

## 1267

~~Unknown~~

A girl. Running. Black swamps. Piles of maggots. The fire sky burned a dark color, or was that the air in the swamp, twisting the color? Blood everywhere, turned black in the gross mud. Guts, intestines, organs around her feet. Trenches, filled with bones and flesh.

Whoever this girl was, she was running. But running wasn't good enough. She fell, and turned onto her back. [Ww\(wo\).\(n\)ovE/\(w\).Rm.©m](#)

Someone with enormous white wings, and a blade so perfectly smooth it had a mirror sheen, stabbed her in the heart.

She died.

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~~Day 26~~

~~Mia~~

Mia sat up. The switch in her head flipped back to on, and a glance at the amber veins told her it wasn't quite the morning twilight hours yet. She'd spent a few hours of the night doing guard duty, ready to wake Vinicius if something attacked, then he'd spent a few hours doing the same. Back and forth twice meant she got enough sleep to function at least. And yeah, sitting around for a few hours while Vinicius slept was boring as fuck, but it gave her time to think about stuff and hopefully get over said stuff.

But the third time she woke up, ready to start a brand new day of fresh Hell, she clutched her heart where the angel in the dream had stabbed her.

No, not her. The angel had stabbed someone else. Mia had felt her die. A quick death, almost painless. Almost.

"Vinicius," she said.

Vinicius opened his eyes, head still pointed at the alcove, but his one visible eye pointed directly at her. Eep. Just a little too similar to that scene in The Land Before Time where Cera ran into the unconscious Sharptooth.

Her guardian, at that point in her life, had insisted the old kid's movie would be a good watch. Mia had been five, and still had the mental scars.

"We're alive," she said. "Nothing ate us. No Cainites found us."

Vinicius nodded.

"And, um... I..." She hugged her knees to her chest and put her forehead on her arms. "I had a dream."

Silence, for a few seconds. But when she lifted her head, Vinicius's one visible eye remained pointed at her, and he clicked in his throat once.

"It was a dream. I had a dream. I think? I, or some girl that I was riding, like you kinda sometimes do in dreams, was running away from... from an angel. There was a black swamp, giant piles of maggots, and the air made everything look weird and dark." [©ww.NoVeIworm.cOm](#)

"The Black Valley."

"That was the Black Valley?"

He nodded.

"Um, but I've never seen the Black Valley. I don't even really know what it looks like."

"Describe more." [©W\(wo\)RM.©m](#)

"More." More, and something specific. "I saw... trenches. The girl ran on swampland, stumbling in this shallow dark water, but she also stumbled into trenches. And there were... guts... in the trenches. Guts, bones, everything."

"The Black Valley." Vinicius nodded and slowly brought his colossal body to its feet. The hole in his gut was healed over, but the skin looked red and soft. Hopefully, as long as no one stabbed him there, it'd darken as it healed.

Much as she was still mad at him, she needed him.

"I don't understand. I had a dream? About a place I've never seen?"

"Doubtful."

"Doubtful? What does that mean? That--oh. It wasn't a dream." She got up, adjusted her silk, took a deep breath, covered her faces with her hands, and panicked. "I'm having visions. Oh god I'm having visions! I am literally running out of fingers counting the strange things about me, Vinicius!"

Vinicius rumbled, said nothing, and began their trek once again.

"Asshole."

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She gave up on asking Vinicius about anything. He refused to talk about himself, his past, how he knew the rider or the other armored person, or what his life was like when he was young. She was half convinced he just didn't remember, or cared about those details in the first place. At one point he'd even stopped rumbling or nodding or shaking his head, and straight up ignored her.

The temptation to use the leash on him grew every hour. She'd felt so bad about having him on a leash before, and forcing him to help her. Then he'd tried to hurt her, and a lot of that guilt vanished. Now, she was growing more and more tempted to hurt him just because he was a genuine asshole, on top of being a ruthless murderer and bloodthirsty killer.

But it only took another hour before she was happy to have him around.

Vinicius held up a hand. She froze, stopped breathing, and stared past his arm into the dark tunnel ahead. Winding tunnels were all they'd found, and sometimes there weren't enough amber veins to light the path. On more than a few occasions, she'd had to feel her way around the rocks and stones, which slowed progress to a crawl. Bloodgrip vines were deadly if you didn't give them the respect they deserved, and the threat of them forced her to tiptoe carefully through dark curves.

Apparently, some other people thought the dark tunnels were good hunting. The quiet grinding of talons announced their approach, and Mia took a step back. Shifting skin, claws on rock, breathing, sounds in the dead quiet as Vinicius held his breath. They, or it, were coming.

Something ahead moved in the darkness, and it came closer. Its body filled the passage. It was... fat. Very fat. But without light, she couldn't see any details.

Vinicius didn't care, and he didn't wait. He roared as he jumped the creature, with zero regard for his wounds or for not making noise. Not a silent takedown, but a display of sheer aggression and anger.

Whatever the thing in the tunnel was, it came forward toward them, and Mia squeaked as she jumped back. It wasn't just fat, it was long. Very, very long, and it had a face like an alligator as big as Vinicius's. It clicked in its long throat a few times, heavy clucks that sounded more like war drums, before it roared and shrieked.

It charged forward, body twisting and turning and filling the entire width of the tunnel. It crashed against Vinicius, and her bodyguard reared back as his weight proved miniscule compared to the size of the thing. But with time, the creature came to a stop, and Vinicius's body, pushed back and into the light, left a trail of deep gashes in the stone from his talons.

Two of Vinicius's arms held the titanic creature by the snout, and two pressed against its thick body and neck. It twisted, tried to bite him, but it had no arms to grab him. It was a graboid! From Tremors! Another old movie her previous guardian had insisted a five-year-old girl watch.

Vinicius got two hands between its jaws, fingers between its teeth, and pulled. His muscles flexed, blood trickled down his limbs, and his roar filled the tunnel as he pulled his two hands apart.

The creature managed another shriek before it twisted into a hiss of pain, and then a bloodcurdling scream of agony as something cracked, and the lower jaw broke away from the upper.

"Oh god!" Mia covered her ears and looked away. The sound died a second later, and she forced herself to look back at the chaos.

Vinicius stood there, panting, bleeding, in front of the corpse of a colossal monster. The child of Belial was a monster, too, but this was a genuine, bona fide horror monster, something that slithered through tunnels and was so thick it filled them. [ww.NoVeIworm.cOm](#)