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"Um, it talked about Lucifer. Or rather, Lucifer talked about his goals. You know, fighting, taking down Heaven, taking back what's his--er, theirs. It borderline read like a military leader's speech before starting a 'righteous' war." She air-quoted righteous. "It talked about Belial. Rise Belial this, rise Belial that, attacking Heaven, and it gave me the names of the nine spires, the nine heavenly islands, and... and... stuff." No need to talk about the runes floating around in her skull. "I didn't read anything about a trial."

"Not all that the book knows is shown to the reader."

"Not..." Okay, magic book that obeyed its own rules? Whatever. If it was written by Satan, she could accept that. She gestured to the spire. "Does this affect us at all?"

"Only if the new spire ruler is concerned with us. They could summon the horde, and tear this land apart looking for us."

"Fuuuuck."

He shook his head. "Death's Grip is in chaos. The new spire ruler will have two concerns: defense, and creating a bridge for the ravine."

"A bridge?"

"Yes, perhaps one crafted using the spire."

"Oh wow. A spire ruler can do that?"

He half grumbled, half growled, and the vibration of his heavy voice flowed through the ground.

"I... don't know."

She had to be careful. Each time she indirectly mentioned that Vin wasn't the spire ruler, the muscles in his body flexed, and his tail twitched slightly. If it wasn't for the brute heart he'd eaten before the body dissolved before they got moving again, he wouldn't have had the strength to climb the hole out of the tunnel, and he was bleeding from his wounds again. He was drained, probably still hungry, and injured. And she was still terrified he might freak out and go on a rampage if she said the wrong thing. He might hurt her, but more likely, he might hurt himself, and she needed him.

And she didn't like seeing him hurt.

"Let's find somewhere you can rest up, somewhere safer than the tunnels." She gestured at the mountain beside them. It looked like they were halfway up it, and only a gap between other mountains let them see the spire valley. Mountains everywhere, jagged and sharp and mean. A couple of them had bits of lava leaking down their sides, too, small streams that disappeared into tunnels. If their tunnel had met one of the newly formed lava rivers, that would have not ended well.

"No," Vin said. "We should find a grem or imp, learn what you wish to learn, and move on."

"We can do that when you aren't leaving a blood trail everywhere you go, Vin." www.novelworm.com

He snapped his gaze at her, hard enough a new trickle of blood ran down his chest from his neck. Ugh, this guy. But he did at least glance down at the surrounding blood. A blood trail didn't last long in Hell, but long enough to be a problem. www.novelworm.com

"Fine."

She smiled up at him and stepped in half behind and beside him as the huge demon began the search for somewhere to rest. They should have just stayed in the tunnel for another day or two, but that was risky. Instead, they'd decided to gamble on getting out of the tunnels. More like, Vin had been too stubborn to just sit down and heal in an exposed place. She didn't blame him.

They found a cave, the perfect kind, a tunnel that twisted and turned enough you couldn't see the exit from the back of it. Problem: it was so small Vin had to duck under the ceiling to keep his horns clear.

He sat down, and much as he tried to hide it, he was thankful to get off his feet. But that led to the second problem: no room. So, with a heavy sigh, Mia sat on his leg again, her feet on the ground and between his thighs.

"Back in a tunnel," she said, groaning as she gestured around. There were amber veins, though, and no bloodgrip, thank god.

"Cave. And it was your idea."

"I didn't think you'd start bleeding all over the place climbing up that hole. You said you could do it."

"I did do it."

She gestured at the red line running down from his thick neck down his colossal chest.

"Am I going to have to take care of your stubborn ass all the way across Hell?"

He rumbled, set his gaze on the curve of the tunnel that led back outside, said nothing, and did not move. He held his wounds, two arms free and limp at his sides, tail beside him, and turned into a statue so completely still, she did a double take of his chest to make sure he was still breathing. www.novelworm.com

"I will, you know," she said.

Without moving a muscle, he aimed a dragon eye toward her, and waited. www.novelworm.com

"I mean, if you get hurt, I'll help. I'm not going to be dead weight you have to literally drag. If you get hurt, I'll do what I can to help. And I'll do what I can to get food."

"You can't--"

She stood up on his thigh, balanced without trouble, and flexed. Yeah, sure, she wasn't exactly swimming in muscle, but she was a fit, strong little thing, and she'd proved that.

"If you teach me how to hunt and fight, I bet I can help? Maybe find me a weapon... that doesn't weight a hundred pounds." And to show how awesome she was, she kicked the air while simultaneously still balancing on his leg.