And that ass was--

"David!" Jes spun around and marched up to him. "I can feel that aura. Stop it. You can't trust this bitch."

"I didn't... I wasn't..."

Acelina stopped and looked over her shoulder, tail still drooping.

"Jeskura..."wVw.loveLwordr.m.co@

"Save it! You can't get back across the ravine, and we both know what that means, Acelina. You're dead. I'm happy to walk away and just let you die."

"Dead?" David asked.

"Ha, yeah. She's screwed. Zotiva never leave the spire, and the only things they ever have to fight are some uppity hatchlings. She can pump out some powerful sin auras, but she can't hunt or fight for shit."

David raised a brow and looked back at the tall demon. Couldn't fight? She could probably kick his ass, sure, but if Jes was right, she wouldn't be kicking other asses very well.

Acelina looked down, her back to them, every part of her droopingww.loveLwordr.m.co@

"Stop it," Jes said. "Stop acting all pathetic. I don't care if you loved Zel. Bitch had it coming."

The spire mother spun around and flared her wings, teeth bared, but one step was all she took.

"Zelandariel brought Death's Grip back from chaos!"

"And nearly destroyed it trying to kill Alessio for the hundredth time! She--nope, nope, I'm not doing this again. I got out of the spire for a reason. Christ, you're almost as bad as Diogo."

"Diogo was a horrible, vile creature!"

"Then why'd you fuck him!"wVw.loveLwordr.m.co@

"That is none of your concern!"

David inched away until his back hit the wall. Uh oh.

"That fucker called for a hunt on my head!" Jes yelled. And the tunnel was happy to make her voice echo.

The spire mother whip cracked her tail behind her.

"You defied Tacitus!"

"He's just as bad as Zel! Worse! The things he did to Daoka--"

"You defied Zelandariel because of a woman!"

Jes marched up to Acelina and pointed a finger up at her.

"You can't give me that shit! I saw the things you did because you--"

"Zel--"

"Interrupt me a third time, I fucking dare you!" For all Jes's declarations of 'not doing this', she seemed very intent on doing it.

Acelina flared her wings out until they pressed to the tunnel walls. Jes did the same.