

## 1260

"Okay, she has value. Assuming she's not lying." Jes gestured toward the tunnel. "You're still going first, tall-ass bitch, and if you so much as look at me funny, I'll leave that giant ass of yours behind. Okay?"

The slow, deep, inward hiss from Acelina was all too familiar to the sounds Mia made when she had to swallow her anger *waw-w-n0v-eLW0rm.coM*

"Very well."

"Awesome," David said, smiling at the two of them.

They parted, Acelina walked forward, and their journey continued, this time with a nine-foot-tall demoness taking the lead. Ten, if you included the horns. So damn tall, and she walked like a fashion runway model, high heels included considering the hooves and long legs. Long, curvy legs, topped by a huge, perfect ass, and--

"David! Stop it!" Jes whipped him in the ass with her tail, and again his leather skirt saved him a lash. "Stop thinking horny thoughts."

"He has the strange aura the other had," Acelina said. "Can he also read the ancient language?" Jes and David both stopped and looked at each other in the corners of their eyes. "By your reaction, I assume yes."

"You talked with my sister?" he asked.

"Only a little. She visited the hatching room and pit once, with Kasimiro as her bodyguard."

"Kas was her bodyguard?" Jes winked at David and laughed. "That sarkarin was smoking hot." *waw-n0v-eLW0rm.COmm*

"I hope he lived," David said. "He fought the rider. I didn't see what happened. That vratorin Adron seemed to know Mia pretty well, and he was fucked up, too. And Mia..." Well, there went the horny aura, now replaced with a nice blanket of doom and gloom.

"Hey, we'll get her back," Jes said, and she again hooked a wing around his shoulders.

"We don't even know where to start."

"Caera will." *waw-n0v-eLW0rm.COmm*

"Caera?" Acelina asked. "She's here, as well?"

"She is," Jes said, snarling at the tall woman. Taller woman. "Caera and Daoka. We're gonna find them, and I'll let Caera decide what to do with you."

"Caera is an intelligent tregeera. She will decide I am worth aiding."

Jes rolled her eyes and leaned in toward David.

"Don't trust her, okay?" *waw-n0v-eLW0rm.COmm*

"I won't."

"I mean it, David. Spire mothers can talk smooth as a succubus and make you dance on puppet strings. And the sin auras they can craft are heavy duty."

"And we're not deaf," Acelina said.

Jes bared her fangs. "Shut up!"

Acelina sighed and shook her head. "As much as Jeskura aggravates me, she is correct. I am... out of my element, out of the spire." She gestured around at the tunnel, the rocks, the amber veins, and the bloodgrip vines. "I don't even know where to begin to find food."

"How'd you get food in the spire?" David asked.

"Simps," Jes said. "Lot of young demons try to stay on the mothers' good sides. They have influence."

David choked on a laugh. The next time they found a scrying pool, he had to ask Jes to show him the sort of shit she watched, to pick up words like that.

"I may be at a disadvantage," Acelina said, "but don't be so quick to assume I am useless. Jeskura thinks other demons will seek to eat me, but as she said, some demons strive to stay on my good side. I am royalty."

"Royalty?" David asked.

Jes fake gagged, one wing still holding David close.

"Spire mothers are very rare," Jes said, "as rare as tetrads, and all spires want them. Without them, you have no one to vet which eggs are worth hatching, and which hatchlings have earned the right to get out of the pit." Growling, she nodded toward the spire mother. "Not that it matters anymore. She can't get back to the Death's Grip spire, so who cares? I think demons are gonna realize that and just eat her or something."

"But, we're trying to get to the Forgotten Place, right?" David said. "Or at least, I am. I--"

Jes glared at him. "Stop telling her everything!"

"Shit, sorry." Yeap, he was nervous and doing nervous talking. Acelina was imposing. Royalty was imposing!

"You're trying to get to the Forgotten Place?" Acelina looked over her shoulder and set her eyeless gaze directly at David. "Why?"

"We're not telling you," Jes said, and the thumb claw of her wing snuck around David's head and covered his mouth. "And if you tell this bitch one more thing, I am going to shove some bloodgrip up your ass."

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It was not a brief trip. Every moment was tense, with frequent pauses to make sure the silence was genuine, and not a trick laid by sneaky demons or Cainites hiding around corners. Every so often, he heard Jes and Acelina take deep sniffs, checking for scents, but so far, nothing.

David was in pain. His body was healing at an unnaturally fast pace, but if it'd taken Dao and Jes a few days to recover from breaking bones, it'd probably take him twice as long to do the same, or more. And every moment he was getting hungrier.

His mind was in pain, too. All that work, down the drain. Over a week of trekking across literal Hell, running through a battle, one giant clusterfuck, and all for naught. Much as it felt good that he knew Mia was alive, she knew he was alive, and they both had the same goal, it sucked the wind out of his sails that the ultimate goal had failed.

And for some reason, his stupid fucking brain could not stop looking at the nine-foot-tall demon in front of him, her amazing long curvy legs, her huge ass and the small tail dangling from above it, and the absurdly tiny waist over wide hips. He'd seen a few succubi in the spire, and they'd all been utterly gorgeous, busty, thin, and very human-like. Acelina, however, was a strange mix of beautiful, and utterly horrifying. The black mask-like face that hid all its features in obsidian, and only revealed her wide mouth and shark teeth when she smiled, was straight out of a horror film.

He kinda liked it.

The many piercings, the dangling chains, the ridiculous massiveness of her breasts, even the way her thin wings hung on her shoulders almost like a nightgown, he couldn't tear his eyes off any of it. And Jes couldn't either.

"If you don't get control of your dick," Jes said, "I am going to--"

He put up his hands and put a few more inches between him and Jes, the two of them still following behind the spire mother.

"You're not doing any better."

"I'm not you. I can turn my sin aura on and off whenever I want, and I can fight one off. Your aura is like this... tingling feeling in the air and in the ground. I can't fight it. And it's getting me all riled up!"

"Please," Acelina said, chuckling. "Any demon would consider themselves blessed to taste of my succulent body." Despite also having an apparently angry disposition, Acelina was nothing like Jes. She had a bit of that haughty attitude about her that fit the royalty title she claimed.

"You let Diogo touch that body."

Acelina hissed, but looked ahead and kept walking.

"A mistake, but Diogo is also the strongest devorjin in Death's Grip."

"And a fucking asshole who killed my friend for no reason."

Acelina shrugged. "I know little of what he's done since becoming bailiff of the Gorzen Mountains. I only know of your tiff with the demon due to Tacitus, and his pursuit of the riva."

"Oh shut up," Jes said, and she dug her talons into the stones. "David, stop thinking about sex, okay? It's driving me nuts. Cover your eyes if you have to."

"Sorry. Sorry."

With a chuckle, Acelina turned around, and cupped her breasts. Bounce. Jiggle. Even while dark red and firm, they still had enough mass to conform to her hands and ripple. He could only imagine what they'd be like if she got aroused, skin reddened, and breasts softened. The way they must feel--

Jes poked him in the ribs.

"Ow! Okay! Jesus fuck."

"Acelina," Jes said, waving a wing at her, "could you fuck off?"

"I was merely curious. He is like the other unmarked, incapable of controlling his unique aura, and putting every nearby demon into a near sexual frenzy."

"Mia did that?"

"Of course. Wherever she walked, soon demons devolved into orgies of bliss. Mia herself spent several nights being ravished by Kasimiro and Adron. At the same time."

And like someone sucker punched him, thoughts of sex went out the window.

"Same time?"

Acelina grinned a big, shark's grin, white teeth terrifying and beautiful against the pure black backdrop of her face.