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Demons ate resonance. Hellbeasts, like souls, ate and survived on essence directly. Souls carried resonance and essence, and so did demons, but hellbeasts only carried essence. It was a fucked up food chain, where hellbeasts were free to attack demons and eat them, but not the other way around. And they knew it, too, like predators in the wild who knew they could eat anyone and anything, even each other if they wanted. Apparently, they were willing to cooperate now, to kill the demons living on top of their den.

"Whatever you do," Mia said, "don't use your fire breath."

Vin growled back at her. He probably wasn't in any condition to go Godzilla on the tunnel, but then again, he'd used his breath when Mia had freed him, and he'd only had Zel's heart for food. Better to not risk it.

A goort pushed past Julisa, and another pushed past Livian on opposite walls of the tunnel, but that was only the beginning. The wall of demons broke, and the tetrads stepped back as the tide of creatures threw themselves into the cavern. They didn't make a break for the exit. Their eyes were on the smaller demons, and Mia.

Romakus jumped into the center of the huge cavern, straight at Vinicius, and with a flap of his wings, he leapt up. He got high, high enough his sword reached the ceiling and killed a fallo spider, before he crashed down, spun, and brought the sword down on a goort that tried to get around Vin.*Ww.w.n.véllworM.com*

"Show off," Julisa said. She and Livian stayed at the tunnel entrance, plugging it as best they could and killing what few creatures were still coming up the tunnel, but the majority had pushed past, and now the cavern was chaos. Yeap, coming down here was a huge mistake.

Why didn't things just go smooth?

Yulia came up to Mia and stood with her, sharing a quick grin, and patted her on the shoulder as she helped nudge Mia to the cavern exit.

"You didn't have to come with Vinicius."

"I know, but--" Mia squeaked and jumped back as a fallo spider dropped from the ceiling. It leapt at her, and Yulia pounced it, knocking it to the ground. But they landed oddly, rolled, and the spider and its sharp legs landed on top.

It didn't get to use them. A very human-like red person jumped past Mia, and cleaved the spider in half at the abdomen with a far more reasonably sized sword than Romakus's.

"What're you doing here?" Faust asked.

"I uh... thought maybe Vinicius could help."*w@w.nσ(ν)ℰlworM.Com*

Vinicius was definitely helping, but only when a hellbeast came at him. Even wounded and recovering, he was strong enough it probably should have been him at the front, ripping and tearing. Instead, he looked back at the four incubi now standing around Mia, and growled like a dog getting possessive of their bone. In any other context, it might have been kinda sexy, but right now, it just made her want to smack him.

The incubi, each armed with a sword, got to work. They didn't have the claws of the other demons, and sure, they weren't as strong, but they were good with those swords, swinging fluidly and cleaving fallo spiders at a safe distance from their many sharp feet. It wasn't so easy with the goorts though, too big, skin too thick, and the incubi avoided them entirely. Vinicius took care of them.*wW@.noVellw@rm.c(σ)m*

Mia backed up all the way to the cavern entrance, and watched. Now that the incubi were here, the demons had the advantage, their blades taking down hellbeasts more quickly than the others did, save for Romakus. He was on the same page as the incubi, happy to use his sword to make the violence quick and brutally efficient. He was good. He knew it, too, and enjoyed showing off. More than once, he threw Mia a wink and grin, and she glared at him. It wasn't good that she kinda liked it.

Things settled down eventually. Dead spiders with blade feet, dead giant horses with ram horns, and dead wolf lions with black spikes littered the cavern. In the end, it was a good thing Mia had come, or at least her bodyguard. Vinicius killed almost a dozen creatures by the time the slaughter was over, in particular some very large goorts that'd wrestled themselves past Julisa and Livian. If he hadn't been injured, he could have torched the tunnel, or gone physical, berserk, and slaughtered hundreds of the creatures with his claws and teeth. An injured child of Belial was still useful.

"Thanks for the help," Romakus said, panting and chuckling as he hooked his sword on his back.

"What happened?" Mia asked, gesturing around at the bodies. "Why'd the hellbeasts attack?"

"They get uppity sometimes." The tetrad walked their way, and didn't so much as try to sidestep any of the corpses, content to walk on them. Spiders went crunch under his feet. "The tunnels go deep, and there are spawning rooms down there." He shrugged and stopped in front of Vin. Mia joined her bodyguard. "My crew hasn't been here long. We don't like to hang around in any place and wear out our welcome, for obvious reasons when most spires want us dead. I'm guessing our presence stirred up the hellbeasts."

"Maybe," Gallius said, standing beside his buddy Faustinus. "Maybe it was the unmarked girl who's walking around wearing a literal angel rune?"

It was common knowledge now that angel clothes -- and armor -- were actually summoned by runes. Not that demons could do anything with that knowledge; the only reason Yosepha felt comfortable with the others learning that.

"I've killed a wurm with her nearby," Vin said. "It didn't react to her anymore than it did to me."

"Is that so?" Romakus said, and he stepped around Vin so he could squat in front of Mia. "How about it? Anything special about you, princess? Feel anything weird going on in there?" With a raised claw, he pointed at her head. Vin flexed, ready to pounce, but thankfully did not.

"What do you think I am? Some sort of... psychic... voodoo... shaman... witch?"

Julisa and Livian joined them, laughing as they kicked aside some corpses. Cruel.

"If it's not about you," Faust said, "then we should consider leaving this mountain sooner than planned. Unless we want to do this dance every so often?"

"Maybe we do," Romakus said. He stood up straight and looked at the crowd of demons. "Sound off!"*ww(w).ñovELLwoRm.Co(π)*

Every demon, even the wounded ones, listed off their name in classic military fashion, starting from where the tetrad pointed, and then in clockwise order. It wasn't the first time they'd done this.

"All accounted for," Romakus said. "No losses. Ain't that lucky?"

Faust shook his head. "Luck had nothing to do with it, boss."

"True. We're pretty awesome." Nodding, Romakus flared and flourished his wings a few times, hooked them, and gestured back to the cavern entrance behind Mia. "Alright, let's go back."

"Go back?" Mia asked. "But... if there's a nest down there, shouldn't someone deal with it?"

"Nests can't be destroyed. They regrow quickly. And the tunnels below Death's Grip are a maze."

Mia groaned and hugged herself. "I know. I learned firsthand."