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One incubus came closer and joined Faust's side. A little taller, a bit more muscle, he also had a scar down the forehead across the cheek, and carried himself with a little more directness than his apparently younger friend.©ww.NOvelwOmt.cO©

"We just came for a meal, Faust. The fuck are you doing?"

"Introducing myself to the unmarked everyone's talking about."

The bigger incubi looked down at Mia, up at Vinicius, and then around the hillside at the two other incubi waiting nearby.

"Never thought I'd see a ragarin in my life," the new incubus said. "And definitely never thought I'd see an unmarked soul. Diogo's one temper tantrum away from summoning the horde and sending every demon in the province on a hunt to kill you. He says you and the child of Belial are responsible for Zel's death."

Mia squirmed. "Maybe."

Faust laughed. "Alright, well, we should probably get out of here before shit happens." With a sneaky wink for Mia, he gestured down the cliff side where at least one human had jumped to their death. "Let's go. Stay out of trouble, Mia."

Faust walked off, though his friend stayed behind for a second and spent it looking Mia up and down. Satisfied, he gave her the same sort of frustratingly smooth, perfect smile all incubi were apparently masters of, before he gave Vin a sort of half-bow as he rejoined his friend.

"Let's go," Vin said once they were gone.

"Uh, yeah. Good idea."

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Once they had some distance between them and the massacre, the mountain peak above and behind them, Vin spoke up.

"You were lucky."

"I know."

He glared at her over his shoulder. "You should have called for my help."

"Because of Faustinus?"

"Yes. He could have killed you."

Part of her wanted to poke him -- verbally -- for making it so obvious he wanted to keep her alive, despite his selfish asshole attitude. But teasing someone for doing something you wanted them to do was a recipe for stopping that behavior; thank you psych 101. Still, his desire to keep her alive was something she wanted to figure out. Did he want to keep her alive because he was curious about her, or because he trusted the woman in aera armor and wanted to save the world, if only to save himself? It could have been a bunch of things, and she'd poked that bear enough. For now.

"You were busy, and judging from the last time you got into a fight and... did demon things, I wasn't sure I could trust you to not accidentally kill me, too."

He growled. "I saved you last time."

"Yeah, and... and thank you, but, you're... scary, you know? You were really scary, when killing those demons." She hugged her arms close to her chest. "But you're right. I fucked up. I should have hid better, and trust you next time." When Vin had run over with full intent on killing Faust, Mia had stopped him. Whether she could do that when Vin was in full battle mode against other demons while on a full belly, she didn't know. If she paid more attention, she wouldn't have to find out.

He watched her with one eye as he navigated the winding path deep between two mountains, but didn't rumble or growl or groan. Maybe he was surprised she admitted fault?

"I thought," she said, "that all the demons would be up there on the mountain where the souls were, joining you in the... feast."

"That... is what normally happens."

Oh ho ho! He was admitting fault, too! Sorta, kinda, barely. But hey, that was a lot more awareness than she expected of the child of Belial.

"Lesson learned," she said. "Demons aren't always so easy to predict. At least the incubus was nice."

"He was looking for a way to exploit you. If I wasn't there, he would have taken you."

"I don't know. He seems to have a real issue with Diogo for killing someone named Leos. And with Diogo in charge, it sounds like Faust's gonna be a thorn in Diogo's side when he can."

Vin groaned and rumbled, but relented with a nod.

"Very lucky," he saidww.rz(e)v6L©rM.©o(m)

"Agreed. Super lucky! Kas and Adron are alive! And they left the spire!" She hopped in place a few times as she caught up to Vin. Maybe it was the excitement, or maybe she just felt she knew Vin well enough now, but before she knew it, she leapt up and grabbed onto the spikes on his back.

Vin didn't so much as slow down. He turned his head enough to peek over his shoulder down at her, and growled annoyance, but didn't knock her off as she climbed up his back. Barely a 5, 2 on the rock climbing scale, and it took her no time at all to get behind his head and toward his right shoulder. She held onto the big spikes coming off the shoulder, while she pressed her body against the hard muscle between his back spikes. And of course she made sure her eyes cleared his shoulder so she could watch the path ahead.

"They're alive," she said. "They're alive, and they're not happy about Diogo."

"No one is happy a pathetic devorjin now rules Death's Grip."

"Pathetic? He was missing an arm and still tried to fight the rider. That was impressive. Courage--"w(w)w.no(v)E!©orM.©©©

"Demons do not have courage. They have power, and hunger."

"I dunno. Maybe? Well, either way, you'll have an easy time taking the spire when you come back here then, right?" With a happy squeak, she patted his shoulder. "They're alive! Maybe we'll run into them? If you spot a vrat with a dinosaur, a--"

"Dinosaur?"

"Dino--oh, you actually probably don't know what those are, do you? Probably not big in scrying pools way back when. I meant Adron the vratorin, and Kas the sarkarin. Can't be too many pairs of those wandering around Hell, right?"

"It would take a lifetime to explore the tunnels in Death's Grip alone. We won't find them."

"Nah, come on, don't say that. I bet we'll stumble onto them. And--"

Mia and Vin snapped their heads up. Shadows cut across the sky, fast things in a strange shape Mia had not seen above her since she'd been alive.

Wings. White wings.