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The incubi all oohed and aahed, and nodded between themselves, impressed by her immense strength.

She liked these guys. They were fun.

"It's pretty large, though," Locutus said. "Unwieldy."

"I've been thinking about that. It's pretty common in some places in the world for moms to work fields, even with a tiny baby. They usually keep them in some sort of shoulder sling, or more complicated ones that go over both shoulders and hold the baby to the chest. Can we make something like that?"

Oudoceus laughed. "It's not a baby. I don't think you'll need to be that careful with it. As long as you don't drop it too hard, on rock, it should be fine.*lvwW.mOVeL(w)Ormm.com*

"True," Faust said. "Hellbeasts aren't fragile, eggs included."

Mia frowned down at the egg and gently ran her fingers around its contours.

"I dunno. It's still an egg, right? And there's something alive inside it. I don't want it to get knocked around and hurt and stuff."

Gallius reached out and touched the egg, and Mia slapped the back of his hand. He laughed and withdrew his evil digits.

"I hope you know the responsibility you've picked up, here," Faust said. "You have to go on a journey to save the world, right? You really want to carry this egg around? And then it's going to hatch and you're going to have to feed it."

"I've thought about it. I have to feed Vin, right? The puppy can join him."

Vinicius growled and looked to the side. His tail was as still as a rock. He didn't like the idea.*WŴw.n.V.LWô(w).Com*

"Not a puppy," Gallius said. "I mean, mostly not a puppy."

"Dogs are always puppy. Puppy puppers. They never grow up."

The incubi looked between each other, wincing.

"Did you not see what the cannams did? Those fights can go a lot worse. Hellbeasts kill demons, often."

She mirrored the wince, but pulled the egg closer to her, anyway.

"I'll raise him to be nice!"

They all looked at each other again, clearly not believing her. She didn't really believe herself, either. Every hellbeast she'd ever seen had been a bloodthirsty, hungry, raging animal, be it goorts or wurms or fallo spiders or hellhounds. That'd be no good to her, and potentially deadly to her. It wouldn't be the first time a human had adopted an odd animal, and of course it grew up to kill or at least maim the owner, eventually. There was a reason a lot of animals were illegal to own, on the surface.*(w)W(w).m0VôI(w)(s)r@.coM*

"Okay, I don't know if he'll be nice," she said. "He'll--"

"He?" Faust asked.

"I... uh, I guess that doesn't fit, does it?" She shrugged and patted the egg. "Whatever. He'll be my pupper."

"Pupp--"

"Pupper! All wolves and dogs are puppies, even the deadly ones." They'd never understand the strange, mindless devotion humans had to dogs. "Come on, I'm not an idiot. I know this is going to be dangerous, and probably a problem, but I can't ignore what happened. This egg means something!"

"Can you still feel the nest?" Oudoceus asked.

"No. I mean, kinda? If I had to, I think I could follow the feeling back to the nest, but it's so subtle. And when I was down there, I felt more of the same, in other places. I was... sensing the nests, I guess. All the nearby ones."

"Not the egg?"

"No, it was the nests. But the nest responded to me! I think. It felt strange, where the egg was born, and... yeah." She patted the egg a couple more times, gently of course, and the puppy inside stirred. "I'm getting slammed with so many weird quirks about me, what I am, and a part of me just wants to hide and pretend I'm not strange. I've never been the center of so much attention." David was probably hating every moment of being the center of attention. Loving the sex powers? Probably. Center of attention? Kryptonite. "But, this is important, save the universe important, and I'm not going to hide from it."

"Brave," Gallius said.

Mia laughed and leaned over her egg so she could smile at the incubi.

"I mean, come on! How many stories have you read about a protagonist who does everything they can to avoid accepting their fate? They run around in circles, deny obvious stuff, and are absolutely convinced the crazy things that keep happening have nothing to do with them." They raised eyebrows, not understanding. "I have to accept it. I'm special, or cursed. Either way, I will not stick my head in the sand and pretend shit doesn't seem to be happening specifically to me, or because of me, or something. Me and the other unmarked, wherever they may be."

"Brave and smart," Locutus said. "I mean, you are unmarked, and wearing an angel rune."

"Yosepha wishes her potram was as sexy as yours," Faust said, smile turning devious. All it took was a playful, handsome smile to bring back the memory of him and Gallius, erect, looking Mia up and down after she'd come back from seeing the angel and gorujin fucking.

She clutched the egg, her egg, and frowned at him. But try as she might, she couldn't keep it up as Faust smiled right back at her. Damn sexy mischievous bastard.

"The four of you would want to fuck that angel even if she was still in her armor," she said. "Horndogs."

"True," Oudoceus said. "Silver and gold armor are pretty sexy."

They all laughed. God, to just laugh again was amazing.

Mia looked down at her egg, squinted at it, and found movement. The creature inside was definitely alive, the leathery skin thin enough she could just ever so barely make out the shape of something inside. It was small, but it'd grow, like any creature in an egg did.

Hopefully, this wouldn't end up like that twisted idea she'd once heard, where special agents in training had to raise a puppy, only to have to kill it to complete their training. She didn't know if it was true, but the thought was enough to make her want to puke, literally. That wouldn't happen to her, no way. If the hellhound couldn't be tamed, she'd just release it somewhere far away.

And besides, it wasn't like Hell would set her up just to be miserable like that. Would she?

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The path ahead was low in vines, but high in remnants. They found the remains of vines, too, as if someone had taken an axe to them to clear the path. Probably accurate.

"I can smell them," Caera said, bringing her nose to the ground. It was mostly a human nose, but with a slight cat-ish snout, and fit the whole 'tiger lady' shape of her well. He liked it.

"Sure you don't want me to wear the armor again?" he asked. "I can--"

"No. We know where they are. We know who their leader is. We know what they can do. All that's left now is to kill them all, and if we have to run past you to make that happen, you could get hurt. If we use a sin aura, the Cainites might attack you even if they didn't want to. Better you just stay back." She gestured back with her tail toward the following demons. "We're ready."

They were ready. He had his dagger. Las had found small swords, bigger than his dagger, heavier, but they were strong enough to wield them one-handed. Daoka didn't have a weapon, but she didn't need one with her horns. Jeskura didn't need one either, but she took a sword, too. Most surprisingly was Acelina, armed with a giant axe, one even a Cainite would have struggled to wield. On top of that, she'd found armor, big chunks of black metal they'd strapped onto her body to cover her breasts, thank god, some of her stomach, her quads, and, most importantly, her shins. She had the longest legs, hardest to guard, especially from thorny vines

"When we find them," Caera said, "stay with Acelina."

"Yes ma'am."

"I mean it, David. Unless you can pull some magical power out of your ass, stay out of the way as much as you can."