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Vin didn't chew. The heart was small enough he swallowed it down, just like a crocodile would. Hopefully, he wouldn't choke. Much as Mia wanted to watch and make sure he didn't, it wasn't like she could give him the Heimlich, and the way his huge neck flexed and bled as he swallowed forced her to look away. Seeing a corpse bleed was one thing. Seeing a living creature bleed as it... he, tried to force down food, was another thing entirely.

Less than a month ago, watching an autopsy had her reeling, and she'd already become a ghost by then. Say one thing for Hell, it definitely desensitized you quick.

Once Vinicius stopped making a half swallowing, half choking sound, she checked on him again.

"Okay, still breathing. That's good. Just focus on breathing and healing." www.NoVelworm.com

He focused his eyes on her, a strange intensity that looked animalistic, like a wounded, starving creature. But there was something else there, too. He was aware, awake, and thinking. Which just made everything more horrible as he choked on his own blood.

She got back to work. If Zel's heart had barely been enough to stave off the giant monster's hunger, one gargoyle's heart wasn't going to do much. She got her hands around the giant black sword's grip, and dragged it over to the other gargoyle. This one had been ripped to pieces, but her chest was in good condition.

Mia took some deep breaths, did her best to ignore the smell of blood saturating the air, the feel of her sweat and blood dripping down her quickly exhausting body, and again swung the sword over her shoulder like she was flipping someone. It crashed into the gargoyle's bare chest, right between the breasts, and broke bones but didn't get through. She had to swing it twice. Thrice.

"I was just... a normal girl, you know?" she said, panting as she worked. Talking was good. Talking helped keep her mind off what she was doing. "I mean, yeah, sure, unusually high sex drive, but I just figured that was normal... for... gingers!" She yanked the heart free deadlift style, but this time kept from ass-planting on the ground. "Then I go to Hell and suddenly I'm broadcasting a weird aura that gets all demons nearby me randy as fuck. Okay, strange, right?" She wiped her forehead of sweat, almost screamed with frustration as she only realized she'd just wiped a bunch of blood across her forehead, and marched back over to Vinicius. "For a bit there, I thought maybe I was some sort of succubus reborn, when I learned about all this sin talk. But that doesn't seem to be the case, does it?" She held the heart over Vin's mouth and held his strange gaze. www.NoVelworm.com

He opened his mouth. She smiled and dropped the heart in.

"At least I'm not broadcasting that aura anymore... as much." She wasn't entirely sure if that was because she was mastering it, or because she was just perpetually sad in a way she hadn't been before. Coming to Hell, losing her brother, and getting captured had definitely been sad, but not deep down in her soul sad; no matter how much she'd told herself he might be, she hadn't been able to believe David might actually be dead, so that explained that. But now, after what happened to Hannah, things were different. She felt different.

"And look at me now. This isn't sexy. This sucks! I'm cutting open corpses to feed my unwilling bodyguard so he doesn't die from a fucking ambush. And--fucking christ this thing is heavy!" With a little rage to fuel it, she swung the sword again, this time down at the vrat Vin had ripped into pieces. She ignored how much he looked like Adron.

"Honestly," she said, glaring down at the shallow wound she'd made, "I kinda wanna go back to how things were. Back in Zel's tower, being protected by a sexy demon, and having sex with him and another sexy demon and his girlfriend... his betrayer, frequently. That was a good afterlife, right? I even lost my virginity to demons, you know." She swung again. Blood splattered and hit her chest and arms. She ignored it. "Pretty fucked up, right? Tiny girl like me, sent to Hell when I shouldn't have been, only to find she's got weird powers, and to test them, Zel had her two sexy demons fuck me into a fucking coma?" She hadn't forgotten about the moral issue with being forced into that, either! "And it was good. It was really good. Of all the ways my stay in Hell could have gone, getting doubly penetrated by a couple giant, sexy demons, while Hannah played with my body? That was a great life! Or second life, or after-after life or whatever.

"But nooooo. Everything had to get ruined. Now here I am, cutting open corpses with a sword I can... barely... lift!" Another swing, this time breaking the ribs and getting into the vrat's chest cavity. Like chopping wood. "Opening corpses so I can feed a demon who hates me, while we trek across Hell on some ridiculous mission straight out of Young Adult fiction!" Yet another reason she wanted to puke. "I know, I know, Zel would have turned on me, eventually. But, just... god, I kinda miss it. I kinda miss when my biggest concern was getting ravaged by Kas or Adron, not demons ambushing me from the shadows and trying to kill me!" Again, she swung the sword, and screamed as she did.

It went through the vrat's chest. Finally. Mia dropped the sword and screamed again as she used a hand and foot to pry some pieces of his ribs out of the way. This sucked. This sucked this sucked this sucked.

Getting a vrat's heart was no easy feat. By the time she butchered her way through his chest and ripped the heart free, she was beyond exhausted. Gasping, soaked in blood -- some of it her own -- and sweat, she joined Vinicius's side again, and presented the much bigger heart.

He rumbled with less gargles this time, and opened his mouth. Finally, progress, less crazy animal hunger in his eyes.

"You..." He swallowed down the heart, and probably some of his own blood. "You talk too much."

"I know! I don't normally, but I do when I'm panicking." She looked back at the sword, and then around Vin's body to the other dead vrat and the dead brute. The vrat, she might be able to cut and break open. The brute, though, not a chance. "How're you feeling?" www.NoVelworm.com

"I'll... live." He managed a nod, but regretted it, groaning and hissing as he tightened his grip on his neck and shoulder.

"Don't go anywhere. Just, lie there and wait until you heal enough to move. You need more food?"

"Not yet."

"Good." She got out of the mess of bones everywhere, and back onto the rocky path between them to the tunnel exit. She took a peek. "I don't see anyone." Of course, if anyone had been nearby, they'd have attacked already. "Is it safe to assume any demons we run into are automatically going to try to kill us every time?"

"No. Only sometimes."

"Well, I guess that's better than all the time. Is it because they saw you were injured and hungry?"

"Yes."

Sighing, she nodded as she came back and sat down beside his head. www.NoVelworm.com