

## 1349

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Hell didn't care about size? It certainly gave a shit when it came to demons. But, souls were different. Did they all come to Hell with the same... soul-level strength? That did level the playing field between sizes and sexes, for souls anyway.

"Good thing," he said, rubbing an arm. Be more fidgety, squirmy, like an unstable guy. "I don't know my way around very well, and I was looking to get back to Greg. We ran into a few demons, bigger than imps or grems. Only me survived." Did they use the same names for demons? Please god use the same names for demons.

"We've killed a bunch of those little fucks," 611 said. "But we haven't seen any big shits since Renato."

"Renato?"

"Yeah. And..." 611, a brunette who looked like she'd fit perfectly in a Mad Max movie, picked up a skull and admired it. That was a vrat skull, big, large jaw and defined eye sockets. Big teeth. "What is that... tingling?"

"Tingling?" David asked, doing his best to mute the strings inside him. Much as he could mute them to almost nothing, he couldn't completely stop his inner fingers from plucking them. "Not feeling anything like that."

The two women looked at each other, eyebrows furrowed. Best to interrupt them before their train of thought screwed him over.

"L--"

"Who recruited you?" the man asked.

"Ryan." It came out of his mouth before he could even think about it. It was a semi-popular name, right? There was a chance the Cainites had someone named Ryan in their ranks, right?

Woman 492 raised a brow.

"Since when did Ryan have permission to do that?"

Permission? So the Cainites had some kind of rank system. And, shit. Okay, play it off like you don't know.

"No idea. Just, some guy approached me after he saw what I did, and... yeah." He shook his head. The longer they thought about this, the bigger the chance they'd chop off his head. "Which way to Greg?"

"Good ways from here," man 587 said. "You gotta cross the lava rivers. Down the tunnel there, first right, and follow the heat. You remember the lava rivers, right? Past that, you reach the death pits."

David nodded and looked down, like he was trying to remember.

"Right. Thanks." He nodded, stepped back, and started down the tunnel.

"You're going to have to explain this to me," 611 said, stepping out into the tunnel with him, sword in her hand. "Ryan recruited you?"

Fuck. David turned around and put on his best serious face. He knew it was shit.

"Yeah. Why?"

"What was his number?"

"What?"

She grinned as she tightened her grip on her sword.

"Ryan. What was his number?"

Double fuck.

"... 554?"

After a long, hopeful pause, she laughed and shook her head. She pointed her sword at him, lifting it more easily than he could his big dagger, and she came closer.

"You're going to tell me who you are, and what you're doing, trying to reach Greg. Or--"  
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Movement in the back drew David's eyes. 611, eyes already glaring into his, spun around, but she didn't get a chance to react.

Caera, coming at them like a literal sprinting tiger, crashed into the woman horns first. Blood splattered over David's body as two red protrusions stuck out the woman's back. He stepped back and narrowly avoided her body as Caera twisted and swung her to the side, earning screams of pain and rage from 611, before the demon turned and pounced at the two still in the alcove.

David didn't look. No need. From the sounds, it was clear Caera had caught them off guard. Gargles and screams followed, and severed limbs flew out of the alcove, spraying blood in beautiful patterns.

Six seconds. Six seconds for Caera to catch up to them, stab 611, and rip and cut 587 and 492 to pieces.

"Jesus," David said. "Caera, you--"

Caera stalked out of the room, covered in blood, and she marched her way on all-fours to 611, limping on her bad arm. 611 was crawling away on her belly, and had gotten maybe two feet.

Much as David really liked Caera's usually calm personality and her inner archaeologist, there was no denying how powerful and useful her other side was. Caera knew how to fight in ways most people didn't. No boasting, no chest thumping, no flourishing, no eye-to-eye standoffs. It was how she survived Zel's last horde call and battle against Alessio. Whoever reacted first survived. Whoever reacted second died.

But holy fuck it was cold, and brutal.

Caera picked 611 up by her hair, and slammed her back against the cave wall, straight onto bloodgrip. The Cainite would have screamed, but blood came out instead. Punctured lung.

"Caera," David said. "She might know something."

"She's a Cainite," Caera said. "She won't tell us anything. And she's"  
dying."wWw.NoVeLw@rm.c0M

"The... fuck..." Gargling on the crimson leaking from her mouth, 611 lifted her head and glared at David. Not the demon holding her up by her hair so her toes only grazed the ground, but David. "Who... the fuck... are you?"

David tried to keep eye contact, but they fell away. Violence in Hell was always so brutal and quick, but for a moment it slowed to an eternal crawl of pain and misery as Caera made sure the Cainite's back rubbed up against the bloodgrip vines behind her. Torture. This was torture.

"Caera--"wWw.NoVeLw@rm.c0M

Caera sank her free hand's claws into the woman's leg. More blood splattered out of her mouth as she tried to scream again, and failed to scream again.

"What happened to Renato?" Caera asked.

The slow grin the dying woman put on her face chilled David to the bone.

"Dead," she said between coughs.