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The brute didn't respond. She climbed onto his giant back, and like she was driving a sword into a stone, she used both hands and slammed the sharp bone sideways into the side of the demon's neck, forward enough it got the soft stuff. That got a response.

The brute stood up, roared and gargled on his own blood, too, and spun around. Mia wasn't there anymore. Brutes had no spikes to climb, and using both hands to stab him meant she fell back onto Vin's legs and tail. Everything turned to chaos as she got up and tried to run away, but Vin's tree-trunk legs and tail bigger than her entire body were kicking and swinging, and she bounced off.

Bones caught her, hundreds of them, the most uncomfortable surface she could have possibly landed on. Some broke under her, some didn't, and she yelped as more than a few of them tore her skin. She scampered to her feet the moment her ass hit the ground, though, grabbed another big bone, and prepared to defend herself against a nearly nine-foot-tall juggernaut.

But the juggernaut, facing her and glaring at her with murder in his eyes as he marched toward her, fell forward. Vinicius had grabbed one of his legs. The creature landed on the ground a foot in front of Mia, a giant bone sticking out of his neck, and blood flowing out of his mouth and skull-ish flat nose.

The brute tried to get up, and planted his palms against the ground. Screaming, Mia swung her new bone into the side of the bone sticking out of the brute's throat. The bone in her hand shattered, but the bone in the brute's neck did not. It sank deeper, and the gargling demon collapsed as a new flood of blood poured from his mouth, and his new hole.

He stopped moving.

"That's... two..." she said, panting. "I bet David doesn't have that many." Easier to make a joke about her demon kill count, than think about what'd she just done. "Vinicius, are you... Oh fuck."

Vinicius held his torn throat with one hand, his torn trapezoid with another, and used the other two to push himself up to sitting. He failed, and his back hit the rock and bed of bones again, back spikes grinding against the stone.*www.OverM.com*

"Vinicius!" She ran up to the side of his head. "Fucking... fuck! Are you gonna be okay?"

He tried to sit up again, and failed again. Blood seeped out from between his fingers, not nearly as much as the brute had, but far more than was safe. She'd seen him bleed buckets and live, but this was worse.*www.novelworm.com*

He tried to sit up again.

"Stop! Stop moving, god damn it. Just, just hold still. I'll..." She looked around at the bodies. Two dead vrats, two dead gargoyles, and a dead brute. The fight had lasted a whole sixty seconds, less even, and blood was everywhere. More than a bit of it dripped from Mia's hands, and her feet were coated in it. She refused to look at the weird, not-quite-red-kinda-pink stuff that'd landed on her chest earlier when Vin had crushed the vrat's skull.

Vinicius needed to eat, and he needed to now. Not remnants, but real food. Human hearts, or demon hearts.

Mia dashed around the monster and looked at the bodies.

The gargoyle, the one he'd grabbed off his shoulder, he'd grabbed her by the chest and had squeezed her hard enough she'd crunched. Lot of broken bones. Lot of ripped and torn flesh.

The bones around Mia's feet, were any of them sharp? Were--oh thank god, the vratorin that'd had a sword, the sword was nearby. She grabbed the hilt.

"Fuck!" That, was a heavy sword. That was a very heavy sword. Mia was fit and strong for her size, but she was just a tiny girl. The sword probably weighed as much as she did.*worm.com*

She dragged it toward the gargoyle. This was taking too long. If more demons showed up, suicidal or hungry ones like the five before, Vinicius couldn't defend her. And he had defended her, genuinely defended her.

He didn't have to do that. He could have let her die, and then killed the demons. No more leash to worry about. Why? Why did he do that? He was a fucking asshole who only cared about carnage, destruction, and taking back Death's Grip. Nearly a week ago, he'd tried to hurt Mia, and the leash had stopped him. That meant his intent had been real, and he was genuinely going to hurt her, probably kill her.

Just now, he'd saved her life, twice. Why?

With a deep breath, Mia got the sword behind her, its tip on the ground and her hands on the hilt, and she bent forward and swung it over her shoulder like she was flipping a person over her in self defense class. It wasn't sharp enough to cut her back or shoulder, but sharp enough it split the gargoyle's already ruined, shattered chest in half. Almost in half. The sword stopped before getting through the gargoyle's back. A gory mess, blood splattering everywhere as the weight of the sword did most of the work.

Over two weeks in Hell and the sight of a ribcage breaking apart, and guts spilling out, was quickly becoming manageable. It didn't make her want to vomit. Still nauseous, but at least she could stay standing and keep working.

She got on her knees, reached down, and got her hands on the gargoyle's heart. Okay, now she wanted to vomit.

She tried to rip it free, but that was easier said than done. Maybe she could look for a sharp bone, something light she could wield? No, no time. She planted her feet hard, and yanked harder. Just doing a deadlift, just a deadlift, not ripping a heart free of binding veins and arteries, nope nope nope. Flesh tore, and the heart came free, much of the gargoyle's inner flesh already half ripped by the sword, or by Vinicius's death squeeze. And, of course, she fell on her ass.

Groaning and cursing under her breath, she got up, ignored the gore, the warm blood dripping between her fingers, the bones hitting against her shins as she waded through the mess of white, and stopped beside Vinicius's giant head.*www.NovelM.com*

"Open up."

Vinicius turned his head enough to look up at her, and growl. Even that sounded gargled. Blood was getting into his stomach or lungs or both. Hell might not have cared about biology like that, about the specifics and stuff, but it certainly gave a shit about injuries and dying from them.

Vinicius did not open up. Instead, he tried to sit up using his two free hands, the other two still covering his throat and shoulder wounds. He got a whole three inches off the ground before collapsing.

"What're you doing? I have a demon heart! Open your mouth!"

He glared at her, rumbled in his throat, and tried again. And failed again.

"Fucking christ, Vin! Is this some macho thing? Can't eat if someone else is feeding you?" And before she knew what she was doing, she punched him, right in the cheek, above his big crocodile teeth and under his dragon eye. "You're dying! Eat!"

All that got her was a glare. But a following coughing fit that had the dragon monster puking up blood onto his giant throat was enough to convince him. He opened his mouth.

She put the hunk of meat between his huge teeth. His dragon snout had giant sharp teeth like Kas's, like a crocodile, sticking out past his lips. Good reason to yank her hand back so he didn't snap down on that by accident; she doubted the leash would protect her from accidental biting.