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Mia did not look any of the bodies in the eye. She did not look at the numbers on their foreheads. She kept her eyes above the dead, and set them on the demons prowling around instead. All of them dripped with blood, rivers of crimson that ran down their mouths, necks, chests, and legs. But none of them compared to Vinicius, and the red that had splattered his entire body, head to toe, horn to talon.

Only one thing could have made blood splatter like that: ripping and tearing bodies over his head.

Vinicius stood in the center of the huge, circular platform, a slowly looked around at the rest of the demons. All of them stood far away, and all of them faced Vin.

The child of Belial rumbled in his chest, and the blood around his feet vibrated. Slowly, he turned in place, and looked at each demon as he flexed and unflexed the muscles of his hands. A silent challenge.

No one used their sin aura. All it'd take was one, just one demon who decided a fight was worth it, and the sin aura would snap the tension and send them into a frenzy. It didn't happen. Instead, each demon walked away, leaving Vin alone in the mess of death and gore.

"Quite the show of dominance," Faustinus said. "He--"

Vinicius snapped his dragon gaze to Faustinus and Mia, and ran toward them. His dinosaur feet hit the ground hard, and the blood splashed like mini tidal waves as he came at them. All of Hell shook with each step as the colossus ripped the ground underneath his talons.

He roared, and Mia squeaked

"Wait!" she screamed. "Wait! He's not attacking!"

Was that even the reason Vin was suddenly ripping up a storm and ready to go on a slaughter? From the look in his dragon eyes, he was half a second away from summoning his aura and starting a fight. But Mia's words punched through the heavy impacts of his feet and his harsh growls, and he slowed. And just like a semi truck, it took a while to slow down, and his own momentum took him right up to the edge of the death pit before he finally stopped.

Poor Faustinus. He had a hand over his shoulder, ready to grab his sword and draw it, and his tail was shivering, betraying the solid look in his eyes. **Ww.nO@eFWoRm.coM**

"What is a volarin doing at a feasting site?" Vinicius said, towering over them.

The incubus managed a small smile and smaller chuckle. He didn't lower his hand.

"Getting leftovers. There're always a few souls who escape but fall down the cliffs. My friends and I were watching, and then I noticed her." He gestured to Mia with his free hand. "And felt like talking to her."

"Which I greatly appreciate," Mia said. "Most demons we run into just try and eat us, and Vin isn't exactly... talkative."

The four-armed demon dragon growled quietly, but at least he lowered his hands. A bit. He couldn't get any closer without stepping over the rock barrier, and instead remained where he stood, waiting, watching, eyes never leaving the incubus.

"I just was telling the unmarked soul here that Diogo somehow became the new spire ruler."

Vinicius rumbled and said nothing.

"That reminds me!" Mia clapped her hands together. "Zel had two demons watching me, before... things happened. Kasimiro and Adron. I know Adron was injured. Do you know if anything happened to them? Are they alive?"

Faustinus tapped his chin with his free hand. Despite his playful, Adron-like mischievous nature, he kept the other hand ready to grab his sword hilt. Not like he'd be able to do much to Vinicius, but still, he was braver than he'd said.

"What's the information worth to you?"

"Uh, what?"

"What're you willing to trade for it?" And with a frustratingly perfect amount of smoothness, he winked. He may have been similar to Adron, but his very human face made the subtle flirtatious motions so much more... intimate. With vrats and brutes and their demony skull-like faces, there was a certain distance, like she was looking at things out of a story. There wasn't even a point in trying to read the expressions of someone like Kas, and Vin's were more animal than anything, but the incubus in front of her was so very human, red skin, red eyes, and black horns aside.

So she kicked him in the shin. **Ww.nOveL@O:Rm.cOm**

"Nothing! I'll trade you nothing." She folded her arms across her chest, very thankful she kept the torn and half shredded silk wrap. It was still good enough to keep her bits out of sight, at least.

She glanced up at Vin. Vin growled, leaned in, and breathed. The hot air of his mouth poured over them, thick with the smell of blood, and drops of the red liquid fell from his teeth onto the stones Mia and Faustinus hid behind. **Ww.NO(e)WOr:m.coM**

Faustinus chuckled. "Message received. Yes, the enforcer and the sneaky vrat are alive."

Mia released a long sigh she didn't know she'd been holding in, and tension melted from her muscles.

"They are?"

"Yeap."

"Are they still at the spire?"

"Nope."

She tilted her head. "No?"

"They left. I don't know the details, but I saw Adron and Kas leave together."

"Together is good!"

"Eh, not so good. Diogo has a standing order to kill them on sight, too."

Oh no.

"Why?"

"Same reason he wants you and Vinicius dead, I guess. I wasn't there. And speaking of." The incubus looked up at Vin and lowered his hand from his sword hilt. "Don't suppose you'll let me go?"

"Let you go?" Groaning, Mia looked up at Vinicius. "You don't have permission to eat him."

He rumbled. "Your naivety will get you killed."

She didn't have to guess Vin's reaction. Letting another demon see them was problematic, but having a conversation with one only to let them go meant a real risk. Now that Faust knew something about what they were up to, they really should have simply killed him.

Well, fuck that. Faust helped her. She would help him.

Mia waved Vin back. Vin rumbled again, deep and long, unhappy, but relaxed and pulled back.

"Much obliged," Faust said. "And some words of advice, unmarked. Do a better job of hiding. Plenty of demons out there who'll do exactly what your friend here thinks, especially to you."

"But not you," she said, smiling at him.

He returned the smile, but damn, his smile was so much better than hers.

"But not me. Diogo can burn for all I care. Isn't that right, boys? **Ww.W.nOveLWOrM.coM**

Mia drew her head back and looked around. Right on cue, movement stirred in the distance, and the now very familiar sound of talons and feet hitting stone filled the silence as three other incubi stepped into view. Each one of them wore bits of black armor, and each one of them had a big black sword strapped to their back. The swords weren't as big as the one Mia had used to feed Vin, but they still probably weighed twenty or thirty pounds. A ridiculous weight for a sword. Even incubi were inhumanly strong.