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Well, the first step to not being a dumbass was realizing she was being a dumbass. She'd just met this guy, was getting swept up the gabriem's wake, and as long as she remembered that, she could keep her heart squarely secure in her chest.

That metaphor had new connotations in Hell. Eep.

"I... admit," he said, "that you're the first soul I've ever talked to that is simultaneously a good soul worthy of Heaven, but now has to deal with the pains of Hell. Other than your brother, I mean. If we were in Avinoam, I would be spending as much time with you as needed to help you forget the scars inflicted on you by this plane."

That was a fancy way of saying he'd fuck her as much as she wanted, if they were in Heaven. Oh my.

"Let me guess. From what Yosepha or Yulia told you, I'd be asking you to get your male friends together so I could have an orgy every night. And day."*www.noVELworm.cOm*

"And I'd do it, too. Happily. As to your earlier question about the things I've done, I once had a woman ask to be taken by four men at once. Two to penetrate her sex, and two to penetrate her ass, all at the same time. Finding the positions to allow that was difficult."

Oh god. She shivered, gulped, and gave herself a not-so-gentle slap on the cheek.

"Uh, as for the pains of Hell," she said, "it hasn't been that bad. I mean, it's been horrible, but not nearly as bad as it could be, you know? Every time I see a remnant, I feel so bad, and sometimes I see the things demons do to new souls, and..." She frowned down at the ground. "Demons are cruel. I find it hard to... want to have sex with cruel people."

"It's hard to tell when a demon is being mean or really, really mean, you know? Some demons are just absolutely horrible. Some aren't! I knew a vratorin named Adron, and he was actually kinda nice and fun. And then there was this sarkarin named Kasimiro, and he was mean, but he also didn't like how bloodthirsty demons were, so he was nice! Sorta, you know? And..." She threw up her hands. "And then there's Faust, Gallius, Oudoceus, and Locutus. They're nice and fun, but I think they're being sneaky, too, you know? More going on in there than they want anyone to realize." She pointed at her temple.

"Probably," Galon said.

"And then there's Vinicius. I'm supposed to be keeping him as a bodyguard and servant, you know? A slave! I'm supposed to use the leash and force him to protect me. But half the time I'm around him, I'm nervous he's going to pounce me and... do things to me."

Galon raised an eyebrow as he looked at her, but a smile slowly crept onto his lips. Uh oh.

"You like that idea."

"I do not!"

"Mia, I have worked with thousands of women in my life. You would hardly be the first that wanted to be pinned and ravaged by a colossal beast known throughout an entire land as deadly. A creature of legend."

Mia squirmed. It was pointless dodging around these topics with Galon. Yosepha, sure, Mia could negotiate the conversation because the mikalim angel didn't seem to be very in-the-know about what souls on the surface were into. Attempts to play coy with Galon would only backfire. Given the sneaky, confident, playful looks he was giving her, he probably already knew she'd read dozens of, and had masturbated to, all sorts of erotica that fit that description. Plenty of straight-up porn of it, too.

"Yeah, okay, true. But those are fantasies! This is real. Vin's a bad demon who's done a lot of very bad things."

"He has engaged in slaughter on an unprecedented scale. But, that's Hell. And as far as I know, he hasn't engaged in acts of torture or rape." Galon patted her shoulders with his wing. "Compared to someone like Valzanal, he's not that bad."

"Not that bad? Are you trying to defend him?"

"I'm... saying you shouldn't hold demons to the same standards as souls. They have different rules and grow up in a different environment. If you find a demon that doesn't enjoy inflicting pain purely for the joy of torture, that is a demon worth considering... nice."

She laughed. "You're right, I know. It's just so hard to get used to! I've only been in Hell for... not even four weeks? So much has happened, it's crazy."

"Very much so, and it's only going to get crazier, I bet." He patted her head with his feathers. "So, as the only gabriem you are likely to speak with for a long time, I have some advice to offer."

"By all means."

"You're pretty lucky to have escaped the spire, and luckier still to have met the Damall. The demons here aren't torturers. And from what I know of Vin, neither is he. If you see an opportunity to have yourself some fun, take it."

"Fun..."

"Fun. Yosepha's made it clear you're a very sexual soul. Your idea of fun includes four incubi all trying to get their dicks inside you at the same time, doesn't it? Just like in my example of that woman with me, and three other angels."*www.no-ve(1)@OrM.cOm*

She could not blush anymore if someone drowned her in tomato juice.

"Um..."

"Your idea of fun includes someone like that vratorin and sarkarin you mentioned, filling you until you're ready to burst."

"I uh--"

"Your idea of fun includes a colossus like Vinicius, lifting you up and using you as a

Fleshlight."*www.NoVELworm.cOm*

He knew what a Fleshlight was! She buried her face in her palms. This conversation was not happening.

"Heaven is going to get more involved eventually," he said. "Right now, there are scouting parties looking for the unmarked, but it won't stay that way. Soon, the skies will fill with angel wings, and the council will remind the spire rulers just how insignificant they are compared to the armies of Heaven." He pulled his wing back in tandem with his expression growing progressively more serious. "If it weren't for the patrols and the eyes of the council, I'd take you to the Forgotten Place myself."

Oh thank god a topic shift to something more serious. Much as Mia was growing more comfortable talking about her sexuality, Galon came at it with more than just bluntness. He came at it with knowledge. Talking with chronically horny demons was one thing. Talking with an angel who could read her like an open book was another thing entirely.

"Y-Yeah? Yosepha wasn't completely convinced she could trust me."

"She changed her mind, by the end, no?"

"I... guess so."

"Yosepha is a dear friend, but she is mikalim. Not exactly the best judge of character." He chuckled as he got up. "My point is, you and your brother are people I think are worth helping, but Heaven disagrees. So I'll help you in secret. If that means giving you some sex tips, then I'll give you some sex tips." He winked at her, reached out with a wing, and poked her in the forehead with a feather. Soft. "The pains of Hell are many. The pleasures are few. Enjoy them when and where you can. If that means being the center of attention of a host of demons who are all desperate to get their cocks inside any hole you can give them, then enjoy."

"You don't have to word it like that!"

His evil grin softened. "And if you think you can find romance in Hell, then do that, too, but don't deny what pleasures you can on a fool's hope."*www.NoVELworm.cOm*

After a serious sigh, she stood up too and gave her cheeks a couple pats.

"You're right, you're right. It's just... hard to expose myself willingly to demons. They're dangerous, you know?"

"I know all too well." Nodding, he paced in front of her, fingers on his chin. "There is something else we can try, to make you feel safer around demons, another way to learn batlam."

"Another way?"

"Yes. Angels and humans are not the same. The human mind is... complicated, and nuanced. Angels and demons have clearer ways of thinking, more direct, with little to distract our thoughts. Usually. To wear a rune needs not only effort to lift it, but a clear state of mind to engage it. Potram is easy enough, but if you're trying to use batlam and you can't focus on it clearly, it becomes heavier."

"Ooh. I need to go zen on this and clear my mind and stuff?"

"Yes, but I don't think meditation is going to work. It takes years of practice for humans to learn how to meditate effectively. No, I think we'll need a different approach."

Gold light filled the room, and Mia squinted while holding up a hand to block the powerful glow. It only took a moment for the angel to put his batlam rune on, and wear his glorious armor of Heaven. Gold and silver, with white silk drifting out between the joints. It wasn't as thick as Yosepha's, and instead of a sword and shield, he sported a beautiful bow of the same color as his armor. A quiver sat along his back between his wings, and he casually reached for an arrow. Its head shined like a mirror.

"Uh... Galon?"

He lifted the bow, knocked the arrow, and pointed it at Mia.

"Equip your batlam rune and block this arrow."

"Uh, Galon!"

He drew back the string.

"Galon! Wai--"

He released the string.