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But his legs didn't hesitate. He took Dao's wrist and pulled her toward the tunnel. It wasn't long before she caught up and moved under her own power, but both had to slow down as they came to the tunnel's entrance.

"This is definitely not good," he said, hand to his gut. The inside of the tunnel proved worse than the outside, more bloodgrip vines and sharp rocks waiting for them, and what amber veins he spotted were few and far between. *Ww.novélWorm.čM*

"No choice," Jes said, and she pushed him in.

"Such a path is suicide," Acelina said. Standing at the tunnel entrance, she bared her shark teeth, eyeless face aimed at the dark path ahead.

"Stay here, then." Jes shrugged, saluted, and disappeared into the darkness.

"Come on!" Caera's voice called from ahead.

"My wings will tear!" *w.móve(i)Worm.čM*

Daoka clicked desperately at Acelina, but, of course, the big demon refused to budge. So, David did the first thing that came to his mind. He gave Dao a push deeper into the tunnel, dashed back out toward Acelina, and grabbed her closer hand. With how tall she was, her hand hung at chest level, and he had to borderline reach up to grab it.

She tried to back away, but he yanked and yanked hard. Before he knew it, Dao was right beside him, doing the same thing to her other hand and clicking up a storm.

"Just pull your wings in tight!" David yelled. "Come on. The chance the angels aren't going to kill me -- and you -- is next to none, and you know it! Get in here!"

"I will not be--"

Daoka hopped behind her, and headbutt the huge demon in her huge ass, literally. Acelina did not appreciate that, cursing and hissing, but she had no choice but to duck low to keep her horns from hitting the ceiling as she stumbled in. With her leaning forward, it was easier to pull her and keep her half running, half stumbling forward into the tunnel.

Bloodgrip vines were cruel, with sharp thorns almost as sturdy as metal, and they ripped and tore into David's ankles and shins. No matter how good he'd gotten at navigating Hell's environment, this was too much, and he bit down his own curses and hisses as blood trickled down his skin until he felt it between the toes. From the way Acelina mirrored the noises, she was suffering just as much as he was. Demon skin was tougher than human skin, but she was so much bigger than him.

Daoka hopped ahead, took David's hand, and guided him. The eyeless couldn't see in pitch black, but they could still see better than him or other demons. Even so, Daoka slowed her pace to a hurried walk, and made tiny, high-pitched chirps of pain every so often.

"Halt," a voice said from behind. They sounded human, and perfect. And they did not sound like the two angels he'd run into before. *W(w).n@elwOrm.c(ə)m*

David did not look back. Acelina did, and it cost her a nasty gash somewhere on her body, and a heavy thunk told him she hit her horns against a rock jutting from the ceiling.

"Come on," Caera said. He almost tripped over her tail. "Careful here. We have to go down."

"Down?"

"Down." She grabbed his hand and threw him over her shoulder. Only his familiarity with her back spikes kept him from getting skewered, and he held on as the tiger lady started down a shade of shadow a little darker than others. A vertical tunnel, something they'd have to climb down, with sharp rocks and bloodgrip everywhere and who the fuck knew what at the bottom.

"Come on!" Jes's voice, from below *ww.NoveWorm.čM*

Caera went down the hole backward, and Daoka and Acelina stood at the edge. Poor Acelina. The giant demon hissed almost without pause, and no matter how hard she pulled her wings tight to her shoulders, they didn't have the same snap and tightness to them Jes's did. They were long, too, and the membrane flowed almost like a loose silk dress, including snagging on any and every sharp protrusion nearby.

Daoka waited and clicked furiously as Acelina looked down the hole.

"This is absurd," Acelina said. "We are going--"

Daoka pulled on the much bigger demon's hand, chirping Morse code fast, head aimed back the way they came. Whatever she said, it earned a sigh from Acelina, and the giant woman began the descent. Of all of them, she was the least built for this. As long as the demons had something to get their claws on, they could climb pretty much any surface. But each foot down the tunnel, a relatively small hole, was agony for the spire mother.

It wasn't dark for long. Just as Acelina's huge horns slipped past the edge of the hole, the tunnel lit with a blinding flash, and all four demons shrieked. The only thing stopping David from yelling, was the paralyzing awe that ripped through him, as the strange, gold light crashed into the cave wall above the hole, straight through the tunnel. The sound hit them a moment later, a thunderous crash that shook the walls.

David should have looked away. He didn't. He stared into the gold light until his eyes burned and water dripped down his cheeks. If it weren't for Caera, he would have stayed there, staring, even as the rocks ripped off the wall and fell upon them.

The angels were attacking them. David and the girls had known that would happen, after the warning they'd received, and Caera had talked about the stories of angels and some of the crazy things they could do. But seeing the gold beam of light, almost as wide as the tunnel they'd just gotten through, tear holes into the wall it crashed against? That wasn't what he thought. They'd just barely dodged a death beam!

Acelina shrieked some more. David's eyes adjusted long enough to see some larger, jagged rocks rip holes in her wings, before one of them blocked out his field of vision as it came at him. Yeah, that was going to hurt.