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"Yes. It is by their will that the unmarked have been sentenced to death. It is by their will the records of the ancient past are only shared piecemeal to those they consider worthy." With an annoyed grunt, Yosepha folded her arms across her chest and scowled. Even her wings half fluttered in an angry kinda way. "As you can surmise from my words, we angels are often kept in ignorance. It is one of the reasons I am here, aiding the Damall, and not simply killing you as ordered."

Mia smiled. Much as Yosepha was the angry sort, she was intrinsically different to the demons. No demon would be so forthcoming with information, but the angel had a desire to do the right thing, to make it happen, and it probably wasn't even crossing her mind that every word she said could be used against her if heard by someone particularly manipulative. Or, maybe she did know, but trusted the demons to not exploit her.

Mia eyed Romakus, and he grinned at her, almost like he knew what she was thinking. Maybe he was. A sneaky, manipulative bastard like him, hooking up with a righteous and kind-hearted, but maybe a little simple angel? That was an... oddly cute couple, assuming he wasn't just using her.

Romakus spoke next. "Why the angels are killing the unmarked is a mystery, and it's a mystery we're trying to solve. Anything that screws with the balance is bad. A giant crack in Hell, and something... something beneath it, something aware and maybe alive? Yeah, we've entered major unbalancing territory here, not seen since Lucifer created the vortex."

"And you think I know what's going on?"

"More than us," Yosepha said. "You will tell us what you know, so that we can keep the balance."

Sighing, Mia half sat, half leaned against a big rock, and donned her best frown again.

"So you can just kill me when you know everything?"

Romakus laughed. "We could always torture it out of you."

"Bullshit. You know torture doesn't work like that. I'd tell you anything to make the pain stop."

"And I wouldn't allow it," Yosepha said. "Until I see otherwise, I will consider the unmarked deserving of some level of protection. She may not be in Heaven, but she is unmarked, and is perhaps worthy of the holy waters of her eternal embrace."

Mia's frown melted, and she beamed.W@vianovè@wrM.com

Romakus grumbled down at Yosepha in an exaggerated, almost playful way, and pushed her back with one of his colossal wings. Which she responded to by grabbing its membrane from underneath, earning an also exaggerated yelp from the demon as she yanked the titan to the side. They were a cute couple, if a bit volatile.

"Okay," Mia said. "I'll tell you... some stuff. Because of her." She gestured to Yosepha, and the angel returned it with a very serious nod. The woman was not the sort to relax, or even smile. Mia liked her. "My brother and I were sitting and eating breakfast when we died. It was completely random. Nothing happened to us. No one killed us. We just... died. It was painful, like everything inside us decided to break at the same time, and ten seconds later we were dead. Both of us, at the same time."

"Strange," Yosepha said, "and unnatural."

"Yeah. We stuck around for over two weeks to see what the coroner would say. They found nothing. When we finally entered the gold light we kept finding everywhere, we stepped out onto big stairs, taking us up to a big, gold gate. Heaven's gate. We walked up, and when we tried to pass the gate, it blocked us. Like, full on, walked into glass, nearly broke my nose sorta block." Sighing, she rubbed her arms, hugging herself. "Then the portal to Hell swallowed us up. We got separated the moment we hit the red river it dumped us over."

Yosepha and the three tetrads all nodded, listening intently. The other demons, not so much.

"I got taken to Diogo, and he took me to Zel, expecting a reward or something for bringing an unmarked. They quickly figured out I had an aura that was--"

"Arousing every demon and soul nearby," Faust said, smiling at her.

She rolled her eyes, but she couldn't stop herself from blushing. Pale skin and all that.

"It's not a sin aura," she said. "I don't know what it is." And she had no intention of telling them how it worked. For all she knew, giving details about the music her inner fingers plucked would brand her an abomination that needed to be executed. "Zel realized the angels were out in numbers, looking for something. She guessed it was me and maybe other unmarked, and she tried to figure out what was going on. Then the rider attacked."

All the demons, save for the tetrads, sucked in a breath. The rider was the bogeyman even more than Vinicius was.

"He wanted to kill you?" Yosepha asked.

"Yeah. But, my brother showed up, and we escaped, and--"

Romakus gestured to Vinicius. "You're skipping an awful lot. What happened to Zel? How'd Vinicius get loose? And why do you have his leash?"

Mia looked Vin's way. Lie? Vin met her eyes, but said nothing, and used no body language. It was up to her.

"I was with Vin in his cell when the rider attacked. Zel left for a moment, and Vin... broke off a spike." She gestured to his spike on his shoulder, still missing most of its length. "Zel came back, and I stabbed her with it."www.NoVèL@wrM.com

Yosepha froze. Livian and Julisa. Romakus's jaw dropped.

"You... killed Zelandariel?" he asked.

"Yeah." Moment of truth. Mia killing Zel upset the balance of Hell pretty bad, and the Damall didn't like that, apparently.www.NoVèL@wrM.com

"A little pipsqueak like you?" Romakus laughed, and soon all the demons were laughing, Livian and Julisa included. "You killed the bitch?"

"Got her through the eye." Okay. If she was going to own this "killed a spire ruler" thing, in hopes it'd earn her street cred or something, she had to be confident about it.

What would David have done? Probably said the rider killed Zel. Yeah, that might have been a better idea. But she sucked at lying, and David was worse.

"Vinicius?" Julisa asked.

The beast rumbled and nodded.

"Well, damn," Romakus said. "I should kill you for that."

Ah, fuck.

Yosepha rolled her eyes and swatted her lover's giant chest with a white wing.

"Spire rulers dying is not unheard of."W@vianovè@wrM.com

Her lover disagreed. "Pretty rare, and power vacuums like that cause problems."

Shaking her head, Yosepha stepped a little closer to Mia, entering the circle of demons.