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He picked up the axe. It took two hands, and just getting it up onto his shoulder was difficult. Cainites had to be supernaturally stronger than humans, considering the man he'd just mercy killed didn't look to be all that much bigger than David. But the aura ripped the puzzle from his thoughts and tossed it aside. That didn't matter. Just use it, and kill.

The Cainites didn't know who they were messing with. The imps and grems, sure, they had to work together to deal with just one soul at a time, especially since the Cainites were apparently superhuman. But Jes and Caera weren't just run-of-the-mill demons. They had a lot of experience under their belt, a lot of battles, a lot of kills, and the two of them diced through the human souls in a brutal dance of dismemberment.

The tunnel filled with the sounds of falling weapons clinking on the rocks, and gargled yells and screams full of blood. Demons went for the throat.

One of the Cainites got past Daoka, and while she head-butted another soul, the woman with a sword swung for her back. But Acelina was there already, charging in, ignoring the bloodgrip that dangled from the ceiling even as it ripped her wings. She got her hands on the Cainite from behind and tore off their head.

The Cainites didn't respond. They didn't care. The aura drowned all thought, buried all sense of strategic thinking, and had everyone throwing themselves at whatever was in front of them. Acelina was not immune to her own aura. Both she and Daoka didn't stop, didn't react to the fact a headless corpse had just fallen underneath their hooves, they just kept moving.

David followed, stepping over the bodies. So close to Acelina, it was like walking straight into the crashing waves of an ocean in a storm. The aura poured out of her in pulses, and each one earned a new roar or growl from the demons. Even the imps and grems, who resisted auras according to the girls, were lost to it. [www.novelworm.com](#)

~~—Sure enough, Daoka jumped ahead, Acelina followed, and one of the Cainites someone else had knocked to the side got back up. The demons didn't notice or care, and left their backs exposed. That was why David followed behind, axe on his shoulder.~~

The Cainite went for Acelina's back; well, her ass, considering how tall she was. David was only five feet behind, but the Cainite didn't so much as look his way. She had a bigger target.

David brought the axe down on the woman's shoulder. The feedback struck him still. Flesh and bone parted under the weighty blade, the woman's shoulder opening under the heavy impact of the ridiculous axe, and David's feet came up off the ground an inch with his swing. Metal, splitting muscle, and splattering blood. Metal, going through someone's body. [www.novelworm.com](#)

He wished he had a gun. There was a healthy -- or not so healthy -- disconnect from violence when you used a gun. But an axe left an imprint, from his skin up to his brain, the way the grip vibrated in his palms when it hit the skin, then muscle, then bone. It was a mercy the axe went deep, carried by its mass, and killed the woman almost instantly.

Acelina and Daoka, and now Jeskura pushed forward, and David followed behind. Another Cainite went for them, and again, David got them in the back, this time from the side where there were no bits of armor or leather straps. They didn't die, though, and the weight of the axe meant David couldn't yank it back quickly. They turned, grabbed the shaft of the axe, and glared at David. [www.novelworm.com](#)

The eyes were exactly what he expected from a crazy psycho human wearing entrails over-top their bits of armor. Them not dying from the axe that sank several inches into their side, he did not expect. They snarled, and with one hand still holding the axe, swung their sword down at David. And all the girls were facing the other direction.

David held out a hand. In a quarter second, he was going to get the sword straight down through the hand, and with how heavy the weapons were, it was going to split his arm in half, down to the elbow. But he held out his hand anyway, because what the fuck else was he supposed to do.

In that quarter second, while a crazy soul high on demon hearts and sin auras came at him, something clicked. He almost heard it. Click. Things, snapping together. Pure reflex. Didn't think, didn't analyze, just did.

His hand flashed gold. Something went 'dink' in the obvious way metal did when hitting other metal. Impact sent his arm swinging back, and the man with the sword stumbled back, too.

The gold disappeared as quickly as it'd appeared, and David, now on his ass on the bloody stones, stared up at the equally shocked Cainite.

Acelina turned around and raked her claws down the Cainite's back. The life drained from their eyes, and they fell. [www.novelworm.com](#)

No questions came from the spire mother. The demon and her obsidian, featureless face opened its wide mouth full of shark teeth, but not in a knowing grin or surprised awe. Still drowning in the aura she herself created, Acelina reached down, yanked the axe free of her latest victim, and looked at David for a second longer than was probably good. But, instead of chopping him down with her new weapon, she turned back to the others, and chopped down another Cainite instead, one that was about to kill one of the gremlas.

And that was the last of them. The barely saved gremla jumped for joy, literally, and pounced on the Cainite Acelina had cut open. The last few seconds the Cainite spent alive, he spent knowing what it felt like to have claws tear open his chest, and the happy high-pitched chirps of a demon only four feet tall.