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Vin snarled at the statue, even stared at it for a bit, but said nothing. Still, she was getting better at reading his body language, the flexing fingers and rigid tail, all signs he was upset. If he'd been in better condition, he might have unleashed some of his rage, but for all the demon's obvious desire to go on slaughter sprees and rend the hellscape into a battlefield, he could control his temper. Maybe over two hundred years in a prison cell had changed him?

They found the tetrads eventually, and the other demons. The path connected to a big tunnel, wide enough for the three tetrads to stand shoulder to shoulder without issue, with a brute on the outside of their phalanx. It was dark, with few amber veins, and the walls screamed and churned endlessly with remnants, desperate to grab onto them.

Say one thing for Romakus, Julisa, and Livian, they weren't the type to order other people around make them do the work. They had brutes, vrats, and gargoyles around them, but it was the three biggest demons in the front of the pack, fighting the oncoming swarm.

Swarm. Stampede, more like. Goorts were huge, work horses with giant muscles and two enormous ram horns, perfectly capable of killing a vrat on their own. Or a basilisk, if they worked together. Someone like Yulia would die instantly if she got under their hooves.

They charged together, too, and crashed into Romakus hard enough his talons dragged along the stone. He slammed his sword down on them, and the gore splattered.

Mia took a step back and got behind one of Vinicius's legs. Okay, yeap, maybe coming down here was a bad idea.

Julisa grabbed one goort, threw it over her shoulder in a sort of flip body slam maneuver, using her four arms to keep it under control, and it landed hard enough something cracked. She sank two sets of claws into the giant creature's exposed stomach, ripped it open, and kicked it aside before turning back to face the stampede again. It bled out quickly. Livian did similar, grabbing a goort and lifting the beast before slamming it into the ground in front of her. The brute beside her grabbed it, wrestled it, got his thick arms around its throat, and broke its neck. $\mathbb{W}\mathbb{W}_{\sigma}\cdot\pi\delta\odot\mathfrak{e}1\mathcal{W}_{\sigma}\mathcal{R}^{(m)}\cdot\mathfrak{c}(\circ)(\pi)$

There were dozens of the massive creatures in the tunnel, clicking and growling, and the death of their frontliners meant nothing to them. Of course, the demons didn't give a shit if the hellbeasts came at them with suicidal animal rage. To them, this was fun, and Romakus borderline cheered as more goorts charged them. It was an excuse for him to use his enormous sword. $\mathfrak{w}\mathfrak{w}\mathbb{W}\cdot\mathfrak{m}\cdot\mathfrak{v}\cdot\mathbf{LW}\mathbb{O}\pi\pi\cdot\odot\odot\mathbb{O}$

Yulia hopped off her brute's back, and the devorjin joined the other demons, killing and slaughtering with his bare hands. He might not have been as big as a tetrad, but he was bigger than all the other demons, and even the giant horse monsters couldn't beat him. The vrats and gargoyles were smart enough to keep the bigger demons between them and the oncoming horde, and were quick to eviscerate any of the smaller goorts that got past.

Thank god, because some creatures slipping past the demon barricade were fallo spiders, big ones. Like the other hellbeasts, they had the same dark red skin as demons, though decidedly less... skin-like. Even the goorts' skin didn't look like demon skin, more bumpy and rough and leathery. But they didn't look as different from demons as demons probably thought they did. And there was the fact they clicked, too, the Hellian language.

The implications were big. Did the demons care? Nope. Hellbeasts were a menace to exterminate, with no resonance to eat. And considering how mindlessly the beasts charged forward, throwing their lives away as they pushed headlong into the wall of demons, only to get ripped open and cut in half, Mia couldn't blame the demons for thinking that.

Still, it was hard to watch.

Yulia and some of the other demons in the back with Mia picked up rocks and got to work. One hard throw with quality aim was enough to knock a spider off the ceiling, and the demons jumped it with practiced expertise. The spider's legs weren't tipped with furry paws, like surface spiders. They were tipped with spikes, black, sharp enough to stab, and the spider attempted to do so, but on its back, it couldn't get a handle on what was happening.

They ripped its legs off as they stabbed it, and it shrieked and clicked as it died. Mia looked away.

Vinicius snarled and stepped forward, his size burying her in his presence. Before she got to ask what he was doing, he brought down a fist, and crushed a fallo spider. Mia squeaked and jumped back, and covered her eyes as the creature twisted and squirmed, large exoskeleton body squashed in the center. Mia wasn't the sort of girl who had trouble killing insects, but she'd always made sure to only do it if letting the bug out outside wasn't really an option, and she always ended it quickly when she killed them. But her bodyguard was quite content to break the big spider's middle, and leave it to shriek, struggle, squirm, and bleed to death.

At least, until he looked down at her, saw her frowning up at him, let out an annoyed rumble, and sank his claws into the spider's head. Tiny head, big claws. There was no head left when he was done.

"Thank you," she said.

He rumbled again and gently pushed her back with his tail.

"How nice of you to join us!" Romakus yelled back over his shoulder. "Sleeping beauty pulling his weight?"

Vinicius didn't dignify that with an answer.

The snarls and clicks of the goorts died down, but a new sound mixed into them, a new growling, and... barks? New creatures crashed against the tetrads, and the three massive demons changed their stances, half crouching with arms more forward. With the goorts, the demons were happy to accept their charges, wrestle them down, bash them, fight them straight on. They didn't want to do that with the new wave of beasts.

The goorts still fighting to get past didn't stop, like a line of water buffalo crashing into a wall of demon muscle, and the hellhounds used them. The giant wolf-lion creatures jumped across the backs of enormous horses and threw themselves over the heads of the tetrads. Livian and Julisa each caught one using their extra arms, but several got over Romakus's head, the tetrad too busy cleaving through the goorts in front of him. $\mathfrak{w}\mathbb{W}_{\sigma}\cdot\mathfrak{m}\mathbf{O}\mathbf{V}\mathfrak{e}\mathbf{LW}\mathbf{O}\mathfrak{r}\mathbf{M}\cdot\odot\mathbf{O}\mathfrak{m}$

Cannam, hellhounds, were huge. One landed in front of Vinicius and ducked its head left and right as it looked for a way to get past the much bigger creature to reach Mia. There was nothing in its animal eyes but hunger, and rage.

It looked slightly canine, but with the musculature and size of a large lion. It even had a mane, sort of, a bunch of black spikes close to its thick neck that flowed back and away from its head. Big, white teeth. A single black spike curled back and up from its forehead. It had a line of black spikes along its spine, too, all the way to the tip of its long tail. Big, black claws $\mathfrak{w}\mathfrak{w}(\omega)\cdot\mathfrak{n}\mathfrak{o}\mathfrak{v}\mathfrak{E}\odot\mathfrak{w}(\mathfrak{c})\mathfrak{r}^{(\pi)}\cdot\mathfrak{c}(\circ)\mathfrak{m}$

It dashed to the side, agile as a cat, and dove for Mia, but Vinicius slammed one of his hands down, and forced the creature to dodge. It was an opening a nearby vrat took advantage of, and brought his sword down on the creature. But the blade didn't get through the spikes, and the huge dog set its attention on demon instead. It pounced, and the vrat went down.

"Vin, help him!"

Vin snarled, and the two of them had a glaring contest again. No need to say it, or even gesture to her necklace. She'd use it if she had to.

Vin reached down, grabbed the huge dog with two hands, and ripped it in half. The vrat, on his back and now covered in a dozen bite wounds and gashes, but alive, dragged himself back to his feet. Only to fall back down when Vin dropped the two halves of the corpse on him. A bloody mess, and the vrat didn't even get a heart to eat for it. Hellbeasts held no resonance.

The juggernaut's giant tail nudged Mia further back, but he was anything but gentle with the next hellhound that came for them. It again tried to get past the bigger demon, but it didn't have much sense of self preservation; not that demons had much, either. It tried to jump around, but Vin was ready for it, and he got the giant dog with one hand. Big as Vin was, the canine really was as big as a lion, with enough weight it made Vin nearly fall back, but he turned with it, and got all four hands onto the giant dog as he pinned it. It bit him, drew blood, but a moment later it was in pieces.

Mia had underestimated the threat. Or maybe Yulia had, letting her come. Either way, Mia backed up again and again as more beasts made their way past the three tetrads, and the whole cavern turned into a mess of violence. The animals came at them, practically ignoring each other, all for the chance to go for a kill against a demon, or Mia. All this, for a meal.