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There were pillars everywhere, colossal things covered in bones from top to bottom, and from their size, femur bones. They were darker than bone usually was, as if they'd been burned. Huge, skull-shaped braziers dangled from the high ceiling on black chains, flames billowing in their eyes. The walls were decorated with skulls hanging from hooks, all demon, and there were plenty of them. The Cainites had been busy.

The main chamber was vast, and long, with plenty of space on either side for a congregation of demons of all shapes and sizes. It'd been mostly empty before, but now it filled with Cainites following David and the girl in, but also from the stairways alongside the building walls where more archways led to hallways. Caera had said the building had floors, above and below.

The girls wouldn't have to worry about hunting them down, though, with what looked like a borderline riot as Cainites poured into the giant room, filling in the spaces along each wall, while more flowed in behind David, ushering him forward toward the pulpit and anvil. Everyone wanted to see.

The pulpit was enormous and tall. No human used that. It stood on a short stage raised by two large steps on all sides, very much like something he'd seen in a church. A pipe organ on the wall behind it, instead of the various stairways and archways, would have fit perfectly.

Below and in front of the pulpit was an anvil, a bit larger than the classic kind you'd find in fantasy stories, with a dozen human skulls carved into its black base. Underneath it ran a thick amber vein, each end disappearing into sculpted holes in the ground, like a long glowing electric wire the anvil sat on. Or was tapping into.

A man stood beside the pulpit. Like David, he didn't wear much of the meera metal; maybe he struggled with the weight, too. He wore leather instead, like David's skirt, except also across his chest. Someone had made him clothes.

He had a book in his hand, leather-bound, and he turned the thick pages, eyes locked on the book with interest. He was a tall guy, short black hair, some scruff, fit and athletic. An all around handsome guy, with no number on his forehead.

He raised his eyes from the book, and the gaze he set on David shattered what thoughts David might have had about this guy. There was something weird in his gaze, something straight out of American Psycho.

"Janette?" he asked.

"Gregory! This guy found the temple, no escort. He says some other Cainites were with him when they got killed." She nudged David forward. "He's unmarked, too."

"Another unmarked? So the rumors are true." Greg closed the book and set it on the pulpit; he had to reach high to do it. "Imps and grems have been going around, talking about unmarked and a great calamity that hit the Death's Grip spire." Sighing, he sat down on the large stairs alongside the short stage, and motioned for Janette to step back from David**WW.N6V@()woRm.com**

"I saw it," David said, doing his best to not rub his arm or scratch his head or shift his weight back and forth on his toes. "Big crack, split Death's Grip from inner to outer edge. It was terrifying."

"That's what I've heard." Greg nodded as he looked out at the gathering group. "The other unmarked haven't made themselves known, though. No one's risen to guide these people or to fix their problems. Where have you been?"

Is that what this guy thought an unmarked's purpose was?

"I... didn't arrive in Hell until recently."

"Is that so?" Greg eyed him, and again, the icy cold of the man's dead gaze cut through David's guts and dumped them on the floor. "Then I suppose you have a lot to learn about Hell... What is your name?"

"David," Janette said for him.

"David. How biblical." The other unmarked chuckled, and it carried no joy. "You--"

The temple rumbled. David's body froze, every muscle tensed, and he looked up as the hanging skull braziers jiggled on their chains. The rumbling passed quickly, and Greg looked around with a raised eyebrow. He didn't look nearly as confused as David had hoped. Maybe the mystery woman had talked to him, too?

Everyone grew quiet, and David strained his ears, but heard no sign of Caera and the girls. More Cainites pushed into the temple, and while they gave plenty of space to Greg and David, they felt comfortable enough to get up on the stage. They wanted to see, though at the moment, they were all looking up and around with wide eyes.

"It's happening again?" Janette asked. Like a match on oil, everyone started talking.

"Maybe," Greg said, and he raised a hand. The crowd grew quiet, and a tiny smile graced the crazy man's lips. Yeah, this guy had a god complex. "Do you know what our mission is, fellow unmarked?"

"I... do not."

Greg nodded, face serious and calm, like a priest's.

"I found the Cainites... or I suppose, they found me, not long ago. When they realized I could craft auras, as I'm sure you've realized you can, they thought maybe I was special. I insisted there had to be others like me; the angels said as much on the stairs to Heaven. The Cainites brought me here." Greg gestured to the pulpit he'd put the book on. "Have you found any other books?"**w@W.no(v)(e)RWoRm.có(m)**

"Books? No."

"The Old Ones wrote books, because... well, because they had to, I suppose." He stepped around the anvil, stood in front of David, and folded his arms across his chest. "Something about the power of words. I don't know for sure. But regardless, the Cainites and I are going to create an army, find more books, take over the spires, and all of Hell. Then, Heaven. The Cainites want angel hearts, convinced they're the key to great power. I'm thinking they might be right. No place we'll find more of those than Heaven, right?"**w@w.noVeLWóRm.c(o)m**

What. The. Fuck.

The crowd cheered.

"Death to the angels!"

"Cain's path will be followed!"

"We'll feast!"

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