

1406

~~Unknown~~

A man, on his back in a black temple, staring up at another man. The other man was small, clean shaven, with freckles and shaggy red hair. He held a rock in his hands, and he brought it down on the first man's face, again and again until there was nothing left. He didn't have a number.

The first man died.

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~~Day 42~~

~~Mia~~

She sat up with a snap and grabbed the closest thing she could find. A big egg, not so moist anymore, warm and leathery, and absolutely useless if she wanted to block a man from bashing her

A man? That'd been... David!

"Vin!" She jumped up, ran over to her bodyguard, and kicked him in the leg. "Vin, I had another vision! I saw my brother, and he was killing another unmarked!" Rather brutally at that, with a rock, to the face, until the unpleasant dream had given her a taste of what it'd feel like to have her skull caved in by a blunt object.

Vin stirred from his sleep. Comfortable enough to sleep while she did, at least a little, and he set his dragon eyes on her as the late twilight washed the sleepiness from him.

"Another vision?"

"Yeah, of my brother! He was killing another unmarked... so I guess it was the other guy I was really having a vision of, but still, it's nice to know David is out there, doing something." And if she didn't get a dream of him dying, then he had to still be alive.

"Killing other unmarked?" After a moment of contemplation, Vinicius rumbled and shrugged. "He was tiny and weak."

"Hey! He's... okay yeah, he's pretty short, and thin, but he's in good shape. We worked out all the time, on the surface."

"How did he kill the other?"

"With a rock, I'll have you know. He was straddling him, so he probably tackled him and took him out like it was 100, 000 BC."

Of course, the giant demon had no idea what Mia meant, but he didn't care, either. Vinicius got to his feet, rotated his four arms, shook out his tail, and nodded with approval. He was no longer bothered by his injuries, judging from the satisfied look on his face.

"We may go."wwW.n@vElwôRm.coM

"Go?"WwW.n(o)xêltw@RM.C@m

"On the journey."

"You're healed already?"

"Yes."

She frowned up at him and looked at the scars. Vin had a lot of scars, places where the flesh wasn't quite the same shade of dark red as other places, but the fresh wounds were obviously brighter red.

"No, you're not."

"I am enough. Let's go."

"Yeah, well, you say that, but you'll have to convince Romakus."

Growling, the giant demon headed for the alcove exit.

"I don't have to convince him. If he tries to stop me, I will kill him."

She ran in front of him and poked him in the stomach@wW.NOv@lWOrm.©@M

"You're still injured. It's like that fight with the angels, remember? You might have won that if the wounds you'd gotten from those demons who ambushed us had healed." And if she hadn't stopped him from killing them. Whatever. She kicked him in the shin for good measure, but even wearing her sandals, it was like kicking a solid door, and he didn't react or budge. "I strongly recommend you take another day, at least! Preferably, you know, four more? Just sit down, relax, and--"

"I do not relax."

"I'm seeing that! But relaxing is important for psycho... logical... health." She dragged her fingers down her face. "Yes, I know. You're a demon, not a human. But the fact we're having a conversation at all means you're more human than not. So, just, relax, okay?"

"The world is going to end, and you wish to relax?"

"I don't want to, but I know how important it is!" She reached up, gently pushed against his enormous abs a couple feet above her head, and nudged him back into the alcove. "I know it'll be important physiologically, and psychologically, and you may not like to hear it, but I'm a pretty damn smart girl, okay? So just... do what I say, please? And then once we've saved the world, you can go back to your rampaging."www.no@ElwOrm.coM

More rumbles and growls, but all quiet and relenting. Slowly but surely, she was understanding Vin, or at least what his triggers were and weren't. Being direct with him was the way to go, and promising rewards was also the way to go.

Of course, that dangled a very weird carrot between them. Demons loved violence, and demons loved sex. Problematically, his sexual interests included her, and that meant the bodyguard that she was actively forcing to do her bidding with a literal pain leash, wanted to fuck her. He could use that against her, demand she have sex with him or he wouldn't obey her commands, and sure she could use the leash and bring him to his knees in pain, but that wouldn't be enough to actually make him comply. Except, maybe to 'sit' or 'stop'.

She did her best to not think about it. Trading sex for protection was fucked up, on the surface. In Hell, it was probably a normal thing. Or not normal, because demons wouldn't bother trading. They'd just take.

Ugh. Why did ethics have to be so weird and fucked up in Hell?

"How about this?" she said. "Romakus isn't stupid. He's going to help us, whether he wants to or not. Yosepha probably told him to make sure we don't get hurt, and that if we have to -- or decide to -- leave before she or Galon get here, that he sticks with us. Fate of the world and all that, you know?"

"The larger our group, the easier we are to find. Death's Grip has many tunnels, but of the other provinces, only the Scar and Angel's Spine have as many." Vin snarled as he sat down. "It'd be wise to be careful about recruiting companions."

"I suppose, but two is way too small a number. What about, uh, four more, for the incubi, three for Romakus and Livian and Julisa, totaling seven more? Nine, like the Fellowship of the Ring!" She didn't wait for the predictable grunt of confusion. "And the puppers. And Yulia and her nameless buddy, if they want. And maybe Yosepha and Galon, if they have to abandon Heaven for whatever reason. And... okay yeah, maybe getting a tiny army together wouldn't be the best idea, if it meant the angels could find us easily." From what Yosepha said, Heaven was sending out thousands of scouting parties to look for, and potentially assassinate, the unmarked. But if Heaven knew for sure where one of the unmarked was, they had to power to send tens of thousands. And a thousand orbital laser cannons firing down on their location would probably be death no matter how deep they hid underground.

"I needed no army when I fought alone," Vin said.

"That was a long time ago."

"Demons do not age."

"No, but, like you said before, you're not feeling like your old self, right? Centuries of getting tortured, locked up in a dungeon, only to get ambushed by demons and then angels? Give yourself a break. I'm sure you'll be back to your rampaging ways in no time." And that was the exact wrong way to deal with Vin, trying to appeal to any sort of desire for sympathy, the last thing he wanted. Quick, change course. "Or, you know, we can go on this trip because you think we can, and the next time angels show up, you have to fight off a hundred instead of just three. Think you can manage that, asshole?" Better, better.

He rumbled, but it was long and quiet, a 'I see your point' sorta rumble.