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Miraculously, that got another chuckle out of the demon. She was getting past his mental defenses! Or, she was just that pathetic, he couldn't help but laugh.

"Only the Red Pits and the Navameere Fields train their demons," he said.

"Really? I kinda figured more spire rulers would train their demons. For a stronger province, you know?"

"Death's Grip and its tribes are skilled. They are forged in combat against each other, and against the Cainites." *WwW.0vEtw.rR(m).C(o)m*

Vinicius clicked a *yes.www.novE1W.rR(m).C(o)m*

"So," Mia said, "the Navameere Fields and the Red Pit do training? Like, how to fight and kill and stuff?"

"Yes."

"And my brother, if he wants to get to the Forgotten Place, he has to get to False Gate, like us. Which means he has to go through those provinces?" *www.Nóv(e)lw.rM.(c)oM*

Another click for yes.

She sighed. "I don't suppose the other provinces are any nicer than Death's Grip?"

And another chuckle. Wow, she was on a roll, for better or worse.

"They're worse."

Fuck.

--Day 35--

--David--

Another bout of sex, officially survived. They'd found another cave, taken a break, and the girls had come back from a successful hunt. Much as David wanted to push hard like when trying to catch up to Mia before, he knew from experience demons just didn't do long distance very well. In retrospect, most animals on the surface didn't, either. It was a decidedly human-specific quirk for the most part, the ability to walk vast distances.

So they didn't push too hard, which gave them time to hunt, and gave them time to fuck. They came back with food, they all ate, David managed to not pass out from the weird flood of memories, and they all sat and relaxed. And then fucked. Much as the memories weren't fun, the way a heart sent energy and desire through his limbs was too strong to ignore. He was pretty much a sex addict at this point, and his body seemed a-okay with that.

And with everyone satisfied, he lay on his back, panting and sweating, while Dao and Jes snuggled into his sides opposite of each other. With his arms out, they both found the grooves of his shoulder, and pressed into his chest. They were both so much taller than him, their feet went way past his.

"This is absurd," Acelina said. She sat not too far off, closer than she needed to, considering the cave was decently big. "Look at this. You coddle and pamper the boy."

Dao chirped a couple times and pressed into him harder.

"Yeah, we do," Jes said. She reached over him past Dao, grabbed his arm, and pulled it around Dao so he hugged the satyr to his side. Satisfied, the gargoyle rested her head on his shoulder again. "Hug us, you asshole."

He gulped, chuckled, did as ordered, and hugged both women to his chest and sides. It wasn't that he didn't want to hug them, but doing that with Jes was a gamble. Apparently not anymore.

He smiled down at the gargoyle as her horns hit against the side of his head while she got comfortable, adjusting her long, smooth, black dreadlocks. Dao had more trouble, considering two of her horns were big ram horns that curled around her head. Eventually she settled on placing her forehead against his shoulder and chest, just below the collarbone, with the front, blunt side of each of her curling horns gently pressing on him.

No eyes, no hair. The two big black ram horns came out of the sides of her forehead, and the two black horns in the middle that curled up and back came more from the center of her forehead. A black, bone-like thick plate covered where her eyes would have been, connected to her forehead, and created the foundation her horns used as a firm connection to her skull. Perfect for head-butting. She rubbed it into his skin, and he smiled as he watched her face-rub like a cat would. The weird face plate felt smooth.

Dao tilted her head up, aimed her eyeless gaze at him, smiled, slid an arm across his chest until her hand slipped between his other side and Jes's stomach, and she hugged him tight.

"Disgusting," Acelina said, gesturing to them with a wing.

Laughing, Caera prowled over toward Acelina and gestured to her body.

"You came how many times, masturbating while watching?"

Acelina scoffed. "Sex is an exercise in pleasure and trust, and I trust none of you. And it is not a... a... precursor, to this disgusting display of pampering."

David raised a brow, but when he tried to lift his head, Jes pushed it back down with a finger.

"Ignore her," Jes said. "Bitch doesn't know how satisfying cuddling can be."

Daoka clicked and nodded.

"I'd be cuddling him, too," Caera said, "if I didn't think he'd get crushed under three women." *www.W.novE1W.rR(m).C(o)m*

David tried to lift his head again, and again, Jes pushed it down. Okay, he wasn't going anywhere, or allowed to see. Nothing to do but stay lying down while two beautiful demon women continued to squish their big breasts into him. Oh the humanity.

"Other demons have shared tales with me," Acelina said, "of the trials and struggles of Death's Grip. I sometimes watched the mountains from the balconies of the spire as Zelandariel explained to me how the roaming tribes of Death's Grip, while they often bowed to her bailiffs, frequently fought amongst themselves. She told me life was harsh between the jagged rocks of her kingdom, where tens of thousands of demons forged themselves into killing machines against each other as much as the cruel stone. Only through the strength of a lifetime of unending struggle and life-threatening trials, did the demons of Death's Grip fight off Alessio and the forces of the Black Valley.

"And here I sit, forced to watch one of Zelandariel's most prized gorgalas... cuddling." Acelina gagged. David didn't have to peek to know what that'd look like, especially considering Acelina's featureless black face. "Caera, another of Zelandariel's most honored, who slayed dozens of demons in her last battle against the Black Valley. You indulge in this pampering, as well."

Caera growled. From what David knew of the tregeera, Acelina's words probably had the tiger lady covering the mark on her shoulder with a hand.

"I was called by the horde," Caera said. "And your bitch lover sealed it in. Not that you'd know what a horde call feels like, but it's a thousand times worse than any sin aura, Acelina. This mark--"

David bolted up. "That mark!" Everyone stared at him. "Can I see that mark, Caera? Up close?"

She frowned at him, but her expression softened as realization donned. After a few painful seconds of silence, she nodded, prowled over to him, reached across Daoka, and set her hand between his legs. With her shoulder up close, he could see the mark, or the remains of it anyway, clearly defined on her dark red skin. A scar, now, but Caera said she got it a long, long time ago, and with how clearly its dark, sharp edges were still imprinted on her skin, it wasn't going anywhere.

He held out a hand, and Caera flinched.

"Can I touch it?"

She frowned at him, but put her hand back. With freedom to really explore, he gently reached out and held her arm so he could balance as he leaned in, still sitting, and with his eyes only inches from the mark, he ran a finger down the strange curves.

Caera didn't react. Thank god, because a pulse of information flooded David's brain, and he squeezed her arm out of reflex.

"What is it?" she asked. "You look... You look like one of those crazy scientists in the movies."

He stared at the rune until it overlaid the one in his mind. It glowed. Not the one on Caera, but the rune in his mind glowed as puzzle pieces snapped together. He could have drawn the rune and it would have meant nothing, but seeing it burned onto someone's flesh hammered context into his brain and wrapped the undefinable rune in definition.

"Control," he said. "It's for control."